

ward, to distances not yet ascertained. This was the *Great Cordilleran Land*. There were probably other small land areas, rising like islands from the universal ocean; and there may have been other areas of moderate continental extent; but, so far as our probable knowledge goes, the three continental expanses mentioned were the chief beginnings of North America.

Simultaneously some of the north-eastern portion of South America was land; and perhaps, also, a part of the region now occupied by the West Indies. Some portions of the British Islands were also land; and this stretched across the North Sea into Scandinavia. Most other parts of the world were sea-bottom.

The Cordilleran Land was a great mountain system, displaying lofty ranges made of crumpled strata; enormous precipices, the result of mechanical dislocation; and finally, a type of mountain sculpture, of such broad, smooth forms as to warrant the belief that subaërial erosion had never carved and furrowed the mountain flanks with the sharp ravines characteristic of modern mountain topography. This massive belt of Eozoic cordilleras determined the limits of the modern cordilleras, and very much of the details of their fundamental structure.

Such was America in the twilight of its history. There must have been, however, as I have argued in Talk XXXIX, some lands which had now disappeared. These surviving germinal nuclei are composed of stratified rocks. Older rocks had been reduced to sediment in supplying material for the building of the lands which are the oldest now remaining. Let us see what vicissitudes these lands were destined to undergo.

The first æon of the ocean's history was past. With the opening of the second, nearly the whole of the Cordilleran Land began to subside. It sank until only the mountain masses rose as rugged islands above the sea-level. Only the western border held its position. This remnant of the Cordilleran Land stretched along western Nevada and eastern