

as well as with human feeling and action, it must have been essentially Ossianic—sad, weird, and solemn. Under the stilted eighteenth-century language, in which Macpherson has given forth his materials, we can descry the kind of thoughts and similes for which the natural surroundings would have prepared us. Many years ago, when through each varying mood of wind and weather, Ossian and my hammer were companions in every ramble among these western moors and sea-lochs, it was strongly borne in upon my mind that, putting Macpherson aside altogether, there is in the poems of Ossian a true poetry of local form and colour, which could only have been created in the West Highlands, but which must be of old date, for it alludes to characteristics that have long passed away. The local truth of the descriptions and allusions is altogether remarkable—the golden sunsets over the western ocean, the surge of the breakers on the dark rocks of the iron-bound shore, the dimpled surface of the Kyle and sea-loch as the breeze sweeps downward from the mountains, the rustle of the bent on the bare moor as the sough of the evening wind passes over it, the scattered boulders and lonely cairns, the rapid chase of sunshine and shadow as the clouds are driven over firth and fell, the deepening gloom of the gathering storm when the gale howls down the glens, tearing the rain-sheet into long, swiftly following shreds, like troops of dimly seen ghosts. These features are depicted with such simple truth that, whatever may be the value we are disposed to set upon the poetry, we must admit that it could only have been born in the West Highlands, and that it is genuine of the soil.

An attempt has recently been made to find the birth-place of the Scandinavian Eddas in the west of Scotland. The two latest and most learned editors of the northern