

upward here forms no conspicuous feature at the surface. Yet it has carried up the same red sandstones on its eastern flank that rise in vertical bands among the cañons north of Denver. From the plain of the Missouri the prairie, there about 1000 feet above sea-level, rises slowly in elevation westward, till at Cheyenne, a distance of rather more than 500 miles, its surface has an average elevation of about 6000 feet. In the next eighteen miles, however, it makes a more rapid slope, for it mounts to an elevation of 8271 feet above the sea. The loss of the cherished delusion about the aspect of the Rocky Mountains was in some small measure compensated by a glimpse we had of the source whence the prairies have derived their fine detritus and the ants their favourite pink building materials. The granite of this elevated plateau is a bright flesh-coloured rock crumbling into sand, the grains of which are mainly of pink cleavable orthoclase felspar. Exposed to all the vicissitudes of weather at so great an altitude, the rock readily disintegrates. Every shower of rain washes down some of its detritus, which is further carried far over the plains by wind. It was no doubt from such a rock as this that the widespread felspar drift of the prairie has been derived, and this very ridge has probably furnished a due amount of it.

After crossing the summit, the railroad track descends slowly into the elevated plateau known as the Laramie Plains, which still drain eastward into the Atlantic. Not until the train has crossed this dreary region for some 150 miles or more, does it reach the true watershed of the country. And then, instead of a colossal rampart of rugged mountains, we find still the same monotonous plains on which the few names that have been affixed to localities—Red Desert, Bitter Creek, Salt Wells, and