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NOTE ON A RARE PHENOMENON IN THE NIGHT SKY.

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ABSTRACT.

A narrow belt of light extending across the sky, east and west, was seen at St. John's, Nfld., on the evening of April 25, 1932. It may have been an unusual form, either of aurora or of zodiacal light.

At St. John's, Newfoundland, between the hours of 9 and 11 of the evening of April 25th, 1932, a very unusual sight was seen. The sky was remarkably clear, except for a faint auroral display in the north. But extending in almost a complete belt across the vault of heaven was a narrow bright strip, which attracted much attention because of its very regular shape.

The writer's attention was called to it just after 9.30 p. m. It was seen as a belt of very uniform width, about 10 degrees, near but not exactly on the line of the ecliptic. The edges were quite sharp, especially the northern edge which ran exactly through the planet Jupiter and the star Gemma Coronis. It seemed to be cut off at both ends about 20 degrees above the horizon east and west. Its colour was white or grey with a very faint greenish tinge. It showed little change in intensity or configuration until about 10.45 p. m., when it slowly faded out.

As to its nature, two explanations seem possible.

In favour of its being an exceptional display of the Aurora there is its colour. But against this we have its unusual position—equatorial rather than circumpolar—and its constancy and uniformity. Besides, there was an aurora of the usual form visible at the same time in the north.

A second hypothesis, that it was an unusual form of the Zodiacal Light, may seem at first very unlikely; for practically all observers describe it as a faint wedge, rarely extending far above the eastern or western horizon. When it does span the sky it is brightest at the point directly opposite the Sun—the so-called *Gegenschein*.

But we must consider its position, its sharp definition and the absence of flashing change as at least suggesting that what we saw was something material, to accept the usual explanation of Zodiacal Light. Moreover, there is at least one record, viz., that of George Jones, U. S. N., at Quito in 1853, of the Zodiacal Light as extending in an unbroken narrow belt across the sky.