When the Water "Quakes"

Seaquakes are mighty disturbances of the waters of the ocean, their cause or causes being identical with the cause of earthquakes. In Major C. E. Dutton's book, "Earthquakes," the author has some interesting facts regarding the ocean variety of quake. From the entries in the logs of many ships he concludes that in rare cases the power of the seaquake shocks may be great enough to render standing on the deck as difficult as it sometimes is on land. It may even be great enough to cause the fear that the vessel is being shaken to pieces. Gigantic waves of the ocean are, of course, a frequent accompaniment of the seaquake. On the west coast of South America, where these waves are frequent, they sometimes follow a quake having its center below the sea level, that is also felt on land. But more often they come without warning. The most memorable seaquake of this locality occurred Aug. 3, 1868.

Major Dutton describes it as follows: "The coast of South America was shaken all the way from Guayaquil in Ecuador to Valdivia in Chile, the highest intensity being manifested in the neighborhood of Arica. The force of the quake in this town was very great, throwing down most of the structures and producing land slips. A few minutes later—precisely how many minutes is not known—the sea was observed to retire slowly from the shore, so that ships anchored in seven fathoms of water were left high and dry.

"A few minutes later still it was seen returning in a great wall or 'bore,' which caught up the ships in the roadstead and swept them inland as if they were mere chips of wood. Among them was the United States steamer Waterlee, one of the improvised war vessels of the blockading fleet of the civil war, which was carried inland nearly half a mile and left with little injury on shore by the recession of the wave."