

Rivers may discharge themselves into the sea or lakes, or they may be lost among marshes. It was generally supposed, previous to the Landers' discovery, that the Niger, after running through an immense tract of country, was lost in marshes; and it has been proved by Sturt, that this is the fate of many of the rivers of Australia. There are some rivers that discharge themselves into lakes, as, for instance, those that flow into the Caspian, and the Murray, which terminates in the Lake Alexandrina. But by far the largest number of rivers enter the sea, and the phenomena produced by the mingling of the waters, each having a force of its own, are sometimes very remarkable. When the mouth of a river is large, it may quietly throw its waters into the sea; but if narrow, a violent struggle ensues between the tide of the one and the current of the other. To this circumstance, the bars which are frequently formed across the mouths of large rivers may be attributed. Travellers have spoken of the terrific spectacle produced when the tide of the Atlantic meets the current of the Amazon. It is like the conflict of giants—the earth trembles with the roar of their blows—and man flies with terror from the scene of encounter.

Some rivers have but one communication with the sea, others discharge themselves through several channels. The Ganges has not less than eight, each of which appears to have been at some time or other the principal. This mighty river receives the water of several tributaries as large as the Rhine, and its source has an elevation of 13,800 feet above the level of the sea.

Some rivers, especially those situated between the tropics, have a periodical rise. This was observed by the ancients in the instance of the Nile; and, as no rain falls in Egypt, they could only consider it as one of the mysteries of nature, and supply the place of truth with fable. All rivers thus situated are liable to these overflows; but the degree and period depend upon local circumstances, though they are in all instances caused by the seasonal rains which fall in tropical countries. When the thirsty earth, burnt up with the heat of a meridian sun, has been saturated with the descending torrents of rain, the rivers are swollen, and overflow their banks, not merely in those places where the rain actually falls, but throughout their courses. The rise of the Nile is occasioned by the rains which fall on the mountains