# 4 Simple Global Adjustments

In this section we are going to take a look at Global Adjustments. This means adjusting the whole image to correct colour, contrast or exposure of an image. It can also be used a special effect to create a specific look.

There are two different way in which you can apply an adjustment to and image. The first is to go to the Image menu and choose Adjustments:
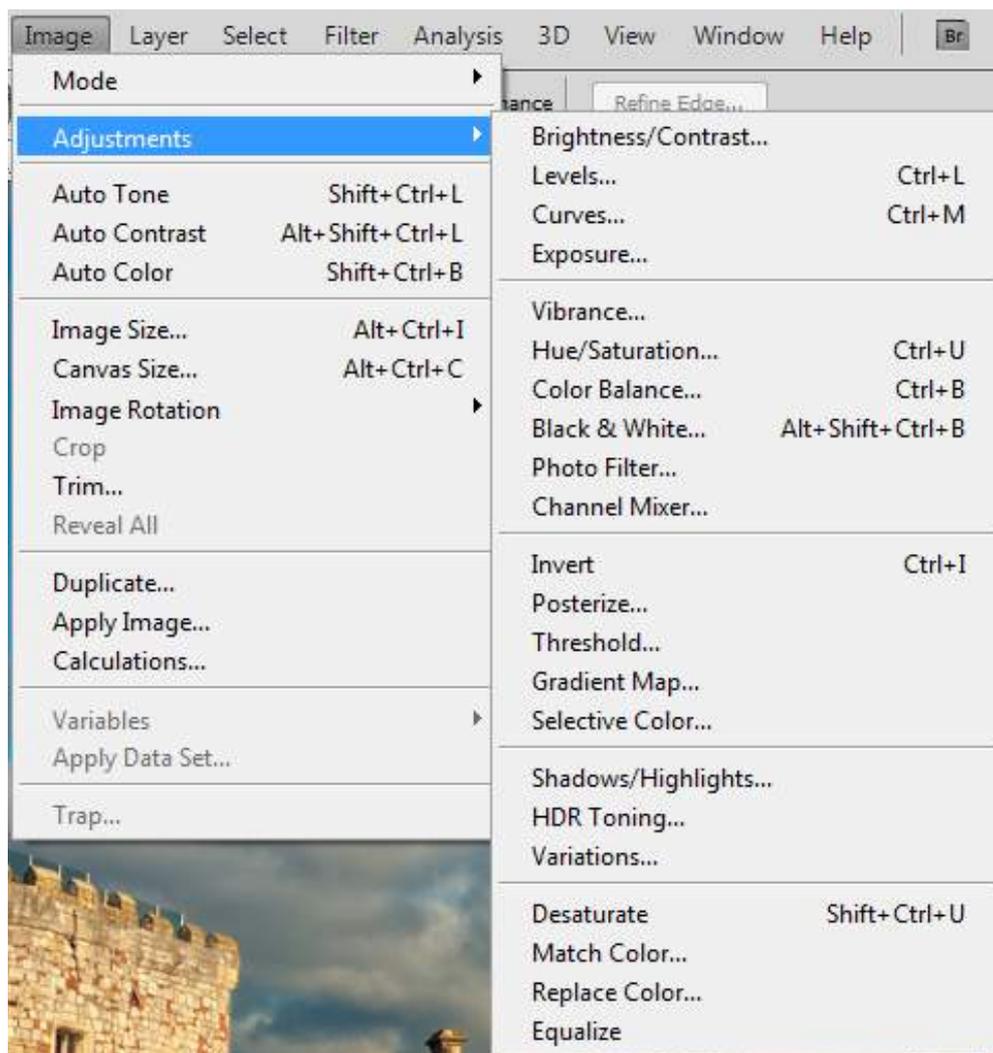
Fig 4.1 the list of Adjustments available under the Image menu

There are 22 different adjustment that you can apply to you image from this menu. However, if you apply an adjustment to your image and save it, the adjustment is permanent and destructive. The second method for applying an adjustment is non-destructive and utilizes a special type of layer called an Adjustment layer.

