

The Voyage of the Beagle

by Charles Darwin

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Chapter 14 - Chiloe and Concepcion: Great Earthquake

ON JANUARY the 15th we sailed from Low's Harbour, and three days afterwards anchored a second time in the bay of S. Carlos in Chiloe. On the night of the 19th the volcano of Osorno was in action. At midnight the sentry observed something like a large star, which gradually increased in size till about three o'clock, when it presented a very magnificent spectacle. By the aid of a glass, dark objects, in constant succession, were seen, in the midst of a great glare of red light, to be thrown up and to fall down. The light was sufficient to cast on the water a long bright reflection. Large masses of molten matter seem very commonly to be cast out of the craters in this part of the Cordillera. I was assured that when the Corcovado is in eruption, great masses are projected upwards and are seen to burst in the air, assuming many fantastical forms, such as trees: their size must be immense, for they can be distinguished from the high land behind S. Carlos, which is no less than ninety-three miles from the Corcovado. In the morning the volcano became tranquil.

I was surprised at hearing afterwards that Aconcagua in Chile, 480 miles northwards, was in action on the same night; and still more surprised to hear that the great eruption of Coseguina (2700 miles north of Aconcagua), accompanied by an earthquake felt over a 1000 miles, also occurred within six hours of this same time. This coincidence is the more remarkable, as Coseguina had been dormant for twenty-six years; and Aconcagua most rarely shows any signs of action. It is difficult even to conjecture whether this coincidence was accidental, or shows some subterranean connection. If Vesuvius, Etna, and Hecla in Iceland (all three relatively nearer each other than the corresponding points in South America), suddenly burst forth in eruption on the same night, the coincidence would be thought remarkable; but it is far more remarkable in this case, where the three vents fall on the same great mountain-chain, and where the vast plains along the entire eastern coast, and the upraised recent shells along more than 2000 miles on the western coast, show in how equable and connected a manner the elevatory forces have acted.

Captain Fitz Roy being anxious that some bearings should be taken on the outer coast of Chiloe, it was planned that Mr. King and myself should ride to Castro, and thence across the island to the Capella de Cucao, situated on the west coast. Having hired horses and a guide, we set out on the morning of the 22nd. We had not proceeded far, before we were joined by a woman and two boys, who were bent on the same journey. Every one on this road acts on a "hail fellow well met" fashion; and one may here enjoy the privilege, so rare in South America, of travelling without firearms. At first, the country consisted of a succession of hills and valleys: nearer to Castro it became very level. The road itself is a curious affair; it consists in its whole length, with the exception of very few parts, of great logs of wood, which are either broad and laid longitudinally, or narrow and placed transversely. In summer the road is not very bad; but in winter, when the wood is rendered slippery from rain, travelling is exceedingly difficult. At that time of the year, the ground on each side becomes a morass, and is often overflowed: hence it is necessary that the longitudinal logs should be fastened down by transverse poles, which are pegged on each side into the earth. These pegs render a fall from a horse dangerous, as the chance of alighting on one of them is not small. It is remarkable, however, how active custom has made the Chilotan horses. In crossing bad parts, where the logs had been displaced, they skipped from one to the other, almost with the quickness and certainty of a dog. On both hands the road is bordered by the lofty forest-trees, with their bases matted together by canes. When occasionally a long reach of this avenue could be beheld, it presented a curious scene of uniformity: the white line of logs, narrowing in perspective, became hidden by the gloomy forest, or terminated in a zigzag which ascended some steep hill.

Although the distance from S. Carlos to Castro is only twelve leagues in a straight line, the formation of the road must have been a great labour. I was told that several people had formerly lost their lives in attempting to cross the forest. The first who succeeded was an Indian, who cut his way through the canes in eight days, and reached S. Carlos: he was rewarded by the Spanish government with a grant of land. During the summer, many of the Indians wander about the forests (but chiefly in the higher parts, where the woods are not quite so thick) in search of the half-wild cattle which live on the leaves of the cane and certain trees. It was one of these huntsmen

who by chance discovered, a few years since, an English vessel, which had been wrecked on the outer coast. The crew were beginning to fail in provisions, and it is not probable that, without the aid of this man, they would ever have extricated themselves from these scarcely penetrable woods. As it was, one seaman died on the march, from fatigue. The Indians in these excursions steer by the sun; so that if there is a continuance of cloudy weather, they can not travel.

The day was beautiful, and the number of trees which were in full flower perfumed the air; yet even this could hardly dissipate the effects of the gloomy dampness of the forest. Moreover, the many dead trunks that stand like skeletons, never fail to give to these primeval woods a character of solemnity, absent in those of countries long civilized. Shortly after sunset we bivouacked for the night. Our female companion, who was rather good-looking, belonged to one of the most respectable families in Castro: she rode, however, astride, and without shoes or stockings. I was surprised at the total want of pride shown by her and her brother. They brought food with them, but at all our meals sat watching Mr. King and myself whilst eating, till we were fairly shamed into feeding the whole party. The night was cloudless; and while lying in our beds, we enjoyed the sight (and it is a high enjoyment) of the multitude of stars which illumined the darkness of the forest.

