

Within her womb ; which, for enlargement striving,  
Shake the old beldam Earth, and topple down  
Steeple and moss-grown towers."

The violence of an earthquake seldom lasts more than a minute ; but successive shocks are sometimes felt at very short intervals. During the agitation, immense chasms are frequently formed, through which flames, torrents of water, or dense volumes of gaseous fluid, are thrown. The effects produced by earthquakes are, therefore, in some instances, most extensive, and of a dreadful character. A more appalling description of the consequences of an earthquake cannot be given, than that account of the catastrophe of 1638, recorded by Kircher. The narrator was on his way to Euphemia, but the sea was tossed about by so unnatural an agitation, and such dreadful noises proceeded from it, that it was found impossible to proceed ; and Kircher, with his companions, landed at Lopizicum. "Here," he says, "scenes of ruin appeared everywhere around me ; but my attention was quickly turned from more remote to contiguous danger, by a deep rumbling sound, which every moment grew louder. The place where we stood shook dreadfully. After some time, the violent paroxysm ceased. I stood up, and turning my eyes to Euphemia, saw only a frightful black cloud. We waited till it passed away, when nothing but a dismal and putrid lake was to be seen where the city once stood."

Humboldt has described, with his characteristic energy, the feelings which are experienced by an individual on the coast of Peru when he feels the shock of an earthquake. "From our infancy," he says, "the idea of certain contrasts fixes itself in our mind ; water appears to us an element that moves—earth a motionless and inert mass. These ideas are the effects of daily experience ; they are connected with every thing that is transmitted to us by the senses. When a shock is felt, when the earth is shaken on its old foundations, which we had deemed so stable, one instant is sufficient to destroy long illusions. It is like awakening from a dream ; but a painful awakening. We feel that we have been deceived by the apparent calm of nature—we become attentive to the least noise—we distrust, for the first time, a soil on which we had so long placed our feet with confidence. If the shocks be repeated, if they become frequent during succeeding days, the uncertainty quickly disappears. In 1784, the inhabitants