the larger part of that impalpable mud, which constitutes the bulk of the solid matter carried into the sea by the Mississippi, is not lost altogether, so far as the progress of the delta is concerned. So impalpable is the sediment, and so slowly does it sink, that a glass of water taken from the Mississippi, may remain motionless for three weeks, and yet all the earthy matter will not have reached the bottom. If particles so minute are carried by the current, setting for a great portion of the year from west to east, across the mouth of the river, into the Gulf Stream, and so into the Atlantic, they might easily travel to the banks of Newfoundland before sinking to the bottom; and some of them, which left the head waters of the Missouri in the 49th degree of north latitude, may, after having gone southward to the Gulf, and then northward to the Great Banks, have found no resting-place before they had wandered for a distance as far as from the pole to the equator, and returned to the very latitude from which they set out. Were it not for the peculiar manner in which the Mississippi forms long bars of sand, which frequently unite with some part of the coast, so as to dam out the sea and form lagoons, the deposition of sediment in the delta would be much less considerable. A lagoon, like Lake Pontchartrain, once formed, becomes a receptacle of the finest mud, poured into it by an arm of the great river during the flood season, and the space thus parted off from the Gulf by bars of sand, is protected from the action of the breakers and marine currents.

When I inquired what might be the depth of the fluviatile mud in the suburbs of New Orleans, I was told that, in making a railroad near Lake Pontchartrain, piles were driven down sixty feet into the soft mud or slush, and when a boring was made there, 600 feet deep, beds of gnathodon were found, but no marine shells.

The depth of the alluvium may vary in different parts of the great sloping plain; for certain areas, such as the "sunk country," for example, west of New Madrid, may have been repeatedly depressed, and have been always brought up again to the same superficial level, by the deposition of the river mud, or the growth of vegetable matter.