January 23rd. -- We rose early in the morning, and reached the pretty quiet town of Castro by two o'clock. The old governor had died since our last visit, and a Chileno was acting in his place. We had a letter of introduction to Don Pedro, whom we found exceedingly hospitable and kind, and more disinterested than is usual on this side of the continent. The next day Don Pedro procured us fresh horses, and offered to accompany us himself. We proceeded to the south -- generally following the coast, and passing through several hamlets, each with its large barn-like chapel built of wood. At Vilipilli, Don Pedro asked the commandant to give us a guide to Cucao. The old gentleman offered to come himself; but for a long time nothing would persuade him that two Englishmen really wished to go to such an out-of-the-way place as Cucao. We were thus accompanied by the two greatest aristocrats in the country, as was plainly to be seen in the manner of all the poorer Indians towards them. At Chonchi we struck across the island, following intricate winding paths, sometimes passing through magnificent forests, and sometimes through pretty cleared spots, abounding with corn and potato crops. This undulating woody country, partially cultivated, reminded me of the wilder parts of England, and therefore had to my eye a most fascinating aspect. At Vilinco, which is situated on the borders of the lake of Cucao, only a few fields were cleared; and all the inhabitants appeared to be Indians. This lake is twelve miles long, and runs in an east and west direction. From local circumstances, the sea-breeze blows very regularly during the day, and during the night it falls calm: this has given rise to strange exaggerations, for the phenomenon, as described to us at S. Carlos, was quite a prodigy.

The road to Cucao was so very bad that we determined to embark in a *peragua*. The commandant, in the most authoritative manner, ordered six Indians to get ready to pull us over, without deigning to tell them whether they would be paid. The *peragua* is a strange rough boat, but the crew were still stranger: I doubt if six uglier little men ever got into a boat together. They pulled, however, very well and cheerfully. The stroke-oarsman gabbled Indian, and uttered strange cries, much after the fashion of a pig-driver driving his pigs. We started with a light breeze against us, but yet reached the Capella de Cucao before it was late. The country on each side of the lake was one unbroken forest. In the same *peragua* with us, a cow was embarked. To get so large an animal into a small boat appears at first a difficulty, but the Indians managed it in a minute. They brought the cow alongside the boat, which was heeled towards her; then placing two oars under her belly, with their ends resting on the gunwale, by the aid of these levers they fairly tumbled the poor beast heels over head into the bottom of the boat, and then lashed her down with ropes. At Cucao we found an uninhabited hovel (which is the residence of the padre when he pays this Capella a visit), where, lighting a fire, we cooked our supper, and were very comfortable.

The district of Cucao is the only inhabited part on the whole west coast of Chiloe. It contains about thirty or forty Indian families, who are scattered along four or five miles of the shore. They are very much secluded from the rest of Chiloe, and have scarcely any sort of commerce, except sometimes in a little oil, which they get from seal-blubber. They are tolerably dressed in clothes of their own manufacture, and they have plenty to eat. They seemed, however, discontented, yet humble to a degree which it was quite painful to witness. These feelings are, I think, chiefly to be attributed to the harsh and authoritative manner in which they are treated by their rulers. Our companions, although so very civil to us, behaved to the poor Indians as if they had been slaves, rather than free men. They ordered provisions and the use of their horses, without ever condescending to say how much, or indeed whether the owners should be paid at all. In the morning, being left alone with these poor people, we soon ingratiated ourselves by presents of cigars and mate. A lump of white sugar was divided between all present, and tasted with the greatest curiosity. The Indians ended all their complaints by saying, "And it is only because we are poor Indians, and know nothing; but it was not so when we had a King."

The next day after breakfast, we rode a few miles northward to Punta Huantamo. The road lay along a very broad beach, on which, even after so many fine days, a terrible surf was breaking. I was assured that after a heavy gale, the roar can be heard at night even at Castro, a distance of no less than twenty-one sea-miles across a hilly and wooded country. We had some difficulty in reaching the

point, owing to the intolerably bad paths; for everywhere in the shade the ground soon becomes a perfect quagmire. The point itself is a bold rocky hill. It is covered by a plant allied, I believe, to Bromelia, and called by the inhabitants Chepones. In scrambling through the beds, our hands were very much scratched. I was amused by observing the precaution our Indian guide took, in turning up his trousers, thinking that they were more delicate than his own hard skin. This plant bears a fruit, in shape like an artichoke, in which a number of seed-vessels are packed: these contain a pleasant sweet pulp, here much esteemed. I saw at Low's Harbour the Chilotans making chichi, or cider, with this fruit: so true is it, as Humboldt remarks, that almost everywhere man finds means of preparing some kind of beverage from the vegetable kingdom. The savages, however, of Tierra del Fuego, and I believe of Australia, have not advanced thus far in the arts.

