

Chapter Seven: Comets

The Romanian people call comets *Stele cu Coadă* (Tailed-Stars), and think they are divine signs placed in the sky to announce the coming of great hardships, such as bloody wars between kings and emperors, epidemics or plagues of men and cattle, famines, etc., and that these will occur in the place the tailed-star goes to. Even the end of the world will be heralded by a tailed-star, thus many peasants think, on seeing a comet, that the end of the world is at hand, and prepare themselves for death using their remaining time for prayers.

In fact, all the beliefs in the evil portents of comets existed from the earliest times with all peoples. What can we say when, even in our own times, many prognosticators forecast that a comet will destroy the Earth, and give the time of its coming? But the cunning comet does not wish to respect their anticipations!

Romania's war for independence in 1877-78 contributed to the people's beliefs in the forecasting ability of comets. In a paper which I received from Vâlcea County, a peasant remarked: *Sometimes, stars are seen with tails, which forecast bad events, like wars, plagues, etc. In 1877, while the Romanians fought with the Turks, a star was seen in the sky with a little tail; then the tail began to lengthen, and the star drew nearer to us; only close to the end of the war did this tailed-star disappear.*

