

CHAPTER IV.

THE HISTORY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC.

I HAD the pleasure of being present at the meeting of the British Association at Birmingham, in 1865: a meeting attended by an unusually large number of eminent geologists, under the presidency of my friend Phillips. I had the further pleasure of being his successor at the meeting in the same place, in 1886; and the subject of this chapter is that to which I directed the attention of the Association in my Presidential address. I fear it is a feeble and imperfect utterance compared with that which might have been given forth by any of the great men present in 1865, and who have since left us, could they have spoken with the added knowledge of the intervening twenty years.

The geological history of the Atlantic appeared to be a suitable subject for a trans-Atlantic president, and to a Society which had vindicated its claim to be British in the widest sense by holding a meeting in Canada, while it was also meditating a visit to Australia—a visit not yet accomplished, but in which it may now meet with a worthy daughter in the Australian Association formed since the meeting of 1886. The subject is also one carrying our thoughts very far back in geological time, and connecting itself with some of the latest and most important discussions and discoveries in the science of the earth, furnishing, indeed, too many salient points to be profitably occupied in a single chapter.

If we imagine an observer contemplating the earth from a