

CHAPTER XV

PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

BETWEEN the southern flank of the Highlands and the northern edge of the uplands of the pastoral counties, lies that wide hilly depression which, for want of a better name, I have been accustomed to call the Midland Valley. It is only in the broad sense, as a band of lower ground between two ranges of high land that it can be spoken of as a valley ; nor can a district so plentifully dotted with hills, and even traversed by long chains of heights, be in strictness termed a plain. Looked at from the geological point of view, however, this belt of lowland country occupies a broad depression defined by parallel dislocations, and bounded on either side by hills which consist of older rocks. It may thus be regarded as a valley, owing its form and direction to geological structure.

Between the other two great belts of Scotland and the central zone, there is the fundamental distinction that they owe their prominence to having been upraised relatively to the surrounding areas, while the intervening tract has undergone subsidence. In the Highlands and Southern Uplands the oldest rocks in the geological structure of Scotland are exposed. In the intervening Lowlands, younger formations