

The chief points in regard to glacial actions are as follows: The upper part of the glacier is loaded with an ever-increasing depth of snow, which is compressed to ice by the burden above. The constant pressure drives the mass like a viscous fluid downwards and forwards every day. Rocks split from surrounding cliffs fall upon it and are carried along. Other rocks frozen in along the sides or base serve as chisels in gouging out and wearing away all unevenness or obstacles in its bed. When the glacier melts, the heavier rocks are deposited, and lighter fragments borne away by the torrents, to be spread out in the valleys and plains as beds of gravel, sand, and clay. The glacier is the ploughshare of the Almighty. It left behind it in Norway fjords and river valleys and beds of lakes. It left a country bold and strong in its outlines, but terrible in its hardness, barrenness, and desolation. As soon as the ice withdrew from any part of its territory, running water took up the work of smoothing, sifting, softening down, and spreading out what its forerunner had left unassorted and in heaps. Soils were formed, and every foothold wrested from the ice was occupied by vegetation.

But the working of another force must be considered before the history is complete. The work of water is one of degradation, and some counteracting, elevating force must be looked for. We find it in vulcanism and the slow powers of upheaval, that silent and unnoticed elevate whole countries with their mountains, valleys, lakes, and rivers to a higher level.

The people whose lives and habits are influenced by the strange physical conditions described, are near relatives of our ancestors, the English. The Norwegians of to-day are of medium size, strongly built, with blue eyes, fair hair, and white and red complexion. They are a cheerful, or rather, placid race, though a tinge of melancholy shows itself in the minor key of the music, perhaps born of the gloom of nature around. The people as a whole are thoroughly democratic, and the rough fellow to whom you have given a quarter for carrying your valise, grips your hand with an overflowing cordiality in saying good-bye, that leaves it lame for the next hour. The land has several distinct classes, and the man of the interior has quite a different set of thoughts and aspirations from those of the fishermen, of the Lofodens, or the sailor on the high seas. The class of farmers and herdsmen is one of the most interesting in Norway. The small farmer—and the farms are all small—has his quaint house and barns standing in a clump together in the midst of the little fields. Every yard of ground is used for potatoes, barley, or hay; five hundred feet up the mountain side, clinging to a rock slope, there