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He "did not enter into the common notion of struggles between subterraneous winds, or fires, vapours or waters, that heaved up the ground like animal convulsions; but always thought it was an electrical shock, exactly of the same nature as those, now become very familiar in electrical experiments." In one passage he remarks that, owing to peculiar meteorological conditions, a wide extent of country is sometimes brought into a highly electrified state and that if then a "non-electric cloud" should discharge its contents, in a heavy shower of rain, "an earthquake must necessarily ensue." In another part of the same essay he refers to "a black sulphureous cloud" which comes "at a time when sulphureous vapours are rising from the earth in greater quantity than usual; in which combined circumstances, the ascending sulphureous vapours in the earth may probably take fire and thereby cause an earth-lightning, which is at first kindled at the surface, and not at great depths, as has been thought; and the explosion of this lightning is the immediate cause of an earthquake." 1

Of a very different stamp from these crude speculations was an essay by the Rev. John Michell (1724-1793) read before the Royal Society in the spring of the year 1760. During the decade that had elapsed since the "earthquake year" of 1750, western Europe had not ceased to be shaken, and there had happened the great Lisbon earthquake of 1st November 1755—the most extensive and disastrous catastrophe which had ever been recorded.

¹ Phil. Trans. vol. xlvi. (1750), pp. 643, 676.