

contour of the ground, except in so far as they may have brought hard and soft rocks side by side.

From every hill and valley, therefore, throughout the whole length and breadth of the Highlands, there comes the same unwavering and uncompromising testimony that the present surface is not that of the primeval uplift, but has been produced by prolonged and stupendous denudation. The table-land of the Highlands has been the work not of subterranean action, but of superficial waste. The long flat surfaces of the Highland ridges, cut across the edges of the vertical strata mark, I believe, fragments of a former base-level of erosion. In other words, they represent the general submarine level to which the Highland region was reduced after protracted exposure to sub-aërial and marine denudation. The valleys which now intersect the table-land, as we shall immediately see, have been eroded out of it. If, therefore, it were possible to replace the rock which has been removed in the excavation of these hollows, the Highlands would be turned into a wide undulating table-land, sloping up here and there into long central heights, and stretching out between them league after league with a marked uniformity of level. And in this rolling plain we should find a restoration of the bottom of a very ancient sea.

The first fact, then, which a study of the topographical features and geological structure of the Highlands establishes, is that the ancient land formed after the stupendous movements that gave the rocks of the region their present characters, was worn down by prolonged denudation. Its mountains were levelled, its valleys were planed down, and finally the region was reduced to a base-level of erosion beneath the waves either of a group of great lakes or of the sea. We do not require to suppose that the whole of the area was submerged at that time. Some central tracts of