

## II.

"THE OLD MAN OF HOY."<sup>1</sup>

THE tidal wave of travellers, which, thanks to railroads and steamboats, pours northward over the country every summer, even as far as John o' Groat's, has as yet hardly risen much beyond that utmost shore. The tourist stops short at the Pentland Firth; indeed, when he reaches its bare treeless coast, and finds that there is really no traditional house at John o' Groat's (though a good inn, with careful host and kindly hostess, should tempt him to rest there a while), he is in a hurry to get back by daylight to the busy hum of men in the hyperborean city of Wick or of Thurso, and as eager to flit southwards again next morning. He makes a fatal mistake, however; for he misses the very points which it would have been worth his while to make the whole of his long journey to see. Let him, for instance, take up his quarters for a day or two by the side of the Pentland Firth, and spend his hours watching from one of its grim cliffs the race of its tideway. Nowhere else round the British Islands can he look down on such a sea. It seems to rush and roar past him like a vast river, but with a flow some three times swifter than our most rapid rivers. Such a broad breast of rolling eddying foaming water! Even when there is no wind, the

<sup>1</sup> *Geological Magazine*, 1878.