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**THE TAIL OF A COMET**  
 It Pays Dearly For Its Brilliant Gaseous Display.  
**FORMED BY LIGHT AND HEAT.**

Far Away the Comet is a Globular Mass, and as it Nears the Sun the Action of That Body Untwines the Tail, Which is Never Recovered.

Traveling as comets do in very elongated ellipses, with the sun in one of the foci, as the attracting point is called, most of their journey is spent in slow uneventfulness far away from the hearth of the system—hearth is just what the word focus means. They are then small globular aggregations, sluggish and dim—a little roundish nebula in look. Such they appear when first described in the telescope coming in from space, for they are rarely seen at all until they have entered within the orbit of Mars. Distance in part, but still more their own behavior till then, keeps them hid.

Within this nebosity, known as the head, appears as it nears us a bright spot, the nucleus. Suddenly there occurs a complete change in the department of the body, one which renders it the observed of all observers, and in less civilized times occasionally its being held the harbinger of distress, disease and death.

As soon as the comet gets near enough the heat of the sun sets up convection within it. By Very's determination of the temperature of the unblanketed sunward side of the moon we are enabled to infer that this heat is great at the earth's distance from the sun in spite of the cold of space. This temperature is 353 degrees F.

And as the comet approaches the sun this heat must increase inversely as the square of the distance. At half the radius of the earth orbit it is already four times as great above absolute zero, at a quarter sixteen times, and so on increasing, the temperature rising into thousands of degrees.

No wonder the comet acts as it does. It at once becomes uneasy, waxes in light and, as the spectroscopic reveals, disruptive electric discharges start in it which let out the imprisoned gases. Then begins that spectacular career of perihelion passage which makes the comet so superb an object and for which it pays so dear. The gases which are thus thrust out from the interior of the separate meteorites, together with such particles of the iron as are made gaseous by the heat, fall prey to another force besides gravitation. This force is the impact of light itself, the light emitted by the sun.

That so immaterial a thing as a beam of light can have power to move even a pith ball is a conception not easy to grasp. Yet there is no doubt of the fact, theoretically calculated years ago by Clerk Maxwell from his electro-magnetic theory of light, for the gaseous particles proceed to be repelled by the sun at enormous speed, each behaving exactly as it should by mathematical analysis if such were the occasioning cause. Evidently the light waves have a propelling power in the direction of their own motion equal to their own speed.

Why, then, is it that the planets betray no such effect in spite of their size? The answer is, because of that very size. Gravity acts on the mass, a matter of three dimensions; the light force on the surface of the body, a matter of two. As a body diminishes in size, therefore, its surface bears a greater and greater ratio to its mass until when small enough the second force is the stronger of the two.

This relation is betrayed in the conduct of the tail. The imprisoned gases, heated to expulsion on the sunward side of the comet, rise toward it in a series of exquisite mantling envelopes, as if the comet's head were veiling itself from the too ardent gaze of the sun. Then, after rising to a certain height, their initial impetus overcome, they fall back, repelled by the light waves, although still attracted by gravity, and are driven out to form the tail of the comet, fresh envelopes taking their place.

Sometimes only a single tail is formed, but at others two or even three are shot out, and when this happens one is nearly straight, one curved and one greatly bent. Now, calculation shows that the repelling force in the case of the first is fourteen times that of gravity, in the second two and two-tenths times, or something less, and in the third only about one-fifth of gravity. But these are the very ratios which particles of hydrogen gas, of the hydrocarbons and of iron or sodium would respectively show.

As the comet approaches the sun the display becomes more violent and more spectacular. Finer and wilder grows the pagant, the "hairy star" blossoming its tresses, which had stood sedately coiled about its head amid the depths of space, to stream in gorgeous gleams behind it as it pays its orbital obsequance to the ruler of its course. It seemingly backs away in keeping with the etiquette of royalty, turning always its face sunward as it retreats whence it came.

But it pays dearly for its display. The matter going to form the tail can never be recovered, but is driven farther away. At each successive return to the sun some of its mass and brilliance is thus lost, and this is why the periodic comets, those that have made many visits, are such small and inconspicuous objects. It is only the comets of long ellipses and very distant habit of which the perihelion pagant is so fine.—Youth's Companion.

