

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *THE GREAT ICE AGE.*

SCIENTIFIC superstitions, understanding by this name the reception of hypotheses of prominent men, and using these as fetishes to be worshipped and to be employed in miraculous works, are scarcely less common in our time than superstitions of another kind were in darker ages. One of these which has been dominant for a long time in geology, and has scarcely yet run its course, is that of the Great Ice Age, with its accompaniments of Continental Glaciers and Polar Ice Cap. The cause of this it is not difficult to discern. The covering of till, gravel and travelled boulders which encumbers the surface of the northern hemisphere from the Arctic regions more than half way to the equator, had long been a puzzle to geologists, and this was increased rather than diminished when the doctrine of appeal to recent causes on the principle of uniformity became current. It was seen that it was necessary to invoke the action of ice in some form to account for these deposits, and it was at the same time perceived that there was much evidence to prove that between the warm climate of the early Tertiary and the more subdued mildness of the modern time there had intervened a period of unusual and extreme cold. In this state of affairs attention was attracted to the Alpine glaciers. Their movement, their erosion of surfaces, their heaping up of moraines bearing some resemblance to the widely extended boulder deposits, their former greater extension, as indicated