

beginning of the fourteenth, describes, in the seventh circle of hell, a rivulet of tears separated from a burning sandy desert by embankments "like those which, between Ghent and Bruges, were raised against the ocean, or those which the Paduans had erected along the Brenta to defend their villas on the melting of the Alpine snows."

Quale i Fiamminghi tra Guzzante e Bruggia,  
 Temendo il fiotto che in ver lor s'avventa,  
 Fanno lo schermo, perchè il mar si fuggia,  
 E quale i Padovan lungo la Brenta,  
 Per difender lor ville e lor castelli,  
 Anzi che Chiarentana il caldo senta —

*Inferno, Canto xv.*

*Delta of the Po.*—The Adriatic presents a great combination of circumstances favourable to the rapid formation of deltas—a gulf receding far into the land—a sea without tides or strong currents, and the influx of two great rivers, the Po and the Adige, besides numerous minor streams, draining on the one side a great crescent of the Alps, and on the other some of the loftiest ridges of the Apennines. From the northernmost point of the Gulf of Trieste, where the Isonzo enters, down to the south of Ravenna, there is an uninterrupted series of recent accessions of land, more than 100 miles in length, which within the last 2000 years have increased from *two to twenty miles in breadth*. A line of sand bars of great length has been formed nearly all along this western coast of the Adriatic, inside of which are lagunes, such as those of Venice, and the large lagune of Comacchio, 20 miles in diameter. Newly deposited mud brought down by the streams is continually lessening the depth of the lagunes, and converting part of them into meadows.\* The Isonzo, Tagliamento, Piave, Brenta, Adige, and Po, besides many other inferior rivers, contribute to this advance of the coast-line and to the shallowing of the lagunes and the gulf.

The Po and the Adige may now be considered as entering by one common delta, for two branches of the Adige are connected with arms of the Po, and thus the principal delta has been pushed out beyond those bars which separate the lagunes from the sea. The rate of encroachment of the new land upon the Adriatic has been accelerated, as before stated, since the system of embanking the rivers became general, especially at that point where the Po and Adige enter. The waters are no longer permitted to spread themselves far and wide over the plains, and to leave behind them the larger portion of their sediment. Mountain torrents also have become more turbid since the clearing away of forests, which once clothed the southern flanks of the Alps. It is calculated that the mean rate of advance of the delta of the Po on the Adriatic between the years 1200 and 1600 was 25 yards or metres a year, whereas the mean annual gain from 1600 to 1804 was 70 metres. †

\* See De Beaumont, *Géologie Pratique*, vol. i. p. 323. 1844.

† Prony, cited by Cuvier, *Discours Prélimin.*