

VII.

A FRAGMENT OF PRIMEVAL EUROPE.¹

WHEN the history of the growth of the European area is traced backward through successive geological periods, it brings before us a remarkable persistence of land towards the north. The stratified formations bear a generally concurrent testimony to the existence of a northern source whence much of their sediment was derived, even from very early geological times. In their piles of consolidated gravel, sand, and mud, their unconformabilities and their buried coast-lines, they tell of some boreal land which, continually suffering denudation, but doubtless at intervals restored and augmented by upheaval, has gradually extended over the whole of the present European area. The chronicles of this most interesting history are at best imperfect, and have hitherto been only partially deciphered. They naturally assume an increasingly fragmentary and obscure character in proportion to their antiquity. Nevertheless traces can still be detected of the shores against which the oldest known sedimentary accumulations were piled. These shores have of course been deeply buried under the deposits of subsequent ages. But the whirligig of time has once more brought them up to the light of day

¹ *Nature*, August 1880.