

Devonian, and Carboniferous rocks have come to be fashioned into the contours of the land which they now form, and what has been their history since they uprose from the sea ; still more, if we are asked where the land of those ancient periods lay, and what it was like, we cast about for an answer and learn that it is not easy to find. The general principles involved in these questions may be clear enough, but the application of them to any particular example involves us in innumerable difficulties. The more the subject is pondered over, the more remote does the first origin of the present topography become—the farther back are we led into the geological past, and the greater are the demands on our imagination in picturing to ourselves conditions of geography and forms of surface that preceded those which now prevail. But it is only from actual concrete examples that the history of the surface of the land can be interpreted.

The present volume is accordingly devoted to an inquiry into the history of the scenery of Scotland. The landscapes of that little corner of western Europe will always be regarded with special interest. To every one they are memorable as the theatre where the battle of national liberty has been fought, and whence the effects of victory have profoundly influenced the progress of freedom and free institutions all over the globe. To the lover of romance they teem with associations that have been embodied in a literature now familiar not only wherever English is spoken, but wherever education has made its way. The pilgrim who seeks them for their natural beauty finds among them scenes which have few rivals in Europe for wealth of colour, if not for variety of form. The student of æsthetics sees in them the source of that inspiration which, in kindling the language of Scott, did more than any other cause to spread abroad in modern society an appreciation and affection for natural scenery.