

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WILL THE MOUNTAINS BE LEVELED?

LET us now direct our attention to a more specific examination of the circumstances under which the visible activities of our terrestrial abode are carried on. The fact which first and most strongly arrests our attention is the presence of universal and perpetual change. This fact alone demonstrates that the existing terrestrial order *had a beginning*. Work is in progress before our eyes; we may easily determine what has been accomplished and what remains to be accomplished. Had these changes been in progress from all eternity, every thing which existing forces are capable of effecting would have been consummated an eternity since, and physical stagnation would now be reigning. It is equally plain that the work which remains to be accomplished is a finite work, and is destined to be accomplished in finite duration.

What is the work with which terrestrial forces are occupied? What are the labors of oceans, and winds, and rains, and frost, and mountain torrents, and swollen streams, and pent-up fires? We witness here a grand antagonism of Nature's energies. While on one hand Nature has exerted herself to rear the continents, on the other hand a different set of forces has been equally assiduous in beating them down. There was a time when the igneous forces possessed the advantage, and island, and continent, and Alp rose triumphant over the sea. That was the age when the igneous forces were in their youth. Then all their elastic energies were commissioned to rear a dwell-