

AURORA ON SPREE OF COLOR PAINTS THE SKIES RED

Unusual Display Is Be- lieved by Many to Be Fire Reflection.

Nature last night gave Chicago a special treat—an unusual exhibition of one of its most wonderful free shows, the aurora borealis.

Almost directly overhead, shortly before 10 o'clock, what appeared to be an immense sea flower, with rough edged, seven petals radiating from the center, blossomed forth in cloudlike form.

Greenish yellow lights played across the northern sky. Above them glowed spots of pale red that seemed to fade out and in a few minutes reappear, not far distant from where they first were seen.

And then there were the streamers across the north that seemed to stretch from the northern horizon to the zenith like waving ribbons or bands of light from great searchlights.

Lights Constantly Changing.

Never was the phenomenon stationary for an instant. The changing of colors and the movement of the cloudlike formations was constant. Observers who made their mental notes at different times found it impossible to agree later.

"It was a remarkable auroral display," said Prof. W. D. MacMillan of the University of Chicago, "one of the most beautiful I ever have seen. The greenish yellow lights were plainly visible and the brilliant scarlet cloudlike lights that stretched from the northeast to the northwest shifted while you watched them.

"It was unusually brilliant but, more than that, it was a combination of the two general types of this form of phenomenon. The first is the type that consists of streams of light that radiate from a rainbow in the north, with streamers that sometimes reach away beyond the zenith. In the second type the lights are more like clouds of brilliant colors.

"It is probable that this display could be seen all the way across the country where the air was clear."

Dispatches from points all over the country reported the brilliance of the display. Wire trouble north and east of New York was reported by the telegraph companies.

Calls It Unusual.

Prof. Elton J. Moulton, acting director of the observatory at Northwestern university, regarded the display as one of the best and most unusual of recent years.

"It was most unusual in this latitude," he said, "particularly in the strong reddish tints. It extended almost to the southern horizon. Ordinarily it reaches only to the zenith. The streamers gave the effect of constantly dancing. The display began before 7 o'clock and lasted until after 10:30.

The switchboard at THE TRIBUNE was as busy as during a world's championship game. Many of those who called wanted to know about "the big fire."

Cyclone on Sun.

The astronomers translate the scientific description of the cause of the aurora, or northern lights, into the explanation that they result from cyclonic disturbances on the face of the sun which are visible there in the form of "sun spots." These whirling masses of mineral gases throw off what might be called "spokes" of electrical force which radiate out from the sun. When the earth encounters one of the "spokes" the aurora can be seen on clear nights.

In other words, about eighteen days ago there was a cyclone on the face of the sun. Its whirling center threw off an electrical current which reached the upper air of the earth last night.