

sea too great a share in the process of denudation were we to regard such a plain as mainly the work of the waves. These give it, indeed, its characteristic flatness, and put the last touches to its sculpture. But all the previous long record of waste, during which the land was worn down to the sea-level, was one in which the sub-aërial agents almost alone were concerned. These agents, sawing, filing, scraping, grooving, polishing, continue their operations as long as any land remains above the sea. It is true that the sea is also at the same time cutting away the margin of the land. But the area exposed to its attacks is a mere insignificant fraction of the whole extent of land which is subject to sub-aërial disintegration, and long before the waves could remove a strip, even a mile or two broad, from the edge of the land, the other denuding forces, working at the same rate as at present, would have reduced the dry land to the level of the sea. A plain of marine denudation, therefore, represents a base level of erosion—the limit down to which all the denuding agents, sub-aërial and marine, have reduced a mass of land, and beneath which further erosion ceases, because the ground, having got to the lowest level down to which the denuding agents can act, is thereafter protected by being covered by the sea. It is approximately a plain, because its erosion cannot be continued below a certain average depth under the surface of the sea. But it must, doubtless, present many minor inequalities of surface, some parts remaining higher because of their superior capacity for resistance, or because of their lying less exposed to the grinding action of waves and currents which elsewhere have lowered the level of the bottom.

The sea between the British Isles and the coasts of the continent from the south of Norway to the north-western headlands of France is so shallow, that an elevation of only