**BURIED HIS OPPONENT.**

"Sunset" Cox Pronounced the Eulogy and Wrote the Epitaph.

Adlai Stevenson in his reminiscences tells some stories of the witty New York congressman, "Sunset" Cox. One relates how Cox got even with a new member who tried to crush him, and another gives Cox's retort to Samuel J. Tilden's effort to win the dyed-in-the-wool Republican state of Vermont in 1876.

A new member from a sparsely settled district entered the house. His avoidupolis was in keeping with the vast territorial area he represented. As a wit he was without a rival in his section. The admiration of his constituents over the marvelous attainments of the new member scarcely exceeded his own. Only the opportunity was wanting when the star of the gentleman from New York should go down and his own be in the ascendant. The opportunity at length came. In the great speech made by the new member Mr. Cox was the victim of the hour, the recipient of many compliments much more fervid than kind. The seven vials of wrath were opened upon him. A vast storehouse of wit, ancient and modern, was literally exhausted for the occasion. Even the dilutive size of the New York member was mentioned in terms of disparagement.

The speech caused much merriment in the house during its delivery, and its author, with an air of self-satisfaction rarely witnessed even in that body, resumed his seat. Mr. Cox at once took the floor. No attempt will be made to do justice to his speech. The manner, the tone of voice, which caused an uproar upon the floor and in the galleries, can never find their way to print. Referring to the ill-mannered allusion to his size, he said "that his constituents preferred a representative with brains rather than one whose only claim to distinction consisted in an abnormal abdominal development." In tragic tones he then pronounced a funeral eulogy over his assailant and suggested as a fitting inscription for his tombstone the pathetic words of Byron:

"Tis Greece, but living Greece no more."

Soon after the nomination of Tilden for president Mr. Cox was invited to attend a political meeting at the state capital and address the Democracy of Vermont. When the scarcity of Democrats in the Green Mountain State is taken into account the significance of Mr. Cox's reply will readily appear. His telegram was to the effect that pressing engagements prevented his attending, but "if the Democracy of Vermont will drop into my library any afternoon about 4 o'clock I will address them with great pleasure."

**A Tragic Wedding Ring.**

A tragic story of a forgotten wedding ring is told in the "Lives of the Lindseys." He should have been at church when Colin Lindsay, the young Earl of Balcarrais, was quietly eating his breakfast in nightgown and slippers. Reminded that Maurilla of Nassau was waiting for him at the altar, he hurried to church, but forgot the ring. A friend present gave him one, which he, without looking at, placed on the bride's finger. After the ceremony was over the countess glanced at her hand and beheld a grinning death's head on her ring. She fainted away, and the countess made such an impression on her that on recovering she declared she was destined to die within a year, a presentiment that probably brought about its own fulfillment, for in a few months the careless Colin was a widower.

**The Old Way of Passing Bills.**

A document found among the Duke of Rutland's papers at Belvoir castle throws a curious light upon the mode of getting private bills through the English house of commons in the days of King Charles II. The case in hand was the divorce bill of John Lord de Roos, an affair that caused a great deal of gossip in its day. One of his lordship's agents wrote in January, 1667: "On Wednesday last I got six and forty of the house of commons to the Dog Tavern, in the palace yard at Westminster, when were present Mr. Attorney General and Mr. George Montagu. As soon as they had dined we carried them all to the house of commons, and they passed the bill, as the committee, without any amendments, and ordered it to be reported the next day."

**News in Olden Times.**

Not many minutes after a statesman has finished a speech nowadays the news is selling in the streets and has been flashed to every capital in Europe.

It was different in the elections in the time of Pitt. He made a memorable speech one March, and the eager public only learned exactly what he said from the Gentleman's Magazine of the following November.—London Saturday Review.

**On the Wrong Back.**

Charitable Lady—I gave your father the money to buy you a coat last week. I see you're not wearing it. Boy—No, mum; 'e put it on a 'orse. Charitable Lady—On a horse? But he should have thought of your comfort before that of an animal.—Throne and Country.

**Blissful Ignorance.**

He (pointing with his whip)—There's a tobacco field. She—Give me the lines, dear, and see if you can find a ripe cigar for yourself.—Harper's Bachelor.