You can apply an adjustment layer by clicking on the ⬤. icon at the bottom of the layers panel (if you can't see your layers panel press the F7 key to open it). Alternatively, you can create an adjustment layer from the Layers menu by choosing New Adjustment layer. You can also apply an adjustment layer by clicking on the appropriate icon in the Adjustment list. The Adjustment list is visible in the Adjustments panel if no adjustment layer is highlighted in the Layers panel.
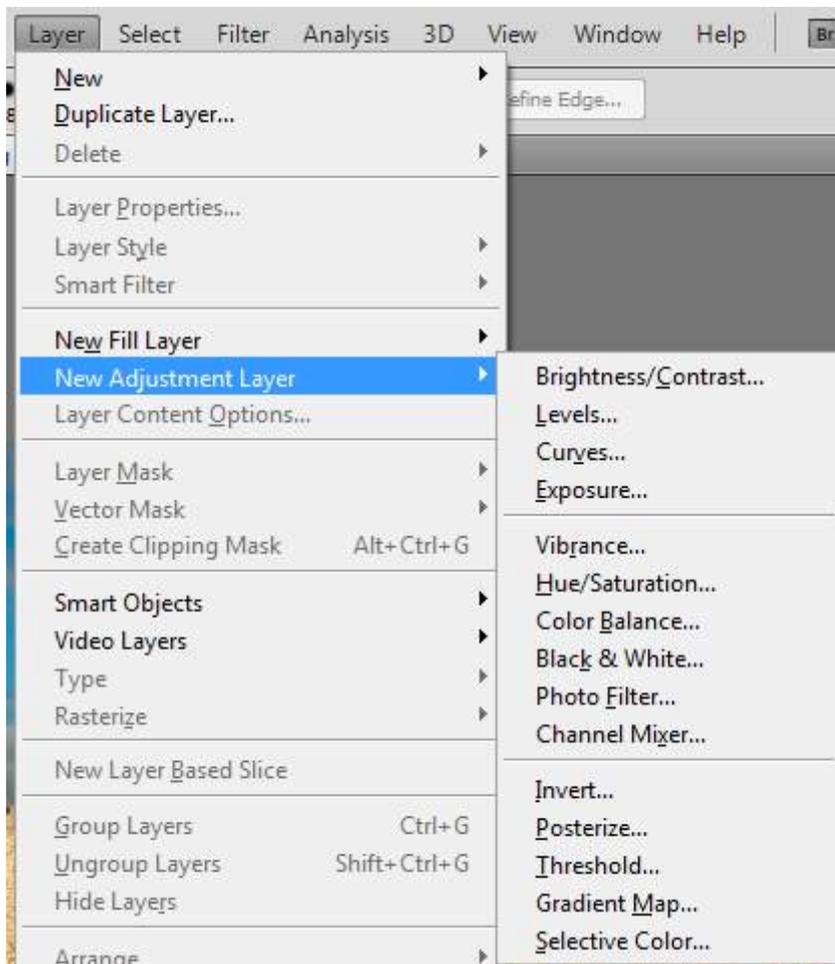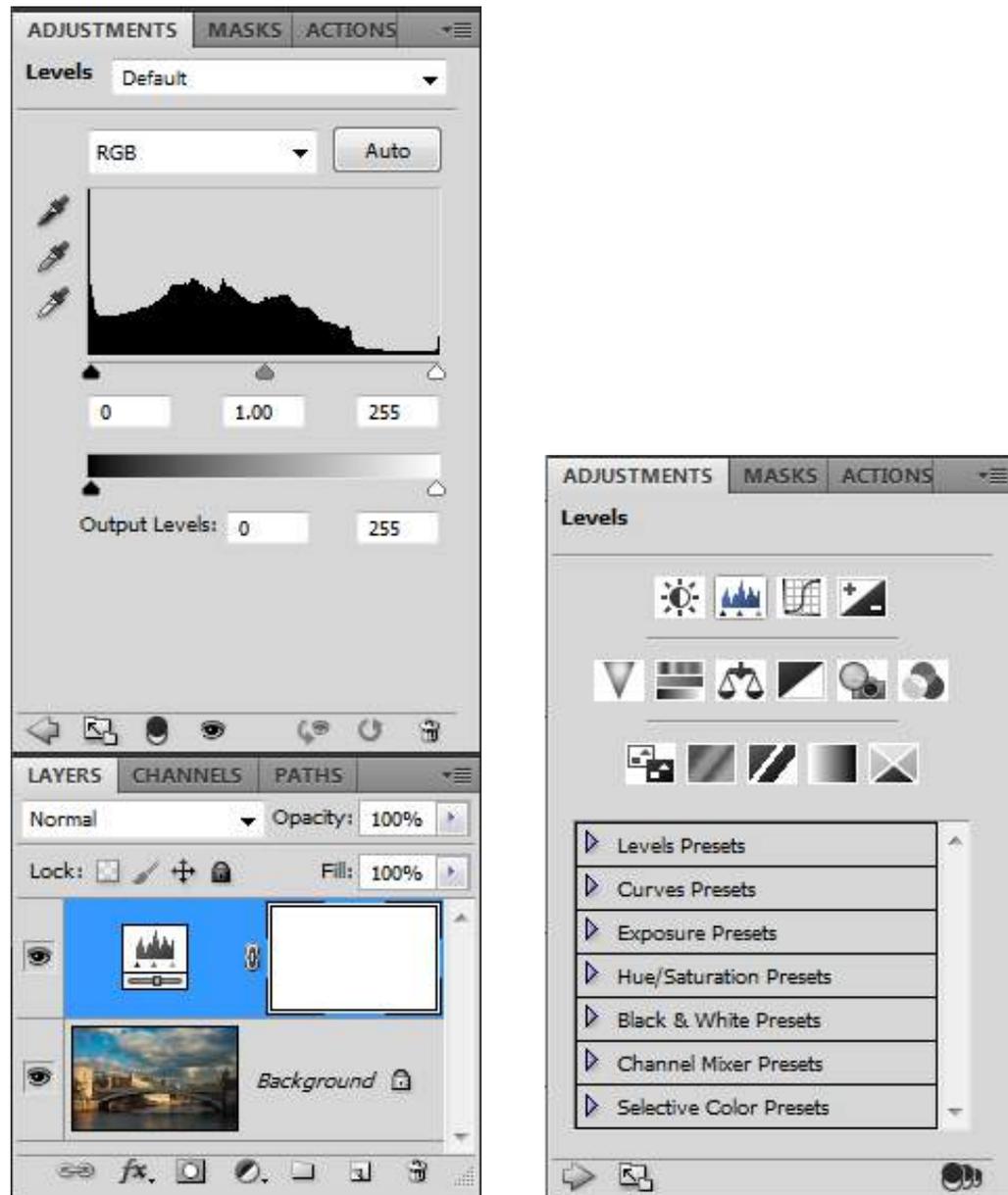

