

plateaux look like fragments of one original broad tableland, which has been trenched into segments by the formation of the transverse and longitudinal valleys (Fig. 23). Farther to the south-west, in Perthshire, Inverness-shire, and Argyllshire, they give place to the ordinary hummocky, crested ridges of Highland scenery, some summits on which, however, exceed 4000 feet in elevation. To the probable meaning of this transition from broad flat-topped heights to narrow crests and isolated peaks, allusion will be made in Chapter IX.

The general surface of the Highlands is rugged. The rocks project in innumerable bosses and crags, which roughen the sides and crests of the ridges. The forms and colours of these roughnesses depend on the nature of the rock underneath. Where the latter is hard and jointed, weathering into large quadrangular blocks, the hills are more especially distinguished for the gnarled bossy character of their declivities, as may be seen in Ben Ledi and the chain of heights to the north-east of it formed of massive grits and mica-schists. Where, on the other hand, the rock decays into smaller debris, the hills are apt to assume smoother contours, as in the slate hills that run from the Kyles of Bute to Loch Lomond. Wherever any mass of rock occurs, differing much from those around it in its power of resisting decomposition, it affects the scenery, rising into a prominence where it is durable, or sinking into lower ground where it is not. This relation between relative destructibility and external configuration is traceable in every part of Scotland, and indeed may be regarded as the law that has mainly determined the present topography of the country. Fuller reference to it and further illustrations of its importance in the elucidation of Scottish scenery will appear in the sequel.

Besides the principal tracts of low ground in the High-