

The STAR OF BETHLEHEM

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THE reign of Herod had nearly ended when the Magi arrived in Jerusalem and asked: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him."

The Jews, a possible rival, was born, and that his birth had been heralded by celestial phenomena, caused Herod much concern. He summoned to him the scribes and learned men. When they were questioned where the king was to be born, they answered: "In Bethlehem of Judaea; for thus it is written by the prophet. And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel." According to the authorized version it is then stated in the New Testament that "Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and for the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

That is the whole story of the Star of Bethlehem as it is simply and directly told in the second chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew.

It was a cluster, faint, of myriads of stars, handed down through centuries, which the Christian world regarded the Star of the East as a miraculous luminary, akin to the pillar of fire that guided the children of Israel in the wilderness—a luminary especially created for the sole purpose of leading the Magi to the birthplace of Christ. The modern Christian is more apt to regard the star as a natural phenomenon and



to seek a scientific explanation of its sudden appearance, not for the purpose of leading the Magi, but of giving it astronomical support.

Who were these wise men, these Magi, of whom St. Matthew speaks? They came from the east, they said, and the east, according to the geographical knowledge of Matthew's day, was Chaldea, Persia, and that Arabian desert where the sons of Ishmael roamed. In that east of which the New Testament narrative holds these Magi to have been astrologers, members of that strange, non-national, privileged priesthood whose office it was to watch the sky each day and each night, to note the position and apparent motion of the sun from dawn to dark, and to predict those changes in planetary positions which, in that day of astrological superstition, were supposed to shape and reveal the destinies of kings and nations. In their science came an early worshipping at the feet of Christ.

To ancient, as well as, medieval astrologers, certain groupings of the stars and planets had a fixed prophetic significance. The planets were named in accordance with their supposed influence. Mercury, always lurking near the sun, furtively gleaming in the morning or evening, was the patron of tricksters, knaves, and thieves. Mars, flaming in red, was the symbol of war, the guardian of heroes and warriors. If the Magi, great astrologers who, believed in stellar influences, the apparition of the Star of Bethlehem must have been an astronomical phenomenon. But, no ordinary astronomical phenomenon could have predicted star-gazers from their temples. We must, therefore, find some celestial event sufficiently extraordinary to warrant a journey from Chaldea or Persia to Bethlehem.

When the Magi arrived to Jerusalem, Herod was within a few weeks of his death. The massacre of the babes of Bethlehem was one of his last cruel deeds. When he inquired diligently what time the star appeared, the reply was given, "such that he felt it necessary to kill all male infants from two years old and under." It is probable, therefore, that the Magi first saw the star two years before their arrival in Jerusalem. Herod died in B. C. 4. Hence the Star of Bethlehem must have appeared about two years before that date. We must discover, if we

slaughter of the infants was issued some time before Herod's death. Professor Stockwell advanced the supposition that this conjunction was the Star of Bethlehem. Since conjunctions occurred so frequently, it is difficult to understand why more of them did not call forth Chaldean or Persian deputations. The answer lies in the fact that these fatal objections to any theory which regarded the Star of Bethlehem merely as a conjunction of two planets, was that the conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, which occurred about the time of the birth of Christ, was a conjunction of two planets of the first magnitude, and finally decided that the wise men might have been guided by a comet. There is much to be said in favor of this supposition. Comets are discovered nowadays at the rate of two or three a year. Not all of them are particularly brilliant; but it is not inconceivable that in earlier times comets occasionally appeared that were brilliant enough to strike terror into superstitious hearts. Indeed, before Edmund Halley proved that the law of gravitation applied to the late comet, which bears his name, and which has revisited the earth at intervals of seventy-one and one-half to seventy-nine years, comets were regarded as divine messengers, as omens of good or evil, and particularly as harbingers of pestilence and war. To a poetic eastern people who revered the stars as symbols especially set in the heavens for the guidance of men, the comets were undoubtedly awesome visitations. The more enlightened than the medieval Christians, and if at the fall of Constantinople in 1453 all Christendom was alarmed at the appearance of a comet, it is highly probable that the Orient was no less impressed by these sudden visitations. Comprising, as it does, a nucleus, a "coma" or envelope surrounding the nucleus and measuring from twenty thousand to one million miles in diameter, and a long tail which streams behind the nucleus for sixty to a hundred million miles or more, a comet is one of the most mysterious beautiful celestial apparitions that ever meet the eye. But, whether or not the Star of Bethlehem really was such an apparition, no one can affirm with certainty. An astronomer can merely state that the idea is not untenable and that it is less objectionable than the conjunction hypothesis.

