

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 18, 1933

AURORAL SOUNDS

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While the majority of scientific authorities are decidedly skeptical about the reality of the sounds often reported in connection with displays of polar lights, such sounds continue to be described at frequent intervals in scientific journals. A circumstantial description is contributed to the last number of the scientific journal, Science, by Clark M. Garber. In the winter of 1925-26 he was making a drive of reindeer across the mountain range bordering the Arctic coast of Cape Prince of Wales on Bering Strait. One night, while crossing a divide about 2,000 feet above sea level, he beheld a magnificent auroral display.

"The beams of light," he says, "could be seen passing directly over our heads, and when one chanced to come over the divide it appeared to be not more than a hundred feet above the surface. The spectacle was so awe-inspiring that the dog team was stopped and I sat upon the sled for more than an hour absorbing the marvelous beauty of this most unusual display. As the great beams passed over our heads they emitted a distinctly audible sound, which resembled the crackling of steam escaping from a small jet. Possibly the sound would bear a closer resemblance to the cracking sound produced by spraying fine jets of water on a very hot surface of metal. Each streamer or beam of light passed overhead with a rather accurate uniformity of duration. By count it was estimated to require six to eight seconds for a projected beam to pass, while the continuous beam would often emit the sound for a minute or more. This particular display was so brilliant that traces could easily be seen long after daylight."

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