THE AURORA BOREALIS.

The New York *Times* furnishes the following account of the Aurora of Sunday night week. The same phenomenon was viewed in this city, but on a less splendid scale, probably owing to the fact that no clouds were visible to reflect the transient glory of the heavens:

"The present generation have listened with wonder and admiration to the stories their fathers and mothers have told them of auroras and meteors. They have opened ears and mouths and eyes as they heard of stars falling from the heavens like rain, of the sky at night becoming red as with blood, and in the daytime of its being so darkened that stars were visible. Few have had opportunities of witnessing these sublime displays; but on Sunday night the heavens were arrayed in a drapery more gorgeous than they have been for years. The phenomena then witnessed are worthy recording, and comparing with previous appearances of a like character, as they will be referred to hereafter among the events which occur but once or twice in a lifetime.

"Sunday was very much such a day as could be expected at this season of the year. Perhaps it may have been a trifle cooler than usual, but this was attributed to the rain which fell in the morning. With the change of wind to the west, the temperature fell noticeably towards evening, until it seemed like that which more appropriately belongs to the middle or latter part of September. Soon after sunset, the streamers which mark every appearance of the Aurora were visible in the north. As the twilight deepened, the 'merry dancers' ventured from their hiding-places and played along the horizon as though successive sheets of impalpable flame were sweeping over the sky. Then they shot up to a point nearer the zenith, and joined company with their sisters from the east and west. The flashes from the south were fewer and less brilliant. The appearance of the horizon in this direction was in striking contrast with that towards the north. Then a bright arch, spanning nearly ninety degrees, sprang up, supporting and apparently originating three floating, quivering sheets of fire. To the south, the sky was of a dark leaden-colored hue, which contrasted oppressively with the surrounding brilliancy. At first, the light was of that peculiar whitish tinge which all have observed in similar displays on winter nights. This became deeper and more intense, until it lighted up the night as though the moon were shining. With this, a beautiful tint of pink finally mingled. The clouds of this color were most abundant to the northeast and northwest of the zenith. There they shot across one another, intermingling and deepening until the sky was painfully lurid. There was no figure the imagination could not find portrayed by these instantaneous flashes. The beautiful coronal of light which was first exhibited north of the zenith point, was gradually thrust further and further to the south, until it became stationary at a point the definite locality of which the astronomers must settle. Between 10 and 10½ o'clock, the display was overpoweringly brilliant and beautiful. After that, it gradually faded. Now and then there were light flashes, but the pink hue gave way almost entirely to the yellow. It was remarkable as indicating the perfect transparency and luminousness of these sheets of flame, that the stars, whose light was not eclipsed by this superior brilliancy, were distinctly visible through their covers of light.

"Such was the Aurora, as thousands witnessed it from housetops and from pavements. Many imagined that they heard rushing sounds, as if Æolus had let loose the winds. Others were confident that a sweeping, as if of flames, was distinctly audible; but if these same individuals will but listen this or any other evening as attentively as they did Sunday, they can satisfy themselves that the identical sounds are always perceptible on a quiet night.

"Undoubtedly, the watchmen of the skies were on guard in all the observatories throughout the land, and to these the scientific observations must be left. When the Scientific Association shall next convene, and when all of us shall remember this Aurora as a thing of the past, we shall be favored with detailed accounts of the time of its exact appearance, of the precise locality where it was brightest, and, finally, long discussions as to the cause will follow.

"Some account of similar phenomena in times gone by will undoubtedly be of interest in this connection.

"Pliny and Aristotle record phenomena identical with those which later times have witnessed. The ancients ranked this, with other celestial phenomena, as portending great events. In 1560, historians state it appeared in London, in the shape of 'burning spears,' a similitude which would be no less appropriate now than it was then. Frequent displays are recorded during the fifteen years following that date. During the latter half of the seventeenth century, the phenomena were frequently visible, oftentimes being characterized by remarkable brilliancy. After 1745, the displays suddenly diminished, and were but rarely seen for the next nine years. The last century, until within the last twenty years, has been favored in a remarkable degree. One of the most interesting periods of the display of the Aurora was during the years 1835, 1836, and 1837, the last exhibition of special interest occurring on November 17.

"Astronomers tell us that the light centres around the magnetic pole when the display is of sufficient brilliancy to define the curve, and, taking this point as that of measurement, they have attempted to calculate the height of the sheets of light above the earth. Various observations made by Prof. Olmsted, in conjunction with Prof. A. C. Twining, of New Haven, fix its elevation, on different occasions, at 42½, 100, 144, and 160 miles. Prof. Olmsted claims that it is rarely less than 70 miles from the earth, and never more than 160 above it.

"What is the origin of this remarkable phenomena? The ancients asked the question, and the moderns reply by repeating the interrogation. The most popular theory attributes it to electricity, but that agent has been made responsible for everything which men did not know how to account for otherwise. The late Prof. Olmsted maintained that its origin was cosmical, or, in other words, that the earth, in revolving on its orbit, at certain periods, passes through a nebulous body, which evolved this strange light in more or less brilliancy, as the body was larger or smaller. To support this theory, he attempted to establish that there were fixed epochs for its display in the highest degree of brilliancy. He fixed the length of these periods at from 60 to 69 years, and, if we remember aright, named 1890 as the time when we might look for another appearance. The remarkable display of Sunday night gives those who have so strongly contested this idea a strong argument against it, and launches astronomers who have anchored to it upon the sea of conjecture again."

Five million acres of French soil are devoted to grape culture, producing annually over eight hundred millions of gallons of wine, at an average cost of ten cents per gallon. From its cheapness, it is the almost universal drink of the people. In Paris, it is computed that each inhabitant consumes 216 bottles of wine in the year.