



Part of a Letter from the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Colman, of Boston in New England, to the Late Bishop of Peterborough; Giving an Account of the Late Earthquake Which Happened There. Communicated by Dr. Jurin. R. S. S. &c.

Benjamin Colman; Dr. Jurin

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III. *Part of a Letter from the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Colman, of Boston in New England, to the late Bishop of Peterborough; giving an Account of the late Earthquake which happened there. Communicated by Dr. Jurin.*
R. S. S. &c.

Boston, Sept. 5, 1728.

MY LORD,

YOUR Lordship hopes that some of our accurate Observers took Notes of the Symptoms and Incidents of our late Storms and Earthquake, to communicate to the Royal Society, for the more critical Enquiry into the Causes and Effects of this. How much Mr. *Dudley* or Dr. *Mather*, the Gentlemen here of Learning, who had the Honour to be Fellows of that learned Body, may have done this, I know not. The Earthquake came suddenly upon us in the Night after the Lord's Day, *Octob. 29, 1727*, between ten and eleven, in a very still and fair Evening; the Stars so bright and glittering, that many had taken great Notice of them, and one or two Persons that had been in Places subject to Earthquakes, had said transiently, that if we had been us'd to have 'em, they should expect one. This only general Symptom of its Approach I have heard of, namely, the most serene Sky and calm Air that was ever known, not a Cloud in the Sky, nor scarce a Breath of Wind. And though this is not universally a Symptom when Earthquakes
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are coming on Places, yet so far as I can inform myself, it has often and for the most Part been observed. It was so in the dreadful Shake at *Jamaica* thirty odd Years ago; and a most ingenious and observing Friend of mine who had his Leg broke on the Point when it sunk, and is still living, tells me, That after that Shock, which was follow'd with many Tremblings and lesser Shakes while his Leg was healing, he could from Day to Day judge by the Face of the Sky and Air, whether there would be any Tremor or Jar of the Earth. If there was any Cloud hanging over the Mountainous Part of the Island, there was no Shake that Day; but if all was serene and fair, he expected one, and it seldom failed. Yet it has not been found so with us, in our After-rumbles and Tremblings, which returned often for some Months after the great Shake, and at Times for nine Months after it.

The Town of *Newbury*, at the Mouth of *Merrimack* River, about forty Miles *North East* from *Boston*, is the Place that seems to have been the Center of the Shock and Shakes felt by us. There the Earth open'd and threw up many Cart-loads of a fine Sand and Ashes, mix'd with some small Remains of Sulphur; but so small, that taking up some of it in my Fingers, and dropping it into a Chafin-dish of bright Coals, in a dark Place, once in three Times the blue Flame of the Sulphur would plainly arise, and give a small Scent, and but a small one. By this it seems evident that it was a sulphurous Blast which burst open the Ground, and threw up the calcin'd bituminous Earth. The Family nearest to this Eruption, it being in that Part of the Town where the Houses lie at a Distance from each other, were in the Terrors
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of Death; the Roar and Shock being much more terrible upon them than upon others: And yet upon us at forty Miles Distance, and upon others at forty and forty more, it was very terrifying and astonishing.

Five or seven small Shakes were felt by us, after the first and great one, that Night and in the Morning following; but these and other following Rumbles and Tremblings, were louder and greater at *Newbury* and the adjacent Places than with us; and they felt and heard many Times when our Parts did not; but yet from Week to Week, we and the Places about us felt and heard some of the greater Tremors, both by Day and Night.

Upon receiving your Lordship's Letter I have made what Enquiry I could, and have receiv'd
 * Mr. Lowell, from a Reverend Minister in *Newbury* *
 the following Account.

As to any previous Notices of the Approach of the Earthquake, I cannot find any thing to be depended on. The Prognostications that have been among us have all fail'd; such as the Brightness of the Sky beyond what was common; the twinkling of the Stars, and the like. I certainly know that we have heard the Rumbles in all Weathers, cloudy, foggy, rainy, snowy, clear, cold, hot, moderate, windy, calm, &c. indifferently; and at all Hours of Day and Night: (Tho' by the way, we heard these Rumbles oftner in the Night during *Winter*, as I think, and since more usually in the Day) Also when the Wind has been at any Point of the Compass, and at all Times of Tide; and as to the Moon equally when she was nearer or further from her Change or Full: Neither in any particular Weather, nor on any observable Occasion were the Shocks greater, or Rumbles louder. As

As to any Alterations in the Air or Water after a Shock, I could never discern any thing; particularly as to the Wind being raised after a Shock, when it was calm before, which some reported, I could never perceive the least Difference.

One Thing I may add here, very remarkable, and which may be depended on. About the Middle of *April*, that fine Sand which was thrown up in several Places in this Parish at the first great Shock, *Octob. 29*, did actually stink to a very great Degree, even so as to be more nauseous than a putrefying Corpse; yet in a very little while after it did not smell at all. How long it was before it began to stink I am not certain; I know it did not at first, and I believe it was cover'd with Snow till a little while before: There is nothing of Smell now. There has been no Opening of the Ground, throwing up Sand, stopping or breaking out of Springs, &c. as at first. If there had continued any sensible Evacuating of Air or other Matter pent up in the Earth, from the Surface of the Sea or Land adjacent to us, at the Times of our many Rumbles and Tremblings, we should have discern'd it before now. *Newbury* is a Spot of Ground, and so the adjacent Towns, very much inhabited and continually travell'd over; and as to the Sea contiguous to these Parts, it is full of our Coasters by Day and Night; but neither on Land or Water have any sensible Eruptions or Evacuations been observed that I hear of.

P. S. Boston Weekly News Letter, Sept. 5, 1728.

We hear from *Newbury* and *Rawley*, That they felt the Shake of the Earth on *Tuesday* last about Four in the Morning, the Noise much like Thunder.