

XXXVII. *An Account of a Storm of Lightning observed on the 1st of March, 1774, near Wakefield, in Yorkshire, by Mr. Nicholson, Teacher of Mathematics in Wakefield. Communicated by Dr. Priestley.*

TO THE REV. DR. HORSLEY, SEC. R. S.

DEAR SIR,

Redde, April 14, 1774. **T**HE following account of a storm of lightning was communicated to me by the observer Mr. NICHOLSON teacher of mathematics in Wakefield, who is a very ingenious man, and a good electrician. I have no doubt of his having given proper attention to the phænomena which he has mentioned, or of his exactness and fidelity in describing them. Some of the circumstances appear to me to be very extraordinary; and, as far as I know, quite new, not having been noticed by any writer that I have met with; I therefore think it very proper that the account of them be communicated to the Royal Society.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Your very humble servant,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

ON

ON the 1st of March, about half an hour past six in the evening, as I was returning from CROFTON, a village near WAKEFIELD, I saw, in the north-west, a storm approaching; the wind, which had been strong all the day, setting from the same quarter; and, as in the afternoon of the same day, there had been some violent showers of hail, I made the best of my way to the turnpike at Agbridge. The air was so much darkened, before the storm began, that it was with difficulty I found my way.

When I was about three hundred yards from the turnpike, the storm began; when I was agreeably surprized with observing a flame of light, dancing on each ear of the horse that I rode, and several others much brighter on the end of my stick, which was armed with a ferule of brass, but notched with using. These appearances continued till I reached the turnpike-house, where I took shelter.

Presently after, there came up five or six graziers, whom I had passed on the road. They had all seen the appearance, and were much astonished. One of them, in particular, called for a candle, to examine his horse's head, saying, "It had been all on fire, and must certainly be singed."

After having continued about twenty minutes, the storm abated, and the clouds divided, leaving the northern region very clear; except that, about ten degrees high, there was a thick cloud, which seemed to throw out large and exceedingly beautiful streams of light, resembling an *Aurora Borealis*, towards another cloud that was passing over it; and, every now and then, there appeared to fall to it such

meteors:

meteors as are called *falling stars*. These appearances continued till I came to Wakefield ; but no thunder was heard.

About nine o'clock a large ball of fire passed under the zenith, towards the south-east part of the horizon. I have been informed, that a light was observed on the weather-cock of Wakefield spire, which is about 240 feet high, all the time that the storm continued.