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Across the Sun.

The passage of the planet Venus over the mighty and tumultuous sea of fire which makes up the face of the sun, is an event of so infrequent occurrence, that it is safe to say no living man includes it in his personal recollection.

Whatever incidents of the glowing skies and the measureless space-depths have disclosed themselves to the vision of vigilant sentinels—whose eyes are yet unsealed in death's deep slumber—the transit of Venus may not be numbered among them, for it has not taken place within a whole century. If it were not for the records of history on the one hand, and the indisputable demonstrations of celestial mathematics on the other, it might be regarded as an astronomical myth.

But just a hundred and three years ago, this bright June month coming, the event so unreal to living eyes, actually happened, and not in any sense to the surprise of the scientific world. On the contrary, it was a repetition of a perfectly accredited phenomenon, and had its date assigned to it by astronomic prescience. It was anticipated, and costly arrangements were made by a great government to have the rare procession carefully inspected from its first step to its vanishing point.

In June, 1769, a company of English astronomers sailed from London, in the special appointed ship, the Endeavor, and, in remote and widely-sundered regions of the globe, scanned, by detachments, the face of the sun, to note the path, across its glowing sierra, of a little black spot, which might, to an untutored eye, have seemed a chance speck, a mere mote.

In less than the space of three years from this date—in December, 1874—there will be another transit of Venus,

and the importance of it to science may be measurably estimated by a consideration of the fact that the British Government has appropriated a sum exceeding fifty thousand dollars for the equipment of various expeditions of learned men and scientific experts, to take the closest possible cognizance of its progress and phases.

These expeditions will doubtless go to the remote zones of our globe, to Hawaii, on the one hand, and on the other, to Crozet Island, or Mauritius, in order to obtain favorable views of the transit.

It will happen, not as in the last historical account of it,—in the "leafy June," but in the dead of our winter; and extreme northern points, otherwise most desirable for the sentinels, will be very bleak, and perhaps utterly inaccessible. In the antarctic latitudes, also, there will undoubtedly present themselves formidable barriers to the enterprise.

In spite of difficulties, however, the scientists will go, undaunted by cold, by icebergs, by the chance of encountering dense fogs, which may hide sun and satellite alike from their sight. From opposite ends of the earth they will look for the exceptional passage of the fair queen of the planets over the blazing surface of the sun.

Other governments, and our own among them, will probably do as the British Government has done, make appropriations for similar adventurous parties; and the common and single object of all explorers, whether by national or private commissions, will be to see how Venus will behave while she is daringly making her trespass on the solar disk.

A hundred thousand dollars will not cover the cost of scientific observations of this unusual event. The observers, as the fruit of toil, perilous exposure, patient waiting at some points for months, will see, generally, a small round disk of intense blackness—which is the unilluminated hemisphere of Venus—impinge upon the sun's glowing border, and occupy four hours—more or less by minutes, according to the observer's position—in accomplishing its procession across the disk, when the little pageant will come to an immediate close!

They will have been, if the sun's face is clear at the imminent moment of contact, and continues smiling, in spite of its brief blemish, to the momentous instant of the planet's *congé*, intensely interested witnesses of the scene.