

Fire-ball of August 13—August Meteors.

A COMPARISON of several good observations of this brilliant visitor shows that the point of its first appearance was over a place near Masham, in Yorkshire, at a height of 79 miles. The disappearance occurred over Gisburn, in the same county, after the meteor had traversed a course of about 48 miles, and when it had descended to within 47 miles of the earth's surface. It was directed to a point covered by the River Mersey a few miles west of Liverpool.

By a clerical error the figures representing the real paths of three of the seven doubly-observed meteors seen on August 5 and 8 last (NATURE, August 23, p. 395) were incorrectly stated. The lengths of Nos. 1, 3, and 7 in the list should be 41, 41, and 36 miles respectively.

Including the fire-ball mentioned above, the mean length of path of eight meteors seen during the present month was 37 miles. Seven of these bodies were Perseids, with an average radiant at $46^\circ + 57^\circ$, which nearly corresponds with the best determinations for the emanating centre of this shower.

W. F. DENNING.

Bristol, August 25.

Sonorous Sand in Dorsetshire.

It may be interesting to know that I have discovered the existence of "musical" sand on the sea-beach at a spot between Studland Bay and Poole Harbour.

This sand, though not emitting sounds quite so loud as those produced in the Eigg sand, answers all the usual tests, and gives out a distinct note when walked upon or when agitated by the hand or a stick.

Briefly, I may state that I have been investigating the phenomenon for the last two years, and that an examination of this Dorsetshire sand gives fresh evidence in support of my theory (shortly to be published) as to the cause of the sounds. I may add that I had reasons for thinking that the sand on this particular beach ought to be sonorous under certain favourable conditions, but that I had visited it before without success.

It is now over thirty years since Hugh Miller discovered this sand at Eigg, and up to the present instance I am not aware that it has again been found in any other part of Europe.

CECIL CARUS-WILSON.

Bournemouth, August 18.

A Column of Dust.

THE following account of a somewhat unusual phenomenon may not be uninteresting to some of your readers. As Mr. Emil Trechmann, lecturer at Bangor University, and myself were walking in the vicinity of Stockton-on-Tees on Sunday last, about half-past one o'clock, we observed a small column of dust to rise suddenly on the road about 40 or 50 yards in front of us. There was not a breath of wind stirring at the time, yet it was evidently raised by the action of what would popularly be called a small whirlwind. This column of dust moved quickly across the road, ceasing when it reached the other side; and had the incident terminated there, we should doubtless have exhibited a passing surprise and have forgotten about it. Fortunately, however, there was a hay-field on the other side of the road, and we presently saw several large wisps of hay lifted off the tops of some haystacks, to the amount of perhaps a small-sized armful, and carried across the fields for a distance of a quarter of a mile or more, at the height of 40 or 50 feet.

Trivial as the incident may seem, it was to us singularly startling and impressive, and it was easy to imagine how, in a superstitious age, such phenomena would be attributed to supernatural agency. The mind instantly recurred to stories of witches transporting haystacks through the air, and it was difficult not to believe that, with increased force of current almost anything might have been carried aloft in a similar way.

The atmosphere remained perfectly undisturbed for at least five minutes after the occurrence, when a single "sough" of wind passed by, and it then resumed its former stillness. The general aspect of the weather was somewhat thunderous, though it remained fine until night.

HUGH TAYLOR.

20 Fraser Terrace, Gateshead-on-Tyne, August 22.

THE INTERNATIONAL GEOLOGICAL CONGRESS.

EXACTLY ten years have passed since the International Geological Congress held its first meeting. It was on the 29th of August, 1878, that the Congress was inaugurated at the Palace of the Trocadéro in Paris; this meeting having been the direct result of a suggestion made by the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Buffalo, on the close of the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876. A Committee was then formed, with Prof. James Hall, of Albany, as President, and Dr. Sterry Hunt as Secretary, for the purpose of organizing an International Congress of Geologists to be held in Paris during the Universal Exhibition in 1878. The prime object of the Congress was to discuss, and if possible settle, questions of geological classification and nomenclature, and to formulate rules for securing uniformity in geological cartography. The original American Committee—*Comité fondateur*—applied in due course to the Geological Society of France for assistance in carrying their suggestions into effect, and an influential organizing Committee was formed in Paris, under the presidency of Prof. Hébert. By the action of this Committee the arrangements were carried to a successful issue. The Paris Congress numbered 304 members; it appointed Committees for the unification of stratigraphical and palæontological nomenclature, and for systematizing the colours and signs on geological maps. Ultimately its proceedings were published in a *Compte rendu* of 313 pages.

After an interval of three years, the Congress held its second session. This was in Bologna, under Prof. Capellini as President. One of the chief results of this meeting was the nomination of a Committee for the purpose of preparing an International Geological Map of Europe, on a scale of 1 to 1,500,000. On this Committee, as at present constituted, Germany is represented by Prof. Beyrich and M. Hauchecorne, France by M. Daubrée, Great Britain by Mr. Topley, Austria-Hungary by M. Mojsisovics, Italy by M. Giordano, Russia by M. Karpinsky, and Switzerland by Prof. Renevier. The Report of the Bologna meeting was issued as a handsome volume of 660 pages.¹

As the meetings of the Congress are triennial, the next gathering was due in 1884, but an outbreak of cholera on the Continent rendered it advisable to postpone the session for another year. It was therefore in 1885 that the Congress assembled for the third time—Berlin being the place of meeting, and Prof. E. Beyrich the President. The meeting was eminently successful, but it is to be regretted that no official volume, containing a full report of the proceedings, has yet been published.

Three years have again passed, and the Congress is about to hold its fourth session. London has been selected as the meeting-place, and by permission of the Senate of the University of London the sittings will be held in the University buildings in Burlington Gardens. The first general assembly of the Congress will take place in the theatre of the University at 8 o'clock on Monday evening, September 17, when the inaugural address will be delivered in French by Prof. Prestwich, as President. French is the official language of the Congress, but considerable latitude is allowed in the discussions, and much English and German will probably be spoken at the forthcoming meetings.

On Tuesday morning the Congress will meet at 10 o'clock, for the purpose of discussing questions bearing upon geological nomenclature and classification. A full and valuable Report on these subjects will be presented by the American Committee. This Report, which has been printed in advance, forms a volume of 220 pages, edited by Prof. Persifor Frazer. Although written

¹ For report of the Bologna Congress see NATURE, vol. xxv. p. 34.