

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE REIGN OF UNIVERSAL WINTER.

WE open now another volume of geological records. From this we glean another prophecy.

I have stated that the energies of the earth's internal fires are waning. There is a chain of effects which, when we trace them backward, conduct us to an ancient molten condition of the world. At a period comparatively recent, it was still so warm that tropical vegetation flourished within the arctic circle. At a remoter period, neither animal nor plant could endure the temperature which prevailed, nor the warfare which fire and water were waging with each other. We retain the solid monuments of a terrestrial condition which carries us still deeper into the heart of eternity; when the whole orb was a glowing ocean of incandescent lava, while yet the waters of the earth hung in invisible vapor upon the outskirts of the atmosphere, like a concealed foe meditating a secret attack upon a powerful enemy.

Few who have studied the physics of the globe, and fewer still who have deciphered geological records, doubt that such were once the temperature and conditions of our planet. From that state to this, it has passed by the simple process of cooling. We trace the footsteps of this progress at every stage. Through Azoic, Eozoic, Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic Ages, heat has been gradually wasted in space—the solid crust has been thickening—the surface conditions have been changing. The average temperature of to-day, instead of being a state that is destined