As an example of one of these, I shall select the delta of the Ganges. This river, and the Brahmapootra (or Burrampooter) descend, from the highest mountains in the world, into a bay which runs 225 miles into the continent. The Brahmapootra is somewhat the larger river of the two; but it takes the name of the Megna, in lat. 24° N., when joined by a smaller stream so called, and afterwards loses this second name on its union with the principal arm of the Ganges, at the distance of about forty miles from the sea. The area of the delta of the Ganges (without including that of the Brahmapootra, which has now become conterminous) is considerably more than double that of the Nile; and its head commences at a distance of 220 miles, in a direct line from the sea. Its base is 200 miles in length, including the space occupied by the two great arms of the Ganges which bound it on each side. That part of the delta which borders on the sea is composed of a labyrinth of rivers and creeks, all filled with salt water, except those immediately communicating with the principal arm of the Ganges. This tract alone, known by the name of the Woods, or Sunderbunds (more properly Soonderbuns), a wilderness infested by tigers and crocodiles, is, according to Rennell, equal in extent to the whole principality of Wales.*

On the sea-coast there are eight great openings, each of which has evidently, at some ancient period, served in its turn as the principal channel of discharge. Although the flux and reflux of the tide extend even to the head of the delta when the river is low; yet, when it is periodically swollen by tropical rains, the velocity of the stream counteracts the tidal current, so that, except very near the sea, the ebb and flow become insensible. During the flood season, therefore, the Ganges almost assumes the character of a river entering a lake or inland sea; the movements of the ocean being then subordinate to the force of the river, and only slightly disturbing its operations. The great gain of the delta in height and area takes place during the inundations; and, during other seasons of the year, the ocean makes reprisals, scouring out the channels, and sometimes devouring rich alluvial plains.

Islands formed and destroyed. — Major R. H. Colebrooke, in his account of the course of the Ganges, relates examples of the rapid filling up of some of its branches, and the excavation of new channels, where the number of square miles of soil removed in a short time (the column of earth being 114 feet high) was truly astonishing. Forty square miles, or 25,600 acres, are mentioned as having been carried away, in one place, in the course of a few years.† The immense transportation of earthy matter by the Ganges and Megna is proved by the great magnitude of the islands formed in their channels during a period far short of that of a man's life. Some of these, many miles in extent, have originated in large sand-banks thrown up round the points at the angular turning of the river, and

* Account of the Ganges and Burrampooter Rivers, by Major Rennell, Phil. Trans. 1781.

† Trans. of the Asiatic Society, vol. vii. p. 14.