

The mere fact that they are of marine origin shows, of course, that the land owes its origin to some kind of terrestrial disturbance. But when the sedimentary formations are examined in detail, they present a most wonderful chronicle of long-continued, oft-repeated, and exceedingly complex movements of the crust of the globe. They show that the history of every country has been long and eventful; that, in short, hardly any portion of the land has reached its present condition, save after a protracted series of geological revolutions.

One of the most obvious and not the least striking features in the architecture of the land is the frequency with which the rocks, though originally horizontal, or approximately so, have been tilted up at various angles, or even placed on end. At first it might be supposed that these disturbed positions have been assumed at random, according to the capricious operations of subterranean forces. They seem to follow no order, and to defy any attempt to reduce them to system. Yet a closer scrutiny serves to establish a real connection among them. They are found, for the most part, to belong to great, though fractured, curves, into which the crust of the earth has been folded. In low countries far removed from any great mountain range, the rocks often present scarcely a trace of disturbance, or if they have been affected, it is chiefly by having been thrown into gentle undulations. As we approach the higher grounds, however, they manifest increasing signs of commotion. Their undulations become more frequent and steeper, until, entering within the mountain region, we find the rocks curved, crumpled, fractured, inverted, tossed over each other into yawning gulf and towering crest, like billows arrested at the height of a furious storm.