Not until 1826 was Kepler's suggestion seriously considered by astronomers. In that year Professor Ideler, of Berlin, computed the positions of Jupiter and Saturn and proved that they were actually in conjunction in B. C. 7. His calculations showed that they at no time approached so near as they did in B. C. 7. They were separated by a distance equal to the apparent diameter of the moon. Accordingly, Ideler had the temerity to suppose that the wise men saw the two planets "as one" because they were nearly in conjunction. In justice to Ideler, it must be stated that he abandoned his theory when, in 1831, repeated the calculations and found that the actual distance between Jupiter and Saturn, when nearest each other in B. C. 7, was more than the apparent diameter of the moon.

Apart from the fact that Jupiter and Saturn were never sufficiently near each other to be seen as one body, two planets in conjunction can hardly be called a star. Nor is it likely that experienced Chaldean astrologers would, so regard it. Moreover, there were other planetary conjunctions at about the same time. Professor Stockwell has demonstrated that a conjunction of Venus and Mars occurred on May 8th, B. C. 6, about fifty days less than two years before Herod's death. Because the magnitude of the

SET TWAIN AT "WORK"

HOW GEN. SHERMAN MADE HUMORIST PAY FARE

Author Compelled to Pose as Famous Soldier While the Latter Smoked Contentedly in His Private Car

Albert Bigelow Paine tells of the time when Mark Twain on his way to West Point to deliver an address found himself in the same train with General Sherman, who had been attending a dinner in Hartford.

"A pleasant incident followed, which Clemens himself used to relate. Gen. Sherman attended the banquet and the dinner of the West Point. Next morning Clemens and Twain were leaving for West Point, where they were to address the military students, guests on the same special train on which Lincoln and Sherman had their private car. This car was at the end of the train, and when the two passengers reached the station Sherman and Lincoln were out on the rear platform addressing the multitude. Clemens and Twain went in and, taking seats, waited for them.

"As the speakers finished the train started, but they still remained outside, bowing and waving to the assembled citizens, so that it was under good headway before they came in. Sherman came up to Clemens, who sat smoking unconcernedly.

"Well, he said, 'who told you you could go to this car?'

"Nobody," said Clemens.

"Do you expect to pay extra fare?" asked Sherman.

No," said Clemens; "I don't expect to pay any fare."

"O, you don't! Then you'll work your way."

"Sherman took off his coat and military hat and made Clemens put them on."

"Now," said he, "whenever the train stops you get out on the platform and represent me and make a speech."

"It was not long before the train stopped and Clemens, according to orders, stepped out on the rear platform and bowed to the crowd. There was a cheer at the sight of his military uniform. Then the crowd, headed by a murmur of uncertainty, followed by an undertone of discussion. Presently somebody said:

"Say, that ain't Sherman; that's Mark Twain, which brought another cheer."

"Then Sherman had to come out, too, and the result was that, both spoke. They kept this up at the different stations and sometimes Robert Lincoln came out with them, and when there was time all three spoke, much to the satisfaction of their audiences."

—Harper's Weekly.

Climate of California.

"As each man steps his foot on shore," wrote one adventurer of the period of the "Forty-Niners," "he seems to have entered a magic circle in which he is under the influence of new impulses."

And, as additional testimony to the extraordinarily stimulating quality of the Californian air, Mr. Henry Childs Merwin tells this delightful tale in his "Life of Bret Hartley."

A popular figure in the streets of San Francisco was a black pony, the property of a constable, that stood most of the day, saddled and bridled, in front of his master's office.

The pony's favorite diversion was to have his hoofs blacked and polished. Whenever a coin was placed between his lips he would carry it to a neighboring bootblack, put first one foot and then the other on the foot rest, and, after receiving a satisfactory "shine," walk gravely back to his usual station.

Even the dumb animals felt that something unusual was expected of them in California.—Youth's Companion.

"Face Value."

