

doorway and clustered shaft, pinnacle, and finial, and tapering spire."

On a nearer approach the illusion reluctantly vanishes, and all the fancied architecture is resolved into piles of hardened clay and sand. These rise from the bottom of the vale to the height of fifty, one hundred, and two hundred feet, showing along their vertical or sloping sides the varied courses of masonry of which they are composed. In the hundreds of towers and isolated masses that rise from this vale of solitude, the order of the courses is the same; and this agrees with the arrangement in the solid walls which circumscribe the valley. A thousand storms have washed the slopes, and furrowed them into the similitude of fluted shafts and clustered columns, which, at the top, bear sometimes a brown entablature of overhanging grass, or continue upward into tower and minaret. The bottom of the vale is an earth of chalky whiteness, baked by the sun, and utterly destitute of vegetation. The water which oozes out of the foundation-wall of the prairie is brackish and unpalatable. In winter, the wind and snow rush through the lanes and corridors of this city of the dead in eddying whirls, while the withered grasses and the voiceless and motionless solitude, together with the relentless frost and never-tiring storm, make the place the realization of utter bleakness and desolation. In summer the scorching sun literally bakes the clays which have been kneaded by the frosts and thaws of spring, and the daring explorer of the scene finds no tree or shrub to shelter him from the fervid rays poured down from above, and reflected from the white walls which tower around him, and the white floor which almost blisters his feet.

But the most impressive feature of the scene is the multitude of fossil bones which appear built into the massive masonry of this mimic architecture. The wearing and