

Venus, Evening Star, Brightest Dec. 26, Guided "Wise Men" 2000 Years Ago!

The Pilot is indebted to Mrs. Dorothy Lockland for the information concerning the article appearing in December issue of "Natural History," dealing with the brilliance of Venus, the evening star, appearing now in the west. A portion of the article:

"A gem of resplendent beauty will shine in the western evening skies this December to thrill observers all over the world. On Christmas Eve it will glow in the twilight like a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem that shown nearly 2000 years ago. Indeed, it is entirely possible that this is the very same "star" that guided the Wise Men to the manger at the time of that first Christmas. Many earthbound observers will suppose that this light marks the top of some new beacon tower erected to guide aircraft. Flyers will depend upon the formula of its movement to determine their latitude and longitude. Thousands will contact observatories and planetariums to ask about

it. Some will even view it with mixed feelings of wonder and fear until they are assured that it is harmless.

"Perhaps reaction to such phenomena is always interesting. It often runs the gamut from intelligent curiosity, through superstitious wonder, to fear and panic. But once people become acquainted with the true explanation, these things take on an added interest that sometimes opens the way to a new world of enjoyment. History reveals that many of our great astronomers were inspired to begin their careers by some similar sight in the heavens. While we cannot predict that this sight of Venus will bring to light any future George Ellery Hales or Harlow Shapleys, it will most certainly set many thousands to thinking about the wonders of the universe, and we hope that some of these may accept the challenge to become better acquainted with our neighbor worlds.

"Venus appears as the brightest object in the heavens, with the exception of the sun, moon, and an occasional comet. Being one of the two planets that circle the sun inside the earth's orbit, it behaves differently from Mars, Jupiter, or Saturn, which move on orbits outside that of the earth. Like Mercury, the other planet that is nearer the sun than we are, it shuttles back and forth from the morning to the evening sky, but is never seen in the midnight sky.

"There will be no possibility of mistaking Venus this December when it blazes forth high above the southwestern horizon against the background of stars in the constellation of Capricornus, the Sea Goat. It will dwarf every star in that part of the sky, its nearest rival being the planet Jupiter, which will appear near by but less brilliant. Early in the month the two planets will appear relatively close together, and on Dec. 6, Jupiter will lie directly north of Venus by a distance of about four times the apparent diameter* of the moon. On the evening of Dec. 22, the beautiful crescent moon will be seen near by and a short distance south of Venus. The next evening the moon will have shifted about 13 degrees farther east and will continue to separate farther from the planet each night as it grows toward its first quarter phase.

"Like so many sky wonders, this one can be enjoyed for only a short time. Venus will attain its greatest brilliance on Dec. 26, and during the remainder of the year and the early weeks of 1950 it will rapidly disappear in the evening twilight. On Jan. 31, it will move in to the morning sky for a few weeks to be lost in the dawn. About a month, however, early risers may find it shining above the eastern horizon as a beautiful "morning star." We will not see it again as an evening star until the spring and summer of 1951."

The Nook Cafe, after having been closed for a couple of weeks for repairs and alterations, will open, Friday, it was announced by Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Stoller, who say they will have a big turkey dinner, with all the extras, Sunday, Christmas.

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