

fought and won. Its smallness of size kept its people within touch of each other from sea to sea, and engendered, or at least nurtured, that spirit of standing shoulder to shoulder, which is one of the distinctive national traits. And thus, not alone by the contact of man with man, but by the very conditions of the topography, were fostered that ardour of resistance, that stubbornness of purpose, that faculty of self-help, that love of country, that loyalty of Scot to Scot, which through good and evil report have marked off the nation from other men.

If natural scenery has affected national temperament, this influence cannot fail to have made itself manifest in the literature of a country. That it is traceable in the poetry of the different districts of Scotland cannot, I think, be doubted. One of the characteristic features of Highland poetry, and even more, of Highland music, is their melancholy cadence. A plaintive wail seems ever to rise as their undertone. Amid all the changes of human feeling and action, we seem to hear the solemn surge of the Atlantic breakers, or the moan of the wind across the desolate moors, or the sigh of the pine-woods, or the dash of the waterfalls and the roar of the floods, as the rain-clouds burst among the glens. We are reminded that the poetry was born among the mountains, that the bards were hunters and cragsmen, familiar with the corries where red deer pasture, and with the precipices where eagles build.

From boyhood I have been familiar with the scenery of the West Highlands, in every aspect of storm and sunshine. I do not mean to stir up the mouldering ashes of the Ossianic controversy, but I have long been convinced that what are called the poems of Ossian had their inspiration from these West Highland scenes. If poetry was to take birth in these regions and to deal largely with outer nature,