

the bluffs or cliffs, bounding the great valley, and therefore older in date, and which are from 50 to 250 feet in perpendicular height, consist in great parts of loam containing land, fluviatile and lacustrine shells of species still inhabiting the same country. These fossil shells occur in a deposit resembling the loess of the Rhine, in which are also found the bones of the mastodon, elephant, tapir, megalonyx, and other megatheroid animals; also a species of horse, ox, and other mammalia, most of them of extinct species. I have endeavoured to show in my *Second Visit to the United States* (vol. ii. ch. 34.) that this extensive formation of loam is an ancient delta of the Mississippi upraised and partially denuded. It rests at Vicksburg and other places on Eocene or lower tertiary strata, which in their turn repose on cretaceous rocks.

Before we take leave of the great delta, we may derive an instructive lesson from the reflection that the new deposits already formed, or now accumulating, whether marine or freshwater, must greatly resemble in composition, and the general character of their organic remains, many ancient strata which enter largely into the earth's structure. Yet there is no sudden revolution in progress, whether on the land or in the waters, whether in the animate or the inanimate world. Notwithstanding the excessive destruction of soil, and uprooting of trees, the region which yields a never-failing supply of drift-wood is densely clothed with noble forests, and is almost unrivalled in its power of supporting animal and vegetable life. In spite of the undermining of many a lofty bluff and the encroachments of the delta on the sea — in spite of the earthquake, which rends and fissures the soil, or causes areas more than sixty miles in length to sink down several yards in a few months, the general features of the district remain unaltered, or are merely undergoing a slow and insensible change. Herds of wild deer graze on the pastures, or browse upon the trees; and if they diminish in number, it is only where they give way to man and the domestic animals which follow in his train. The bear, the wolf, the fox, the panther, and the wild-cat, still maintain themselves in the fastnesses of the forests of cypress and gum-tree. The racoon and the opossum are every where abundant, while the musk-rat, otter, and mink still frequent the rivers and lakes, and a few beavers and buffaloes have not yet been driven from their ancient haunts. The waters teem with alligators, tortoises, and fish, and their surface is covered with millions of migratory waterfowl, which perform their annual voyage between the Canadian lakes and the shores of the Mexican Gulf. The power of man begins to be sensibly felt, and many parts of the wilderness to be replaced by towns, orchards, and gardens. The gilded steamboats, like moving palaces, stem the force of the current, or shoot rapidly down the descending stream, through the solitudes of the forests and prairies. Already does the flourishing population of the great valley far exceed that of the thirteen United States when first they declared their independence. Such is the state of a continent where trees and stones are hurried annually, by a thousand torrents,