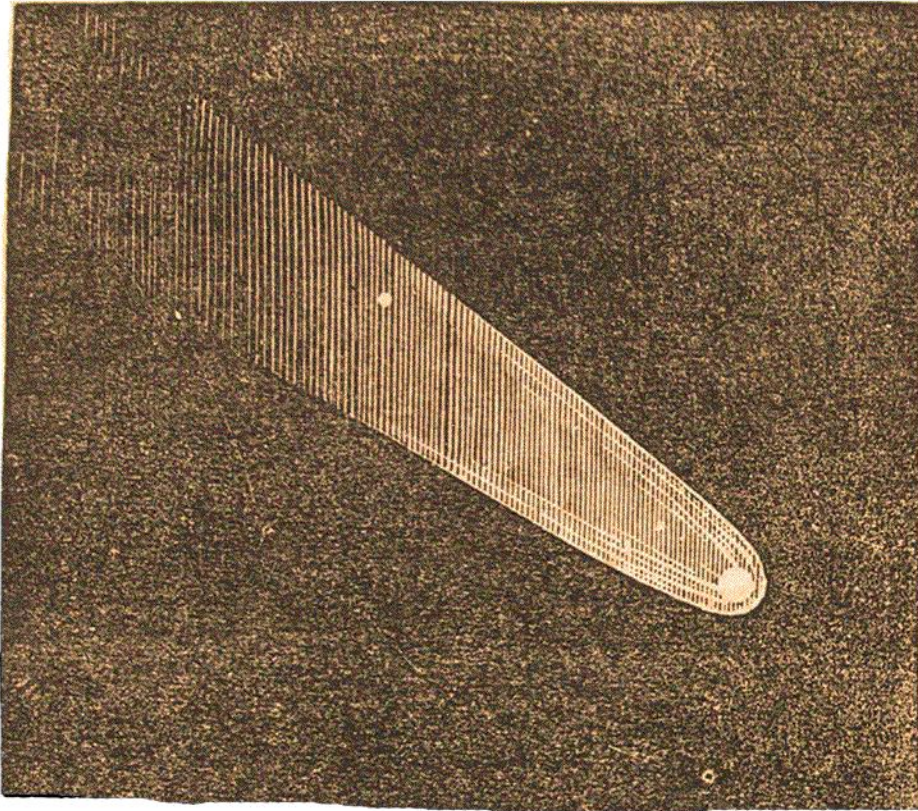


ciples, men were accustomed to regard them not only as the forerunners, but as the causes of political convulsions. All human affairs were supposed to be under the control of celestial influences, and it is not strange that comets were



The Comet of 1819.

invested with an uncommon degree of malevolent power. There is strong historical evidence to prove that the art of astrology was practised among the earliest nations, and that it had been widely distributed among successive generations. Not only was it used in the temples and oracles of the Greeks and Romans, but also in Assyria, Babylonia, the Hindus, and in Egypt. In all these countries it was practised, and by universal consent acknowledged to be the most noble of all sciences. It was this that gave the priesthood so entire and enslaving an influence over the public mind, led to the establishment of sanguinary superstitions, and was the origin of idolatry itself.

It is not, perhaps, singular that the early nations, who are known to have paid great attention to celestial phenomena, and especially to the relative motions of the heavenly bodies, should have chosen them as the subjects of their art. The