

## Various Theories Heard About Star of Bethlehem Phenomenon

By J. HUGH PRUETT  
Astronomer, Extension Division, Oregon Higher Education System

With the coming of the Christmas season there is brought to us anew the beautiful story of the Star of Bethlehem. In recent years it has become the custom of astronomical writers and the operators of the Zeiss planetaria throughout the country to present at this time various theories regarding the nature of the phenomenon of long ago.

To those who feel that God's universe at all times operates through natural laws, such speculations seem permissible; to others, the believers in supernatural manifestations on great occasions, these inquiries may appear somewhat irreligious. There is a third group which maintains there never was a Christmas star of any sort and the entire story is merely a "pious myth."

The attempted explanations have become so well known that they need only be reviewed here. Planetary groupings have long been favored as likely solutions. In 6 B.C. Mars, Jupiter and Saturn formed a compact triangle. Weitzel has calculated that seven years later a still brighter combination, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus in close formation adorned the eastern November dawn.

Others believe the Star was a brilliant nova (new star) such as now sometimes flashes out where no star has been noticed before. Or perhaps it was a bright comet—Halley's appeared near that time—or a flaming meteor.

We have a gorgeous Christmas star this year. Hardly has the twilight begun to darken the evening sky when in the southwest the planet Venus blazes forth with a glory that is sometimes amazing. Many exclaim, "I never saw such a brilliant star before!" Venus has over several months gradually been brightening as it has drawn nearer the earth and presented the most favorable lighted area.

December 26, the "goddess of love and beauty" reaches her greatest brilliancy. Early next year, she will leave the evening twilight and reappear in the eastern dawn.

The large star-group, the Northern Cross, every year adorns our Christmas heavens. Between 8 and 9 p.m. it is standing almost upright about over the northwestern horizon. The bright Deneb at its head, the cross arm of three conspicuous stars and the line of fainter lights extending downward can be easily outlined.

A correspondent recently observed the moonless evening sky almost entirely mottled for a short period with fluffy little clouds, with not a single star in view toward the west excepting the five principal ones outlining the Northern Cross. "In the dark blue they stood out as clear as crystal with white fluffs all around them."

It is not necessary to go back 2000 years for splendid Yuletide stars. Give us a cloudless night and the sky is ablaze with colored Christmas lights. It is as if the floor of heaven were "thick inlaid with patines of bright gold." If some happiness is not possible when "the heavens are calling you, and wheel around you displaying their eternal beauties," then surely "still your eye is on the ground."

## 4 Big Liners To Be Built

San Francisco, Dec. 24 (AP)—Plans for early construction of four new modern combination passenger-cargo liners were announced today by American President Lines.

President George Killion disclosed, too, that the company was studying the possibility of building two fast passenger ships at least twice as large as the 573-foot President Cleveland class vessels now operated by the company.

The four new "round-the-world" liners would cost approximately \$40,000,000. These ships, Killion said, would be in addition to three V-2000 type luxury liners now under construction at Camden, N. J.

The proposed new ships would have a cruising speed of 19 knots. They would have accommodations for 60 passengers and 525,000 cubic feet of cargo space.

When the present ship construction program is completed, Killion said, American President Lines will own 22 fast, modern passenger and cargo liners.

In the Rome of Cicero's time, lumber was sold by weight.

## British Suspend Trade with Huns

London, Dec. 24 (AP)—Britain has suspended trade and financial talks with Hungary because that country refused to allow a British consul general to see an Englishman arrested in Budapest as a spy.

The foreign office announced today that the month-long talks were suspended last Monday.

The Englishman concerned is Edgar Sanders. Along with Robert C. Vogeler, an American, he was arrested in Budapest Nov. 22 on charges of espionage. Both Vogeler and Sanders are officials of the American-owned International Telephone and Telegraph company, of New York.

Immediately after Sanders' arrest, the British minister in Budapest asked permission to see him, a foreign office spokesman said. The request was refused formally Nov. 30 and other—and more insistent requests—have been rejected since.

The Hungarian trade delegation is returning to Budapest this week-end.

## Severe Failure of Power at McMinnville

McMinnville, Dec. 24 (AP)—This town's worst power failure in eight years occurred Friday just as a heavy storm struck the area.

The 115-kilovolt line between Salem and McMinnville went out, blacking out all this town for about five minutes. The city's diesel generating system then was put into emergency operation, restoring power to hospitals and part of the business district.

The rest of the town, however, remained without power. Bonneville said it had not yet been able to locate the trouble, but thought it might be a fallen tree.



# Season's Greetings

Best wishes for  
a Merry Christmas and  
a Very Happy New Year...  
may each and every day of it  
be filled with joy and cheer!

**The Man's Shop**  
"The Store of Style, Quality & Value"  
**MOXLEY & HUNTINGTON**  
416 State St. Salem, Ore.

*Sincere Wishes for your Happy Holidays  
the Fulfillment of  
Every Hope and Dream — the  
Answer to Your Every Wish — a  
Rich and Prosperous New Year — with our  
Sincere Appreciation of Your Friendliness  
and Patronage.*



# GREETINGS

*May  
CHRISTMAS DAY,  
and the whole  
New Year  
turn out exactly right for  
you!*



**GEVURTZ**