

chasms opened, and new islands appeared in the Mississippi and its tributaries. Flint, the geographer, who visited the country seven years after the event, says that, at the time of his visit, a district west of New Madrid still remained covered with water, and that the neighboring forest presented a scene of great confusion—many trees standing inclined in every direction, and others having their trunks and branches broken. He also saw hundreds of deep chasms remaining in the alluvial soil, which were produced, according to the inhabitants, by the bursting of the earth, which rose in great undulations, and discharged vast volumes of water, sand, and coaly matter, thrown up as high as the tops of the trees. As the shocks lasted throughout a period of three months, the country people remarked that, in given districts, there were certain prevailing directions in which these fissures opened, and they accordingly felled the tallest trees, making them fall at right angles to the direction of the chasms. By stationing themselves on these, they often escaped being swallowed up when the earth opened beneath them. Some of the shocks were perpendicular, while others, much more desolating, were horizontal, or moved along like great waves.

Before I left New Orleans, Mr. Bringier, the engineer, related to me that he was on horseback near New Madrid, in 1811, when some of the severest shocks were experienced, and that, as the waves advanced, he saw the trees bend down, and often, the instant afterward, when in the act of recovering their position, meet the boughs of other trees similarly inclined, so as to become interlocked, being prevented from righting themselves again. The transit of the wave through the woods was marked by the crashing noise of countless branches, first heard on one side and then on the other. At the same time powerful jets of water, mixed with sand, mud, and bituminous coaly shale, were cast up with such force, that both horse and rider might have perished, had the undulating ground happened to burst immediately beneath them. He also told me that circular cavities, called sink-holes, were formed where the principal fountains of mud and water were thrown up.

Hearing that some of these cavities still existed near the town,