

from the area. The valleys would then be seen running in utter disregard of the geological structure of the rocks around them, and there might even remain no trace of the younger formations on which they began and which guided their excavation. Now this stage also has probably been reached in the history of the valleys of Scotland. It is best exhibited in the southern half of the kingdom; but we probably see examples of it in Highland valleys which, regardless of the structure of the rocks now visible at the surface, may have begun to be eroded when these rocks were covered with a cake of Old Red Sandstone which has since been denuded off.

Looking at the present topography of the country, we naturally think of it as a completed work—a piece of sculpture which has taken long ages for its elaboration, but which now stands in finished symmetry of proportion and beauty of detail. But the process of carving is manifestly still in progress. Instead of appearing at its close, we look at it when it has still, perhaps, more to accomplish than has yet been done. With the exception of the ice of the Glacial period, the same powers of waste are still at work before us, and in watching their progress we see exemplified the same kind of action which has brought mountain and glen to their present forms, and which may be destined in the long ages of the future to continue until the last relics of the old table-land have been effaced, and even until mountain and glen have alike disappeared.

The process by which the ancient table-lands of the country have been trenched into the present system of valleys and confluent ridges is most instructively displayed among the higher mountains. In these elevated regions vegetation is scanty, and the naked rock is thus left exposed to the action of the elements. The rainfall is more