

flat bare surface of the plains is marked. The ground appears to be in a constant state of cutaneous eruption. So leisurely does the train move along, however, and so seldom does it halt, that for some hours after daylight we sat looking on this singular scene before an opportunity came of getting down to have a closer view of it. We noticed that though the general colour of the soil is a dirty yellowish gray or drab, the ant-hills have a somewhat pinkish tint. Our first halt revealed the curious fact that this difference arises from the choice which the ants make of their building materials. With infinite labour they pick up from the surface of the prairie the small broken crystals of flesh-coloured felspar that are sparsely strewed there. The rocks underneath are various sandstones, clays, and limestones, the decomposition of which could never have furnished this felspar detritus. I examined a good many ant-hills, and found the same kind of fragments on all of them. The felspar grains were most abundant, but there occurred also small pieces of quartz and other minerals of crystalline rocks, and here and there some black glistening specks of coal. There seemed to be a thin crust or veneering of this kind of fine detritus over the drab-tinted soil, not thick enough to be readily observable, but yet sufficiently persistent to supply the materials so patiently gathered together into these little mounds.

No warning bell gives the traveller notice to resume his place in the cars, and we had just time after hearing the "All aboard!" of the conductor to regain the train, more puzzled than ever by the prairie ant-hills. The source of this fine felspar drift, and the cause of its being spread so thinly over the many hundreds of square miles it evidently covered, were questions in the history of the prairies which we could not answer, but to which we were able to return.