

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE SCENERY OF THE COAL PERIOD.

IT was in the middle ages of the history of the world. The growing continents had lifted their brows above the surface of the all-embracing sea; but their spreading plains and long-extended shores were still the empire of the garpikes, and the nursery of illimitable beds of encrinurites and polyyps. The Gulf of Mexico jutted northward to Middle Iowa, and rolled its widening waters northwest far toward the sources of the Missouri River. There are good reasons for believing that it stretched through the entire length of the continent to the Frozen Ocean. The shoreline of the Atlantic reached from Connecticut through Southern New York and Northern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, to the valley of the future Mississippi. All the centre of Michigan was a sea-bottom, and not unlikely a gulf projected northward over the peninsula now inclosed by the great lakes. There was never, however, any free communication between the Michigan Gulf and the ocean after the later portion of the Devonian Age. Hudson's Bay stretched far toward the site of Lake Superior, as the Arctic Sea pushed down from the north to fall into the warm embrace of the waters of the Mexican Gulf. The great lakes were not—save, perhaps, Lake Superior—nor the mighty Mississippi, nor the thunder-voiced Niagara. The youthful continent was yet unclothed with soil, save the rocky detritus which nourished the lean vegetation which began to garnish the land during the period of the Chemung and Marshall. The skeleton rocks protruded every