

DATE TO CATCH DUST FROM COMET'S TAIL

WATERER STARTS ACROSS EARTH AT NOON

ELECTRIC LINES MAY GET SHOCK FROM LUMINARY

Scientists Agree That Halley's Comet Will Not Harm Earth During Passage

Tail Will Take Twelve Hours for Transit and Particles May Be Captured

The earth will start on its long heretofore journey through the tail of Halley's comet shortly after noon today, and though it will take almost 12 hours to clear it, scientists almost without exception agree that no harmful results need be feared. Though this is the first time that the earth cuts into the tail of Halley's comet it has had similar experiences before with other comets, and the world at large was none the wiser, until a few weeks later, when astronomers made known the fact.

The last time the earth passed through the tail of a comet, according to Waldemar Kaempfert, an eminent astronomer, was in 1861. What the effect would be if the earth and the comet met is a matter of conjecture, but under the present circumstances such catastrophe is anticipated.

VIEWERS OF SCIENTISTS

Scientists state that the effect on this occasion will be trifling and scarce noticeable. The following are some of their views as to the phenomena when the earth enters the zone of the comet's tail:

Prof. J. J. See of the naval observatory, Mare Island—This brush of the earth against the comet's tail will do us no more harm than the appearance of a rainbow in the sky. A little powder dust might fall on the earth, but any sprinkling that we may receive is sure to be harmless, and we not even notice it. No harm occurred June 30, 1861, when we last passed through the tail of a great comet, and none will occur now. Yet during the passage of 1861 the atmosphere and the sky took an unusual aspect, and the heavens were faintly illuminated.

GLOW IN THE HEAVENS.

Prof. W. W. Campbell, Lick observatory—I do not expect any other phenomena apart from a probable glow in the heavens and perhaps a disturbance of the telegraph and telephone lines.

Dr. George M. Seale—As the tail of the comet is probably hollow there will be nothing remarkable or out of the ordinary in the earth's passage through it.

Prof. David P. Todd of Amherst college—I expect nothing more than an aurora effect.

Prof. Robert W. Wilson, Harvard college observatory—There may be a darkening of the atmosphere.

STARBURST PREDICTED.

Frank E. Searge of Providence, R. I.—In a few days the earth will find itself swept by a starburst, but there should be no score over the approaching event.

Prof. Burchhalter of the Chabot observatory, Oakland—The comet's tail is extremely rare and it more nearly produces a vacuum than can any body on earth. For that reason I am satisfied that the visit of the celestial body will not be fatal to us.

Prof. George E. Hale, director of the Carnegie solar observatory, Mount Wilson—There probably will be many shooting stars.

PLATE TO BE EXPOSED UPON MOUNT WILSON

PASADENA, May 17.—The character of the solids and fine dust which Halley's comet is supposed to be carrying with it in its sweep through space is interesting members of the United States geological survey, who will have a representative at the Carnegie observatory on Mount Wilson tomorrow to trap some of the particles as the earth passes through the comet's tail.

A high tower has been erected at the observatory with a plate coated with glycerine surmounted to catch any dust the comet's tail may contain. But Dr. George Hale, director of the observatory, has little hope of the success of the scheme.

NO DISTURBANCE EXPECTED

Doctor Hale issued a statement today in which he said that the earth would enter the comet's tail about 4 o'clock in the afternoon and emerge about midnight.

"But in my opinion," he states, "the passage of the earth through the tail is not likely to be signalized by any conspicuous phenomenon."

Spectroscopic observations show that the tail consists of gases far too tenuous to affect the chemical composition of the earth's atmosphere. Associated with these, close to the head of the comet, are solid and liquid particles which reflect a perceptible amount of sunlight.

In this part of the tail through which the earth will pass, it is not likely to be present in sufficient number or size to produce meteors.

SKY MAY BE BRIGHTER

The illumination of the tail might perhaps be sufficient to cause a slight increase in the brightness of the night sky soon after the transit, were it not for the moon, which will probably prevent any such effect from being seen.

"It is possible that the electric potential of the earth's atmosphere may be slightly affected by electrically charged particles in the comet's tail, but a reduction in the number of electrons received from the sun, caused by the screening effect of the tail.

Although it is very doubtful whether any such effect can be detected, observations with an electrometer will be continued for some time after the earth emerges from the tail.

As such electric phenomena might cause slight changes in the intensity of the earth's magnetism, a sensitive recording variometer will be used in an attempt to register any such changes.

PLATES TO COLLECT MATTER

At the request of a member of the United States geological survey, plates coated with glycerine will be exposed at the summit of a high tower to collect any minute traces of meteoric matter that may come into our atmosphere from the comet.

It is possible, however, that even if such minute particles should enter the upper atmosphere, they would not settle to the earth within a sufficiently

