

belts of diminutive birches skirt the ravines and water-courses, and yellow mosses and grey lichens form the staple covering of the humbler hill-sides and the moors. But the distinctive feature of the country is its glaciers. Fed by the perpetual snows of the upper heights, the deeper valleys among the mountains have their rigid ice-rivers, that in the narrower firths and lochs of the western and northern coasts shoot far out, mole-like, into the tide. And, lo! along the shores, in sounds and bays never yet ploughed by the keel of voyager, vast groups of icebergs, that gleam white to the sun, like the sails of distant fleets, lie moveless in the calm, or drift slowly along in rippling tideways. Nor is the land without its inhabitants, though man has not yet appeared. The colossal elephant, not naked and dingy of coat, like his congener of the tropics, but shaggy, with long red hair, browses among the woods. There is a strong-limbed rhinoceros wallowing in yonder swamp, and a herd of rein-deer cropping the moss high on the hill-side beyond. The morse is basking on that half-tide skerry; and a wolf, swept seawards by the current, howls loud in terror from yonder drifting ice-floe. We have looked abroad on our future country in the period of the first local glaciers, ere the submergence of the land.

Ages pass, and usher in the succeeding period of the boulder-clay. The prospect, no longer that of a continuous land, presents us with a wintry archipelago of islands, broken into three groups by two deep ocean-sounds,—the ocean-sound of the great Caledonian Valley, and that of the broader but shallower valley which stretches across the island from the Clyde to the Forth. We stand full in front of one of these vast ocean-rivers,—the southern one. There are snow-enwrapped islets on either side. Can yonder thickly-set cluster be the half-submerged Pentlands? and yonder pair of islets, connected by a low flat neck, the eastern and western Lomonds? and yonder half-tide rock,