

them to be produced by the disruption of mountains when the earth, at first full of water, dries up; for he remarked that they take place chiefly during droughts and also during excessively wet seasons, because in the one case the earth is dried and splits up, while in the other, it gives way on account of being saturated with liquid.

Rejecting the explanations of his three predecessors just cited, Aristotle remarks that if some of their views were true, earthquakes ought gradually to grow less abundant and severe, until at last the earth should cease to shake, but that as this diminution has not been observed, another interpretation must be sought. He accordingly proposes one of his own which is a curious and memorable instance of imperfect observation and inaccurate generalisation. Earthquakes are due, he thinks, to a commingling of moist and dry within the earth. Of itself, the earth is dry, but from rain it acquires much internal humidity. Hence when it is warmed by the sun and by the internal heat, wind is produced both within and without its mass. Wind, being the lightest and most rapidly moving body, is the cause of motion in other bodies; and fire, united with wind, becomes flame which is endowed with great rapidity of motion. It is neither water nor earth which causes an earthquake; it is the wind when what is vaporised outside returns into the interior. Remarking a relation between the frequency and violence of earthquakes and the state of the weather, Aristotle admits with Anaximenes that they occur most abundantly in spring and autumn, during the seasons of heavy rain and of great drought, but he thinks