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# WILL COMING COMET COLLIDE WITH EARTH



HALLEY'S COMET HEADED EARTHWARD

What with earthquakes from within and comets threatening from above, surely these are days of uncertainty and anxiety for the inhabitants of this mundane sphere. Astronomical calculation tells us that four big comets are headed for the earth, coming with that awful speed which only those erratic tramps of the heavens can attain. Three are due this year, and the fourth, which is the one which is causing the greatest speculation, will come into view in 1910. This last is known as Halley's comet. At present it is not far from the orbit of Jupiter, and by the time the year has waned it will be speeding through the belt of the asteroids—a group of miniature planets revolving in orbits just outside of that of Mars.

Assuming that the gigantic star-like nucleus and its mighty nebulous tail succeed in passing without disaster through this maze of little worlds—none of which is more than 100 miles in diameter—it will cut across the orbit of Mars and touch upon that of the earth. That the comet will not come in contact with one or more of these planetoids is not at all an assured fact, but this does not concern us nearly as much as the possibility of its coming into collision with the earth.

When the bright-tailed orb is nearest the sun it will be many millions of miles inside the earth's orbit, and hence there will be two occasions when it and the earth might meet, namely, when the former passes into and out of the latter's path. If such a celestial collision should take place, the comet would probably be burned up in the earth's atmosphere, and the earth be still left intact, though the blinding light and intense heat would destroy all life on that side of the world.

Obers, a German astronomer living in the interval between 1758 and 1840, pointed out that Biela's comet would, in 1832, pass within 20,000 miles of the earth's orbit, though the earth would not reach the same point until a month later. While astronomers saw no danger, a great many people who feared the verity of the deductions looked forward to the time with considerable apprehension. They were greatly relieved, however, for as predicted the comet came on the day the mathematicians named, and all danger had passed.

Halley's comet, which is now approaching, is of extraordinary interest. It was the first to be suspected of returning periodically, as well as the first whose period of revolution was calculated.

It will be its thirteenth visit which the comet will make three years hence, but who can tell what scene it will look down upon? Many authorities believe it will come very close to the earth, though it may not be as brilliant or as conspicuous as in its earlier returns. Arago suggested that comets in traversing their gigantic orbits might throw off into space nearly all the matter of which they were composed when at a point nearest the sun.

Under these conditions, then, it is evident that some of the more attenuated ones may, in the course of time, pass entirely out of existence, though they may, on the other hand, attract particles floating in space along their paths and so equalize their losses. This would account for the varying intensity of the same comet, as for instance, Halley's. However this may be, it must be remembered that appearances of comets in the early days were much more mysterious, and proportionately impressive, than in the more enlightened ages and that the extraordinary brilliancy recorded in some instances was, quite likely, due more to imagination than to the actual state of the comet.

When the great comet comes on the scene in 1910, its nucleus or beard will appear like a star of the first magnitude, but having a mighty tail trailing after it and pointing away from the sun. Different from many

of the smaller comets which are tailless, the one named for Halley is formed of three distinct parts, namely—the nucleus, coma and tail. The nucleus is the concentrated part and shines by the reflected light of the sun, while the tail gives out a light of its own, due chiefly to the glowing carbon vapor which is not unlike that of an ordinary gas jet.

Though shining as brightly as Jupiter, and sometimes visible even in the daytime, the comet is very light in weight, being not more than one one-millionth as heavy as the planet named. That this is true is known from the slight attraction it exerts on the planets, while the latter frequently pull the comet out of its course. The tail is so flimsy that should it brush the earth it would hardly be noticeable.

When Halley's comet is first seen by the comet seekers as it rushes headlong toward the sun, it will appear like a round, dim ball of hazy light. As it comes nearer the earth, its tail will gradually appear and lengthen. It may increase or decrease from night to night, varying from 25 to 15,000 miles in 24 hours, though should it do this, it would be an exception rather than the rule. As the great celestial messenger swings round the sun, its tail will apparently grow smaller, and finally disappear, the ball of hazy light alone being left to tell of its flight to Neptune. After a little this will be gone to be seen no more until the year 1985.

