

speaking population. On the Old Red Sandstone, we hear only English, often with a northern accent, or with some northern words that seem to remind us of the Norse blood which flows in the veins of these hardy fisherfolk and farmers. We there come upon 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 advance within the Highland districts of the crystalline schists than all the human associations of the ground, as well as its physical aspect, appear changed. Gaelic is now the vernacular tongue. There are few or no villages. The houses built of boulders gathered from the soil, and held together with mere clay or earth, are covered with frail roofs of ferns, straw, or heather, kept down by stone-weighted ropes of the same materials. Fireplaces and chimneys are luxuries not yet universally adopted, and the pungent blue smoke from fires of peat or turf finds its way out by door and window, or beneath the begrimed rafters. The contrast of geological structure and scenery which allowed the Teutonic invaders to drive the older Celtic people from the coast-line, but prevented them from advancing inland, has sufficed during all the subsequent centuries to keep the two races apart.

When Engle and Norsemen landed on the eastern side of the country, the broad selvage of low ground between them and the dark mountains in the distance offered them sites for their new homesteads, which, by degrees, were planted all along the coast within touch of each other. But down the sea-board of the Western Highlands lay no such convenient plain. There the mountains shoot up from the edge of the sea, and though at the heads of the long, deep,