

wide at the mouth and 25 in height; I cannot well describe the music on the water from the cave!

Spoke at the Red Banks. Quit the boats at the mouth of Cumberland river, embarked in a boat from that river going to trade with the Indians up the Arkansas. At the mouth of Ohio I embarked in a keel boat and descended the Mississippi to New Madrid, in Missouri territory.

The earthquake as here made awful distress among the inhabitants, as may be seen by the following letter.

New Madrid, Territory of Missouri, March 22, 1816.

DEAR SIR:—

IN compliance with your request, I will now give you a history, as full in detail as the limits of a letter will permit, of the late awful visitation of Providence in this place and its vicinity.

On the 16th of December, 1811, about two o'clock, A. M., we were visited by a violent shock of an earthquake, accompanied by a very awful noise resembling loud but distant thunder, but more hoarse and vibrating, which was followed in a few minutes by the complete saturation of the atmosphere, with sulphurous vapor, causing total darkness. The screams of the affrighted inhabitants running to and fro, not knowing where to go or what to do—the cries of the fowls and beasts of every species—the cracking of trees falling, and the roaring of the Mississippi—the current of which was retrograde for a few minutes, owing as is supposed, to an irruption in its bed—formed a scene truly horrible. From that time until about sunrise, a number of lighter shocks occurred; at which time one still more violent than the first took place, with the same accompaniments as the first, and the terror which had been excited in every one, and indeed in all animal nature, was now, if possible doubled. The inhabitants fled in every direction to the country, supposing (if it can be admitted that their minds were exercised at all) that there was less danger at a distance from, than near to the river. In one person, a female, the alarm was so great, that she fainted, and could not be recovered. There were several shocks of a day, but lighter than those already mentioned until the 23d of January, 1812, when one occurred as violent as the severest of the former ones, accompanied by the same phenomena as the former. From this time until the 4th of February the earth was in continual agitation, visibly waving as a gentle sea. On that day there was another shock, nearly as hard as the preceding ones. Next day four such, and on the 7th about 4 o'clock, A. M., a concussion took place so much more violent than those which had preceded it, that it was denominated the hard shock. The awful darkness of the atmosphere, which as formerly was saturated with sulphurous vapor, and the violence of the tempestuous thundering noise that accompanied it, together with all the other phenomena mentioned as attending the former ones, formed a scene, the description of which would require the most sublimely fanciful imagination. At first the Mississippi seemed

to recede from its banks, and its waters gathering up like a mountain, leaving for a moment many boats, which were here on their way to New Orleans, on the bare sand, in which time the poor sailors made their escape from them. It then rising fifteen or twenty feet perpendicularly, and expanding, as it were, at the same moment, the banks were overflowed with a retrograde current, rapid as a torrent—the boats which before had been left on the sand were now torn from their moorings, and suddenly driven up a little creek, at the mouth of which they laid, to the distance in some instances, of nearly a quarter of a mile. The river falling immediately, as rapid as it had risen, recoded within its banks again with such violence, that it took with it whole groves of young cotton-wood trees, which lodged its borders. They were broken off with such regularity, in some instances, that persons who had not witnessed the fact, would be difficultly persuaded, that it has not been the work of art. A great many fish were left on the banks, being unable to keep pace with the water. The river was literally covered with the wrecks of boats, and 'tis said that one was wrecked in which there was a lady and six children, all of whom were lost. In all the hard shocks mentioned, the earth was horribly torn to pieces—the surface of hundreds of acres, was, from time to time, covered over, of various depths, by the sand which issued from the fissures, which were made in great numbers all over this country, some of which closed up immediately after they had vomited forth their sand and water, which it must be remarked, was the matter generally thrown up. In some places, however, there was a substance somewhat resembling coal, or impure stone coal, thrown up with the sand. It is impossible to say what the depth of the fissures or irregular breaks were; we have reason to believe that some of them are very deep. The site of this town was evidently settled down at least fifteen feet, and not more than half a mile below the town there does not appear to be any alteration on the bank of the river; but back from the river a small distance, the numerous large ponds or lakes, as they were called, which covered a great part of the country, were nearly dried up. The beds of some of them are elevated above their former banks several feet, producing an alteration of ten, fifteen to twenty feet, from their original state. And lately it has been discovered that a lake was formed on the opposite side of the Mississippi, in the Indian country, upwards of one hundred miles in length, and from one to six miles in width, of the depth of from ten to fifty feet. It has communication with the river at both ends, and it is conjectured that it will not be many years before the principal part, if not the whole of the Mississippi, will pass that way. We were constrained by the fear of our houses falling to live twelve or eighteen months, after the first shocks, in little tight camps made of boards; but we gradually became callous, and returned to our houses again. Most of those who fled from the country in the time of the hard shocks have since returned home. We have, since their commencement in 1811, and still continue to feel, slight shocks occasionally. it is seldom indeed that we are more than a week without feeling one, and sometimes three or four in a day. There were two this winter past much harder than we have felt them for two years before; but since then they appear to be lighter than they have ever been, and we begin to hope that ere long they will entirely cease.

