cient channel, and, plunging headlong down the precipice, began again the practice of that stupendous system of engineering which it had already so well learned to wield.

As the continent slowly rose from the sea, innumerable depressions in the newly-exposed surface were left filled with the brine. Thus the basins of the great lakes of North America were first filled. But an outlet existed from these lakes to the ocean. When the accession of water from the clouds produced an overflow, the drainage was always saliferous. Thus these lakes have always been giving out brine and receiving only pure water. As a consequence, their original brine has been continually diluted, until, in our age, its salinity is no longer perceptible to the taste. Nevertheless, chemistry has a tongue that still detects the salty savor.

Not a few of the ancient depressions found no outlet. The ocean's brine, imprisoned within impassable barriers, has there remained, and "salt lakes" are the result. In many instances the brine of these lakes has even been concentrated in the progress of time. The evaporation of pure water from their surfaces has exceeded the precipitation from the clouds within the limits of their hydrographical basins. This is probably the case with most existing salt lakes, of which the Caspian Sea is our largest example. Some of these salt lakes, in the progress of evaporation, have greatly shrunken in geographical extent. Their abandoned territory is often saturated with saline constituents rejected by the overburdened water. Some of the salt and alkali plains of our Western Territories have had an origin of this kind. It can hardly be doubted, however, that the great salt-plantations of Nevada result from dried-up streams which take their origin in salt-bearing formations built into the frame-work of the sierras.

We have now arrived at a point where we can read the