

narrow sea-lochs the salt-water gives place to open, level straths, these cultivable tracts lie so far from the outer coast as practically to form part of the inland country. When the Norsemen sailed down that western coast, they found in it the counterpart of their Scandinavian home—the same type of bare, rocky, island-fringed shores, sweeping up into black mountains, winding into long fjords beneath the shadow of sombre pine forests, and to the west the familiar sweep of the same wide blue ocean.

The effect of this peculiar configuration—so different from that of the east coast, is curiously marked in the history of the Scandinavian colonisation. Masters of the sea, the Norse Vikings possessed themselves of the Shetland, Orkney, and Western Islands. They likewise held the western sea-board of the mainland. But the want of any continuous selvae of low ground down that coast made it difficult for them to plant there a continuous line of settlements. Only by sea could communication be kept up between the scattered communities. The Norsemen of the west, therefore, remained to the end Vikings—baysmen—familiar with every creek and headland, but never permanently settling in the hilly interior, where the Celtic dalesmen and hardy mountaineers held their ground. Hence, when at last the political connection between Western Scotland and Norway was severed, the Norse population, no longer recruited from its mother country, and hemmed in upon the sea by the *near background of mountains*, could not maintain its individuality. It was gradually absorbed into the far more abundant Celtic population, which came down again from the interior to the coast. Though the Norsemen held possession of these western tracts for so many centuries, hardly any trace of their former presence is to be detected save in the blue eyes and fair hair of many a Western High-