

surface, and have assumed the form of successive sheets, as in the terraced plateaux of Skye, Eigg, Canna, Muck, Mull, and Morven. These detached areas probably formed originally a continuous plain of basalt. We have seen that, though dating back only to older Tertiary time, this volcanic platform has been so deeply trenched by the forces of denudation that it has been reduced to mere scattered fragments, that thousands of feet of basalt have been worn away from its surface, that deep and wide valleys have been carved out of it, and that so enormously has it been wasted as to have been almost entirely stripped off from wide tracts which it once covered. This stupendous

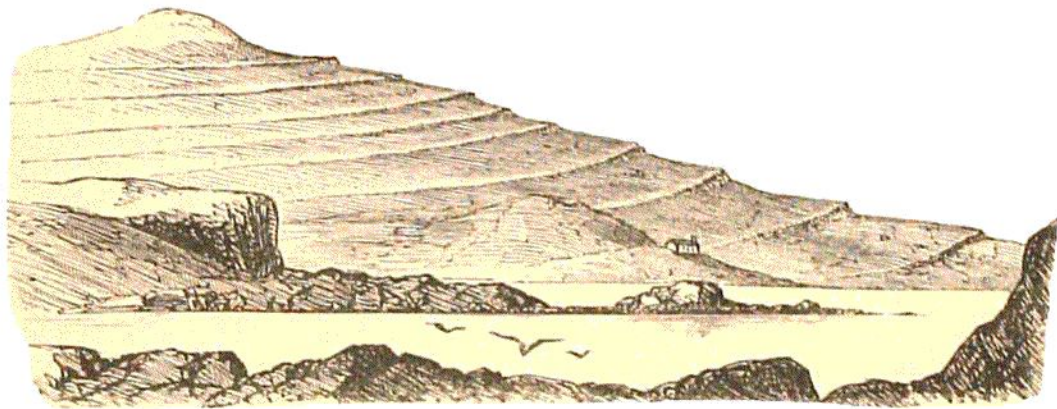


FIG. 47.—View of a portion of the basalt plateau, Isle of Eigg.

denudation has allowed these lava-streams to play a far more conspicuous part in west Highland scenery than they originally did. Though they have suffered so much from waste at the surface, they have been but little affected by subsequent subterranean movements. An occasional fault elevates or depresses a portion of the plateaux for some hundreds of feet (Fig. 33). But the horizontality or low inclination of the basalt remains wonderfully persistent all through the Inner Hebrides.

Piled over each other in nearly horizontal beds, these sheets of rock attain in the north of Skye a thickness of at