

and sterility, there is a singular absence of peaks or crags of any kind. The domes and ridges present everywhere a rounded flowing outline, which has only here and there been partially defaced by the action of the weather.

These contours, however, though now so characteristic of the old gneiss in the north-west of Scotland, are not the natural forms which the rock would have assumed if left to mere ordinary atmospheric disintegration. They bear emphatic testimony to the work of land-ice. The whole surface of the country has been ground smooth by ice. The polished, striated, and grooved surfaces left by the ice are still everywhere to be seen, and huge blocks of rock scattered all over the ground, and sometimes poised on the very summits of the rounded rock-domes, remain to complete the proofs of former glacial action (Figs. 56, 57). It is only here and there, where the ice-worn surface has been broken up that we can see how the gneiss yields to the process of weathering. One of the best localities for observing its aspect under these conditions is along the range of cliffs to the south of Cape Wrath. Bearing there the full brunt of every storm that sweeps across the Atlantic, it is peculiarly exposed to disintegration. Every weak part of its framework, discovered by the furious winds, fierce rains, and surging breakers of that desolate and iron-bound coast, is hollowed out into cleft and gulley, tunnel and cave, while the harder parts protrude in massive buttresses, or tower aloft in fantastic columns. Its huge veins of pink pegmatite seem to writhe up the face of the dark cliffs like the sinews of some antique statue (Fig. 15).

Above this venerable rock the next member of the series of geological formations represents a much less ancient period. It consists of dark-reddish and purplish-brown sandstone and conglomerate (Torridon sandstone), in which as yet no dis-