

to a certain point exactly as one to one; and after that point has been reached, exactly as one to two. And I can find no adequate grounds for believing all this. But though it be thus far from self-evident that the mean level of the ocean is a fixed line, its rises and falls must have been slight indeed compared with those of the land. There are some of the Alps more than fifteen thousand feet in height; but, if spread equally over Europe, they would raise the general surface, says Humboldt, little more than twenty-one feet. And the displaced masses of the ocean, whether occasioned by the rising or the sinking of continents, have always to be spread over a surface thrice greater than that of *all* the land. A displacement, however, effected by the sinking of a continent which bore as large a proportion to the ocean as that borne by the Alps to Europe, would lower the general sea-line from the mean level of by far the best-marked of our ancient coast lines to the mean level of the existing one.