

only during a long process of sub-aërial waste. They must have reached their highest development just before the Ice Age began. For, as will be more fully dwelt upon in the following chapter, the glaciers and ice-sheets did much to break off the sharpness of the angles everywhere, and to give to the whole country a smoother and tamer aspect than it had worn before. Since that time, however, atmospheric disintegration has been ceaselessly busy upon the ice-moulded surface, and though the track of the ice still remains singularly fresh, it bears everywhere proof that it is disappearing, and that in time the rains and frosts will restore to the outlines of our hills and mountains all the ruggedness which they possessed before they were swathed in the wintry folds of the ancient glaciers. In comparing and contrasting, therefore, the various forms of scenery to which the different geological formations give rise, it should not be forgotten that the distinctions between them are not so great as they were once, nor so marked as they will be again, when the ice-worn surfaces shall have faded away.

Perhaps the most interesting way of tracing this relation of the minor outlines of the landscape to the nature of the rocks, will be to take some of the more important rock-masses of the Highlands and connect their scenery with their geological character. For this purpose, it may be useful to adopt a chronological order and to begin with the oldest formations.

I have already dwelt upon the peculiarity of the landscapes of the Archæan gneiss, which forms part of the Outer Hebrides and stretches as a broken belt along the western coast of Sutherland and Ross. I would only repeat here that nothing can well be more impressive for its monotonous barrenness than an expanse of this grey, cold, bare rock, protruding from the heather in endless rounded crags and