The composition of comets interested men even before their periods were calculated, and Halley's will be examined as it never was before, for we have instruments now that were unknown when it was visible in 1835. The spectroscope has shown what other and smaller comets were made of. The nucleus is a solid mass formed of different substances, and this is an envelope of dense gaseous matter that is, in perpetual motion. This portion is called the coma, and to its activity is probably due the tail, attracting and repelling the gaseous particles of waste material.

The effect of the sun on the nucleus is to draw it to it, but at the same time it has an evident tendency to repel the tail, and thus it is that the tail always stands out and away from the sun. The terrific velocity of the nucleus when a comet whirls round the sun shows plainly that its tail is not an integral part of the main body, for, if it was, the centrifugal force to which its extreme end is subjected would throw it off onto space.

The tail of Halley's comet when previously observed curved toward the rear something like a sword and indicating that the particles composing it as they pass outward move at the same slow rate at the interior particles and, in consequence, are left behind.

There are many small periodic comets that have been discovered in recent years, but Halley's is the only great comet that appears at regular intervals and its periodic visits is always assured of an interested and delighted throng of observers for there are few indeed who can say they ever saw it before.

In spite of the comforting assurance of astronomers that the approaching comet will be harmless, so far as its general effects upon the earth are concerned, and providing, of course, that the comet ever reaches us, Mme. de Thebes, the Mother Shipton of Paris, has predicted that the comet is going to make a great deal of trouble for the earth. Mme. de Thebes predicted the Boer war, the great Charity Bazaar fire in Paris, the Servian massacre, the San Francisco and Kingston disasters and the discovery of radium.

Though a very small kingdom, Denmark can boast of thrones and throne rooms unique in some respects. The most noteworthy of the Danish thrones is in the Knights' hall of the Schloss Rosenberg in Copenhagen.

## HE GOT THE COUNTERSIGN

Sentinel Had His Own Idea of His Duties While Guarding the Outer Lines.

State Senator Arthur Dewalt, of Allentown, member of the capitol investigating commission, has a favorite story. It runs as follows:

Among the troops about Tampa was a regiment of Pennsylvania Germans from my section. One night the guard was being placed. Said Private B. to the corporal:

"Now, you dell me vat to do."

"Well, here is your beat. You walk from that point (indicating) to this. If anyone comes you say, 'Halt! who goes there?' He will say to you, 'Friend, with the countersign.' You say to him, 'Advance, friend, with the countersign.' If he says 'Pocatelligo' you let him pass. If he doesn't you shoot."

"Holt ub, corporal; say dot ag'in. It's long."

Thereupon the officer of the guard repeated the instructions, going over them carefully.

Some two hours later a noise was heard by the lonely sentinel pacing to and fro, repeating his orders to himself.

"Haldt! Who goes dere?"

"Friend, with the countersign."

"Advtance, friendt, mit der gountersign."

Footsteps approached from the jungle, while the sentry grew more nervous and got his rifle in position for business. Aiming at the visitor, now about 12 feet distant, the recruit shouted:

"Now, you \_\_\_\_\_, you say Phogatelligo, or I zhoot."

## HYPERBOLE.

A Rochester clergyman was accustomed to use scientific terms, which the people did not understand. At deputation waited on him with the request that in the future, whenever he used such terms, he would explain them.

On the following Sunday he used the term hyperbole, and added: "As agreed on, I beg to explain this word. Were I to say that at this moment the whole of my congregation are sound asleep it would be hyperbole, but if I say that one-half are asleep, that is not hyperbole, but the truth."

The next day the deputation again called to say that the minister need not explain technical terms. The people would learn their meaning from a dictionary.—Rochester Herald.

## FAIR WARNING.



The Elephant—Can you stand draught?  
The Giraffe—I think so—w-w-w-why?  
The Elephant—Because I'm g-g-g-going to sneeze.

George Farris won the Democratic nomination for representative in Garrard county, by 7 votes.

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