

Having recently read, through the public press, several papers on the change of sea-level on the coasts of Scotland, I am induced to offer the following:—

Some years ago, while resident in the island of Tiree, in

*On the Alteration of Sea-Level.* 407

the Hebrides, being engaged in the erection of the lighthouse at Skerryvore, under the superintendence of the late Mr Alan Stevenson, civil engineer, I had opportunities of observing the mode of fishing for sillocks and other small fish, very abundant there at certain seasons. It is not the mode of fishing, so much as the appliances made use of by the natives for fishing, to which I wish to direct attention.

On the south end of the island there is a rocky headland called Hynish Point, much resorted to by the natives for rod and hand-net fishing. The east face of this rock is naturally adapted for such exercise, in having several ranges of natural steps or stages upon which the fishers take up their position. Several of these stages, about half tide up and upwards, have circular holes, in the shape of a bowl, cut out of the hard gneiss rock, into which the fishers put shell-fish, which they bruise with a round stone till they are like pulp. Handfulls of this pulp are thrown into the sea, to decoy the fish close upon the rock, and then the fish are taken, either by the hook or net, in great quantities.

When the tide has risen to the lowest stage, the fishers have recourse to the next stage higher up the face of the rock, and so on as the tide rises; and on several of these places also holes are excavated for the shell-fish thus prepared.

I have observed that considerably higher up the face of the rock there are stages with holes cut into them, similar to those below, but which are much too high to be of any service at the present day as fishing stances, as they are a great many feet beyond practicable reach of the sea.

The fact of these holes in the upper parts of the rock being of the same shape, &c. as those at present in use, shows that the mode of fishing is not only a very old one, but, in my opinion, it is also a strong proof of a change having taken place in the sea-level, and that this process may still be going on for aught we know to the contrary.