

in my opinion, the result of a recollection of those fearful pictures of devastation presented to our imaginations by the historical narratives of the past, but is rather due to the sudden revelation of the delusive nature of the inherent faith by which we had clung to a belief in the immobility of the solid parts of the earth. We are accustomed from early childhood to draw a contrast between the mobility of water and the immobility of the soil on which we tread; and this feeling is confirmed by the evidence of our senses. When, therefore, we suddenly feel the ground move beneath us, a mysterious and natural force, with which we are previously unacquainted, is revealed to us as an active disturbance of stability. A moment destroys the illusion of a whole life; our deceptive faith in the repose of nature vanishes, and we feel transported, as it were, into a realm of unknown destructive forces. Every sound—the faintest motion in the air—arrests our attention, and we no longer trust the ground on which we stand. Animals, especially dogs and swine, participate in the same anxious disquietude; and even the crocodiles of the Orinoco, which are at other times as dumb as our little lizards, leave the trembling bed of the river, and run with loud cries into the adjacent forests.

To man the earthquake conveys an idea of some universal and unlimited danger. We may flee from the crater of a volcano in active eruption, or from the dwelling whose destruction is threatened by the approach of the lava stream; but in an earthquake, direct our flight whithersoever we will, we still feel as if we trod upon the very focus of destruction. This condition of the mind is not of long duration, although it takes its origin in the deepest recesses of our nature; and when a series of faint shocks succeed one another, the inhabitants of the country soon lose every trace of fear. On the coasts of Peru, where rain and hail are unknown, no less than the rolling thunder and the flashing lightning, these luminous explosions of the atmosphere are replaced by the subterranean noises which accompany earthquakes.* Long habit, and the very

* [“Along the whole coast of Peru the atmosphere is almost uniformly in a state of repose. It is not illuminated by the lightning’s flash, or disturbed by the roar of the thunder; no deluges of rain, no fierce hurricanes, destroy the fruits of the fields, and with them the hopes of the husbandman. But the mildness of the elements above ground is frightfully counterbalanced by their subterranean fury. Lima is frequently visited by earthquakes, and several times the city has been reduced to a mass of ruins. At an average, forty-five shocks may be counted on in the year. Most of them occur in the latter part of Octo-