

shire hills* at sunset in the finer summer evenings, when the clear light threw the shadows of their gigantic, cone-like forms far over the lower tract, and lighted up the lines of their horizontal strata, till they showed like courses of masonry in a pyramid. They seem at such times as if colored by the geologist, to distinguish them from the surrounding tract, and from the base on which they rest as on a common pedestal. The prevailing gneiss of the district reflects a cold, bluish hue, here and there speckled with white, where the weathered and lichened crags of intermingled quartz rock jut out on the hill-sides from among the heath. The three huge pyramids, on the contrary, from the deep red of the stone, seem flaming in purple. There spreads all around a wild and desolate landscape of broken and shattered hills, separated by deep and gloomy ravines, that seem the rents and fissures of a planet in ruins, and that speak distinctly of a period of convulsion, when upheaving fires from the abyss and ocean currents above, had contended in sublime antagonism, the one slowly elevating the entire tract, the other grinding it down and sweeping it away. I entertain little doubt that, when this loftier portion of Scotland, including the entire Highlands, first presented its broad back over the waves, the upper surface consisted exclusively, from the one extremity to the other — from Benlomond to the Maidenpaps of Caithness — of a continuous tract of Old Red Sandstone; though, ere the land finally emerged, the ocean currents of ages had swept it away, all except in the lower and last-raised borders, and in the detached localities, where it still remains, as in the pyramidal hills of western Ross-shire, to show the amazing depth to which it had once overlaid the

* Suil Veinn, Coul Beg, and Coul More.