

ing of vegetables and their matted roots ; yet, strange to say, instead of being lower than the level of the surrounding country, it is actually higher than nearly all the firm and dry land which encompasses it, and, to make the anomaly complete, in spite of its semi-fluid character, it is higher in the interior than towards its margin.

The only exceptions to both these statements is found on the western side, where, for the distance of about twelve or fifteen miles, the streams flow from slightly elevated but higher land, and supply all its abundant and overflowing water. Towards the north, the east, and the south, the waters flow from the swamp to different rivers, which give abundant evidence, by the rate of their descent, that the Great Dismal is higher than the surrounding firm ground. This fact is also confirmed by the measurements made in levelling for the railway from Portsmouth to Suffolk, and for two canals cut through different parts of the morass, for the sake of obtaining timber. The railway itself, when traversing the Great Dismal, is literally higher than when on the land some miles distant on either side, and is six to seven feet higher than where it passes over dry ground, near to Suffolk and Portsmouth. Upon the whole, the centre of the morass seems to lie more than twelve feet above the flat country round it. If the streams which now flow in from the west, had for ages been bringing down black fluid mire, instead of water, over the firm subsoil, we might suppose the ground so inundated to have acquired its present configuration. Some small ridges, however, of land must have existed in the original plain or basin, for these now rise like low islands in various places above the general surface.