

would make extensive inroads whenever the main channel of discharge is altered and there is a local relaxation of the river's power. Every year, as soon as the flood season is over, the tide enters far up each channel, scouring out mud and sand, and sweeping away many a bar, formed during the period of inundation. Bringier, an experienced surveyor of New Orleans, told me, that on revisiting the mouths of the Mississippi after an interval of forty years, he was surprised to observe how stationary their leading features had remained. Mr. Dunbar, also an engineer in great practice in Louisiana, assured me that on comparing the soundings lately made by him with those laid down in the French maps of Sieur Diron, published in 1740, he found the changes to be quite inconsiderable. On questioning the pilots on the subject, they stated that the changes from year to year are great, but are no measure whatever of those worked out in a long period, for there seems to be a tendency in the action of the tides and river to restore the old soundings.

Captain Grahame, also a government surveyor, on comparing the northeast pass with the charts made a century before, found it had not advanced more than a quarter of a mile, and that in the same interval the principal variations at the pass à Loutre had consisted in the filling up of some bayous. Even if we could assume that the progress of the whole delta in twenty-five years was as great as that assigned by Linton to one or two narrow channels and banks, it would have taken several thousand years for the river to advance from New Orleans to the Balize; but when we take into our account the whole breadth of the delta, or that part of it which has advanced beyond the general coast-line above 100 miles across, we must allow an enormous period of time for its accumulation.

The popular belief in New Orleans, that the progress of the banks near the mouths of the river has been very rapid, arises partly from the nature of the evidence given by witnesses in the law courts, in cases of insurance. When a ship is lost, the usual line of defense on the part of the pilots, whether for themselves or their friends, is to show that new sand-bars are forming, and shoals shifting their places so fast, that no blame attaches to any