The coast to the north of Punta Huantamo is exceedingly rugged and broken, and is fronted by many breakers, on which the sea is eternally roaring. Mr. King and myself were anxious to return, if it had been possible, on foot along this coast; but even the Indians said it was quite impracticable. We were told that men have crossed by striking directly through the woods from Cucao to S. Carlos, but never by the coast. On these expeditions, the Indians carry with them only roasted corn, and of this they eat sparingly twice a day.

26th. -- Re-embarking in the periagua, we returned across the lake, and then mounted our horses. The whole of Chiloe took advantage of this week of unusually fine weather, to clear the ground by burning. In every direction volumes of smoke were curling upwards. Although the inhabitants were so assiduous in setting fire to every part of the wood, yet I did not see a single fire which they had succeeded in making extensive. We dined with our friend the commandant, and did not reach Castro till after dark. The next morning we started very early. After having ridden for some time, we obtained from the brow of a steep hill an extensive view (and it is a rare thing on this road) of the great forest. Over the horizon of trees, the volcano of Corcovado, and the great flat-topped one to the north, stood out in proud pre-eminence: scarcely another peak in the long range showed its snowy summit. I hope it will be long before I forget this farewell view of the magnificent Cordillera fronting Chiloe. At night we bivouacked under a cloudless sky, and the next morning reached S. Carlos. We arrived on the right day, for before evening heavy rain commenced.

February 4th. -- Sailed from Chiloe. During the last week I made several short excursions. One was to examine a great bed of now-existing shells, elevated 350 feet above the level of the sea: from among these shells, large forest-trees were growing. Another ride was to P. Huechucucuy. I had with me a guide who knew the country far too well; for he would pertinaciously tell me endless Indian names for every little point, rivulet, and creek. In the same manner as in Tierra del Fuego, the Indian language appears singularly well adapted for attaching names to the most trivial features of the land. I believe every one was glad to say farewell to Chiloe; yet if we could forget the gloom and ceaseless rain of winter, Chiloe might pass for a charming island. There is also something very attractive in the simplicity and humble politeness of the poor inhabitants.

We steered northward along shore, but owing to thick weather did not reach Valdivia till the night of the 8th. The next morning the boat proceeded to the town, which is distant about ten miles. We followed the course of the river, occasionally passing a few hovels, and patches of ground cleared out of the otherwise unbroken forest; and sometimes meeting a canoe with an Indian family. The town is situated on the low banks of the stream, and is so completely buried in a wood of apple-trees that the streets are merely paths in an orchard I have never seen any country, where apple-trees appeared to thrive so well as in this damp part of South America: on the borders of the roads there were many young trees evidently self-grown. In Chiloe the inhabitants possess a marvellously short method of making an orchard. At the lower part of almost every branch, small, conical, brown, wrinkled points project: these are always ready to change into roots, as may sometimes be seen, where any mud has been accidentally splashed against the tree. A branch as thick as a man's thigh is chosen in the early spring, and is cut off just beneath a group of these points, all the smaller branches are lopped off, and it is then placed about two feet deep in the ground. During the ensuing summer the stump throws out long shoots, and sometimes even bears fruit: I was shown one which had produced as many as twenty-three apples, but this was thought very unusual. In the third season the stump is changed (as I have myself seen) into a well-wooded tree, loaded with fruit. An old man near Valdivia illustrated his motto, "Necesidad es la madre del invencion," by giving an account of the several useful things he manufactured from his apples. After making cider, and likewise wine, he extracted from the refuse a white and finely flavoured spirit; by another process he procured a sweet treacle, or, as he called it, honey. His children and pigs seemed almost to live, during this season of the year, in his orchard.

February 11th. -- I set out with a guide on a short ride, in which, however, I managed to see singularly little, either of the geology of the country or of its inhabitants. There is not much cleared land near Valdivia: after crossing a river at the distance of a few miles, we entered the forest, and then passed only one miserable hovel, before reaching our sleeping-place for the night. The short difference in latitude, of 150 miles, has given a new aspect to the forest compared with that of Chiloe. This is owing to a slightly different proportion in the kinds of trees. The evergreens do not appear to be quite so numerous, and the forest in consequence has a brighter

tint. As in Chiloe, the lower parts are matted together by canes: here also another kind (resembling the bamboo of Brazil and about twenty feet in height) grows in clusters, and ornaments the banks of some of the streams in a very pretty manner. It is with this plant that the Indians make their chuzos, or long tapering spears. Our resting-house was so dirty that I preferred sleeping outside: on these journeys the first night is generally very uncomfortable, because one is not accustomed to the tickling and biting of the fleas. I am sure, in the morning, there was not a space on my legs the size of a shilling which had not its little red mark where the flea had feasted.

