

RFA: WILLIAM R. CORLISS "HANDBOOK OF UNUSUAL NATURAL PHENOM." SOURCEBOOK PROJECT. GLEN ARN, MARYLAND, 1977.

4 Luminous Phenomena

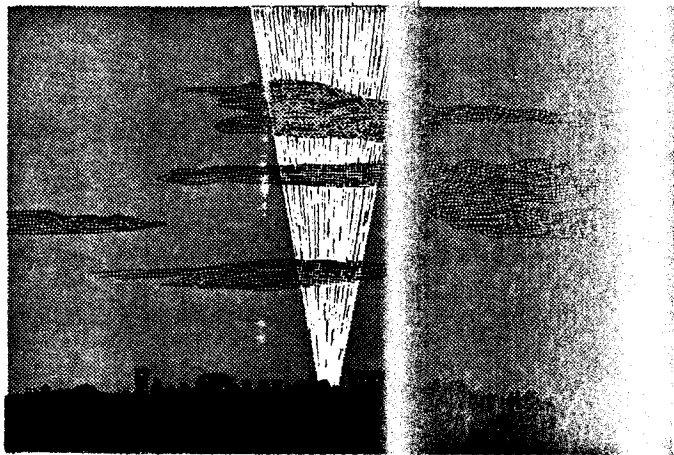
in the sky the light broke off into two curved sections passing through the zenith and finishing 3° above the horizon bearing N. 75° W. True. The straight part of the phenomenon had the appearance of a gigantic searchlight. The whole of light was motionless over its arc of 166° and commenced fading away at 10 p. m. and finally disappeared entirely ten minutes later. Fracto Nimbus and Cumulus clouds in S. W. portion of sky lit up by reflection of light."

Note,---It is possible that this was some kind of auroral ray. Another explanation is that it was the trail of a meteor, but if, as the description seems to indicate, the ray was seen at first to progress across the sky, the bright head of the meteor would have been seen. (*Marine Observer*, 7:65, 1830)

A CURIOUS PHENOMENON

Noble, William; *Knowledge*, 4:173, 1883.

Can any of my brother readers of *Knowledge* offer a feasible explanation of a remarkable phenomenon which I witnessed at 10h. 30m. p. m. on Tuesday, August 28? I was just coming out of my observatory when, on the E. N. E. point of the horizon beneath the Pleiades, I saw a bright light. My first thought was that the moon was rising, but an instant's reflection sufficed to remind me that she was



Searchlight-like ray of light on horizon

Remarkable Auroral Phenomena 5

not be up for the next two hours. As I watched the light becoming brighter and brighter, I saw that it threw a kind of radial illumination upward, the effect of which I have tried to reproduce in the accompanying rough little sketch. As will be seen, a few distant cumulo-stratus clouds, close to the horizon, crossed it. For a moment I imagined that I was viewing the apparition of a new and most glorious comet; but, as I watched, the "tail" disappeared and what would represent the nucleus flashed up brilliantly. Then I made up my mind that some distant house, barn, or haystack was on fire, and returned to the observatory for a 3 inch telescope, which I keep for looking over the landscape. Before I had time, however, to enter the door, every vestige of illumination disappeared as suddenly as it had come into view, and after waiting in vain for some time, I left the observatory and came into the house. I have diligently inquired if there was a fire anywhere in this part of Sussex on the night of which I am speaking, but there was none. (*Knowledge*, 4:173, 1883)

A CURIOUS PHENOMENON

Bradgate, W. K.; *Knowledge*, 4:207, 1883.

The remarkable phenomenon which Mr. Noble described in No. 98 of *Knowledge* was also witnessed by me in Liverpool on August 29, at 12 h. 40 m. a. m. I had just been looking at Saturn, when, for the first time, I saw a bright divergent cone of light about 7° above the horizon; the entire length of the cone was about 5°. The apex or nucleus displayed such a degree of concentration that I thought it was the planet Jupiter. I turned my telescope, a 2-inch, armed with a power of 30, on the point where the apex should be (it was now obscured by a cloud), with the expectation of being able to unravel the mystery, but was disappointed, as the cloud was too dense. I then ran my telescope along the major axis of the cone, and the field of view was so faintly illuminated that the brightest part could hardly be said to equal the *lumiere cendree* seen under similar conditions. It gradually faded from view, after having been visible for thirteen minutes. I continued watching the part of the heavens where it had disappeared, with the confident hope that it would return, but was at last obliged to give it up, as a great bank of clouds precluded all further observation.

It could hardly have been an auroral streamer, as the point where it appeared is 67° east of North. (*Knowledge*, 4:207, 1883)

AURORAL APPEARANCE

Bonnycastle, R. H.; *American Journal of Science*, 1:32:393-394, 1837.

At a quarter past nine o'clock on Sunday night the eighth day of May, in the present year, my attention whilst regarding the heavens was forcibly attracted to the sudden appearance due east of a shining broad column of light.