

system of joints is much less defined than in the Cambrian and Old Red Sandstone. Consequently the mural character is less prominently marked. Where the basalt is harder, it rises with a perpendicular face, but the more decomposing bands crumble into irregular belts, and not infrequently decay into steep slopes that support a coating of rich green grass. The contrast between the dark hue of the rock and the bright verdure that grows on it is one of

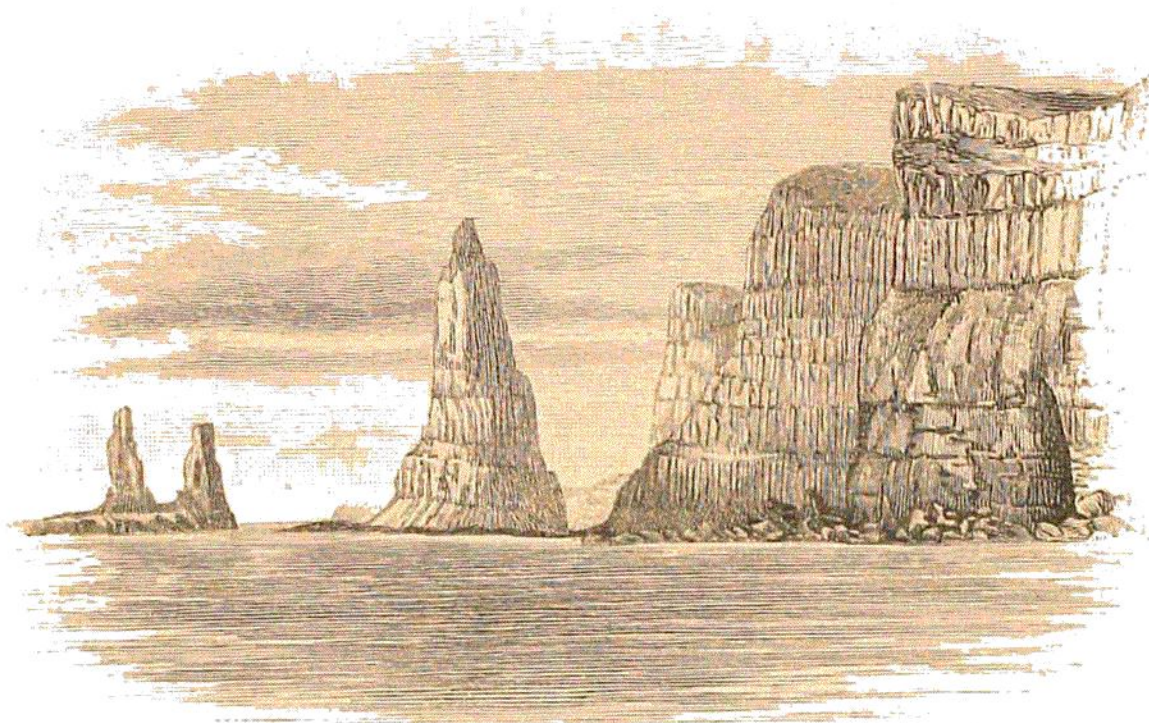


FIG. 16.—Macleod's Maidens and the basalt cliffs of the west of Skye.

the most striking effects of colour in the Western Highlands (Fig. 16).

The chain of the Hebrides, like a great breakwater, fronts the western coast of Scotland, which it no doubt in some measure protects from the full force of the Atlantic breakers. The greater hardness of the rocks, as compared with those of the east coast, must also have contributed to retard the progress of the waves. Nor must we forget that the absence of harbours, maritime villages and towns on the western sea-board