

CHAPTER XIX.

THE REIGN OF ICE.

WHEN the continent of North America, which had been growing through unnumbered ages by continual annexations of land wrested from the dominion of the sea, had finally attained the dimensions and outline destined to endure through the human era—when the great mountain axes had been uplifted, and the broad river streams were rolling the drainage of the valleys and hill-slopes to the sea—when the horse and the camel, the elephant, the bear, and other quadrupeds which were to characterize the epoch of man, had assumed their stations on the land—when the atmosphere was populated by birds and insects which were destined in a coming age to be startled by the presence of a dominant intelligence—when the beech, the tulip-tree, the linden, and the buttonwood had taken their places on the jungle's margin and the high-land slope, and the sorrowing willow had begun to weep above the flowing waters of the sedge-bordered stream—when the whole face of Nature seemed fitted and expectant of the crowning work of creation, what should prevent the divine Artificer from summoning man upon the scene to begin the labor of his earthly life? To a finite intelligence the preparation was complete. To the eye of Omniscience one more revolution was needed. The coming man must tarry without the doors of the temple of life through yet another geological æon.

To this time the evolution of the continent had proceeded by elevations and subsidences of the regions lying in