

rint of hills and valleys, which, on the whole, do not rise much above, nor sink much below, a general average level. Over this expanse, with all its bareness and sterility, there is a singular absence of peaks or crags of any kind. The domes and ridges present everywhere a rounded, flowing outline, though here and there this outline has been partially defaced by the action of the weather.

The rocks that have assumed this external contour are the Archæan, Fundamental, Lewisian, or Laurentian gneiss, which, as Murchison showed, form the platform whereon the rest of the stratified rocks of Britain lie. They do not, however, cover the whole surface of these north-western tracts. On the contrary, they form a broken fringe from Cape Wrath to the Island of Raasay, coming out boldly to the Atlantic in the northern half of its course, but throughout the southern portion retiring chiefly towards the heads of the bays and sea-lochs, and even extending inland to the head of Loch Maree. The reason of this want of continuity is to be found in the spread of later formations over the gneiss. At the base of these overlying deposits comes a mass of dark red sandstone and conglomerate (classed as Cambrian by Murchison and his associates), which, in gently-inclined or horizontal strata, sweeps across the platform of gneiss, rising here and there into solitary cones or groups of cones fully 3400 feet above the sea. No contrast in Highland scenery is more abrupt and impressive than that between the ground occupied by the old gneiss and that covered by this overlying sandstone group. So sharp is the line of demarcation between the two tracts that it can be accurately followed by the eye even at a distance of several miles. Where the sandstone supervenes, the tumbled sea of bare gray gneiss is succeeded by smooth heathy slopes, through which the flat or gently-inclined