12th. -- We continued to ride through the uncleared forest; only occasionally meeting an Indian on horseback, or a troop of fine mules bringing alerce-planks and corn from the southern plains. In the afternoon one of the horses knocked up: we were then on a brow of a hill, which commanded a fine view of the Llanos. The view of these open plains was very refreshing, after being hemmed in and buried in the wilderness of trees. The uniformity of a forest soon becomes very wearisome. This west coast makes me remember with pleasure the free, unbounded plains of Patagonia; yet, with the true spirit of contradiction, I cannot forget how sublime is the silence of the forest. The Llanos are the most fertile and thickly peopled parts of the country, as they possess the immense advantage of being nearly free from trees. Before leaving the forest we crossed some flat little lawns, around which single trees stood, as in an English park: I have often noticed with surprise, in wooded undulatory districts, that the quite level parts have been destitute of trees. On account of the tired horse, I determined to stop at the Mission of Cudico, to the friar of which I had a letter of introduction. Cudico is an intermediate district between the forest and the Llanos. There are a good many cottages, with patches of corn and potatoes, nearly all belonging to Indians. The tribes dependent on Valdivia are "reducidos y cristianos." The Indians farther northward, about Arauco and Imperial, are still very wild, and not converted; but they have all much intercourse with the Spaniards. The padre said that the Christian Indians did not much like coming to mass, but that otherwise they showed respect for religion. The greatest difficulty is in making them observe the ceremonies of marriage. The wild Indians take as many wives as they can support, and a cacique will sometimes have more than ten: on entering his house, the number may be told by that of the separate fires. Each wife lives a week in turn with the cacique; but all are employed in weaving ponchos, etc., for his profit. To be the wife of a cacique, is an honour much sought after by the Indian women.

The men of all these tribes wear a coarse woollen poncho: those south of Valdivia wear short trousers, and those north of it a petticoat, like the chilipa of the Gauchos. All have their long hair bound by a scarlet fillet, but with no other covering on their heads. These Indians are good-sized men; their cheek-bones are prominent, and in general appearance they resemble the great American family to which they belong; but their physiognomy seemed to me to be slightly different from that of any other tribe which I had before seen. Their expression is generally grave, and even austere, and possesses much character: this may pass either for honest bluntness or fierce determination. The long black hair, the grave and much-lined features, and the dark complexion, called to my mind old portraits of James I. On the road we met with none of that humble politeness so universal in Chiloe. Some gave their "mari-mari" (good morning) with promptness, but the greater number did not seem inclined to offer any salute. This independence of manners is probably a consequence of their long wars, and the repeated victories which they alone, of all the tribes in America, have gained over the Spaniards.

I spent the evening very pleasantly, talking with the padre. He was exceedingly kind and hospitable; and coming from Santiago, had contrived to surround himself with some few comforts. Being a man of some little education, he bitterly complained of the total want of society. With no particular zeal for religion, no business or pursuit, how completely must this man's life be wasted! The next day, on our return, we met seven very wild-looking Indians, of whom some were caciques that had just received from the Chilian government their yearly small stipend for having long remained faithful. They were fine-looking men, and they rode one after the other, with most gloomy faces. An old cacique, who headed them, had been, I suppose, more excessively drunk than the rest, for he seemed extremely grave and very crabbed. Shortly before this, two Indians joined us, who were travelling from a distant mission to Valdivia concerning some lawsuit. One was a good-humoured old man, but from his wrinkled beardless face looked more like an old woman than a man. I frequently presented both of them with cigars; and though ready to receive them, and I dare say grateful, they would hardly condescend to thank me. A Chilotan Indian would have taken off his hat, and given his "Dios le pague!" The travelling was very tedious, both from the badness of the roads, and from the number of great fallen trees, which it was necessary either to leap over or to avoid by making long circuits. We slept on the road, and next morning reached Valdivia, whence I proceeded on board.

A few days afterwards I crossed the bay with a party of officers, and landed near the fort called Niebla. The buildings were in a most ruinous state, and the gun-carriages quite rotten. Mr. Wickham remarked to the commanding officer, that with one discharge they would certainly all fall to pieces. The poor man, trying to put a good face upon it, gravely replied, "No, I am sure, sir, they would stand two!" The Spaniards must have intended to have made this place impregnable. There is now lying in the middle of the courtyard a little mountain of mortar, which rivals in hardness the rock on which it is placed. It was brought from Chile, and cost 7000 dollars. The revolution having broken out, prevented its being applied to any purpose, and now it remains a monument of the fallen greatness of Spain.

I wanted to go to a house about a mile and a half distant, but my guide said it was quite impossible to penetrate the wood in a straight line. He offered, however, to lead me, by following obscure cattle-tracks, the shortest way: the walk, nevertheless, took no less than three hours! This man is employed in hunting strayed cattle; yet, well as he must know the woods, he was not long since lost for two whole days, and had nothing to eat. These facts convey a good idea of the impracticability of the forests of these countries. A question often occurred to me -- how long does any vestige of a fallen tree remain? This man showed me one which a party of fugitive royalists had cut down fourteen years ago; and taking this as a criterion, I should think a bole a foot and a half in diameter would in thirty years be changed into a heap of mould.

