



BUFFALO ASTRONOMICAL ASSOCIATION INC.
BUFFALO MUSEUM OF SCIENCE
HUMBOLDT PARKWAY
BUFFALO NEW YORK 14211

the Spectrum

J A N U A R Y 1 9 7 1

* TO ALL OUR READERS WE WISH A HAPPY AND ASTRONOMICALLY REWARDING NEW YEAR *

JANUARY MEETING: Since the December meeting was cancelled due to the snow storm, we are rescheduling this meeting for January 8, 1971, our regular January meeting. The program will be the same as that announced for the December meeting, except that we will have a New Year's party. The Lindbergs will present their illustrated talk on CLOCKS AROUND THE WORLD, while Mrs. Geiger will entertain us with her year-end roundup of slides illustrating the behavior of our members during the year. Dr. West, who was originally scheduled to lecture on DOUBLE STARS at the January meeting has kindly consented to present his lecture at the February meeting.

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* **B.A.A. SCRAP BOOK** * Our Vice-President, Mr. Leslie Stoklosa has for some time collected newspaper clippings dealing with the activity of our association for an official BAA Scrap Book. He would greatly appreciate the cooperation of our members - if you have any items, old or new, which deal with our association or with the astronomical activities of our members, please contact Mr. Stoklosa.

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* **OPEN-AIR OBSERVING** * By William F. Denning, P.R.A.S.
From his: "Telescopic Work for Starlight Evenings," London 1891, p. 75f.

Night air is generally thought to be pernicious to health; but the longevity of astronomers is certainly opposed to this idea. Those observers who are unusually susceptible to affections of the respiratory organs must of course exercise extreme care, and will hardly be wise in pursuing astronomical work out of doors on keen, wintry nights. But others, less liable to climatic influences, may conduct operations with impunity and safety during the most severe weather. Precautions should always be taken to maintain a convenient degree of warmth; and, for the rest, the observer's enthusiasm must sustain him As soon as the observer becomes uncomfortably chilly he should go indoors and thoroughly warm his things before a fire. He may then return fortified to his work and pursue it for another period before the frost again makes its presence disagreeably felt. ... It is a great mistake to suppose that "a glass of something hot" before going into the night air is a good preventive to catching cold. It acts rather in the contrary way. The reaction after the system has been unduly heated only renders the observer more sensitive, and the inhalation of cold air is then very liable to induce affections of the throat.

A telescope permanently mounted in the open, and exposed to all weather, must soon lose its smart and bright appearance, but it need lose none of its efficiency, which is of far more importance; for it is intended for service, not for show. The instrument should be kept well painted and oiled. I find vaseline an excellent application for the screws and parts controlling the motions, as it is not congelative like common oils. The observer, before a night's work and before darkness sets in, will do well to examine his instrument and see that it is in the best condition to facilitate work. Whole tribes of insects take up their habitation in the base or framework, and even in the telescope itself if they can effect a lodgment; and I have sometimes had to sweep away a perfect labyrinth of spiders' webs from the interior of the main tube. On one occasion I could not see anything through the finder, try how I would. I afterwards discovered that a mason-wasp had adopted the vacuity in front of the eye-lens as a suitable site for her nest; and here she had formed her cells, deposited her eggs, and enclosed the caterpillars necessary for the support of the young when hatched. On another night I came hurriedly to the telescope to observe Jupiter with my single-lens eyepiece, but could make nothing out of it but a confused glare, subject to sudden extinctions and other extraordinary vagaries. Looking again into the eyepiece, I caught a momentary glimpse of what I interpreted for the legs of an insect magnified into gigantic proportions and very distinct on the bright background formed by Jupiter much out of focus. On detaching the eyepiece and carrying it indoors to a light, an innocent-looking sample of the common earwig crawled out of it. Telescopic observers are thus liable to become microscopic observers before they are conscious of the fact, and perhaps also in opposition to their intention.

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Buffalo Astronomical Association, Inc.
c/o Buffalo Museum of Science
Humboldt Park
Buffalo, N.Y. 14211



FIRST CLASS

Mr. Eugene Hazel
Mr. Larry Hazel
1234 89th St.
Niagara Falls, N. Y.
14304