

It appears from soundings made during various Admiralty surveys, that the gained land thus brought above the level of the sea, instead of presenting a system of hills and valleys corresponding with those usually characterising the interior of most of our island, would form a nearly level terrace, or gently inclined plane, sloping outwards like those terraces of denudation and deposition which I have elsewhere described as occurring on the coasts of Sicily and the Morea.*

It seems that, during former and perhaps repeated oscillations of level undergone by the British Isles, the sea has had time to cut back the cliffs for miles in many places, while in others the detritus derived from wasting cliffs drifted along the shores, together with the sediment brought down by rivers and swept by currents into submarine valleys, has exerted a levelling power, filling up such depressions as may have pre-existed. Owing to this twofold action few marked inequalities of level have been left on the sea-bottom, the 'silver-pits' off the mouth of the Humber offering a rare exception to the general rule, and even there the narrow depression is less than 300 feet in depth.

Beyond the 100 fathom line, the submarine slope surrounding the British coast is so much steeper that a second elevation of equal amount (or of 600 feet) would add but slightly to the area of gained land; in other words, the 100 and 200 fathom lines run very near each other.†

The naturalist would have been entitled to assume the former union, within the post-pliocene period, of all the British Isles with each other and with the continent, as expressed in the map, fig. 41, even if there had been no geological facts in favour of such a junction. For in no other way would he be able to account for the identity of the fauna and flora found throughout these lands. Had they been separated ever since

* Manual of Geology, p. 74.

† De la Beche, Geological Researches, p. 191.