February 20th. -- This day has been memorable in the annals of Valdivia, for the most severe earthquake experienced by the oldest inhabitant. I happened to be on shore, and was lying down in the wood to rest myself. It came on suddenly, and lasted two minutes, but the time appeared much longer. The rocking of the ground was very sensible. The undulations appeared to my companion and myself to come from due east, whilst others thought they proceeded from south-west: this shows how difficult it sometimes is to perceive the directions of the vibrations. There was no difficulty in standing upright, but the motion made me almost giddy: it was something like the movement of a vessel in a little cross-ripple, or still more like that felt by a person skating over thin ice, which bends under the weight of his body. A bad earthquake at once destroys our oldest associations: the earth, the very emblem of solidity, has moved beneath our feet like a thin crust over a fluid; -- one second of time has created in the mind a strange idea of insecurity, which hours of reflection would not have produced. In the forest, as a breeze moved the trees, I felt only the earth tremble, but saw no other effect. Captain Fitz Roy and some officers were at the town during the shock, and there the scene was more striking; for although the houses, from being built of wood, did not fall, they were violently shaken, and the boards creaked and rattled together. The people rushed out of doors in the greatest alarm. It is these accompaniments that create that perfect horror of earthquakes, experienced by all who have thus seen, as well as felt, their effects. Within the forest it was a deeply interesting, but by no means an awe-exciting phenomenon. The tides were very curiously affected. The great shock took place at the time of low water; and an old woman who was on the beach told me that the water flowed very quickly, but not in great waves, to high-water mark, and then as quickly returned to its proper level; this was also evident by the line of wet sand. The same kind of quick but quiet movement in the tide happened a few years since at Chiloe, during a slight earthquake, and created much causeless alarm. In the course of the evening there were many weaker shocks, which seemed to produce in the harbour the most complicated currents, and some of great strength.

March 4th. -- We entered the harbour of Concepcion. While the ship was beating up to the anchorage, I landed on the island of Quiriquina. The mayor-domo of the estate quickly rode down to tell me the terrible news of the great earthquake of the 20th: -- "That not a house in Concepcion or Talcahuano (the port) was standing; that seventy villages were destroyed; and that a great wave had almost washed away the ruins of Talcahuano." Of this latter statement I soon saw abundant proofs -- the whole coast being strewed over with timber and furniture as if a thousand ships had been wrecked. Besides chairs, tables, book-shelves, etc., in great numbers, there were several roofs of cottages, which had been transported almost whole. The storehouses at Talcahuano had been burst open, and great bags of cotton, yerba, and other valuable merchandise were scattered on the shore. During my walk round the island, I observed that numerous fragments of rock, which, from the marine productions adhering to them, must recently have been lying in deep water, had been cast up high on the beach; one of these was six feet long, three broad, and two thick.

The island itself as plainly showed the overwhelming power of the earthquake, as the beach did that of the consequent great wave. The ground in many parts was fissured in north and south lines, perhaps caused by the yielding of the parallel and steep sides of this narrow island. Some of the fissures near the cliffs were a yard wide. Many enormous masses had already fallen on the beach; and the inhabitants thought that when the rains commenced far greater slips would happen. The effect of the vibration on the hard primary slate, which composes the foundation of the island, was still more curious: the superficial parts of some narrow ridges were as completely shivered as if they had been blasted by gunpowder. This effect, which was rendered conspicuous by the fresh fractures and displaced soil, must be confined to near the surface, for otherwise there would not exist a block of solid rock throughout Chile; nor is this improbable, as it is known that the surface of a vibrating body is affected differently from the central part. It is, perhaps, owing to this same reason, that earthquakes do not cause quite such terrific havoc within deep mines as would be expected. I believe this convulsion has been more effectual in lessening the size of the island of Quiriquina, than the ordinary wear-and-tear of the sea and weather during the course of a whole century.

The next day I landed at Talcahuano, and afterwards rode to Concepcion. Both towns presented the most awful yet interesting spectacle I ever beheld. To a person who had formerly know them, it possibly might have been still more impressive; for the ruins were so mingled together, and the whole scene possessed so little the air of a habitable place, that it was scarcely possible to imagine its former condition. The earthquake commenced at half-past eleven o'clock in the forenoon. If it had happened in the middle of the

night, the greater number of the inhabitants (which in this one province must amount to many thousands) must have perished, instead of less than a hundred: as it was, the invariable practice of running out of doors at the first trembling of the ground, alone saved them. In Concepcion each house, or row of houses, stood by itself, a heap or line of ruins; but in Talcahuano, owing to the great wave, little more than one layer of bricks, tiles, and timber with here and there part of a wall left standing, could be distinguished. From this circumstance Concepcion, although not so completely desolated, was a more terrible, and if I may so call it, picturesque sight. The first shock was very sudden. The mayor-domo at Quiriquina told me, that the first notice he received of it, was finding both the horse he rode and himself, rolling together on the ground. Rising up, he was again thrown down. He also told me that some cows which were standing on the steep side of the island were rolled into the sea. The great wave caused the destruction of many cattle; on one low island near the head of the bay, seventy animals were washed off and drowned. It is generally thought that this has been the worst earthquake ever recorded in Chile; but as the very severe ones occur only after long intervals, this cannot easily be known; nor indeed would a much worse shock have made any difference, for the ruin was now complete. Innumerable small tremblings followed the great earthquake, and within the first twelve days no less than three hundred were counted.

