

*Delta of the Mississippi.*

I have shown in my Travels in North America that the deposits forming the delta and alluvial plain of the Mississippi consist of sedimentary matter, extending over an area of 30,000 square miles, and known in some parts to be several hundred feet deep. Although we cannot estimate correctly how many years it may have required for the river to bring down from the upper country so large a quantity of earthy matter — the data for such a computation being as yet incomplete — we may still approximate to a minimum of the time which such an operation must have taken, by ascertaining experimentally the annual discharge of water by the Mississippi, and the mean annual amount of solid matter contained in its waters. The lowest estimate of the time required would lead us to assign a high antiquity, amounting to many tens of thousands of years (probably more than 100,000) to the existing delta.

Whether all or how much of this formation may belong to the recent period, as above defined, I cannot pretend to decide, but in one part of the modern delta near New Orleans, a large excavation has been made for gas-works, where a succession of beds, almost wholly made up of vegetable matter, has been passed through, such as we now see forming in the cypress swamps of the neighbourhood, where the deciduous cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), with its strong and spreading roots, plays a conspicuous part. In this excavation, at the depth of sixteen feet from the surface, beneath four buried forests superimposed one upon the other, the workmen are stated by Dr. B. Dowler to have found some charcoal and a human skeleton, the cranium of which is said to belong to the aboriginal type of the Red Indian race. As the discovery in question had not been made when I saw the excavation in progress at the gas-works in