

CHAPTER II.

WORLD-MAKING.

GEOLOGICAL reading, especially when of a strictly uniformitarian character and in warm weather, sometimes becomes monotonous ; and I confess to a feeling of drowsiness creeping over me when preparing material for a presidential address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in August, 1883. In these circumstances I became aware of the presence of an unearthly visitor, who announced himself as of celestial birth, and intimated to me that being himself free from those restrictions of space and time which are so embarrassing to earthly students, he was prepared for the moment to share these advantages with me, and to introduce me to certain outlying parts of the universe, where I might learn something of its origin and early history. He took my hand, and instantly we were in the voids of space. Turning after a moment, he pointed to a small star and said, "That is the star you call the sun ; here, you see, it is only about the third magnitude, and in a few seconds it will disappear." These few seconds, indeed, reduced the whole visible firmament to a mere nebulous haze like the Milky Way, and we seemed to be in blank space. But pausing for a moment I became aware that around us were multitudes of dark bodies, so black that they were, so to speak, negatively visible, even in the almost total darkness around. Some seemed large and massive, some a mere drift of minute particles, formless and without distinct limits. Some were swiftly moving, others