After viewing Concepcion, I cannot understand how the greater number of inhabitants escaped unhurt. The houses in many parts fell outwards; thus forming in the middle of the streets little hillocks of brickwork and rubbish. Mr. Rouse, the English consul, told us that he was at breakfast when the first movement warned him to run out. He had scarcely reached the middle of the court-yard, when one side of his house came thundering down. He retained presence of mind to remember, that if he once got on the top of that part which had already fallen, he would be safe. Not being able from the motion of the ground to stand, he crawled up on his hands and knees; and no sooner had he ascended this little eminence, than the other side of the house fell in, the great beams sweeping close in front of his head. With his eyes blinded, and his mouth choked with the cloud of dust which darkened the sky, at last he gained the street. As shock succeeded shock, at the interval of a few minutes, no one dared approach the shattered ruins, and no one knew whether his dearest friends and relations were not perishing from the want of help. Those who had saved any property were obliged to keep a constant watch, for thieves prowled about, and at each little trembling of the ground, with one hand they beat their breasts and cried "Misericordia!" and then with the other filched what they could from the ruins. The thatched roofs fell over the fires, and flames burst forth in all parts. Hundreds knew themselves ruined, and few had the means of providing food for the day.

Earthquakes alone are sufficient to destroy the prosperity of any country. If beneath England the now inert subterranean forces should exert those powers, which most assuredly in former geological ages they have exerted, how completely would the entire condition of the country be changed! What would become of the lofty houses, thickly packed cities, great manufactories, the beautiful public and private edifices? If the new period of disturbance were first to commence by some great earthquake in the dead of the night, how terrific would be the carnage! England would at once be bankrupt; all papers, records, and accounts would from that moment be lost. Government being unable to collect the taxes, and failing to maintain its authority, the hand of violence and rapine would remain uncontrolled. In every large town famine would go forth, pestilence and death following in its train.

Shortly after the shock, a great wave was seen from the distance of three or four miles, approaching in the middle of the bay with a smooth outline; but along the shore it tore up cottages and trees, as it swept onwards with irresistible force. At the head of the bay it broke in a fearful line of white breakers, which rushed up to a height of 23 vertical feet above the highest spring-tides. Their force must have been prodigious; for at the Fort a cannon with its carriage, estimated at four tons in weight, was moved 15 feet inwards. A schooner was left in the midst of the ruins, 200 yards from the beach. The first wave was followed by two others, which in their retreat carried away a vast wreck of floating objects. In one part of the bay, a ship was pitched high and dry on shore, was carried off, again driven on shore, and again carried off. In another part, two large vessels anchored near together were whirled about, and their cables were thrice wound round each other; though anchored at a depth of 36 feet, they were for some minutes aground. The great wave must have travelled slowly, for the inhabitants of Talcahuano had time to run up the hills behind the town; and some sailors pulled out seaward, trusting successfully to their boat riding securely over the swell, if they could reach it before it broke. One old woman with a little boy, four or five years old, ran into a boat, but there was nobody to row it out: the boat was consequently dashed against an anchor and cut in twain; the old woman was drowned, but the child was picked up some hours afterwards clinging to the wreck. Pools of salt-water were still standing amidst the ruins of the houses, and children, making boats with old tables and chairs, appeared as happy as their parents were miserable. It was, however, exceedingly interesting to observe, how much more active and cheerful all appeared than could have been expected. It was remarked with much truth, that from the destruction being universal, no one individual was humbled more than another, or could suspect his friends of coldness -- that most grievous result of the loss of wealth. Mr. Rouse, and a large party whom he kindly took under his protection, lived for the first week in a garden beneath some apple-trees. At first they were as merry as if it had been a picnic; but soon afterwards heavy rain caused much discomfort, for they were absolutely without shelter.

In Captain Fitz Roy's excellent account of the earthquake, it is said that two explosions, one like a column of smoke and another like

the blowing of a great whale, were seen in the bay. The water also appeared everywhere to be boiling; and it "became black, and exhaled a most disagreeable sulphureous smell." These latter circumstances were observed in the Bay of Valparaiso during the earthquake of 1822; they may, I think, be accounted for, by the disturbance of the mud at the bottom of the sea containing organic matter in decay. In the Bay of Callao, during a calm day, I noticed, that as the ship dragged her cable over the bottom, its course was marked by a line of bubbles. The lower orders in Talcahuano thought that the earthquake was caused by some old Indian women, who two years ago, being offended, stopped the volcano of Antuco. This silly belief is curious, because it shows that experience has taught them to observe, that there exists a relation between the suppressed action of the volcanos, and the trembling of the ground. It was necessary to apply the witchcraft to the point where their perception of cause and effect failed; and this was the closing of the volcanic vent. This belief is the more singular in this particular instance, because, according to Captain Fitz Roy, there is reason to believe that Antuco was noways affected.

