**An account of the comet of the year 1811.**

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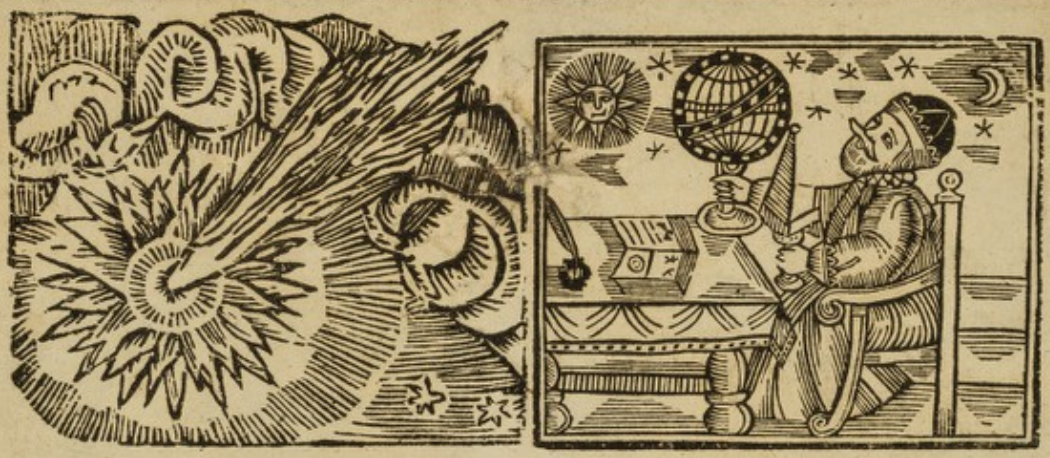

# *AN ACCOUNT OF*
# THE COMET,
## OF THE YEAR 1811.

THIS Comet is the ſecond, ſince the beginning of the preſent century, which has been viſible to the naked eye. The firſt was diſcovered at Marſeilles, on the 20th September, 1807, and continued viſible till the beginning of December following. The preſent Comet was alſo firſt diſcovered in France, at the city of Viviers, on the 25th of laſt March, by M. de Flaugergues; and nearly about the ſame time (viz. about the end of March) according to the accounts, by the China fleet in the Indian ocean. It continued viſible till the arrival of the fleet at St Helena, about the end of May, when, from its approach to the ſun, it could no longer be ſeen. Shortly after, emerging from the rays of that luminary, it was obſerved by Bovard, at Paris, on the 21ſt of Auguſt, between three and four o'clock in the morning; its poſition then being nearly that laid down in the elements calculated by Buckhardt, a celebrated French Aſtronomer.

On the 26th of the ſame month, it was firſt ſeen in Britain, by Mr Ferminger, late aſſiſtant aſtronomer to the Royal Obſervatory at Greenwich; and nearly at the ſame time, by M. Veitch, at Inchbony, at 20 minutes paſt nine at night, in the N. N. W. quarter of the heavens.

It was obſerved at Glaſgow, immediately after ſunſet, upon the firſt of September, and at eight o'clock that evening, it appeared like a ſmall ſtar, ſurrounded by a coma, or whitiſh haze. On the evening of Wedneſday, 4th September, at 10 minutes after nine, its ſize was evidently on the increaſe. On Friday night, at eight minutes after nine, it was ſhining with great ſplendour, and the form of its coma well defined, forming near a right angled triangle with the ſtars U and L in the Great Bear, and nearly equi-diſtant from each—a bright and luminous ſtream of light, or tail, appeared to ſhoot out from its body. On Saturday night, 6th September, the tail was ſtill more conſpicuous, and had the appearance of being forked; ſeveral fixed ſtars were ſeen through it, which completely confutes the idea, that the tails of Comets are of the nature of fire or flame—the length of the tail cannot be leſs than three degrees, or 180 miles. When viewed by a good teleſcope, the nucleus appears circular, and much better defined than on the 1ſt and 2d inſtant. The coma alſo appears of a ſimilar form, and ſhades gradually from the body, receding to a conſiderable diſtance.

This Comet is apparently much larger than that obſerved in the Autumn and Winter of 1807, and, from its preſent poſition and motion, it will likely remain viſible for ſeveral weeks, and afford many opportunities of aſcertaining its true path, diſtance, and real magnitude, which, from the few obſervations that have yet been made, cannot be done in a very ſatisfactory manner.

The following, written by an eminent philoſopher, has been publiſhed in many of the London journals, from which it is copied, care having been taken to expunge ſuch of the technical language as it was thought would be unintereſting to the readers.

"The Comet which was obſerved in Europe in its deſcent to the ſun, from the middle nearly of March to the latter end of May laſt, and in the Weſt Indies on the firſt of June, when it was coming to its perihelion, and which was again obſerved at the Obſervatory at Paris, after it had paſſed its perihelion, is now very conſpicuous under the ſquare of the Great Bear, whence it ſeems to be paſſing in a direction through the ſquare and the tail of the Dragon, and the body of the Leſſer Bear, near the tail.

