

of the north of Scotland is richly fossiliferous, Conon-side and its neighborhood furnished me with no very favorable field for geological exploration. It enabled me, however, to extend my acquaintance with the great conglomerate base of the system, which forms here, as I have already said, a sort of miniature Highlands, extending between the valleys of the Conon and the Peffer, and which,—remarkable for its picturesque cliffs, abrupt eminences, and narrow steep-sided dells,—bear in its centre a pretty wood-skirted loch, into which the old Celtic prophet Kenneth Ore, when, like Prospero, he relinquished his art, buried “deep beyond plummet sound” the magic stone in which he was wont to see both the distant and the future. Immediately over the pleasure-grounds of Brahan, the rock forms exactly such cliffs as the landscape gardener would make, if he could,—cliffs with their rude prominent pebbles breaking the light over every square foot of surface, and furnishing footing, by their innumerable projections, to many a green tuft of moss, and many a sweet little flower; while far below, among the deep woods, there stand up enormous fragments of the same rock, that must have rolled down in some remote age from the precipices above, and which, mossy and hoar, and many of them ivy-bound, resemble artificial ruins,—obnoxious, however, to none of the disparaging associations which the make-believe ruin is sure always to awaken. It was inexpressibly pleasant to spend a quiet evening hour among these wild cliffs, and imagine a time when the far distant sea beat against their bases; but though their enclosed pebbles evidently owed their rounded form to the attrition of water, the imagination seemed paralyzed when it attempted calling up a still earlier time, when these solid rocks existed but as loose sand and pebbles, tossed by waves or scattered by currents; and when, for hundreds and thousands of square miles, the wild tract around existed as an ancient ocean, skirted by unknown lands. I had not yet collected enough of geologic fact to enable me to grapple with the difficulties of a restoration of the more ancient time. There was a later period, also, represented in the immediate neighborhood by a