

copious than on the lower grounds, and the steeper declivities give the descending torrents enormous erosive power. The frosts too are keener and more lasting, while the variations of temperature from day to day are greater. Hence erosion proceeds at an accelerated pace. The long screes or talus-slopes at the foot of every crag and cliff bear witness to the continual waste of the mountain-sides. As the head-waters of a river cut into the ridge wherein they take their rise they lengthen their valley. The valley creeps backward into the very core of the mountain, and its origin and progress are sometimes best explained by what may be seen at its upper end. Thither, therefore, should we betake ourselves if we would see Nature still at her task. Throughout the Highlands, thousands of localities might be referred to as suitable for such a visit. Everywhere in rocky glen or on rough mountain-side we may descry

‘Some tall crag  
That is the Eagle’s birthplace, or some peak  
Familiar with forgotten years,—that shows  
Inscribed, as with the silence of the thought,  
Upon its bleak and visionary sides,  
The history of many a winter storm.’<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere can a better illustration of this universal waste be found than among the deep glens and corries round the flanks of Ben Nevis. If the observer be sure of foot and steady of eye, let him ascend that mountain, not by the regular track, but up the long and almost equally lofty ridge of Carn Mor Dearg (the big red cairn), which lies to the east, and thence along the narrow and somewhat perilous col which circles round to the south-eastern front of the great Ben. The ascent lies first among heathery slopes, channelled with brooks of clear cold water, and roughened

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Excursion*, book i.