

the Henry Mountains (p. 949) owe their dome-shape to the subterranean effusion of erupted lava, but the superficial irregularities of contour in the domes must be ascribed to denudation.

3. *Terrestrial Features due to Denudation.*—The general results of denudation have been discussed in Book III. Part II. Sect. ii. Every portion of the land, as soon as it rises above the sea-level, is attacked by denuding agents. Hence the older a terrestrial surface, the more may it be expected to show the results of the operation of these agents. We have already seen how comparatively rapid are the processes of subaerial waste (p. 780). It is accordingly evident that the present contours of the land cannot be expected to reveal any trace whatever of the early terrestrial surfaces of the globe. The most recent mountain-chains and volcanoes may, indeed, retain more or less markedly their original superficial outlines; but these must be more and more effaced in proportion to their geological antiquity.

The fundamental law in the erosion of the terrestrial surfaces is that harder rocks resist decay more, while softer rocks resist it less. The former consequently are left projecting, while the latter are worn down. The terms "hard" and "soft" are used here in the sense of being less easily and more easily abraded, though every rock suffers in some measure. If, therefore, a perfectly level surface, composed of rocks exceedingly unequal in power of resistance, were to be raised above the sea, and to be exposed to the action of weathering, it would eventually be carved into a system of ridges and valleys. The eminences would be mainly determined by the position of the harder rocks, the depressions by the site of the softer. Every region of Mes-