

strata are massive. A mountain constructed of such materials appears as a colossal pyramid, the level bars of stratification looking like gigantic courses of masonry. Joints and faults traversing the bedding allow it to be cleft into blocks and deep chasms that heighten the resemblance to ruined architecture. Probably the most marvellous illustrations of these results are to be found in the Western Territories of the United States. The vast table-lands of the river Colorado, in particular, offer a singularly impressive picture of the effects of mere subaerial erosion on undisturbed and nearly level strata (see Frontispiece). Systems of stream-courses and valleys, river gorges, unexampled elsewhere in the world for depth and length, vast winding lines of escarpment, like ranges of sea-cliffs, terraced slopes rising from plateau to plateau, huge buttresses and solitary stacks standing like islands out of the plains, great mountain masses towering into picturesque peaks and pinnacles, cleft by innumerable gullies, yet everywhere marked by the parallel bars of the horizontal strata out of which they have been carved—these are the orderly symmetrical characteristics of a country where the scenery is due entirely to the action of subaerial agents and the varying resistance of level or little disturbed stratified rocks.

On the other hand, where stratified rocks have been subjected to plications and fractures, their characteristic features may be gradually almost lost among those of the crystalline masses which under these circumstances are so often found to have been forced through them (see Fig. 252). The Alps may be cited as a well-known example of this kind of scenery. The whole geological aspect of these mountains is suggestive of former intense commotion. Yet on every side are to be seen proofs of the most enormous denudation.