

CHAPTER XI

THE ANCIENT ICE-SHEETS AND GLACIERS OF THE HIGHLANDS

IN the fourth chapter a brief outline was given of the effects produced on the surface of the land by the movement of sheets of ice across it. I propose to describe here the traces of the march of the ancient glaciers which have so profoundly affected the scenery of Scotland, and notably of the Highlands. It is now well ascertained that during a comparatively recent geological period, the climate of the northern hemisphere was much colder than at present, and that in the British Islands, as well as in other countries where glaciers are now unknown, the land was enveloped in snow and ice. This part of the geological record is known as the Ice Age or Glacial Period.

In following the track of the Scottish glaciers and ice-sheets, and noting how much they have modified the contours of the country, it must be borne in mind that the present great leading features of mountain and valley had been fixed before the snow and ice spread over them. The minor outlines of the surface, however, were in some respects unlike those which we now see. There was doubtless far more angularity and ruggedness about