

away to the east and pass under the vast series of younger schists which form most of the rest of the Scottish Highlands. This order of succession, first established by Murchison, can be demonstrated by innumerable lines of natural section. I have myself traced it through the mountainous country from Cape Wrath to Skye, and in many traverses across Sutherland and Ross. I have sought for evidence of the reappearance of the old or fundamental gneiss of the north-west, and have ransacked every Highland county in the search, but have never found the least trace of that rock beyond its limits in Sutherland and Ross. Its distinctive gneisses and other crystalline masses, so wonderfully unlike anything else in the Highlands, never reappear to the east. And that strange mammillated, bossy surface is found in the north-west alone.

To realise what the appearance of the old gneiss at the present surface involves we must bear in mind that it was first buried under several thousand feet of red sandstone, that the area was then further submerged until the vast pile of sediment was deposited out of which the Highlands have been formed, that these sedimentary accumulations—how many thousand feet thick we cannot yet tell—were subsequently over the Highland area crumpled and metamorphosed into crystalline schists, and that finally towards the west the ancient platform of gneiss was once more ridged up and gradually bared of its superincumbent load of rock, until now at length some portions of it have been once more laid open to the air.

There is thus a special historical interest in this fragment of the old gneiss country. It is a portion of the earliest European surface of which as yet we know anything—a surface in chronological comparison with which the Alps are of quite modern date. For many years past