of petroleum, it would be of great interest to know more about the "localized reservoirs of great volume" for which the organic origin of oil "is not entirely satisfactory." Certainly, more detailed explanations must be made of the analysis if it is to be of the greatest possible usefulness.

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AN OBSERVATION AT THE TIME OF THE AURORA

BETWEEN 8:45 and 9:00 P. M. to-night (October 14th) we observed a peculiar phenomenon which seems to have some connection with the Aurora Borealis.

The auroral streamers were very strong, and we went into a north room to view them. There was no house illumination: all electric lights were turned off, so as to see the streamers better. Outside there was a moonlight of medium clarity. No perceptible wind was blowing; the air was unusually clear, and the point of observation was exceptionally free from obstructions and street or house lights, being on the top of a treeless hill 725 feet above sea level, in northern New Jersey. The outdoor illuminations against which the phenomenon was observed were a few street lights *about half a mile away.*

While watching the Aurora, my son happened to hold his face close to one of the window panes, so that some of the warm moisture of his breath was precipitated on the glass. Then began the curious thing. The entire area of mist of the glass seemed to begin drifting and blowing at a great rate. It looked for all the world like a tremendous snowstorm. Heavy flakes and wisps of driven snow appeared to be flying past us outside of the pane. It is important to record that *the movement was entirely toward the north and horizontal.* There was *no upward movement,* as one might expect if this had been merely the evaporation of the condensed moisture on the pane.

This movement was visible on no clear pane. As the moisture passed, the movement vanished; as we breathed afresh on the pane, the illusion—if it was one—came back full force.

We waited until the Aurora had ceased, which was about 9:15 P. M. Then, only the faintest trace of the streamers being anywhere visible, we again breathed on the pane; but now no such phenomenon developed.

Will some expert on auroras or radioactivity or relativity or something else kindly enlighten us? Or have we stumbled on some new oddity in this mysterious realm?

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SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

Heteroptera or True Bugs of Eastern North America. By W. S. BLATCHLEY. The Nature Publishing Co., Indianapolis, Ind. 1,116 pages, 12 plates, 215 text figures, Oct., 1926.

THIS is the fourth of Blatchley's books on the systematics of the insect fauna of Eastern North America and upholds the high standard set in the "Coleoptera of Indiana."

The general account of the group, including directions for collecting, is followed by a systematic arrangement tabulating the families, genera and species. The descriptions of the 1,253 species are mostly new, but in the Miridae and Corixidae, owing to the difficulties in obtaining identified material, it was necessary to compile descriptions of some species. A few species are described as new, chiefly from Florida, and a number of tropical species are recorded from Florida for the first time. The nomenclature and classification are those generally accepted, but in a few cases there are changes. With many species the host-plant is given and something of the habits.

The descriptions appear full and sufficient and the synopses, though partly compiled, are well made, altogether easily the best book on the Hemiptera of our country, and it will long be the one most necessary to the student, be he a beginner or a specialist. As with the others of this author's works it will undoubtedly stimulate the study of our insects. One can not refrain from expressing the greatest admiration for the ability and energy which, overcoming numerous obstacles, has pushed this work to such a successful conclusion.

N. BANKS

SCIENTIFIC APPARATUS AND LABORATORY METHODS

THE EXTRACTION OF FAT FROM SPECIMENS PRIOR TO CLEARING BY THE POTASH METHOD

IN specimens cleared by the potash method the fat of the superficial and muscular fasciae is partially saponified and appears in the cleared material as opaque, white masses which often prove a serious impediment to accurate observation of the skeletal elements as noted by Strong (1925).[1] After the treatment with potash it is apparently difficult to get rid of the fat, as Strong was unable to find a suitable solvent for these masses and found it necessary to dissect them away.

This difficulty may be obviated by the extraction of

[1] Strong, R. M., 1925, "The Order, Time and Rate of Ossification of the Albino Rat (Mus Norvegicus Albinus) Skeleton," *Amer. Jour. Anat.*, Vol. 36, 313–55.