

THE COMET.

As the Comet has now (October, 1835,) reached its nearest point of approach to the earth, and is hurrying off towards the Sun, we think that some facts in relation to it, (culled from foreign journals,) might not be uninteresting. The early history of this remarkable body may be traced, with some degree of probability, as far back as 130 years before the Christian era, when a comet is said to have appeared of considerable magnitude and brilliancy, shining with a brightness which surpassed the splendour of the sun; it was supposed to have signalised the birth of Mithridates.—There is reason to believe also that the comets which were seen in the years 228 and 399, were returns of the same body; in the latter year it is also described of prodigious magnitude and horrid aspect. In the years 630, 856, 930, and 1006, it probably was again observed; the latter year described as four times as large as the planet Venus. It was also visible in 1230, 1305, and 1380; at the second of these returns it was termed "*cometa horrendae magnitudinis*;" whence it may be concluded that its aspect was very conspicuous.

In the year 1456 the Comet returned again, and was beheld by all Europe with fear and astonishment. The Turks were then engaged in a successful war, in which they destroyed the Greek Empire; they, therefore, might have regarded it as an auspicious omen. The Christians thought that their destruction was portended by its appearance, especially as its tail was turned towards the east. The Pope Calixtus regarded it as at once the sign and instrument of Divine wrath; he ordered public prayers to be offered up, and granted a year's indulgence to all who, at the tolling of the noon-bell, should say three paternosters and three ave-marias, to propitiate the mercy of Heaven.

In the year 1521, it appeared of a bright gold colour. In 1607 it pursued nearly the same apparent path through the heavens which it is now pursuing.—The celebrated Kepler observed it on his return from a convivial party on the 26th September. It continued visible about five weeks. Subsequent to its return in 1693, the attention of the celebrated astronomer Halley, was directed to the periodical return of these bodies, and from a comparison of the elements of various comets on record, he ventured to assert, that those which appeared in the years already specified were not different comets, but the same body returning at intervals of seventy-five and a half years. At that time, he also predicted that the same comet would again make its appearance about the end of the year 1758, or the commencement of 1759. The prediction was verified. It was first seen by George Palitzsch, a farmer, near Dresden, on Christmas day, 1758; and was afterwards recognised by several European observatories.

The completion of another period of seventy-five years has just arrived, and a second verification of Halley's prediction has been accomplished. Through what unimaginable realms of space must this body have travelled during that period! What mighty associations are connected with its history! It is the same Comet which in ages back "perplexed monarchs," and in the imaginations of the people,

— "From its horrid hair,
Shook pestilence and war."

Science has dispelled these credulous apprehensions, and also overturned those notions of the influence of Comets, which have prevailed to a considerable extent even in our own enlightened age.