Fig 4.2 the list of Adjustment Layers available from the Layer menu

You will notice that this time there are only 15 adjustments instead of the 22 we saw previously. However, with the exception of Shadows/Highlights, we have all of the important adjustments available to us.

Fig 4.3 an Adjustment Layer in the Layers Panel and the Adjustment Panel

Once you've added the adjustment layer it will be visible as a new layer above your image in the Layers panel, fig 4.3. The dialogue box for the adjustment will also appear in the Adjustments panel (if you can't see the Adjustments panel, select it from the Windows menu).

There are many different adjustments, but the most useful adjustments for beginners to start with are:

- Levels
- Hue/Saturation

Levels

Levels is an extremely powerful tool for adjusting exposure problems and can also be used to colour correct an image.
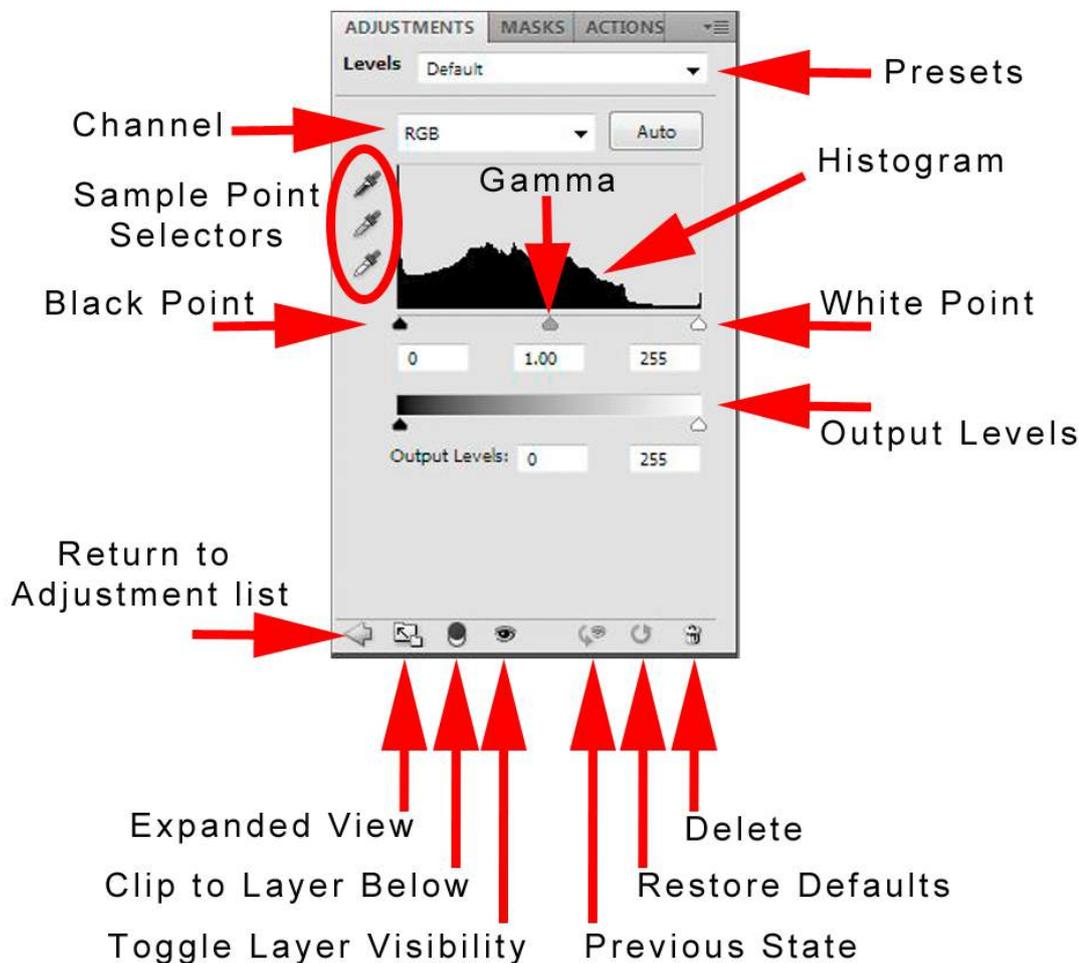

Fig 4.4 the Levels Adjustment

When you apply a Levels correction you will notice that there is a histogram, this is a representation of all of the tonal values in the image. The black point slider on the left is set at 0 which is pure black and the white point slider on the right is set at 255 which is pure white. This gives us a complete range of 256 possible values.

The middle Gamma slider works differently to the black and white sliders. If the Gamma is adjusted to the left (towards the black end of the scale) the image will get lighter in the mid tones and the opposite will happen if you move it to the right, the image will get darker in the mid tones.
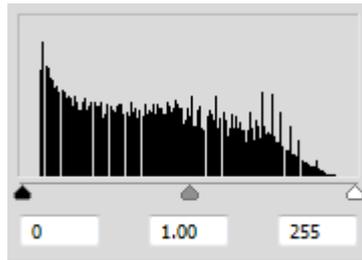
Fig 4.5 the Levels histogram showing values from 0 (black) to 255 (white)

In this Histogram we can see that the dark values don't go all the way to the black point on the left and the white values don't go all the way to the white point on the right. This means that there are no true blacks or whites in the image and this may result in the image lacking in contrast. We can adjust this histogram by moving the black and white point inwards to meet the beginning and end of the pixel values.
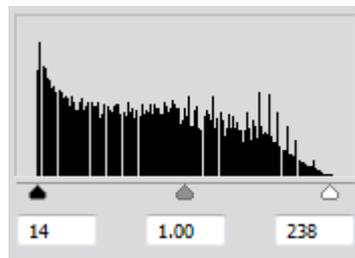

Fig 4.6 the black point and white point have been adjusted to give a full range of tones from black to white

The black and white values have been changed and in the left hand box the input value now reads 14. This means that any pixel values of 14, or less, will be mapped to 0 (black). Similarly, the right hand input box now reads 238. This means that any pixel values in the image of 238 or greater will be mapped to 255 (white). By moving these sliders inwards to meet where the pixel values begin and end, we now have an image that contains a full range of values from pure black to pure white. This results in an increase in contrast within the image.

If you are confident as to where your black points and white point should be in your image, you can select the appropriate sample point selectors (commonly known as the eyedropper tools, fig 4.7) in the Levels dialogue box and click directly in your image to set the value. The eyedroppers will also attempt to created neutral values, so they will remove any colour cast that your image may have.

