

ranges; here and there isolated mountain masses, rising like islands from a rocky sea; "defiant peaks, where eternal snows and silence and mystery brood over the secrets of nature." The most interesting element of the strange scene now claims the attention. A land of canyons! The profound chasm of the Colorado River scores with tortuous course throughout the entire length of the greatest diameter of the elevated plateau. At the bottom of this Grand Canyon, from three thousand to six thousand feet below the general level of the plain, the river wanders, lashing its confines of precipitous rock for hundreds of miles. More than this: not only has the Colorado cut for itself a canyon, but every river entering has cut a canyon; every lateral creek has cut a canyon; every brook runs in a canyon; every rill born of a passing shower has cut a canyon. So that the whole tableland is traversed and meshed by a labyrinth of these deep gorges. The wonderful elaboration and diversity with which this work has been done is only equalled by the vast scale on which the plan was laid. The extent and the complexity of the system of canyons is simply wonderful. Some portions of the plateau are cut into shreds by these gigantic chasms. Belts of country, miles in width, have been swept away, leaving only isolated mountains standing in the gap; fissures so profound that the eye can not penetrate their depths, are separated by walls whose thickness can almost be spanned; and slender spires shoot up a thousand feet from vaults below.

After the canyons, the next feature characteristic of the country is the long cliffs of erosion, called mesa-walls. These are bold escarpments, often hundreds or thousands of feet in altitude; great geographical steps, scores or hundreds of miles in length. These mesa-walls, running east and west, facing south, mark the limits of successive strata. The plateau is further subdivided by longitudinal cliffs, produced by "faults," or the dropping down or lifting up of a continuous line of an otherwise unbroken stratum. It is obvious that the displacement would, in either case, form a cliff or long step.

The region is further diversified by short ranges of eruptive mountains. There are many centres of volcanic action, from which floods of lava have poured, covering mesas and table-lands with sheets of black basalt. The expiring energies of these volcanic agencies have piled up huge cinder-cones, that stand