

sea, that plains are essentially areas of deposit. They are the tracts that have received the detritus washed down from the slopes above them, whether that detritus has originally accumulated on the land or below the sea. Their surface presents everywhere loose sandy, gravelly, or clayey formations, indicative of its comparatively recent subjection to the operation of running water.

(2.) *Coast-lines*.—A mere inspection of a map of the globe brings before the mind the striking differences which the masses of land present in their line of junction with the sea. As a rule, the southern continents possess a more uniform unindented coast-line than the northern. It has been estimated that the ratios between area and coast-line among the different continents, stand approximately as in the following table:

Northern	{	Europe has 1 geographical mile of coast-line to 143 sq. m. of surface		
		North America	“	265 “
		Asia including the islands	“	469 “
		Africa	“	895 “
Southern	{	South America	“	434 “
		Australia	“	332 “

In estimating the relative potency of the sea and of the atmospheric agents of disintegration, in the task of wearing down the land, it is evidently of great importance to take into account the amount of surface respectively exposed to their operations. Other things being equal, there is relatively more marine erosion in Europe than in North America. But we require also to consider the nature of the coast-line, whether flat and alluvial, or steep and rocky, or with some intermediate blending of these two characters. By attending to this point, we are soon led to observe such great differences in the character of coast-lines, and such an obvious relation to differences of geological structure, on the one hand, and to diversities in the removal or de-