In China α, β, and γ were **Ho Koo**, a River Drum.

In astrology Altair was a mischief-maker, and portended danger from reptiles.

Ptolemy, who designated the degrees of star brilliancy by Greek letters, applied β to this as being of the 2d magnitude, whence some think that it has increased in light since his day. It is now the standard 1st magnitude according to the Pogson, or "absolute," photometric scale generally adopted by workers in stellar photometry, and is largely used in determining lunar distances at sea; while Flamsteed made it the fundamental reference star in his observations on the sun and in the construction of his catalogue.

Its parallax,[1] 0″.214, considered by Elkin as nearly or quite exact, indicates a distance of about 15⅓ light years.

Its spectrum is of Pickering's class Xb of Secchi's first type, but peculiar, with very hazy solar lines between the broad hydrogen lines.

Altair has the large proper motion of 0″.65 annually; and Gould thought it slightly variable.

It marks the junction of the right wing with the body, and rises at sunset about the 15th of June, culminating on the 1st of September.

Near it appeared, in A. D. 389, an object, whether a temporary star or a comet is not now known, said by Cuspinianus to have equaled Venus in brilliancy, which vanished after three weeks' visibility; and there is record of another, of sixty years previous, in this constellation.

5° to the eastward of Altair, according to Denning, lies the radiant point of the **Aquilids**, the meteor stream visible from the 7th of June to the 12th of August.

β, 3.9, pale orange.

Alshain is from Shahin, a portion of the Persian name for the constellation; but Al Achsasi termed it **Al Unuḳ al Ghurāb**, the Raven's Neck.

It is the southern of the two stars flanking Altair; yet, although it bears the second letter, is not as bright as γ or δ.

γ, 3, pale orange.

Tarazed, or **Tarazad**, from the same Persian title, lies north of Altair.

These three stars constitute the **Family of Aquila**, the line joining them being 5° in length.

[1] A parallax of 1″ represents a distance from the earth of 3.26 light years; a light year, the astronomers' unit in measuring stellar distances,—light traveling 186,327 miles in a second of time,—being about 63,000 times the distance of the earth from the sun. But no star thus far investigated has so large a parallax; that of the nearest, α Centauri, being only 0″.75.