

The sunk country is not confined to the region west of the Mississippi; for, on my way up the river, I learnt from Mr. Fletcher, a farmer, who had a wooding station in Tennessee, that several extensive forest tracts in that state were submerged during the shocks of 1811-12, and have ever since formed lakes and swamps, among which are those called Obion and Reelfoot. He had observed, in several of these, that trees which had been killed, and had stood for a long time partially submerged, had in many places rotted down to the water's edge. In some swamps caused by the earthquake, they had all decayed to within a few inches of the base of the trunk. It is therefore evident, that should the turbid waters of the Mississippi overflow that region, and deposit their sediment on such stumps, they would present to the geologist a precise counterpart of the buried stools of trees with their roots before described as occurring at the bottom of the bluff at Port Hudson.* Mr. Fletcher also told me, that he knew several fissures in Tennessee, formed in 1811-12, where the ground on one side of the rent remained higher by two feet than that on the other side.

I was informed at New Madrid that the Indians, before the year 1811, had a tradition of a great earthquake which had previously devastated this same region. Yet there is so wide an area of forest without sink-holes, or any great inequalities of surface, and without dead trees like those above alluded to, that we can not suppose any convulsion of equal magnitude to have occurred for many centuries previous to 1811.

Having explored the margin of the Great Prairie, and seen the sunk country several miles west of New Madrid, I returned by a different path through the woods, often losing my way, till I fell into the main road for the last six miles, which was cut straight through the forest, and was at this season singularly monotonous and dreary. It was furrowed with long, deep ruts, cut in black mud, and full of miry water. The sky was cloudy, and the plain as level as if it had never been disturbed by the slightest subterranean movement since it originated. The trees were, for the most part, leafless, and almost all of the same height,

* Ante, pp. 137-140.