

cloudy screen which keeps the sun from ripening his miserable patch of corn, or rots it with perpetual rains as it lies week after week on the sodden field. He stands among the mountains face to face with nature in her wilder moods. Storm and tempest, mist-wreath and whirlwind, the roar of waterfalls, the rush of swollen streams, the crash of loosened landslips, which he may seem hardly to notice, do not pass without bringing, unconsciously perhaps, to his imagination their ministry of terror. Hence the playful mirthfulness and light-hearted ease of the Celtic temperament have, in his case, been curdled into a stubbornness which may be stolid obstinacy or undaunted perseverance, according to the circumstances which develop it. Like his own granitic hills, he has grown hard and enduring, not without a tinge of melancholy, suggestive of the sadness that lingers among his wind-swept glens, and that hangs about the birken slopes around his lonely lakes.

But in the formation of the national character, as in the development of the material prosperity of the country, the dominant influence has undoubtedly been that of the lowlands. There, in the earliest and rudest times, lay the widest extent of fertile land to attract and retain the aboriginal settlers. In the subsequent struggle of races, it was there that the battle necessarily raged longest and fiercest. Gael, Cymri, Roman, Dane, Angle, Norseman, all contended on these plains, and there was effected that subsequent fusion of races which has achieved all that is distinctive in Scottish character and history.

The open, defenceless condition of this little strip of territory exposed it to invasion, now from the wild Gaels of the Highlands, now from the devastating English armies. Again and again was it laid waste with fire and sword. It became the battlefield on which the struggle for liberty was