

## The Story of Fingal Retold for younger children

The story has three main characters:

Cathullin - General of the Irish Tribes

Fingal, The King of Morven in Scotland

and King Swaran of Lochlin in Scotland

Cathullin and Fingal join together to defeat King Swaran.

Cathullin, and Irish general, is sitting alone beneath a tree on day when a scout runs to him in alarm and tells of the landing of Swaran (King of Lochlin). The scout is afraid when he sees Swarans army approaching:

*Many, chief of men, are the*

*foe!*

*Many the heroes of the sea-born Swaran!"*

Cathullin replies that it is not the enemy, but their friend Fingal who is coming to help them.

*Then to the scout the blue-eyed chief replied, "Thou ever tremblest. Thy fears have increased the foe. It is Fingal King of deserts who comes with aid to green Erin of streams."*

*The scout disagrees and insists it is the enemy, large and fearsome..*

*"Nay, I beheld their chief," replied the scout, "tall as a glittering rock. His spear is a blasted pine. His shield the rising moon. He bade me say to thee, "Let dark Cathullin yield.""*

But Cathullin was not going to be afraid like the scout.

*“No,” replied the blue-eyed chief, “I never yield to mortal man. Dark  
Cathullin shall be great or dead.”*

Cathullin then gathered his chiefs to discuss what should be done and there was an argument as to what best do about the enemy. Some wanted to wait for Fingal, King of Morven in the North west coast of Scotland to come to their aid. He had helped them on other occasions. Others said they should fight immediately. Cathullin himself was eager to fight, and so not waiting for Fingal, they went into battle.

*And the sound of their going was ‘as the rushing of a stream of foam when the thunder is travelling above, and dark-brown night sits on half the hill.’*

The two armies moved towards each other and fierce was the battle:

*...approached the heroes. Like two deep streams from high rocks meeting, mixing, roaring on the plain; loud, rough and dark in battle meet Lochlin and Innis-fail. Chief mixes his strokes with chief, and man with man; steel clanging sounds on steel. Helmets are cleft on high..*

Both sides lost many men and great was their grief. The day came to an end, and neither side had the victory. But help was on the way for Cathullin. Fingal had arrived!

And in this second day’s fight Swaran was the victor, but while the battle still raged white-sailed ships appeared upon the sea. It was Fingal who came, and Swaran had to fight a second foe.

*‘Now from the grey mists of the ocean, the white-sailed ships of Fingal appear. High is the grove of their masts, as they nod by turns on the rolling wave.’*

*'They fling their weapons down. Each rushes to his hero's grasp. Their sinewy (muscular) arms bend round each other they turn from side to side, and strain and stretch their large spreading limbs below. But when the pride of their strength arose they shook the hills with their heels. Rocks tumble from their places on high; the green-headed bushes are overturned. At length the strength of Swaran fell; the king of the groves is bound.'*



The ships, he cried, the ships of the lonely isles.

Fingal won and Swaran's army fled and were chased by Fingal's warriors until the hero, Fingal, told them to stop. More warriors had been lost and great was the grief once more.

*'The clouds of night come rolling down. Darkness rests on the steeps of Cromla. The stars of the north arise over the rolling of Erin's waves: they shew their heads of fire, through the flying mist of heaven. A distant wind roars in the wood. Silent and dark is the plain of death.'*

But then the grieving stopped and the rejoicing began. The heroes gathered for a feast, but Swaran is silent and not joining in the rejoicing.

*Fingal leaned on the shield of his fathers. His grey locks slowly waved on the wind of night. He saw the grief of Swaran and spoke to the first of bards.*

Fingal ordered his bard (man who sang poems) to sing to Swaran to cheer him up:

*"Raise, Ullin, raise the song of peace. O soothe my soul from war. Let mine ear forget in the sound the dismal noise of arms. Let a hundred harps be near to gladden the king of Lochlin. He must depart from us with joy. None ever went sad from Fingal. The lightening of my sword is against the strong in fight. Peaceful it lies by my side when warriors yield in war."*

*So at the bidding of Fingal the minstrel sang, and soothed the grief of Swaran. And when the music ceased Fingal spoke once more:*

*"King of Lochlin, let thy face brighten with gladness and thine ear delight in the harp. Dreadful as the storm of thine ocean thou hast poured thy valour forth; thy voice has been like the voice of thousands when they engage in war."*

Then Swaran chose to depart in peace. He had no more will to fight against Fingal, so the two heroes swore friendship together. Then once again Fingal called for the song of minstrels.

*'A hundred voices at once arose, a hundred harps were strung. They sang of other times; the mighty chiefs of other years.' And so the night passed till 'morning trembles with the beam of the east; ....The sons of the ocean gather around. Silent and sad they rise on the wave. The blast of Erin is behind their sails. White as the mist of Morven they float along the sea.'*

Swaran and his warriors departed, and Fingal called his men together to go hunting. As he hunted he found Cathullin still hiding and still ashamed. But Fingal comforted the beaten hero and reminded him of times in the past when he had been victorious. together they returned to Fingal's camp and there they sang and feasted. Cathullin was once more happy.

*'We rose on the wave with songs. We rushed with joy through the foam of the deep.'*

*Thus the hero returned to his own land.*

*Adapted from H. E. Marshall: History of English Literature*

*Picture from:* <https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/ossian/oss25.htm>