"If an earthquake were to engulf England tomorrow, the English would manage to meet and dine somewhere among the rubbish, just to celebrate the event."

Douglas William Jerrold (1803 - 1857)

Maybe! But then here in England, we just don't have such things as earthquakes. Earthquakes are for positively foreign areas, like China, northern Africa, South America, and (dare we say it?) California.

What's all this got to do with words and wordplay? For no particular reason, we've taken a sudden interest in words ending in -QUAKE. Ask the average word buff, whatever that may be, to list as many words as possible ending in -QUAKE, and he/she will probably give you two or three. EARTHQUAKE, MOONQUAKE and SEAQUAKE are the likeliest possibilities.

A quick check of Webster's Second Edition, courtesy of our reverse dictionary based on that dictionary, reveals nine -QUAKE words: COWQUAKE, EARTHQUAKE, HEARTQUAKE, ICEQUAKE, SEAQUAKE, STATEQUAKE, SUNQUAKE, WATERQUAKE and WORLDQUAKE. The cowquake is a plant, rather than some sort of bovine upheaval; notice that EARTHQUAKE and HEARTQUAKE are mutual transposals.

A check of Webster's Third Edition reveals a mere five -QUAKE words: EARTHQUAKE, ICEQUAKE, MOONQUAKE, SEAQUAKE and WATERQUAKE. MOONQUAKE is the only quake not already encountered.

To this total of ten quakes can be added two more from A Dictionary of New English. It lists both STARQUAKE and YOUTHQUAKE, which are defined respectively as follows:

"a series of rapid changes in the shape of a star or in the distribution of its matter detected from sudden speedups in the star's pulse rate or radiation output"

"the worldwide agitation caused by student uprisings and other expressions of rebellion and radicalism among the youth during the 1960's and 1970's"
Twelve quakes so far. This number can be almost doubled just by noting one particular news report which appeared in The Times of London some while ago. The paper carried the following statements:

"Marsquakes will be the first, then venusquakes and mercuryquakes, jupiterquakes, saturnquakes, uranusquakes, neptunequakes and plutoquakes ... And then the moons of these planets, Mars giving phobosquakes and deimosquakes, and Jupiter with its 12 satellites."

Notice the distinct use of lower-case initial letters for these different quakes.

The 22 quakes recorded up to here can be increased by one. In January 1973, Newsweek magazine reported an earthquake somewhere in the world, and added:

"It was not a superquake as earth tremors go ..."

Can readers up the number of quakes to two dozen? Or take the total beyond that? There must be more quakes waiting to be unearthed.

VERBATIM: VOLUMES I & II

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