

St. Croix Avis.

CHRISTIANSTEDS
POLITI SKA
ST. CROIX

75TH YEAR.

CHRISTIANSTED, V. I. U. S. A., MONDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER 1919.

No. 217.

THE ST. CROIX AVIS

is printed and published daily (Sundays and Holidays excepted) by G. Johansen at the Avis Office.

TERMS—40 cents monthly in advance, 2 cents per single copy.

Entered as second-class matter May 26th 1917 at the Post Office at Christiansted, St. Croix, V. I. of the U. S. A., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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AWFUL THINGS NEXT DECEMBER?

Numerous readers of the Pathfinder have asked whether any credence is to be placed in the widely published predictions that the world is to come to an end toward the close of the present year, or at least that the present planets will then be in such a position that unprecedented storms and disasters will take place.

We recently reported that Rev. Webb-Peploe, an English preacher, had made a prediction of this sort. Now he writes that he did not make such a prediction himself but that all he did was to repeat what he had heard a man say who had made a study of the Great Pyramid of Egypt and who "felt perfectly confident, from the intricate details of that building, that a solemn and very remarkable crisis in the world's history was to be looked for about the close of 1919". He adds that his reason for repeating this fearsome prediction was "to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord."

This minister we believe, is acting on very slight and unjustifiable data. when he takes the hearsay of some unnamed and unknown person and draws any such deduction from it: Many people have studied the Great Pyramid and no two of them have reached the same conclusions as to the significance of its position and peculiar construction. It is pretty certain that that wonderful monument was designed with special reference to astronomical phenomena and it may be that it was intended to be a sign and a warning to succeeding generations. But all this is pure conjecture and if the prophets of evil want to frighten people

into preparing for the end of the world they ought to make use of something more plausible.

Some of our newspapers are now publishing, in more detail, a similar prophecy by "Prof. Albert F. Porta, noted sunspot forecaster and discoverer of 'Porta's weather laws.'" "Prof." Porta refers to the very unusual position in which the planets of our solar system will be gathered toward the end of next December. He says that six of the planets, namely Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Neptune, will all be in conjunction, on the same side of the sun, and be "grouped together in the greatest league of planets ever known in the annals of astronomy." And in addition, the remaining planet, Uranus, will be in opposition, on the other side of the sun, and will aggravate the situation by pulling in the opposite direction.

"Prof." Porta says that even where two planets are in such a position as to cause a united pull on the sun they will produce moderate-sized sunspots, and that the combination of the seven planets as it will occur in December will cause "the hugest sunspot on record." This article by the "professor" declares: "The sunspot will be visible to the naked eye, and since men first began to make records of events no sunspot has been large enough to be seen without the aid of instruments."

This statement is false, and it is itself enough to throw "Prof." Porta out of court as a witness who doesn't know what he is talking about. It is not at all unprecedented to see sunspots with the naked eye. The Pathfinder doesn't pretend to antedate recorded history, but it told at the time about a sunspot that was thus seen with the naked eye only as far back as Feb. 4, 1905.

The only "instrument" needed for observing a big sunspot is a piece of well-smoked glass. The glass doesn't magnify the spot at all—the only purpose of it being to protect your eye from the light of the sun, which would probably ruin your sight if your eye was not thus screened.

"Prof." Porta goes on to say that this gigantic sunspot will cast such a baneful spell on our planet that "the disturbance will be without precedent or parallel". There will be "hurricanes, lightning, colossal rains, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, to say nothing of floods and fearful cold." He tells everybody to "be warned in advance"—though we don't know what they are going to do about it, as the League of nations cove-

nant includes no "mandate" over the sun or the other planets.

"Tremendous things are going to happen from Dec. 17 to Dec. 20 and afterwards," he says. This is a safe prediction, as "tremendous things" are always happening. It would be foolish to assert that there will be no abnormal conditions in the months that are just ahead. Everyone knows that for the last several years climatic conditions have been visibly below par. Summers have been cold; winter before last was a record-breaker for cold and last winter was a record-breaker for warmth. Just recently various sections of the country have been visited by the heaviest down-pours of rain known for a long period of years.

It is no secret that the sun is abnormally disturbed, and we know that at such times the earth experiences extreme weather conditions, with electrical storms, auroras, earthquakes and other manifestations. Sir William Herschel was the first astronomer to make much of a study of sunspots. He concluded that they came and went in periods or cycles, and he even went so far as to try to show that periods of great sunspot activity corresponded with high bread prices. His idea was that sunspots produce abnormal weather and that this tends to reduce the crops and thus raise the cost of living.

The world is now experiencing the highest living cost ever known, and this is also a time of sunspot activity. It may possibly be true that the high prices are stimulated partly by the disturbance of the sun. It may even be true that the war itself is an indirect result of this same force, which irritates the nerves of men and makes them want to do violence. The statistics prove that heat waves are accompanied by crime waves.

What causes the sunspots is not known, and there is where "Prof." Porta's conclusion are unwarranted. It may be that they are produced by the influence of the planets, but that is by no means proved; it is merely a guess. Hence the claim that the earth is to suffer any unprecedented disaster next December is not based on science or exact knowledge. If the planets react on the sun it is not yet a proved fact.

People who are sincere in wanting to prepare themselves for the end of the world or the coming of the Lord should not wait till such things are predicted but should do the one obvious thing

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