

CHAPTER VIII

THE HIGHLAND VALLEYS

THOUGH an eminently hilly country, Scotland is not dominated by any leading mountain chain, on which all the other topographical features are dependent. Even in the Highlands, where the highest elevations are reached, ridge succeeds ridge in endless succession, not one of them ever attaining such an altitude as to mark it out as a great central axis of upheaval. Nor is there any more evidence of a dominant line of elevation among the Southern Uplands. Seen, indeed, either from a distance or from any commanding summit in their midst, the high grounds of Scotland, as I have already remarked, seem to undulate up to a common average level, and are to be considered rather as a broken and sorely wasted table-land than as a series of true mountains. Careful examination soon shows that the dominant features are not the monotonous ridges, but the valleys that have been opened through them. If these valleys were filled up, the high grounds, as we have now seen, would once more become what they probably were at first, elevated plains or plateaux, with no strongly-marked features, —no eminences rising much above nor hollows sinking much below the general surface.