

formations, and therefore that the basalt eruptions took place in early Tertiary time. The volcanic episode to which these plateaux owe their origin was one of the most important in the geological history of Britain. It appears to have resembled in its main features those remarkable outpourings of basalt which have deluged so many thousand square miles of the Western Territories of the United States. The eruptions were connected with innumerable fissures in which the basalt rose, and from numerous points on which it flowed out at the surface. These fissures, with the basalt that solidified in them, now form a vast assemblage of dykes which cross Scotland, the north of England, and the north of Ireland, in a prevalent east and west or north-west and south-east direction. That the volcanic period was a prolonged one is proved by the great denudation of the plateaux before the last eruptions took place. This is impressively exemplified in the Isle of Eigg, which will be more specially described in the following Chapter. A remarkable feature in the volcanic phenomena was the subsequent disruption of the basaltic plateaux by large bosses of gabbro and of various granitoid rocks. These intrusive masses now tower into conspicuous groups of hills,—the Coolins and Red Hills in Skye, the mountains of Rum and Mull, and the rugged heights of Ardnamurchan.

Under the Post-tertiary division of geological time come the records of the Ice Age, when Scotland was buried under sheets of ice which ground down, striated, and polished the harder rocks over the whole country, and left behind them the widespread accumulations of clay, gravel, and sand known as glacial deposits. The nature of the evidence and the deductions drawn from it have been already stated in Chapter IV., but a full description of the glaciation of the Highlands will be given in Chapter XI. The youngest