

that has become difficult to answer, since implicit confidence is no longer yielded to the relations of Greenland whale-fishers and Siberian fox-hunters. Northern lights appear to have become less noisy since their occurrences have been more accurately recorded. Parry, Franklin, and Richardson, near the north pole; Thienemann in Iceland; Gieseke in Greenland; Lotin and Bravais, near the North Cape; Wrangel and Anjou, on the coast of the Polar Sea, have together seen the Aurora thousands of times, but never heard any sound attending the phenomenon. If this negative testimony should not be deemed equivalent to the positive counter-evidence of Hearne on the mouth of the Copper River and of Henderson in Iceland, it must be remembered that, although Hood heard a noise as of quickly-moved musket-balls and a slight crackling sound during an Aurora, he also noticed the same noise on the following day, when there was no northern light to be seen; and it must not be forgotten that Wrangel and Gieseke were fully convinced that the sound they had heard was to be ascribed to the contraction of the ice and the crust of the snow on the sudden cooling of the atmosphere. The belief in a crackling sound has arisen, not among the people generally, but rather among learned travelers, because in earlier times the northern light was declared to be an effect of atmospheric electricity, on account of the luminous manifestation of the electricity in rarefied space, and the observers found it easy to hear what they wished to hear. Recent experiments with very sensitive electrometers have hitherto, contrary to the expectation generally entertained, yielded only negative results. The condition of the electricity in the atmosphere*

* [Mr. James Glaisher, of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, in his interesting *Remarks on the Weather during the Quarter ending December 31st, 1847*, says, "It is a fact well worthy of notice, that from the beginning of this quarter till the 20th of December, the electricity of the atmosphere was almost always in a neutral state, so that no signs of electricity were shown for several days together by any of the electrical instruments." During this period there were *eight* exhibitions of the Aurora Borealis, of which one was the peculiarly bright display of the meteor on the 24th of October. These frequent exhibitions of brilliant Auroræ seem to depend upon many remarkable meteorological relations, for we find, according to Mr. Glaisher's statement in the paper to which we have already alluded, that the previous fifty years afford no parallel season to the closing one of 1847. The mean temperature of evaporation and of the dew point, the mean elastic force of vapor, the mean reading of the barometer, and the mean daily range of the readings of the thermometers in air, were all greater at Greenwich during that season of 1847 than the average range of many preceding years.]—*Tr.*