

broad. This channel is now converted into a grassy plain, which surrounds the islands on all sides. Among the numerous changes on this coast, we find that the present channel of the Isonzo is several miles to the west of its ancient bed, in part of which, at Ronchi, the old Roman bridge which crossed the Via Appia was lately found buried in fluviatile silt,

Notwithstanding the present shallowness of the Adriatic, it is highly probable that its original depth was very great; for if all the low alluvial tracts were taken away from its borders and replaced by sea, the high land would terminate in that abrupt manner which generally indicates, in the Mediterranean, a great depth of water near the shore, except in those spots where sediment imported by rivers and currents has diminished the depth. Many parts of the Mediterranean are now ascertained to be above 2000 feet deep, close to the shore, as between Nice and Genoa, and even sometimes 6000 feet, as near Gibraltar. When, therefore, we find near Parma, and in other districts in the interior of the Italian peninsula, beds of horizontal tertiary marl attaining a thickness of about 2000 feet, or when we discover strata of inclined conglomerate, of the same age, near Nice, measuring above a thousand feet in thickness, and extending seven or eight miles in length, we behold nothing which the analogy of the deltas in the Adriatic might not lead us to anticipate.

Basin of the Mississippi.—The hydrographical basin of the Mississippi displays, on the grandest scale, the action of running water on the surface of a vast continent. This magnificent river rises nearly in the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude, and flows to the Gulf of Mexico in the twenty-ninth—a course, including its meanders, of more than three thousand miles. It passes from a cold climate, where the hunter obtains his furs and peltries, traverses the temperate latitudes, and discharges its waters into the sea in the region of rice, the cotton plant, and the sugar cane. From near its mouth at the Balize a steam-boat may ascend for 2000 miles with scarcely any perceptible difference in the width of the river. Several of its tributaries, the Red River, the Arkansas, the Missouri, the Ohio, and others, would be regarded elsewhere as of the first importance, and, taken together, are navigable for a distance many times exceeding that of the main stream. No river affords a more striking illustration of the law before mentioned, that an augmentation of volume does not occasion a proportional increase of surface, nay, is even sometimes attended with a narrowing of the channel. The Mississippi is half a mile wide at its junction with the Missouri*, the latter being also of equal width; yet the united waters have only, from their confluence to the mouth of the Ohio, a medial width of about half a mile. The junction of the Ohio seems also to produce no increase, but rather a

* Flint says (vol. i. p. 140.) that, where the Mississippi receives the Missouri, it is a mile and a half wide; but

Captain B. Hall pointed out that this was a great mistake.—Travels in North America, vol. iii. p. 328.