

powerful, the large cedar (*Cupressus disticha*) and many other deciduous trees are in full leaf. The black soil formed beneath this shade, to which the mosses and the leaves make annual additions, does not perfectly resemble the peat of Europe, most of the plants being so decayed as to leave little more than soft black mud, without any traces of organization. This loose soil is called sponge by the labourers; and it has been ascertained that, when exposed to the sun, and thrown out on the bank of a canal, where clearings have been made, it rots entirely away. Hence it is evident that it owes its preservation in the swamp to moisture and the shade of the dense foliage. The evaporation continually going on in the wet spongy soil during summer cools the air, and generates a temperature resembling that of a more northern climate, or a region more elevated above the level of the sea.

Numerous trunks of large and tall trees lie buried in the black mire of the morass. In so loose a soil they are easily overthrown by winds, and nearly as many have been found lying beneath the surface of the peaty soil, as standing erect upon it. When thrown down, they are soon covered by water, and keeping wet they never decompose, except the sap wood, which is less than an inch thick. Much of the timber is obtained by sounding a foot or two below the surface, and it is sawn into planks while half under water.

The Great Dismal has been described as being highest towards its centre. Here, however, there is an extensive lake of an oval form, seven miles long, and more than five wide, the depth, where greatest, fifteen feet; and its bottom, consisting of mud like the swamp, but sometimes with a pure white sand, a foot deep, cov-