agent of commotion, aided by the collapse of the roofs or sides of underground caverns. When the disturbance of the air in these recesses reached a maximum of intensity its friction or that of falling masses of loosened rock set fire to combustible materials, and eventually the wind and hot vapours forced their way with violence to the surface in volcanic explosions. That earthquakes are common in volcanic districts had been recognised from the earliest times, but they had been experienced also in regions where there were no active volcanoes. In the latter case they were regarded as volcanic convulsions which had not succeeded in opening a vent above ground. But down to the middle of the eighteenth century no real progress had been made in the solution of the problem of their origin.

The year 1750 was remarkable for the number of earthquakes which at that time affected the west of Europe, and which caused some alarm in the south of England. The Royal Society collected and published the narratives of many observers, and likewise some lucubrations on the "philosophy of earthquakes." The same century was distinguished for its great activity and rapid advance in the investigation of electricity. This new and still mysterious force, so stupendous, sudden and swift in its operation, seemed to some minds to offer a probable explanation of the phenomena of earthquakes. The earliest writer who tried to picture to himself the manner in which electricity acts in the process seems to have been Dr. Stukeley, who contributed several communications on the subject to the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society.