

In the third place, the sites of towns and villages may often be traced to a guiding geological influence. Going back to feudal times, we at once observe to what a large extent the positions of the castles of the nobles were determined by the form of the ground, and notably by the prominence of some crag which, rising well above the rest of the country, commanded a wide view and was capable of defence. Across the lowlands of Scotland such crags are abundantly scattered. They consist for the most part of hard projections of igneous rock, from which the softer sandstones and shales, that once surrounded and covered them, have been worn away. Many of them are crowned with mediæval fortresses, some of which stand out among the most famous spots in the history of the country. Dumbarton, Stirling, Blackness, Edinburgh, Tantallon, Dunbar, the Bass, are familiar names in the stormy annals of Scotland. A strong castle naturally gathered around its walls the peasantry of the neighbourhood for protection against the common foe, and thus by degrees the original collection of wooden booths or stone huts grew into a village or even into a populous town. The Scottish metropolis undoubtedly owes its existence in this way to the bold crag of basalt on which its ancient castle stands.

In more recent times the development of the mining industries of the country has powerfully affected both the growth and decay of towns. Comparing in this respect the maps of to-day with those of 150 or 200 years ago, we cannot but be struck with the remarkable changes that have taken place in the interval. Some places which were then of but minor importance have now advanced to the first rank, while others that were among the chief towns of the realm have either hardly advanced at all or have positively declined. If now we turn to a geological map, we find