When firſt ſeen here, Auguſt 21, at 10 minutes paſt eight in the evening, it had the appearance of a large Nebula, nearly circular, and of about one degree in extent, with a central light, reſembling a hazy ſtar of the fourth or fifth magnitude. Cloudy weather prevented its being again ſeen till the evening of the fifth Sept. when it appeared like a fixed ſtar of about the ſecond magnitude, with a thin pale train; on the ſixth it was conſiderably brighter, its train then, viewed with a good four-foot-and-a-half refractory of Dolland, and a very good night-glaſs, adapted for the use by Nairn and Blunt, was evidently divided by a darkiſh ſhade near the further extremity. It was very conſpicuous even to the naked eye. The head now appeared much more round. Saturday night, ſtill advancing towards the ſquare, it appeared even brighter than on Friday, the head a yellowiſh light, pretty well defined; the tail (which, when moſt apparent, was that and the former night about five degrees, or 360 miles, in length, and nearly four at its father extremity) a thin white ſplendour, like the *eaſtieſt* part of the *Milky Way*. Breadth of the head about 1-4th or 1-5th of the moon's apparent diameter. From its ſlow motion and the direction of its path, there ſeems reaſon to hope that it will be viſible three or four months longer. It is a noble confirmation of the Newtonian and Halleian theory, having been ſo long before, and now after its perihelion. From obſervation, there ſeems no reaſon, in general, to ſuppoſe any thing noxious or deſtructive in its form, but the contrary."

This Comet is pronounced by a very diſtinguiſhed mathematician, Mr Page, of Congleton, to be the ſame as appeared in 1661, and whoſe period is 150 years, and not 129 years, as has been generally ſuppoſed, and hence expected in 1789, and confounded with one ſeen in 1532.—It exceeds in apparent magnitude any thing of the kind that has been ſeen within the memory of man, and by ſome has been thought to be an omen of heaven's judgments. Some read in it the deſtiny of nations, and the fall of empires. To others, it is the preſage of wars, plagues, and inundations;—in a word, of the moſt formidable ſcourges. Theſe ſuperſtitious perſons do not conſider that a Comet is a natural body, the return of which can be calculated with certainty; and which, conſequently, cannot diſturb the order of things. They do not conſider, that this body, as well as the other planets, muſt have a more important deſtination than ſuperſtition gives them. What! would the Supreme Being have placed ſuch prodigious bodies in the heavens, merely to announce to a few creatures the fate which awaits them.

To many minds the appearance of this Comet has produced awe and dread. In general, indeed, nothing affects the imagination more than uncommon appearances in the heavens: the fall of a meteor ſtrikes deeper awe than the ſpectacle of all the ſtars; and Comets, from time immemorial, have been beheld with terror and amazement, as executioners of divine wrath. There is, however, nothing in the appearance of this myſterious ſtranger "in the arctic ſky" that ſhould ſtrike dread. He draws after him a train of beautiful light, reſembling in colour, and exceeding in luſtre, the traces of the Milky Way; and from the preſence of ſuch a meſſenger we need fear no evil.

During the time this Comet appears viſible it may be obſerved every evening after ſun-ſet, (unleſs the clouds interpoſe) in a N. N. W. direction, under the tail of the Great Bear; and every morning in a N. N. E. direction, from half-paſt two o'clock till nearly day-light.

The motion of this Comet it is ſaid, is very ſlow; and has not yet been correctly aſcertained. The Comet of the year 1743, moved at the amazing rate of ſix hundred thouſand miles an hour, or ten thouſand miles in a minute! What an amazing thought it is to conſider this ſtupenduous body traverſing the immenſity of the creation with ſuch a rapidity, and at the ſame time wheeling about in that line which the almighty has preſcribed for it? That it ſhould move in ſuch an inconceivable fury and combuſtion, and at the ſame time with ſuch an exact regularity? How ſpacious muſt the univerſe be that gives ſuch bodies as theſe full play, without ſuffering the leaſt diſorder or confuſion by it? What a glorious ſhow are thoſe beings entertained with, that can look unto this great theatre of nature, and ſee myriads of ſuch tremendous objects wandering through thoſe immeaſurable depths of æther, and running their appointed courſes? Our eyes may hereafter be ſtrong enough to command this magnificient proſpect, and our underſtandings able to find out the ſeveral uſes of theſe great parts of the univerſe. In the mean time they are proper objects for our imaginations to contemplate, that we may form more exalted notions of infinite wiſdom and power, and learn to think humbly of ourſelves, and of all the little works of human invention.

"The following are the elements of the orbit of this Comet:—Perihelion diſtance, 1,022,42. The inſtant of its paſſage by the perihelion, 48 minutes paſt nine in the evening of the 12th of September, 1811. Aſcending node, 140. 13.; inclination, 72. 42.; place of the perihelion, 74. 12."

*M. Angus and Son, Printers, Newcaſtle.*