

protected them from the sudden swoop of Saxon and Scandinavian sea-pirates. Neither Roman nor Teuton ever made any lasting conquest of that territory. It has remained in the hands of its Celtic conquerors till the present time.

But the case has been otherwise with the tracts where the younger Palæozoic deposits spread out from the base of the Highland mountains. These strata have not partaken of the violent corrugations and marked crystallisation to which the older rocks have been subjected. On the contrary, they extend in gentle undulations forming level plains, and strips of lowland between the foot of the more ancient hills and the margin of the sea. It was on these platforms of undisturbed strata that invaders could most successfully establish themselves. So dominant has been this geological influence, that the line of boundary between the crystalline rocks and the Old Red Sandstone, from the north of Caithness to the coast of Kincardineshire, was almost precisely that of the frontier established between the old Celtic natives and the later hordes of Danes and Northmen. To this day, in spite of the inevitable commingling of the races, it still serves to define the respective areas of the Gaelic-speaking and English-speaking populations. On the Old Red Sandstone we hear only English, often with a northern accent, and even with not a few northern words that seem to remind us of the Norse blood which flows in the veins of these hardy fisher-folk and farmers. We meet with groups of villages and towns; the houses, though often poor and dirty, are for the most part solidly built of hewn stone and mortar, with well-made roofs of thatch, slate, or flagstone. The fuel in ordinary use is coal brought by sea from the south. But no sooner do we penetrate within the area of the crystalline rocks than all