

series of fatiguing inductions, you will, I trust, sustain my apology, when I remind you that this dreary ice-epoch in the history of our country still forms as debatable a *terra incognita* to the geologist as the dreary ice-tracts which surround the pole do to the geographer. We have been threading our twilight way through a difficult North-West Passage ; and if our progress has been in some degree one of weariness and fatigue, we must remember that without weariness and fatigue no voyager ever yet explored

‘ The ice-locked secrets of that hoary deep
Where fettered streams and frozen continents
Lie dark and wild, beat with perpetual storm
Of whirlwind and dire hail.’

‘ We might expect,’ says Professor Sedgwick, ‘ that as we come close upon living nature, the characters of our old records would grow legible and clear. But just where we begin to enter on the history of the physical changes going on before our eyes, and in which we ourselves bear a part, our chronicle seems to fail us ; a leaf has been torn out from Nature’s book, and the succession of events is almost hidden from our eyes.’ Now it is to this age of the drift-gravels and the boulder-clay that the accomplished Professor here refers as represented in the geologic record by a torn page ; and though we may be disposed to view it rather as a darkened one,—much soiled, but certainly not wanting,—we must be content to bestow on its dim, half-obliterated characters, more time and care than suffice for the perusal of whole chapters in the earlier books of our history. And so, casting myself on your forbearance, I shall take up the unfinished story of the Pleistocene period in Scotland in my next address.