

Caracas were entirely destroyed. The walls of some houses not thrown down, as those in the street San Juan, near the Capuchin Hospital, were cracked in such a manner as to render them uninhabitable. The effects of the earthquake were somewhat less violent in the western and southern parts of the city, between the principal square and the ravine of Caraguata. There, the cathedral, supported by enormous buttresses, remains standing.

It is computed that nine or ten thousand persons were killed in the city of Caracas, exclusive of those who, being dangerously wounded, perished several months after, for want of food and proper care. The night of the Festival of the Ascension witnessed an awful scene of desolation and distress. The thick cloud of dust which, rising above the ruins, darkened the sky like a fog, had settled on the ground. No commotion was felt, and never was a night more calm or more serene. The moon, then nearly at the full, illumined the rounded domes of the Silla, and the aspect of the sky formed a perfect contrast to that of the earth, which was covered with the bodies of the dead, and heaped with ruins. Mothers were seen bearing in their arms their children, whom they hoped to recall to life. Desolate families were wandering through the city, seeking a brother, a husband, or a friend, of whose fate they were ignorant, and whom they believed to be lost in the crowd. The people pressed along the streets, which could be traced only by long lines of ruins.

All the calamities experienced in the great catastrophes of Lisbon, Messina, Lima, and Riobamba were renewed at Caracas on the fatal 26th of March, 1812. Wounded persons, buried beneath the ruins, were heard imploring by their cries the help of the passers-by, and nearly two thousand were dug out. Never was pity more tenderly evinced; never was it more ingeniously active than in the efforts employed to save the miserable victims whose groans reached the ear. Implements for digging and clearing away the ruins were entirely wanting; and the people were obliged to use their bare hands, to disinter the living. The wounded, as well as the invalids who had escaped from the hospitals, were laid on the banks of the small river Guayra, where there was no shelter but the foliage of trees. Beds, linen to dress the