Fig 4.7 the black point, gamma and white point eyedroppers

Hue Saturation

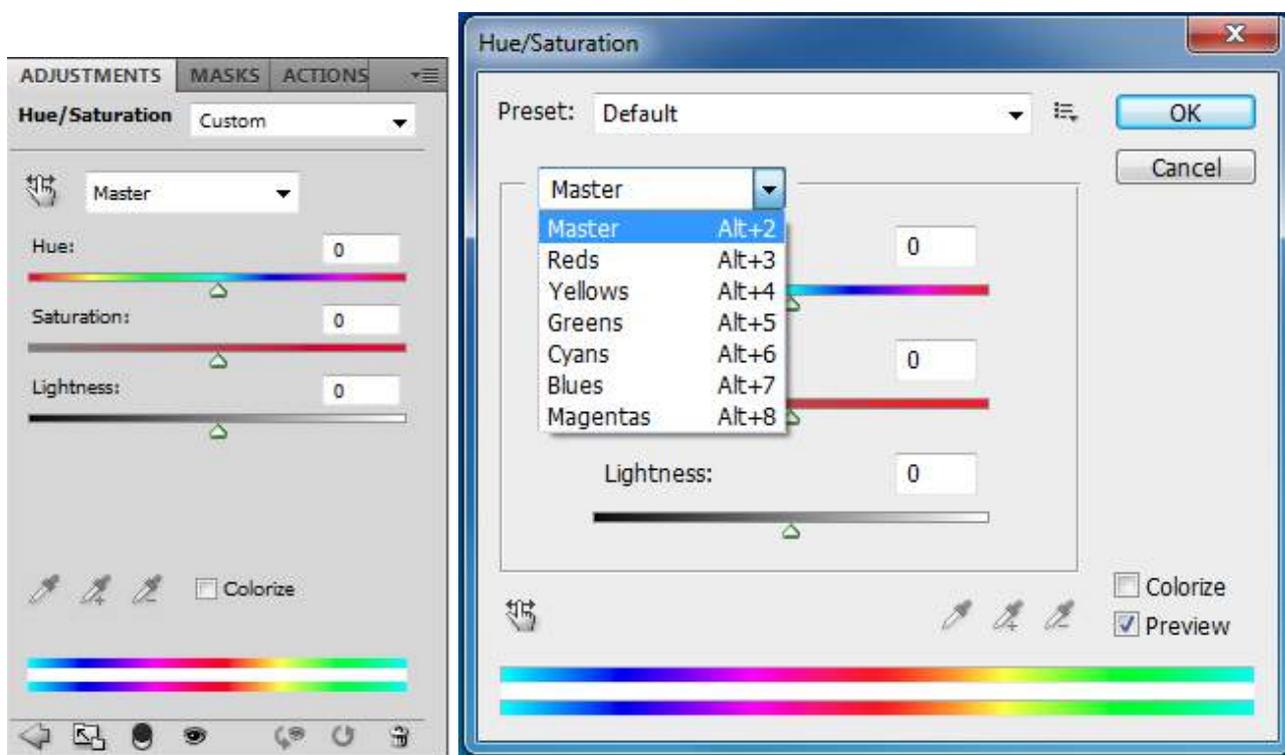The Hue/Saturation adjustment allows us to manipulate the colours in an image, either globally or independently.

Fig 4.8 Hue/Saturation in the Adjustments Panel (left) and as a free floating dialogue box (right)

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As with the Levels adjustment, I recommend that you apply it as an Adjustment layer. In the Hue/Saturation dialogue box we have three main sliders:

- Hue: affects the colour value. When you move it the spectrum of colours is shifted. This is not useful as a global adjustment but can be very useful when applied to a specific colour.
- Saturation: represent the intensity of the colour. Moving the sliders value to the right will make the colours in your image appear stronger. Moving the slider to the left will decrease the intensity of the colours and if you move it all the way to the left, will result in a grayscale image. For the best and most natural looking results you should do this on a per-colour basis.
- Lightness: as the name implies, will affect the lightness of the image and unless used with care, can result in loss of contrast.

