

SCIENTIST ANNOUNCES DISCOVERY OF STRANGE CELESTIAL PHENOMENON WHICH HE HAS TERMED "WAR COMET"

Dr. Schlesinger Has Definitely Located the Celestial Body Which May Preside Over Destinies of the Nations Now in Conflict

PORTENTOUS SIGNIFICANCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ATTACHED TO ASTRAL PHENOMENA

A Review of the Great Comets Which History Records and Their Supposed Influence Upon Human Destinies—Some Outstanding Cases

THE announcement from Dr. Frank Schlesinger, director of the Allegheny Observatory, that he has succeeded in definitely locating the "war comet" which has been suggested as presiding over the destinies of the warring nations of Europe, has aroused the interest of all who believe in astronomical prognostics.

This celestial visitor which has intruded into mundane affairs contemporaneously with the outbreak of the struggle in Europe, is, according to its god-father, to stay in the vicinity of our Mother Earth for about two years. If this is a real "war comet" and the calculation as to its duration correct, then Lord Kitchener has been only displaying the sagacity credited him when he announced the necessity of making preparations for a struggle of eighteen to twenty months' duration.

comitants to world important events. Strange stars, eclipses of sun and moon, appearance of comets and shooting stars have ever been taken to denote that some supernatural being was giving the earth's inhabitants warning of disaster or good fortune. From ancient times great belief has been placed in these signs. Even today when science with its explanations can banish the mystery of the appearance at certain times of these celestial bodies, hundreds of thousands in their innermost selves still believe them to be supernatural emissaries to warn humanity.

Eclipses in History

During the mobilization of the Russian army early in August, there was a total eclipse of the sun visible, particularly in many parts of the great Empire. Cable despatches told of the ignorant peasantry taking the phenomenon as an omen.

However much the educated of the 20th century may scoff at the possibility of there being anything of the nature of a Divine revelation in this occurrence, the same thing happened at the crucifixion of Christ was, and is, amongst many to-day, deemed to be fraught with miraculous import. Matthew XXVII, 45 tells of the event in these words: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour."

A superstitious regard for omens seems to have made very considerable additions to the common load of human infelicity. For instance, at the accession of Queen Elizabeth in November, 1558, danger and unpleasantness had to be endured so that the elements could deliver to mankind their good omen. A storm burst over London with thunder and lightning. Sir John Hayward, in his annals of this time, observes: "Likewise the spire of All-hallows Church, in Bread Street, being then of stone, was smitten about ten fathoms beneath the eave, from which place a stone was struck that slew a dog and overthrew a man with whom the dog played. The accident was at that time esteemed prodigious by some whose affections ran with a bias, only because it ensued so great a change." All this was naively construed to be the celebration of the elements in honor of the accession of Good Queen Bess.

Comets were well calculated in



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early ages to attract the attention of all and to excite the fear of many. It has been the unanimous testimony of history, during a period of upwards of 2,000 years, that comets were always considered to be peculiarly "ominous of the wrath of Heaven, and as harbingers of wars and famines, of the dethronement of monarchs and the dissolution of empires."

History informs us that some comets have shone with such splendor as to have been distinctly seen in the daytime. Special attention was always paid to these messengers as their portent was deemed to be of extraordinary importance.

Seneca relates that one such brilliant comet appeared at the death of Demetrius, King of Syria. It was little inferior to the sun in size, being a circle of red fire, sparkling with a light so bright as to surmount the obscurity of night.

It is recorded in an ancient chronicle that a wonderful sign appeared in the heavens shortly before the death of Philip Augustus of France, of which event it was generally believed to be the precursor. It was seen for only eight days.

Although little information is possessed about this comet, and all that of a very vague nature, it seems probable that this was the famous Halley's comet which appeared as recently as the year 1910.

Astrophysics All Europe

In April, 1066, an important comet became visible. It astonished all Europe. It is minutely, though not very clearly described in Chinese annals. The path there assigned to it has been found by later astronomers to agree with elements which bear a resemblance to those of Halley's comet. In England it was considered the forerunner of the victory of William of Normandy and was looked upon with universal dread. In Normandy it was taken to prove the divine right of William to invade England.

An ancient Norman chronicle referring to it tells of "how a star with three long tails appeared in the sky; how the learned declared that stars only appeared when a Kingdom wanted a king, and how the said star was called a comet." Almost every historian and writer of the 11th century bears witness to the splendor of the comet of 1066. It was equal in size to the full moon. Its train at first appeared small, but as the Norman approached the shores of Britain, it increased to a wonderful length. There can be little doubt that this was Halley's.