**Power is a fretful thing and hath its wings always spread for flight.—Walt Whitman.**

**Pigeon Whistles of Peking.**

The smallest musical instruments in the world are the pigeon whistles of Peking. They are made of thinnest bamboo and tiny gourds scraped to paper-like delicacy and fastened beneath the tail feathers of the carrier pigeons. As the birds fly through the air these instruments emit a weird aeolian melody like the harps of fairyland. Every morning and afternoon the vault of Peking's sky is swept by these sweet, mournful notes as the birds fly to and fro, carrying messages to the bankers, the merchants, the lawyers, invitations, letters, stock quotations, a system older than the telegraph or telephone or the oldest letter service, as old as time itself. There are some twenty different kinds of pigeon whistles, some of them simple bamboo tubes with but one top and some as elaborately constructed as miniature organ pipes. They are all of featherweight lightness and when held in the hand and swept through the air emit the same delicate whistling notes as when borne through the upper atmosphere by the carrier pigeons.

**A Diplomatic Official.**

During the reign of Emperor Napoleon III, he and the empress visited Normandy and had arranged to spend a couple of days at Evreux. M. Janvier de la Motte, who was the prefect, learned that the revolutionaries intended to hiss the sovereigns as they passed, and so he summoned the leaders of the movement and told them that he knew of their plot. "If you carry out your plan," said he to them, "you will get six months in prison. If you do not get your friends will accuse you of cowardice and treason. As a way out of the difficulty I propose to lock you up at once until the emperor has gone." The conspirators accepted the terms offered them, and so the emperor was greeted only by cheers, as the revolutionaries, frightened at the arrest of their chiefs, had not dared to utter a sound. After the emperor and empress had gone the prefect went in person to release his prisoners, who had had such a pleasant time that they greeted him with cries of "Long live the prefect!" to which M. Janvier de la Motte, who was a man of wit, replied: "My friends, do not overdo it."

**Settling a Matrimonial Dispute.**

Mme. Sada Yacco, the famous Japanese actress, who had been a friend of the assassinated Prince Ito from her childhood, told the following amusing anecdote:

"In my frequent quarrels with my husband we sometimes asked Prince Ito to judge between us. One day when we had had a more than usually violent dispute at Chigasaki the prince came in unexpectedly, and I asked him to decide the question. But he declined, while proposing the following solution:

"Go down into the garden, both of you, and fight it out like sumo tori (wrestlers). The one that wins will naturally be the one who is in the right."

"No sooner said than done! In a trice Kawakami and I were in wrestling trim. By good luck my husband was just recovering from a serious illness, and as he was very weak I soon threw him to the ground. This amused the prince enormously, who, of course, had foreseen the end of the unequal match."

**Cemeteries Where Women Gossip.**

Friday, the Sabbath of the Moslems, when all true believers of the masculine gender make a point of going to church, their wives, sisters and daughters resort to the cemeteries and wall for the dead. But all their time is not spent in weeping, and sorrow is not the only emotion they display, on these occasions. They take with them bunches and garlands of flowers and decorate the graves of their relatives and pray and weep over the dead for a time. Then when this pious duty is performed they gather in little groups and have a good time gossiping about the living. Thus the day of mourning is very popular among the Moslem women. It gives them almost the only opportunity they have of cultivating the acquaintance of their neighbors.

**The Lion and the Unicorn.**

The unicorn came into the royal arms with James I. It belongs to the royal arms of Scotland. The signet ring of Mary, mother of James, is in existence, having a unicorn on it. In the royal arms, therefore, one supporter represents England, the other Scotland.

The lion and the unicorn occur also in ancient Buddhist scriptures, placed together as supporters. Both of these animals also are seen playing draughts together in the well known Egyptian painting. But the oldest connection of the two is in the blessing of Jacob and of Moses.—London Notes and Queries.

**Second Thought.**

"Dear Mr. Hicks," she wrote, "I am very sorry that what you ask I cannot grant. I cannot become your wife. Yours sincerely, Ethel Harrows." Then she added: "P. S.—On second thoughts, dear George, I think I will marry you. Do come up tonight and see your own wife Ethel."

**A Subtle Difference.**

"And so," began the browbeating attorney to the shabby witness, "you live by your wits, do you?"

"No, sir; by other folks' lack of them," corrected the witness modestly.

**He Knew.**

Wife—I wonder why there are no marriages in heaven? Husband—Because it is heaven, of course.—Illustrated Bits.