

Mississippi has an area of more than 12,000 square miles, consisting chiefly of sands and clays, with much vegetable matter, and that of the Nile an area of about 21,000. The delta of the Ganges and Brahmapootra is more than 48,000 square miles in extent, has peaty beds interstratified with clays and sands, containing freshwater shells and freshwater tortoises, often much below the level of the neighbouring sea. The area of all England and Wales is 57,812 square miles, and the areas of all the coal-fields of Great Britain extended to their original size did not equal that of this great delta.

It is not to be supposed that, in each coal-field, each bed of coal extends over the whole area. On the contrary they thicken and thin out, and have their edges like many a modern peat moss, and the vegetation of the Carboniferous epoch flourished and decayed rapidly, on moist ground and in a moist atmosphere, not of excessive warmth, as has often been stated, but, in the opinion of Sir Joseph Hooker, 'in a moist and equable climate,' that could scarcely have been sub-tropical.