

plateaus may be formed by the subterranean forces violently thrusting them up, like vast wedges, through the general crust of the earth, and high over the ocean level; or it may be brought up to the light and air *en masse* by a general elevation over wide areas of the unbroken crust itself; or land may again sink under these two sets of conditions: it may sink in consequence of a breaking up and prostration of its framework to the average level of the crust,—of a striking back, if I may so speak, of the protruded wedges; or it may sink in consequence of a *general depression* over a wide area of the portion of the crust on which its framework is erected. Thus Scotland might disappear under the waves, either by some violent earthquake convulsion that would strike down its hills and table-lands to the general level of the earth's crust, and of consequence wholly destroy its contour; or it might disappear through a gentle sinking of the area that it occupies, which would leave its general contour unchanged. Were there a depression to take place where it now rises, of but one foot in five hundred over an area a thousand miles square, its highest mountain-summits would be buried beneath the sea, and yet the contour of the submerged land would remain almost identically what it is,—its hills would retain the same relative elevation over its valleys, and its higher table-lands over its lower plains. Now, in the later ages of its history,—in those ages, for instance, in which the ice-laden ocean of the boulder-clay rose high along its hill-sides, and it existed as a wintry archipelago of islands, there seems to have taken place scarce any change in its framework: the depressions through which it sank, and the elevations through which it rose, seem to have been depressions and elevations of area; and, whether under or over the waves, it continued to retain its general contour. The last great change which affected its framework, and gave to it a different profile in relation to the general surface of the globe from that which it had borne