

Aurora Borealis Startles Europe; People Flee in Fear, Call Firemen

Britons Thought Windsor Castle Ablaze— Scots See Ill Omen—Snow-Clad Swiss Alps Glow—Short-Wave Radio Halts

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, Jan. 25.—The most brilliant display of an aurora borealis in fifty years held Britons spellbound over a wide area of this country tonight. From 6:30 to 8:30 P. M. the people of London watched two magnificent arcs rising in the east and west, from which radiated pulsating beams like searchlights in dark red, greenish blue and purple.

During this period all transatlantic radio communication was interrupted, and it was not until 11:30 A. M. that normal service was resumed. From an airplane the display looked like "a shimmering curtain of fire." A big spot had been noted on the sun during the weekend and some scientists anticipated that there would be an electrical disturbance of this kind.

One of the novel features of tonight's display was the vivid red glow. Londoners' last view of an aurora borealis was one night during a Zeppelin raid when it added terror to the dropping bombs.

Police stations, fire brigades and newspaper offices all over the country were inundated by calls tonight asking "Where is the fire?" The phenomenon was seen as far south as Vienna, and in Holland crowds awaiting the birth of Princess Juliana's baby cheered it as a lucky omen.

Londoners Thought City Afire

By The Associated Press.

LONDON, Jan. 25.—The aurora borealis, rarely seen in Southern or Western Europe, spread fear in parts of Portugal and Lower Austria tonight, while thousands of Britons were brought running into the streets in wonderment. The ruddy glow led many to think half the city was ablaze. The Windsor Fire Department was called out in the belief that Windsor Castle was afire.

Superstitious folk of the Scottish lowlands shook their heads and declared the northern lights always spelled an ill-omen for Scotland.

The lights were clearly seen in Italy, Spain and even Gibraltar. The glow, bathing snow-clad mountaintops in Austria and Switzerland was a beautiful sight, but firemen turned out to chase non-existent fires.

Portuguese villagers rushed in fright from their homes, fearing the end of the world.

Short-wave radio connections between London and New York were disrupted by the electrical disturbance.

French and Swiss Alarmed

By The Associated Press.

GRENOBLE, France, Jan. 25.—A huge blood-red beam of light which scientists said was an aurora borealis of exceptional amplitude tied up telephone systems in parts of France tonight and spread anxiety in numerous Swiss Alpine villages.

Emblazoned in the northern sky the light brought thousands of telephone calls to Swiss and French authorities asking whether it was a fire, war or the end of the world.

Scientists at the University of

Grenoble said that a similar aurora borealis had not been seen in Western Europe since 1709.

Bermuda Witnesses Phenomenon

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

HAMILTON, Bermuda, Jan. 25.—A brilliant exhibition of an aurora borealis brought all Bermudians out of their homes at 6:15 o'clock tonight to witness the phenomenon, seen here only on the rarest occasions. The sky was brilliantly lighted with dark red streamers, flashing like searchlights. Many persons thought the light was caused by a ship afire at sea. Steamship agents took the precaution of checking with wireless stations to learn if there had been any S O S calls. The display lasted about three-quarters of an hour, the lights passing gradually into the north. It has been many years since such a phenomenon was witnessed here.

Canadian Land Lines Suffer

By The Canadian Press.

TORONTO, Jan. 25.—Aurora borealis rays, electrical disturbances in the ether, disrupted wire services throughout northern Ontario, northwest from Winnipeg and in the Toronto-Montreal-Ottawa area today.

Commercial telegraph wire chiefs described the rays as comparable to those of last Monday, said to have been the heaviest in ten years. Today's rays, however, did not affect carrier channels which were disrupted by the earlier trouble.

Effect On Radio Waning

Short-wave radio, after apparently emerging yesterday afternoon from one of the most severe disturbances felt in many months, suddenly went dead again between 6 and 7 o'clock last night, simultaneous with the appearance of an aurora borealis in many parts of Europe, in Canada and Bermuda. The trouble was laid to magnetic influences resulting indirectly, according to scientists, from sun spots and solar phenomena. They cause turbulences in the Heaviside Layer or "radio roof," and produce large "earth currents" that "clog the wires."

The magnetic storm's effect has been felt on transatlantic short radio waves for about eight days, but experts declared early yesterday that the end was in sight.

At its height a few days ago the disturbance was recorded by experts of RCA Communications as about 80 per cent as severe on the short waves as the storm of last April, which went into radio records as the most intense in 100 years.

With traffic blocked periodically on most short-wave channels between New York and Europe, the communication concerns shifted to waves of 5,000 meters or longer to force telephone and telegraph messages through.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company revealed, however, that the trouble was concentrated largely over the Atlantic; no appreciable stoppage of short-wave traffic over the Pacific was encountered, it was said.