

higher ground may have been left as islands. So prolonged also was the period during which the denudation went on, that not improbably subterranean movements, by occasional elevations and subsidences, may have modified the progress of the erosion.

The next question for determination is to fix the geological date of this vast denudation. From the evidence alluded to in the foregoing chapter, we can affirm with confidence that an enormous erosion must have been accomplished between the time of the Lower Silurian and that of the Lower Old Red Sandstone system. Probably the waste began in the Lower Silurian period, and continued during the vast series of ages that extended into the period of the Old Red Sandstone. An examination of the fringe of conglomerate and sandstone round the Highlands shows conclusively that not only were the schists as metamorphosed and plicated as they are now before the time of the Old Red Sandstone, but also that they had undergone enormous denudation. This conclusion bears so directly upon the history of the present scenery of the region that the evidence on which it is based may with advantage be laid before the reader.

From the geological map, the general position of the Old Red Sandstone fringe and its outliers within the Highland area may readily be seen. But the map does not convey any adequate impression of the very marked unconformability to be seen on the ground, nor of the clear proofs that the younger formation once stretched far and wide over the crystalline schists, whence it has been since stripped off. At the southern edge of Caithness, for example, the conical mountain of Morven rises to a height of 2313 feet, as a conspicuous landmark all over the north of Scotland. Towering far above the platform of the crystalline schists