

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE REIGN OF MAMMALS.

ANOTHER cycle of eternity was past. The progress of geological agencies had brought the crust of the earth to a tension which was to be relieved by another collapse. As the Paleozoic Time was closed by the sudden sinking of the beds of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and the corresponding protrusion of the ridges of the Appalachians, so the Mesozoic Time was closed by a farther progress in the same direction. The ever-shrinking nucleus necessitated the ever-enlarging wrinkles of the enveloping crust. The furrows must deepen and the folds must rise. The uplift which marked the close of Mesozoic Time affected the whole continental body. It was not a sudden uprising accomplished in a day. It may have extended through a century; but it was an interval of movements so much accelerated as to mark a pretty definite boundary between two stages of continental development and two great periods in the history of the world. During the Cretaceous Age which had now just closed, the great Mediterranean Gulf represented in Fig. 77 had been broader along its eastern borders, and continuous to the Gulf of Mexico. Through this, perhaps, the Gulf Stream had coursed to the Frozen Ocean. Now, by an upheaval of the central region, this gulf was severed in twain. On the south it retreated to nearly the modern limits of the Mexican Gulf, while northward remained an elongated body of water, swelling out in the central portion of the continent, in two places, to dimensions exceeding the Caspian and