The town of Concepcion was built in the usual Spanish fashion, with all the streets running at right angles to each other; one set ranging S.W. by W., and the other set N.W. by N. The walls in the former direction certainly stood better than those in the latter; the greater number of the masses of brickwork were thrown down towards the N.E. Both these circumstances perfectly agree with the general idea, of the undulations having come from the S.W., in which quarter subterranean noises were also heard; for it is evident that the walls running S.W. and N.E. which presented their ends to the point whence the undulations came, would be much less likely to fall than those walls which, running N.W. and S.E., must in their whole lengths have been at the same instant thrown out of the perpendicular; for the undulations, coming from the S.W., must have extended in N.W. and S.E. waves, as they passed under the foundations. This may be illustrated by placing books edgeways on a carpet, and then, after the manner suggested by Michell, imitating the undulations of an earthquake: it will be found that they fall with more or less readiness, according as their direction more or less nearly coincides with the line of the waves. The fissures in the ground generally, though not uniformly, extended in a S.E. and N.W. direction, and therefore corresponded to the lines of undulation or of principal flexure. Bearing in mind all these circumstances, which so clearly point to the S.W. as the chief focus of disturbance, it is a very interesting fact that the island of S. Maria, situated in that quarter, was, during the general uplifting of the land, raised to nearly three times the height of any other part of the coast.

The different resistance offered by the walls, according to their direction, was well exemplified in the case of the Cathedral. The side which fronted the N.E. presented a grand pile of ruins, in the midst of which door-cases and masses of timber stood up, as if floating in a stream. Some of the angular blocks of brickwork were of great dimensions; and they were rolled to a distance on the level plaza, like fragments of rock at the base of some high mountain. The side walls (running S.W. and N.E.), though exceedingly fractured, yet remained standing; but the vast buttresses (at right angles to them, and therefore parallel to the walls that fell) were in many cases cut clean off, as if by a chisel, and hurled to the ground. Some square ornaments on the coping of these same walls, were moved by the earthquake into a diagonal position. A similar circumstance was observed after an earthquake at Valparaiso, Calabria, and other places, including some of the ancient Greek temples. [1] This twisting displacement, at first appears to indicate a vorticose movement beneath each point thus affected; but this is highly improbable. May it not be caused by a tendency in each stone to arrange itself in some particular position, with respect to the lines of vibration, -- in a manner somewhat similar to pins on a sheet of paper when shaken? Generally speaking, arched doorways or windows stood much better than any other part of the buildings. Nevertheless, a poor lame old man, who had been in the habit, during trifling shocks, of crawling to a certain doorway, was this time crushed to pieces.

I have not attempted to give any detailed description of the appearance of Concepcion, for I feel that it is quite impossible to convey the mingled feelings which I experienced. Several of the officers visited it before me, but their strongest language failed to give a just idea of the scene of desolation. It is a bitter and humiliating thing to see works, which have cost man so much time and labour, overthrown in one minute; yet compassion for the inhabitants was almost instantly banished, by the surprise in seeing a state of things produced in a moment of time, which one was accustomed to attribute to a succession of ages. In my opinion, we have scarcely beheld, since leaving England, any sight so deeply interesting.

In almost every severe earthquake, the neighbouring waters of the sea are said to have been greatly agitated. The disturbance seems generally, as in the case of Concepcion, to have been of two kinds: first, at the instant of the shock, the water swells high up on the beach with a gentle motion, and then as quietly retreats; secondly, some time afterwards, the whole body of the sea retires from the coast, and then returns in waves of overwhelming force. The first movement seems to be an immediate consequence of the earthquake affecting differently a fluid and a solid, so that their respective levels are slightly deranged: but the second case is a far more important phenomenon. During most earthquakes, and especially during those on the west coast of America, it is certain that the first great movement of the waters has been a retirement. Some authors have attempted to explain this, by supposing that the water retains its level, whilst the land oscillates upwards; but surely the water close to the land, even on a rather steep coast, would partake of the motion of the bottom: moreover, as urged by Mr. Lyell, similar movements of the sea have occurred at islands far distant from

the chief line of disturbance, as was the case with Juan Fernandez during this earthquake, and with Madeira during the famous Lisbon shock. I suspect (but the subject is a very obscure one) that a wave, however produced, first draws the water from the shore, on which it is advancing to break: I have observed that this happens with the little waves from the paddles of a steam-boat. It is remarkable that whilst Talcahuano and Callao (near Lima), both situated at the head of large shallow bays, have suffered during every severe earthquake from great waves, Valparaiso, seated close to the edge of profoundly deep water, has never been overwhelmed, though so often shaken by the severest shocks. From the great wave not immediately following the earthquake, but sometimes after the interval of even half an hour, and from distant islands being affected similarly with the coasts near the focus of the disturbance, it appears that the wave first rises in the offing; and as this is of general occurrence, the cause must be general: I suspect we must look to the line, where the less disturbed waters of the deep ocean join the water nearer the coast, which has partaken of the movements of the land, as the place where the great wave is first generated; it would also appear that the wave is larger or smaller, according to the extent of shoal water which has been agitated together with the bottom on which it rested.

