

from difference of geological structure, the tendency of erosion, by wearing the steep slope more than the gentle one, is to carry the watershed backward nearer to the true centre of the region, especially at the heads of valleys. Of course this is an extremely slow process; but it must be admitted to be one of real efficacy in the vast periods during which denudation has continued. Excellent illustrations of its progress, as well as of many other features of land-sculpture, may often be instructively studied on clay-banks exposed to the influence of rain.¹⁴

The crests of mountains are watersheds of the sharpest type, where erosion has worked backward upon a steep slope on either side. Their forms are mainly dependent upon structure, and especially upon systems of joints. It will often be observed that the general trend of a crest coincides with that of one set of joints, and that the bastions, recesses and peaks have been determined by the intersection of another set. If the rock is uniform in structure, and the declivity equal in angle on either side, a crest may retain its position; but as one side is usually considerably steeper than the other, the crest advances at the expense of the top of the gentler declivity. But, under any circumstances, it is continually lowered in level, for it may be regarded as part of a mountain where the rate of sub-aerial denudation reaches a maximum. An ordinary cliff is attacked only in front, but a crest has two fronts, and is further splintered along its summit. Nowhere can the guiding influence of geological structure be more conspicu-

¹⁴ See on this subject Mr. Gilbert's suggestive remarks in the Essay on "Land Sculpture" already cited. See also *Nature*, xxix. 1884, p. 325, where the history of the watersheds of the British Isles is traced.