I have now, sir, finished my promised description of the earthquake—imperfect it is true, but just as it occurred to my memory; many of, and most of the truly awful scenes, having occurred three or four years ago. They of course are not related with that precision which would entitle it to the character of a full and accurate picture. But such as it is, it is given with pleasure—in the full confidence that it is given to a friend. And now, sir, wishing you all good, I must bid you adieu.

Your humble servant,

The Rev. Lorenzo Dow.

ELIZA BRYAN.

There is one circumstance which I think worthy of remark. This country was formerly subject to very hard thunder; but for more than a twelve month before the commencement of the earthquake there was none at all, and but very little since, a great part of which resembles subterraneous thunder. The shocks still continue, but are growing more light, and less frequent.—E. B.

The vibration of the earth shook down trees, thousands of willows were swept off like a pipe stem, about waist high, and the swamps became high ground, and high land became low ground, and two islands in the river were so shaken, washed away and sunk, as not to be found.

After speaking once, descended to ^{the} Iron Banks, acres of which had been shaken down, the effects of which were awfully impressive! Being very high, some trees, the tops just above water, others just ready to fall and slide off.

There are many sawyers in this river, i. e., trees fastened by the branches or roots in the bottom of the river, which saw up and down by virtue of the pressing of the water; while others are so firm as not at all to yield to the current. Those things make it dangerous going at night or in the fog.

We lay by two nights and a day; the wind and fog being our hindering cause.

New Madrid had been designed as the metropolis of the New World, but God sees not as man sees—it is deserted by most of its inhabitants; the upper Chickasaw Bluff does not wash like the others; and probably will be fixed upon one day as a proper site to convene the portage up and down the river, which now is inconvenienced by the Indians owning the soil, or the inundation of the water.—From New Madrid to Orleans, there is no high ground for settlements on the west side of the river, the high water flows back in some places 30 or 40 miles, rising 50 feet, and the Ohio 65; on the

east side also, between the mouth of the Ohio and the Walnut Hills, the places for settlement are few.

Our boat got aground near this bluff, but two men came along in a canoe, and helped us off—then we struck a planter and split and hung the boat—which with difficulty was got off and mended; so I quit her, paying my fare, and took to another.

There are but few inhabitants for several hundred miles, Indians, or whites degenerated to their level! There are natural canals from the Mississippi to Red river, and so to the sea, far west of Orleans, the map of this country is but little understood—ten companies are now surveying the public military land.

At length I landed at Natchez, obtained several letters, and not finding my friends, I embarked in another boat, after paying my fare; and on the 30th of December, I arrived in New Orleans, having changed from one boat or canoe to another, thirteen times.

Thus by the providence of God, after many restless days and nights, got to my journey's end; stayed about a month, mostly at the house of Capt. William Ross, who was inspector of the port; and at whose house I was treated as a friend, in Europe, when I first arrived in a strange land. May God remember them for good.

My books, through the delay of the binders, did not come in time for me. I got only a few—took steamboat, ascended to Baton Rouge—visited St. Francisville and several places in Florida; thence to Woodville, Liberty, Washington, Greenville, Gibson Port, and Warrington, Natchez and many country parts; saw some of my old acquaintance; bought a horse and thinking to return by land, sold him again, being unable to endure the ride—so I went down the river, visiting such places as God gave me access unto. On the Island of Orleans, I find the influence of the clergy going down hill. Many of the people came to some of my meetings.

Mr. Blunt requested me to preach his wife's funeral. She told when she should die, and pointed out the place where she choose to be buried. But few men feel the union in the bonds of nature more than he did.

I baptized twelve, by request, showing that water was not the essential point, but the answer of a good conscience. The ancients used water. I availed myself of the opportunity to impress the substance of INWARD religion home to the heart, without which we could