

since the time of Strabo, where havens are filled up, islands joined to the mainland, and where the whole continent has increased many miles in extent. Strabo himself, on comparing the outline of the coast in his time, with its ancient state, was convinced, like our countryman, that it had gained very considerably upon the sea. The new-formed strata of Asia Minor consist *of stone*, not of loose incoherent materials. Almost all the streamlets and rivers, like many of those in Tuscany and the south of Italy, hold abundance of carbonate of lime in solution, and precipitate travertin, or sometimes bind together the sand and gravel into solid sandstones and conglomerates: every delta and sand-bar thus acquires solidity, which often prevents streams from forcing their way through them, so that their mouths are constantly changing their position.\*

*Delta of the Nile.*—That Egypt was “the gift of the Nile,” was the opinion of her priests before the time of Herodotus; and Rennell observes, that the “configuration and composition of the low lands leave no room for doubt that the sea once washed the base of the rocks on which the pyramids of Memphis stand, the *present* base of which is washed by the inundation of the Nile, at an elevation of 70 or 80 feet above the Mediterranean. But when we attempt to carry back our ideas to the remote period when the foundation of the delta was first laid, we are lost in the contemplation of so vast an interval of time.”† Herodotus observes, “that the country round Memphis seemed formerly to have been an arm of the sea gradually filled by the Nile, in the same manner as the Meander, Achelous, and other streams, had formed deltas. Egypt, therefore, he says, like the Red Sea, was once a long narrow bay, and both gulfs were separated by a small neck of land. If the Nile, he adds, should by any means have an issue into the Arabian Gulf, it might choke it up with earth in 20,000 or even, perhaps, in 10,000 years; and why may not the Nile have filled a still greater gulf with mud in the space of time which has passed before our age?”‡

The distance between Memphis and the most prominent part of the delta in a straight line north and south, is about 100 geographical miles; the length of the base of the delta is more than 200 miles if we follow the coast between the ancient extreme eastern and western arms; but as these are now blocked up, that part only of Lower Egypt which intervenes between the Rosetta and Damietta branches, is usually called the delta, the coast line of which is about 90 miles in length. The bed of the river itself, says Sir J. G. Wilkinson, undergoes a gradual increase of elevation, varying in different places, and always lessening in proportion as the river approaches the sea. “This increase of elevation in perpendicular height is much smaller in Lower than in Upper Egypt, and in the delta it diminishes still more; so that, according to an approximate calculation,

\* Karamania, or a brief Description of the Coast of Asia Minor, &c. London, 1817.

† Geog. Syst. of Herod. vol. ii. p. 107.  
‡ Euterpe, XL