

20° from the *Zenith*: Out of these arose three beautiful Pyramids of Light, which extended very near the *Zenith*; the middle of these Pyramids were of a beautiful Sea-green, which went off gradually in lighter Shades towards the Edges, which were of a bright White; the Colour of these very much resembled the Light of *Phosphorus*. I observed these Columns for some Minutes, and then, going in a-doors, saw no more of the Phænomenon; and was told, half an Hour after, that it was all over; but have been informed since, that it returned again about Ten; when the Redness spread, almost universally, over the Southern Parts of the Heavens.

XXIV. *A Letter from Mr. John Martyn, F.R.S. Prof. Botan. Cantab. to John Machin, Esq; Secr. R. S. and Prof. Astron. Gresham. concerning an Aurora Australis, seen March 18. 1738-9. at Chelsea, near London.*

S I R,

I Now trouble you with a rude Account of the *Aurora Australis*, or what other Name you chuse to call it by, which was mentioned at the Society last *Thursday*.

*Sunday, March 18. 1738-9.* at half an Hour past Eight, being informed, That there was a great Fire towards *London*, I made haste towards an upper Window that looked to the North North-east: I found an extraordinary Redness in the Air, but of too determined

termed a Figure to arise from the burning of a House : A broad red Band extended itself to the Northward of the East; in the Middle of which I very plainly saw *Arcturus*, then about  $25^{\circ}$  high ; and its Northern Edge touched *Cor Caroli*. It seemed to be fixed and permanent; not radiating, or fading, as in a common *Aurora Borealis*. This red Band, or Arch, was bounded on the North by Streams of a greenish Blue, in the same Direction ; the most Northern Edge of which touched the Star marked  $\eta$  in the Tip of the Tail of *Ursa Major*. After I had considered this Phænomenon for some little time, I retired into my Garden, where I saw a great Brightness almost in the Zenith, but declining to the South-west ; which I found to be a Centre, from which many luminous *Radii*, of which the red Band was much the most considerable, proceeded. This Crown, or Centre, seemed, at that time, as near as I could judge, about the Place of *Cancer* ; for it effaced all the neighbouring Stars, and I could but just see two Stars, which I take to be those in the Heads of the *Twins* ; when the Brightness was most faded : It would sometimes almost disappear for near a Minute, and then kindle again, and dart Rays on all Sides ; but those to the West and North were short, pale, and soon disappeared. Those which shot Southward, were of a fiery Red ; and the whole Southern Part of the Atmosphere was tinged with a red Brightness, which did not however reach quite down to the Horizon ; for, to the South-west, where my Prospect was least confined, I could see *Sirius*, then about  $15^{\circ}$  high beyond the red Light. The Houses opposite to mine hindered me from seeing, how far to the East and North-east

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the red and blue Rays extended. All this while, the North and North-west Parts of the Heavens seemed dark, by reason of the great Brightness in the East and South : It was very clear however, and the Stars visible. About Nine, the red Band had covered the Tail of *Ursa major*, having moved considerably towards the North, the Centre continuing in the same Place ; and by degrees it faded so as not to be distinguishable from the common Redness which was spread over so considerable a Part of the Heavens. About Ten I went to the River-side, where I had a large Prospect to the South-east ; and found all that Part covered with a dusky Red, quite down to the Horizon. There were afterwards some faint Rays darted, sometimes from the Centre of this Phænomenon, which has the Appearance of a common *Aurora Borealis*. If you can gather any thing material from this Description, it will be a Pleasure to,

S I R,

*Your most obedient*

*humble Servant,*

John Martyn.