

abysses of the Atlantic. It is perfectly certain, therefore, that though our area was formerly prolonged westward beyond its present limits, there has never been any important mass of land to the west of us in recent geological times, or within what we call the human period, probably never at any geological epoch at all. Every successive wave of migration, whether of plant or of animal, must have come from the other or eastern side. But though our country could never have stretched much beyond its present westward limits, it once undoubtedly spread eastward over the site of what is now the North Sea. Even at the present day, an elevation of less than 600 feet would convert the whole of that sea into dry land from the north of Shetland to the headlands of Brittany. At the time when these wide plains united Britain to the mainland, the Thames was no doubt a tributary of the Rhine, which, in its course northward, may have received other affluents from the east of Britain before it poured its waters into the Atlantic somewhere between the heights of Shetland and the mountainous coasts of Southern Norway.

There is evidence of remarkable oscillations of climate at the epoch of the advent of man into this part of Europe. A time of intense cold, known as the Ice Age or Glacial period, was drawing to a close. Its glaciers, frozen rivers and lakes, and floating icebergs, had converted most of Britain, and the whole of Northern Europe, into a waste of ice and snow, such as North Greenland still is; but the height of the cold was past, and there now came intervals of milder seasons, when the wintry mantle was withdrawn northward, so as to allow the vegetation and the roaming animals of more temperate latitudes to spread westward into Britain. From time to time a renewal of the cold once more sent down the glaciers into the valleys, or even