

between the northern and southern ballads in our national poetry, seems to me to lead us back to the fundamental distinctions between the physical features of the Border country and those of more southern and civilised parts of England. The northern ballad glows with poetic fire, whether the subject be border raid, or deed of chivalry, or tale of tragic love, or weird enchantment of fairy or warlock. We feel the keen northern air breathing through every line. The varied scenery of that wild Border land forms the background of the scenery in the poems, and according to their theme, we find ourselves among rough moss-hags or in fertile dale, on bare moorland or sheltered cleugh, by forest-side or river-ford, amid the tender green of birken shaws or the sad russet of dowie dens. The touches are lightly given, but they constitute one of the great charms of the poems. In the southern ballad, on the other hand, the local colouring is absent, or at least is so feeble that it could not have had the dominant influence which it exercised upon the imagination of the northern minstrels. The versification falls into what Hallam has justly called 'a creeping style which has exposed the common ballad to contempt.' To my mind, this tame featureless character is suggestive of the sluggish streams, and pleasing but unimpressive landscapes, amid which the southern minstrels sang.

In fine, if we attempt to analyse the impression which the scenery of a long-inhabited region now makes upon our minds, we can trace the working of more complex influences than might at first appear. The public taste has at length been educated to appreciate the variety of nature. Mountains are no longer described with horror, but are sought with even more determination than they were formerly avoided. In looking at Scottish landscapes, however, it is not merely the external forms that fill the eye. There is