

before him. On remaining perfectly still, the flames returned, and he attempted to light a piece of paper by them ; but the current of air produced by his breath kept the flames at too great a distance. On turning away his head, however, and holding up a screen of cloth, he was able to set fire to a narrow strip of paper. He also succeeded in putting out the flame by driving it before him to a part of the ground where no gas was produced, then applying the flame of a torch to the surface whence the gas bubbles issued, a kind of explosion was heard over eight or nine square feet of the surface of the marsh ; a red light was seen, which diminished to a blue flame about three feet high. This continued to burn with the unsteady motion observed in the Will-o'-the-Wisp. As the morning approached all the flames became pale, and seemed to approach nearer and nearer to the earth, till they at last faded from the sight. Major Blesson thinks that when once the thin stream of inflammable air is set on fire, it continues to burn by day as well as by night, but the light is so pale that it cannot be seen by day. He also thinks it probable, that the fires which sometimes break out in forests are caused by ignes fatui.

The same observer has also made experiments on the ignis fatuus in other places. At Malapane, in Upper Silesia, he passed several nights in a forest where this meteor was to be seen. He succeeded in extinguishing and inflaming the gas, but could not set fire to paper or thin shavings of wood by its means. In the Konski forest, in Poland, the flame appeared of a darker hue than usual, and on attempting to ignite paper and wood, they became covered with a viscous moisture. On another occasion, he succeeded in lighting up the ignis fatuus by throwing fireworks from a distance into marshy ground. He visited by night the summit of the Porta Westphalia, near Minden ; the meteor was not visible, but on firing off a rocket a number of small red flames were observed below, which soon went out, but appeared again on firing another rocket.

It appears then, from these and other experiments made by scientific men, that the ignis fatuus is frequently caused by an inflammable gas, formed in stagnant pools by the decay of vegetable matter. The appearance of this meteor has been accounted for in various other ways, but none of them appear to be so satisfactory as the above.—*Selected.*