

After considering these details, the reader will not be surprised if we add that nothing so grievously terrifies man — nothing fills his soul with so unconquerable an anxiety—nothing, in fact, so utterly demoralizes him—as the earthquake. Humboldt has described, with his usual force, the profound impression, the wholly peculiar and distinct effect which it produces on the human mind :—

“That impression,” observes the illustrious physicist, “does not proceed from the images which the awful catastrophes whose memory history has preserved, then crowd upon the brain. What really moves us is, that we suddenly lose our innate confidence in the stability of the soil. From our infancy we have been accustomed to contrast the shifting nature of water with the immobility of earth. Our security has been strengthened by all the evidences of our senses. But the ground trembles, and that moment suffices to destroy the experience of a life. An unknown power is suddenly revealed, the calm of nature being but an illusion, and we feel ourselves thrown back violently upon a chaos of destructive forces. Then every sound, every breath of air excites the attention ; we grow mistrustful of the very ground on which we walk. Animals, too, and especially dogs and swine, experience this anguish ; the crocodiles of the Orinoco, generally as mute as our own little lizards, fly from the shattered bed of the river, and take refuge, roaring, in the forest.”\*

[A recent writer has very justly observed that the first physical effect of an earthquake seems to be to strip men of all their sense of moral relation to the universe altogether, to reduce them to the sickness of absolute isolation, and this even before the shock has worked its destructive effects. A gentleman who witnessed one of the worst earthquakes at Copiapo, remarked, “Before we hear the sound, or at least are fully conscious of hearing it, we are made sensible, I know not how, that something uncommon is going to happen ; everything seems to change colour ; our thoughts are chained immovably down ; the whole world appears to be in disorder ; all nature looks different from what it was wont to do ; and we feel quite subdued and over-

\* [Humboldt, “Kosmos,” i. 243.]