The most remarkable effect of this earthquake was the permanent elevation of the land, it would probably be far more correct to speak of it as the cause. There can be no doubt that the land round the Bay of Concepcion was upraised two or three feet; but it deserves notice, that owing to the wave having obliterated the old lines of tidal action on the sloping sandy shores, I could discover no evidence of this fact, except in the united testimony of the inhabitants, that one little rocky shoal, now exposed, was formerly covered with water. At the island of S. Maria (about thirty miles distant) the elevation was greater; on one part, Captain Fitz Roy founds beds of putrid mussel-shells _still adhering to the rocks_, ten feet above high-water mark: the inhabitants had formerly dived at lower-water spring-tides for these shells. The elevation of this province is particularly interesting, from its having been the theatre of several other violent earthquakes, and from the vast numbers of sea-shells scattered over the land, up to a height of certainly 600, and I believe, of 1000 feet. At Valparaiso, as I have remarked, similar shells are found at the height of 1300 feet: it is hardly possible to doubt that this great elevation has been effected by successive small uprisings, such as that which accompanied or caused the earthquake of this year, and likewise by an insensibly slow rise, which is certainly in progress on some parts of this coast.

The island of Juan Fernandez, 360 miles to the N.E., was, at the time of the great shock of the 20th, violently shaken, so that the trees beat against each other, and a volcano burst forth under water close to the shore: these facts are remarkable because this island, during the earthquake of 1751, was then also affected more violently than other places at an equal distance from Concepcion, and this seems to show some subterranean connection between these two points. Chiloe, about 340 miles southward of Concepcion, appears to have been shaken more strongly than the intermediate district of Valdivia, where the volcano of Villarica was noways affected, whilst in the Cordillera in front of Chiloe, two of the volcanos burst-forth at the same instant in violent action. These two volcanos, and some neighbouring ones, continued for a long time in eruption, and ten months afterwards were again influenced by an earthquake at Concepcion. Some men, cutting wood near the base of one of these volcanos, did not perceive the shock of the 20th, although the whole surrounding Province was then trembling; here we have an eruption relieving and taking the place of an earthquake, as would have happened at Concepcion, according to the belief of the lower orders, if the volcano at Antuco had not been closed by witchcraft. Two years and three-quarters afterwards, Valdivia and Chiloe were again shaken, more violently than on the 20th, and an island in the Chonos Archipelago was permanently elevated more than eight feet. It will give a better idea of the scale of these phenomena, if (as in the case of the glaciers) we suppose them to have taken place at corresponding distances in Europe: -- then would the land from the North Sea to the Mediterranean have been violently shaken, and at the same instant of time a large tract of the eastern coast of England would have been permanently elevated, together with some outlying islands, -- a train of volcanos on the coast of Holland would have burst forth in action, and an eruption taken place at the bottom of the sea, near the northern extremity of Ireland -- and lastly, the ancient vents of Auvergne, Cantal, and Mont d'Or would each have sent up to the sky a dark column of smoke, and have long remained in fierce action. Two years and three-quarters afterwards, France, from its centre to the English Channel, would have been again desolated by an earthquake and an island permanently upraised in the Mediterranean.

The space, from under which volcanic matter on the 20th was actually erupted, is 720 miles in one line, and 400 miles in another line at right angles to the first: hence, in all probability, a subterranean lake of lava is here stretched out, of nearly double the area of the Black Sea. From the intimate and complicated manner in which the elevatory and eruptive forces were shown to be connected during this train of phenomena, we may confidently come to the conclusion, that the forces which slowly and by little starts uplift continents, and those which at successive periods pour forth volcanic matter from open orifices, are identical. From many reasons, I believe that the frequent quakings of the earth on this line of coast are caused by the rending of the strata, necessarily consequent on the tension of the land when upraised, and their injection by fluidified rock. This rending and injection would, if repeated often enough (and we know that earthquakes repeatedly affect the same areas in the same manner), form a chain of hills; -- and the linear island of S. Mary, which was upraised thrice the height of the neighbouring country, seems to be undergoing this process. I believe that the solid axis of a mountain, differs in its manner of formation from a volcanic hill, only in the molten stone having been repeatedly injected, instead of having been repeatedly ejected. Moreover, I believe that it is impossible to explain the structure of great mountain-chains, such as that

of the Cordillera, were the strata, capping the injected axis of plutonic rock, have been thrown on their edges along several parallel and neighbouring lines of elevation, except on this view of the rock of the axis having been repeatedly injected, after intervals sufficiently long to allow the upper parts or wedges to cool and become solid; -- for if the strata had been thrown into their present highly inclined, vertical, and even inverted positions, by a single blow, the very bowels of the earth would have gushed out; and instead of beholding abrupt mountain-axes of rock solidified under great pressure, deluges of lava would have flowed out at innumerable points on every line of elevation. [2]

[1] M. Arago in L'Institut, 1839, p. 337. See also Miers's Chile, vol. i. p. 392; also Lyell's Principles of Geology, chap. xv., book ii.

[2] For a full account of the volcanic phenomena which accompanied the earthquake of the 20th, and for the conclusions deducible from them, I must refer to Volume V. of the Geological Transactions.

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