
or to carry his bones about the streets on account of any of these later great comets.

(2.) When we look through nature and observe the manifest indications of design which every point of it exhibits, it would be very presumptuous in us to assert that comets are of no use, and serve no purpose in our system. Hitherto, however, no one has been able to assign any single point in which we should be a bit better or worse off, materially speaking, if there were no such thing as a comet. Persons, even thinking persons, have busied themselves with conjectures: such as that they may serve for fuel for the sun (into which, however, they never fall), or that they may cause warm summers—which is a mere fancy—or that they may give rise to epidemics, or potato-blight, and so forth. But I need hardly say this is all wild talking, as my readers will be better able to judge when I shall have stated a few things which are known for certain about them. But *there is* a use, and a very important one, of a purely intellectual kind, which they have amply fulfilled; and who shall say that it has not been *designed* that such should be the case? They have afforded some of the sublimest and most satisfactory verifications of our astronomical theories—they have furnished us with a proof amounting to demonstration of the existence of a repulsive force* directed (under certain circumstances, and acting on certain forms of matter) *from* the sun as well as of that

* See on this subject my "Results of Astronomical Observations at the Cape of Good Hope," p. 407, *et seq.*, where the existence of such a repulsive force is clearly demonstrated.