

prairie region of Illinois. The underlying strata are nearly horizontal. Why now do they terminate so abruptly at the mountain wall which we scale to reach Bon Air? The cut margins of these mountain ribs lie exposed and protruding from base to summit of the laborious ascent. Did Nature form them originally thus? We are forced to conclude that these mountain sheets, like those under the "highland rim," once extended westward over the basin of Tennessee, and have been scooped out by some tremendous agency appointed by Nature to furnish materials for the states—then future—of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. The Cumberland Table-land and the abrupt knobs about Chattanooga are not upheavals, but lines of relief. It is the valleys that have been made, and not the mountains. The mountains are landmarks—"benchmarks" the engineer might say—showing the former level of the entire region.

If we travel westward or northward from Nashville we find the basin walled in by the "highland rim," though it is only on the east that the pile of strata rises so high as to bring us within the limits of the Coal-measures. Here, then, is one of the most stupendous examples of geological denudation. What the precise nature of the agency by which this work was done we can only conjecture. Equally uncertain is the precise date of the work. We can only say that it was performed between the close of Paleozoic Time and the present, but as to the reality and almost incalculable vastness of the work we have no room to doubt. Neither can we fail to see that such enormous excavations must have been in progress in all ages, to furnish the requisite amount of materials for formations of continental extent, and attaining a thickness of hundreds or thousands of feet.

I have already alluded to the monuments of destructive