

fertile when well drained. In Suffolk and Essex the chalky Boulder-clay covers wide tracts of flat land, and was formerly much used as a dressing for other soils, and it forms an excellent soil in itself.

The great plain of the Wash consists partly of peat on the west and south, but chiefly of silt. These broad flats, about seventy miles in length from north to south, and forty in width, include an area of more than 1,700 square miles. The whole country is traversed by well-dyked rivers, canals, drains, and trenches. Standing on the margin of the flat, or walking on the long straight roads or dykes, cheerfulness is not the prevailing impression made on the mind. The ground looks as level as the sea in a calm, broken only by occasional dreary poplars and willows, and farm houses impressive in their loneliness. The soil of these fens ere the crops grow, is often as black as a raven, the ditches are sluggish and dismal, and the whole effect is suggestive of ague. Windmills of moderate size stand out from the level as conspicuous objects, and here and there the sky-line is pierced by the ruins of Crowland Abbey, Boston tower, and the massive piles of the Cathedrals of Ely and Peterborough on the margins of the flat. Yet it is not without charms of a kind; as, when at sunset, sluice, and windmill, and tufted willows, combined with light clouds dashed with purple and gold, compose a landscape such as elsewhere in Western Europe may be seen in the flats of Holland. The same impression, in less degree, is made on the banks of the Humber, where the broad warped meadows, won from the sea by nature and art, lie many feet below the tide at flood, for walking in the fields behind the dykes, when the tide is up, good-sized vessels may be seen sailing on the rivers above the level of the spectator's head. An old