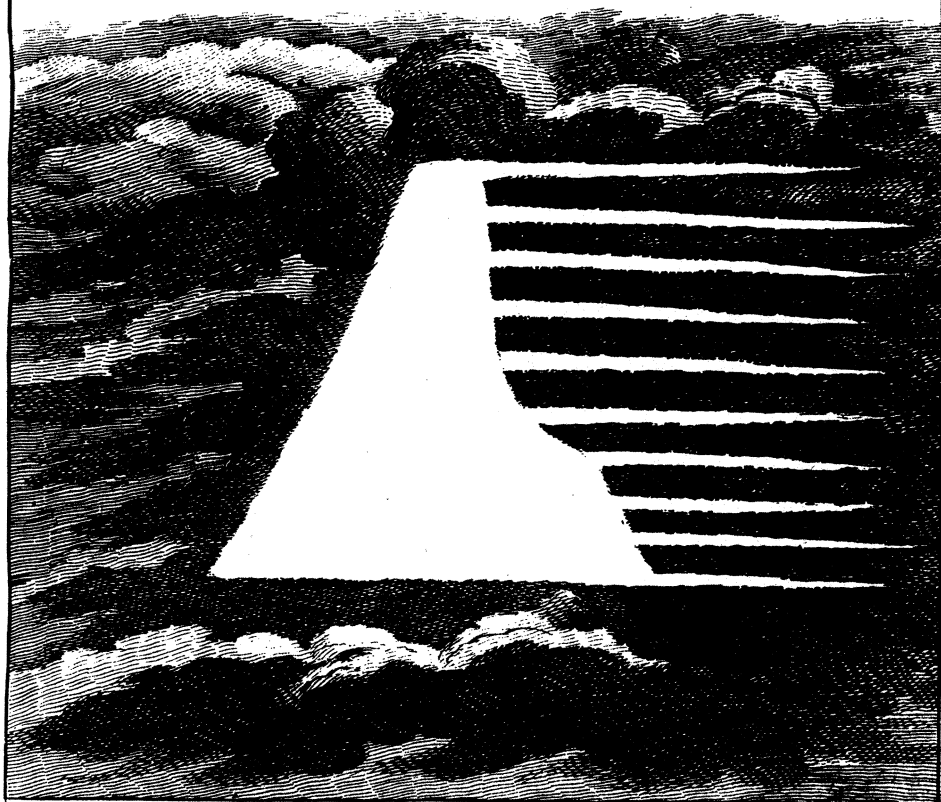


LIII. *An Account of a remarkable Meteor seen at Oxford, March 5, 1764. In a Letter to the Rev. Thomas Birch, D. D. Secretary to the Royal Society, from the Rev. John Swinton, B. D. F. R. S. Member of the Academy degli Apatifti at Florence, and of the Etruscan Academy of Cortona in Tuscany.*

Good Sir,

Read Dec. 6, 1764. **C**OMING out of Christ-Church common-room into the great quadrangle, on Monday, March 5th, 1764, about 7<sup>h</sup> 30' P. M. I observed, with some surprize, a general brightness in the air, much superior to that of the full moon; though the heavens were then in some measure overcast, and the moon only three days old. This unusual and very remarkable illustration of the atmosphere continued the whole evening, though nothing farther meriting any particular regard (at least nothing that I either saw or heard of) for two or three hours occurred. But throwing up my bedchamber sash, a little before eleven o'clock, I unexpectedly discovered a most glorious and exceedingly resplendent white [TAB. XVIII.] column in the southern part of the hemisphere, which in lustre surpassed every thing of the same kind that I had ever seen before. The base of this column seemed to be between twenty and thirty degrees distant from the horizon, and was many degrees broad. The meteor ascended gradually near thirty degrees, passing to the S. of the zenith.



zenith. It was much narrower at the vertex than the base, and consequently approached somewhat towards a pyramidal form. It remained a few minutes in a fixed and permanent state, after it had arrived at its greatest altitude, and was completely formed. About 11<sup>h</sup> 15' P. M. it grew fainter, and much less vivid; and there then darted from it towards the W. several whitish rays and coruscations. At 11<sup>h</sup> 20' the lucid column was barely visible, declining apparently southward, and soon after totally disappeared. I went to bed at 11<sup>h</sup> 30' P. M. when the atmosphere was covered with the same kind of luminous vapour, that before the formation of the bright Colossean pillar had appeared; and, in the Southern part of the hemisphere, diversified by undulations of shining matter, that exhibited a most beautiful and agreeable scene.

It may not be improper here to remark, that a meteor, called an *Aurora Borealis*, was seen at Lisbon, according to \* one of the public papers, the very same night. It is said to have lasted about four hours, and to have engaged the attention of the philosophers there. As from the similitude of certain circumstances it might have been denominated an *Aurora Borealis*, though appearing in the southern part of the heavens, as that I observed actually did; a more particular and distinct account of this phenomenon might possibly enable us to determine, with some degree of probability, whether or no it was the same with that by me here so imperfectly described. Could the identity of these meteors be clearly evinced, or indeed rendered probable, several curious corolla-

\* LLOYD'S *Evening Post*.

ries, relative to the altitude, motion, velocity, &c. and even the very nature itself, of that I had so transient a view of, might perhaps be deducible from it.

Instances of *Auroræ Australes*, at least in our part of the world, are immensely rare. At present that observed by John Martyn, M. D. F. R. S. and Professor of Botany in the University of Cambridge, only occurs. The account of this very uncommon appearance, transmitted by that ingenious gentleman to the Royal Society, and published by them in the *Philosophical Transactions* \*, highly merits the attention of the curious meteorologist. This phænomenon, seen by him, January 23, 1749-50, and that of which I now send you so imperfect a description in several respects pretty well agreed; but in others, which it would be superfluous even to touch upon here, almost totally differed. Some of the † public papers informed us, that an extraordinary phænomenon was observed in the air at London, the preceding night, viz. March 4, 1764; which in a few particulars resembled that of which I have taken the liberty to communicate to you a short account in this letter, but in the rest those two meteors were dissimilar enough. Perhaps these *Auroræ Australes* may some time or other hereafter be more frequent than hitherto they have been, and by certain new circumstances attending them farther elucidate the theory of this species of meteors; the true cause of which, notwithstanding the labours and researches of several

\* *Philos. Transact.* Vol. XLVI. p. 319.

† *The St. JAMES'S Chronicle, &c.* N° 468.

learned men, seems not yet to be perfectly known.  
I am, with all possible consideration and esteem,

S I R,

Your much obliged,

and most obedient servant,

Christ-Church, Oxon.  
Aug. 22, 1764.

John Swinton.

LIV. *Extract of a Letter from Mr. John Horsley, Fourth Mate on board the Glatton East-India Ship, to the Rev. Mr. Nevil Maskelyne, F. R. S. dated Batavia, Nov. 16, 1763, giving an Account of his Observations, at Sea, for finding out the Longitude by the Moon.*

Dear Sir ;

Read Dec. 13, 1764. **Y**OU was so good as to express a desire of hearing from me, by every opportunity, during the time of my voyage ; a request that I shall always comply with, with a great deal of pleasure.

I have the misfortune to inform you of our having lost our passage to China, the original occasion of which was our late departure from England. We

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