Do you ever figure out what you would bring in money if sold at "face value," that is, if the component parts of your body were weighed and measured by a purchaser as "raw material?" Well, a patient German scientist has figured it all out, and here is the result:

"A man weighing 160 pounds comes to about \$7.50. He finds in his body about two and a half dollars' worth of fat, while of iron, no essential to health and vigor, he discovers hardly enough to make a nail as much long. But there is plenty of lime, enough to whitewash a good-sized chicken-house. Of phosphorus he finds enough to put the heads on two thousand two hundred matches, and there is magnesia enough to make a good fireworks place for the Fourth of July.

There is enough albumen for one hundred hen's eggs, and a small teaspoonful of sugar and a goodly sized pinch of salt."

Love and the Liner.

"A sentimental young girl from town was on the steamship quay, where she saw a young girl sitting on a trunk in an attitude of utter dejection and despair."

"Poor thing," thought the romantic young lady, "she is probably alone and a stranger! Her pale cheeks and a great, sad eyes tell of a broken heart and a yearning for sympathy."

"She went over to the traveler to win her confidence."

"Crossed in love?" she asked sympathetically.

"No," replied the girl with a sigh. "Crossed in the 'Polo,' and an awfully rough passage, too!"

WAS WILLING TO REPEAT IT

Bright Youth's Phrase of Gratitude Paid for and Well Worthy of Repetition.

"He was a most intelligent youth and while going through the basement at the works he noticed that something was wrong with the machinery. He at once gave the alarm, and prevented what might have been a serious accident. The circumstance was reported to the head of the firm, before whom the lad was summoned."

"You have done me a great service, my lad," said the genial chief, "and in future your wages will be increased by two shillings weekly."

"Thank you, sir," said the bright little fellow. "I will do my best to be a good servant to you."

"That's the right spirit, my lad," he remarked, encouragingly. "In all the years that I have been in business no boy has ever thanked me in that way. I will make the increase three shillings. Now, what do you say to that?"

"Well, sir," replied the lad, smiling. "I would, you mind if I said it again?"

ITCHING AND BURNING

Berlin, Mo.—"I was troubled with scalp eczema about five years and tried everything I heard of, but all to no avail. The doctors told me I would have to have my head shaved. Being a woman, I hated the idea of that. I was told by a friend that the Cuticura Remedy would do me good. This spring I purchased two boxes of Cuticura Ointment and one cake of Cuticura Soap. After using one box of Cuticura Ointment I considered the cure permanent, but continued to use it to make sure and used about one-half the other box. Now I am entirely well. I also used the Cuticura Soap."

"The disease began on the back of my head, taking the form of a ringworm, only more severe, rising to a thick, rough scale that would come off when soaked with oil or warm water, leaving a few holes each time, but in a few days would form again, larger each time, and spreading until the entire back of the head was covered with the scale. This was accompanied by a terrible itching and burning sensation. Now my head is completely well and my hair growing nicely." (Signed) Mrs. Geo. F. Clark, Mar. 25, 1912.

Cuticura Soap and Ointment sold throughout the world. Sample of each free with 32-p. Skin Book. Address post-card "Cuticura, Dept. L, Boston."

Adv.

Where Autos Are Barred.

Prince Edward Island bars automobiles, not because the islanders cannot afford the machines, but because of accidents caused by the recklessness of drivers who brought in the first cars. They caused many run-aways, and a few had tragic endings. The legislature at once passed a law barring autos from the island. Some of the leading ideas have since endeavored to have the enactment repealed, but the country influence has always been strong enough to overcome all such efforts.

Scarcely as Her's Teeth.

Mr. Crimmonbeak—That bachelor friend of mine is looking for a partner for his joys and sorrows.

Mrs. Crimmonbeak—Well, it seems to me he's a long time about it.

"Yes; you see he's looking for a silent partner."

Don't buy water for buying. Liquid blue is almost all water. Buy Red Cross Ball Blue, the blue that's all blue." Adv.

But a tip doesn't always come to the man who waits.

CANADA'S OFFERING TO THE SETTLER

THE AMERICAN RUSH TO WESTERN CANADA IS INCREASING

Free Homesteads in the new Northwest. Thousands of acres of land are available for settlement. The Government is offering land to settlers on very easy terms. The land is free of all taxes and duties. The settlers can have the land for a small fee. The land is suitable for farming and stock raising. The settlers can have the land for a small fee. The land is suitable for farming and stock raising.

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