means remote in a geological sense, was in active operation here. All over these islands, except along the southern belt of England between the Bristol Channel and the mouth of the Thames, there is abundant evidence that the surface of the land, like the rest of the northern parts of Europe and America, has been modified by some kind of natural agent, very different in its effects from any of those which have been noticed in the foregoing chapters. Had the features of these northern regions been carved only by air, rain, springs, rivers, and frosts, their general outlines would have been more rugged than they are. The valleys would oftener have had scarped sides, the hills would have been sharper in form, and more deeply cleft with gullies and ravines. There would have been such an angularity of topography as one can witness on a crag or crest long exposed to sub-aërial disintegration. But on the contrary, a general smoothness of contour characterises both hill and valley, pointing to some abrading agency which has in large measure worn off the old roughnesses, and given a flowing outline to the ground. The fuller proofs of this statement will be given in a future chapter.

In the meantime, by way of illustration and explanation, let me briefly refer to the aspect of the deep inlets by which the Atlantic rolls its tides far into the heart of the great mountainous tracts of the Western Highlands. Fronting the sea, as on the coast about Arisaig, a scattered group or chain of islets rises out of the water—little bare rocky bosses, like the backs of dolphins. Inside this natural breakwater, the fjord or sea-loch, deeper, perhaps, than the sea immediately outside, winds inland between lofty mountains. On either hand, the rocks of the valley slip down into the sea, with the same smoothed outlines. It is only the loftier crests and peaks, shooting far up into the colder layers of