## SOMETHING ABOUT ROCK-SALT AND GYPSUM. 295

The salt of the rocks is the residuum of the once universal ocean. The reader will remember that reference has already been made to the origin of salt lakes, like those of Utah and the Caspian and Aral Seas. Such lakes are but remnants of the last oceanic inundation. They occupy depressions in the terrestrial surface from which there is no outlet. If, like Lake Superior, they had been drained to the sea, the original saline waters would long since have been replaced by fresh waters from the clouds.

In consequence of the changed condition of the earth, the amount of evaporation from the surfaces of these inland seas has generally exceeded the contributions of fresh water from the clouds. Their saltness has therefore been intensified, and, in many cases, a deposit of crystallized salt has been formed upon the bottom and around the shores. Indeed, there have been salt lakes that are now extinct, in consequence of the exhalation of their waters; and in the place of each remains a salt plain, the surface of which is composed of salt and the other mineral constituents of the ancient sea-water, variously intermingled with argillaceous matter washed in from the surrounding country. The interior of the American continent furnishes abundant phenomena of this kind, stretching from Utah, through the Great American Desert, to Mexico. Such products are the residua of salt lakes which have evaporated since the surface received its existing configuration. It will be remembered, however, that extensive salt-beds exist in Nevada, which are derived from the leachings of the saliferous strata of the mountains; and it may be that some of the ancient salt lakes of the region were supplied with salt to some extent by contributions from similar sources. This, nevertheless, would not prove that all salt lakes have been similarly fed. Besides, if it should appear that they are, we have still to account for the existence of strata of salt