

The various opinions which have been offered by Michell and later writers, respecting the remote causes of earthquake shocks in the interior of the earth, will more properly be discussed in the thirty-third chapter.

Chili, 1751. — On the 24th of May, 1751, the ancient town of Concepcion, otherwise called Penco, was totally destroyed by an earthquake, and the sea rolled over it. (See plan of the bay, fig. 53. p. 437.) The ancient port was rendered entirely useless, and the inhabitants built another town about ten miles from the sea-coast, in order to be beyond the reach of similar inundations. At the same time, a colony recently settled on the sea-shore of Juan Fernandez was almost entirely overwhelmed by a wave which broke upon the shore.

It has been already stated, that in 1835, or eighty-four years after the destruction of Penco, the same coast was overwhelmed by a similar flood from the sea during an earthquake; and it is also known that twenty-one years before (or in 1730), a like wave rolled over these fated shores, in which many of the inhabitants perished. A series of similar catastrophes has also been traced back as far as the year 1590*, beyond which we have no memorials save those of oral tradition. Molina, who has recorded the customs and legends of the aborigines, tells us, that the Araucanian Indians, a tribe inhabiting the country between the Andes and Pacific, including the part now called Chili, "had among them a tradition of a great deluge, in which only a few persons were saved, who took refuge upon a high mountain called Thegtheg, "the thundering," which had three points. Whenever a violent earthquake occurs, these people fly for safety to the mountains, assigning as a reason, that they are fearful after the shock, that the sea will again return and deluge the world."†

Notwithstanding the tendency of writers in his day to refer all traditionary inundations to one remote period, Molina remarks that this flood of the Araucanians "was probably very different from that of Noah." We have, indeed, no means of conjecturing how long this same tribe had flourished in Chili, but we can scarcely doubt, that if its experience reached back even for three or four centuries, several inroads of the ocean must have occurred within that period. But the memory of a succession of physical events, similar in kind, though distinct in time, can never be preserved by a people destitute of written annals. Before two or three generations have passed away all dates are forgotten, and even the events themselves, unless they have given origin to some customs, or religious rites and ceremonies. Oftentimes the incidents of many different earthquakes and floods become blended together in the same narrative; and in such cases the single catastrophe is described in terms so exaggerated, or is so dis-

* See Father Acosta's work; and Sir Woodbine Parish, Geol. Soc. Proceedings, vol. ii. p. 215.

† Molina, Hist. of Chili, vol. ii. p. 93.