

Several authors have remarked upon the tendency of the winged Lampyridæ, in countries where large numbers of the same species are in view at one time, to exhibit their light at rhythmic intervals. I have never observed this in the United States, nor in those parts of tropical America which I have visited. I think that, in this respect, there must be great differences in the habits of the species. In travelling by night on railroads in the Middle States, I have frequently seen in low and moist lands near the road many thousands of these insects (chiefly *Photuris pensylvanica*), which sparkled and twinkled to such an extent that one might imagine himself on the Glittering Heath* itself, on which the hero of the great epic of our race achieved his first victory, and gained his double prize. But I have never seen any approach to a rhythmic effect in these sparklings, as described in the books.

The causes to which this singular phenomenon are ascribed are either physical or physiological.† In order that my readers may give these

* But lo ! at the last a glimmer, and a light from the West there came,
And another and another, like points of far off flame ;
And they grew and brightened and gathered, and whiles together they ran
Like the moon-wake over the waters, and whiles they were scant and wan.

—Sigurd the Volsung, Book II, p. 137.

† Proc. Ent. Soc. London, 1880, p. ii., Mr. McLachlan . . . “had at that time advanced the opinion that the phenomenon in question might be caused by currents of air inducing the insects to simultaneously change their direction of flight.” Sir Sidney Saunders: “The simultaneous character of these corruscations among vast swarms would seem to depend upon an intuitive impulse to emit their light at certain intervals as a protective influence, which intervals became assimilated to each other by imitative emulation.”

Ibid, p. vii. : “Mr. McLachlan, in connection with his idea of the supposed contemporaneous flashing of all the individuals in a swarm of Lampyridæ, called attention to flies of the genus *Argyra*, which when flying exhibited at times an appearance similar to that of small snow-flakes, owing to the silvery pubescence with which part of the body was clothed, but which was observed in certain positions, and especially when the insects rested, owing to the pubescence being then concealed ; he thought this to some extent was an analagous case to that of the light of swarms of Lampyridæ.” Sir Sidney Saunders observed : . . . “as to the contemporaneous flashes of myriads, such as are more frequently congregated on the calmest nights, surrounding objects previously involved in obscurity, become suddenly illuminated as if by electricity, and as rapidly plunged into their antecedent gloom at alternate intervals. He could not concur in the hypothesis that currents of air had any connection with such displays or exhibitions, when not a breath was stirring around ; nor that these manifestations might be evoked