

erosion rather than by underground movement. But in their case, the erosion has been carried by glacier-ice far below the level at which the original stream acted. The softer nature of the rock which allowed the stream to widen its valley above the gorge would enable the ice to deepen it. As already suggested, many of the flat alluvial plains above gorges in the Highlands were probably at one time glen-lakes which have been gradually filled up. Large as is the number of existing lakes in the Highlands, it is a mere fraction of the number that once existed. Everywhere we see them being filled up by the sand and mud poured into them by their tributary streams. The shallow basins, of course, disappear first; those that are deep and have steep sides last longer, and except at the upper end, where the main stream enters, may show no sign of diminution. But they too are natural filters that receive the muddy water from the surrounding hillsides, and discharge it clear and bright at their lower ends. Every spate, therefore, helps to displace the water of the lake by an equivalent amount of sediment deposited on the bottom. Slowly but certainly each lake is diminishing in volume, and unless some new series of geological revolutions should begin, the result of the present operations of nature must inevitably be to convert every Highland lake into an alluvial plain.