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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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NOTIONS ABOUT AURORAS

The Eskimos see in the northern lights the spirits of their dead at play. The Norsemen fancied them to be the Valkyries, in flashing armor, riding through the light. Seen in low latitudes, where the sight was unfamiliar, the aurora inspired the tales of phantom armies warring in the sky that abound in ancient and mediaeval chronicles. Many old drawings of these alleged combats are extant.

Auroras were said to have appeared in the shape of armies of horse and foot engaged in battle before the death of Julius Caesar and also to have been seen frequently in Palestine during the year preceding the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

In England the aurora long bore the name of "Lord Derwentwater's lights," in allusion to a brilliant auroral display that occurred on the night of Feb. 24, 1716, following the execution of James, Earl of Derwentwater, with which the phenomenon was supposed to have had some supernatural connection.

The idea that the aurora can be smelled was once common. Reports of a sulphurous odor attending its displays were thought worthy of inclusion in the manual of instructions for the British Arctic expedition of 1875, and there were several similar reports in connection with a brilliant aurora observed in Europe on April 5, 1870.

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