The default setting is to affect all of the colours in the image, as indicated by "Master" in the drop down menu. However, individual colours can be affected independently, by either selecting the appropriate colour from the drop down menu, fig 4.8 (right), or by using the small icon that depicts a finger on a left and right pointing arrow, to click directly on the image. Clicking and dragging to the right will increase the saturation of the selected colour and clicking and dragging to the left will desaturate the selected colour.

Near the bottom of the panel is a check box called Colorize, fig 4.8. If you click in this box your entire image will be tinted with one specific colour. The Hue slider will allow you to change the colour and the Saturation slider will adjust the intensity.
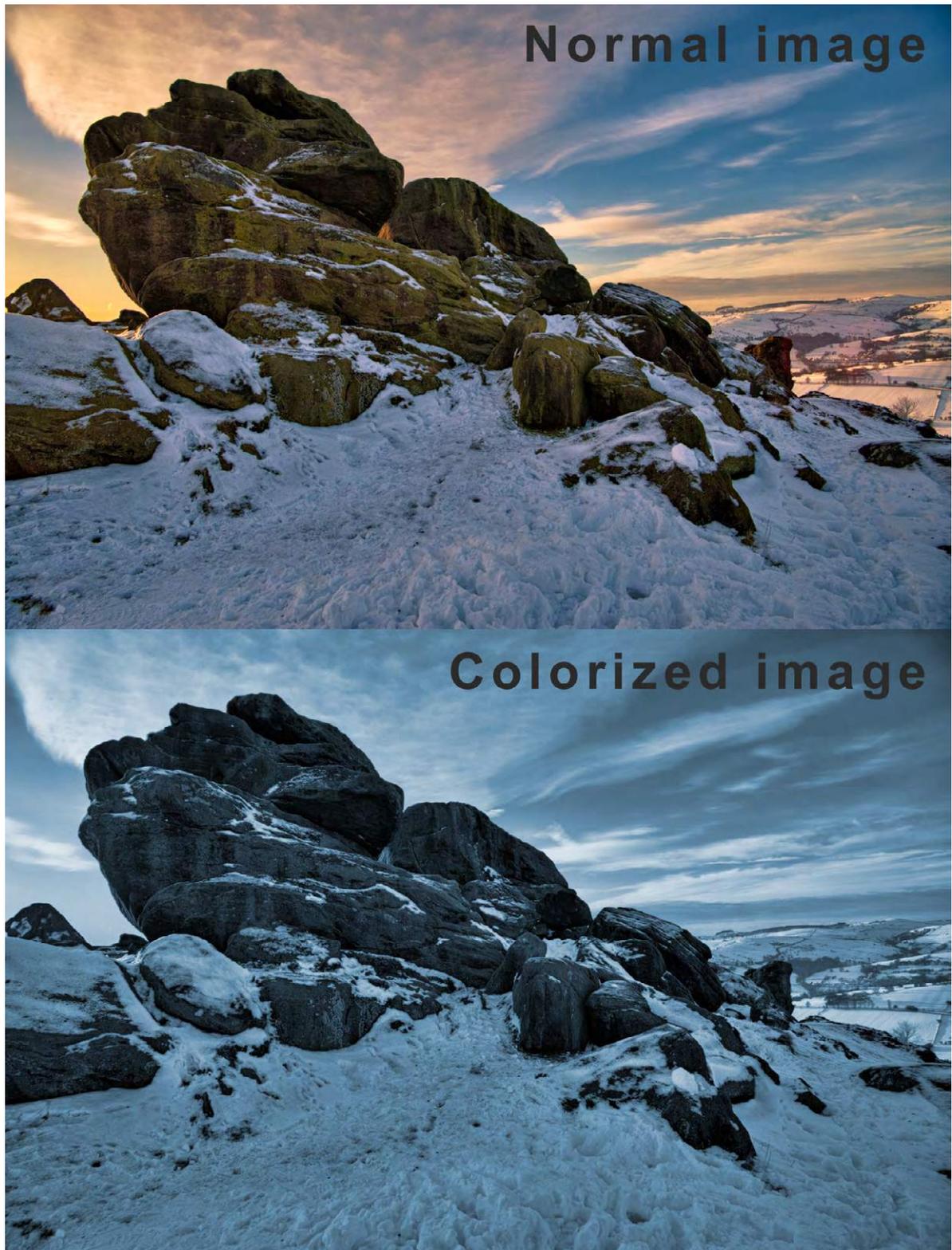
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Fig 4.9 the effect of clicking in the Colorize check box