The Pillar of Fire

The Pillar of Fire that directed the children of Israel in their flight from Egypt is now believed to have been Halley's or one of the other brilliant comets. The appearances of Halley's comet have been traced back through the following years: 1066, 168, 912, 837, 760, 684, 608, 530, 451, 373, 295, 218, 141, 66 A.D., and 11 B.C. Beyond this it can be worked out with no absolute certainty.

Speaking of the war of 1060, an old chronicler says: "Soon after the death of Henry, King of France, by poison) a comet denoting, as they say, change in kingdoms, appeared, trailing its extended and fiery train along the sky. Wherefore a certain monk of our monastery, by name Elmer, kneeling down with terror at the sight of a brilliant star, wisely exclaimed, 'Thou art come! A matter of lamentation to many a mother art thou come; I have seen thee long since; but I now behold thee much more terrible, threatening to hurl destruction on this country.'"

Upon the appearance of Halley's comet in 1456; Pope Calixtus III, to ward off evil, ordered the church bells to be rung daily at noon and extra Ave Marias to be repeated by everybody. While this favorable comet was in its ascendancy, Huniades, the Hungarian general, gained an advantage over Mahomet II, and compelled him to raise the siege of Belgrade.

Paracelsus, the Swiss naturalist and discoverer of hydrogen, gravely insisted that comets were celestial messengers sent to foretell good or bad events. The astrologer, Sardon, working along the same lines as Paracelsus, predicted his own death to the day and hour. Failing in his calculations, however, at the appointed

time he killed himself for the sake of science.

The ancient Romans did not trouble much about astral phenomena. They nevertheless, looked upon the comet of 43 B.B. as a celestial chariot carrying away the soul of Julius Caesar, who had been assassinated just as the comet made its appearance.

Worthy old Leonard Digges, a chronicler of the Middle Ages, says that "comets signify corruptions of the ayre. They are signs of earthquakes, of warres, of chaunnings of kingdoms, a great weathe of corne, yea, verily, a common death of man and beast."

War Or Death of Kings

John Gadbury, coming a little later, says: "Experience is an eminent evidence that a comet like a sword, portendeth war; and an hairy comet, or a comet with a beard, denoth the death of Kings." Gadbury also gives a copious register of all sorts of cometary announcements for upwards of 600 years, and adds in large Roman capitals: "As if God and nature intended by comets to ring the knell of princes and the outbreak of wars and pestilence, esteeming Churches upon Earth not sacred enough for such illustrious performances."

Shakespeare speaks of: "Comet importing change of times and states. Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky. And with them scourge the bad revolting stars That have consented unto Henry's death."

And in another place:—"When beggars die there are no comets seen. The Heavens themselves blaze forth the death of Princes."

Napoleon's Mascot

The last comet employed in an astrological character was that of 1769, which Napoleon looked upon as his protecting genie. Indeed as late as 1808 Messier published a work on it, the title of which is "La Grande Comete qui a paru a la Naisance de Napoleon le Grand."

Curious as it may seem many Kings and other people in authority have died coincident with the appearance of comets. Emperor Constantine in 336, Mahomet II. in 632, Louis II. in 875, Richard I. of England 1198, Pope Innocent IV. in 1254, and Pope Urban IV. in 1264, all died just after, or while comets were seen in the skies.

Historical references books do not tell whether the Aurora Borealis shone in the sky at the time of Flodden, but Aytoun in his Lay of Edinburg after Flodden makes it understood that the people of the Scottish capital were forewarned of disaster by the lights on the sky.

All night long the northern steamers Blazed across the northern sky. Fearful lights that never beckon Save when Kings and heroes die.

Influence on the Earth

The influence of astral bodies on human affairs has always strongly gripped the popular imagination, and writers down through the ages have never lost an opportunity to appeal to this credulity. Even the great Kepler, discoverer of so many astronomical wonders, during the dark ages, had to bow to popular will to effect the sale of his books. In 1619 he published a work on comets, in which he, almost insincerely, makes the most of the significance of the appearance of a comet and its influence on human affairs.

As Kepler was writing when the Thirty Years' War had just begun and religious persecution was at its height in Europe, it was not difficult to find sensational events which happened soon after or shortly before the appearance of a comet.

Nevertheless, although Kepler himself was not inclined to attach much importance to such coincidences, he thought that possibly actual contact with a comet's tail might produce pestilence and trouble. Beyond that he was not prepared to go. He would do no more than endorse the pious, if somewhat neutral opinion, that one of the uses of a comet is to remind us on this plane that we are merely mortals.

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