

there is always a bayou or channel, connecting, during floods, each deserted bend or lake with the main river, through which large floating logs may pass. These often form rafts, and become covered with soil supporting shrubs and trees. At first such green islands are blown from one part of the lake to another by the winds, but the deciduous cypress, if it springs up in such a soil, sends down strong roots, many feet or yards long, so as to cast anchor in the muddy bottom, rendering the island stationary.

Lake Solitude, situated in lat. 31° N. is two miles and a half in circuit, and is most appropriately named, being a retired sheet of water, its borders overhung by the swamp willow, now just coming into leaf, and skirted by the tall cypress, from which long streamers of Spanish moss are hanging. On the east it is bounded by high ground, a prolongation of the bluff at Port Hudson, on which the hickory, the oak, and many splendid magnolias, with the beech, walnut, tulip tree, and holly, and a variety of beautiful shrubs are seen. The surface of the lake (except near the shore, where it is covered with the water lily) faithfully reflects the trees and sky, presenting, in this respect, a marked contrast to the yellow waters of the Mississippi. It is inhabited by hundreds of alligators and countless fish, and so many birds were swimming on it, or flying over it, that it seemed as if all the wild creatures which the steamers had scared away from the main river had taken refuge here. Several alligators were lying motionless, with their noses just above the surface of the water, resembling black logs. About fourteen years ago, some of them were not unfrequently seen here measuring fifteen feet in length, but they now rarely exceed eight feet. I observed a large gar-fish, or bony pike, called the alligator gar (*Lepidosteus*), leap nearly out of the water in pursuit of its prey. Its hard shining scales are so strong and difficult to pierce, that it can scarcely be shot. It can live longer out of water than any other fish of this country, having a large cellular swimming bladder, which is said almost to serve the purpose of a real lung. One of them has been known to seize the nostrils of a mule who was drinking, and only to be shaken off on dry ground, when its whole body had been dragged into the air.