

though, as sometimes happens in matters of pure accident and in the run of chances, it is not *very* unfrequent (and we have lately seen it remarkably exemplified) for two or even three very great comets to follow each other in rapid succession. Thus the great comet of 1680 was followed in 1682 by two other very conspicuous ones, of which we shall have more to say presently.

(5.) When a comet is first discovered in a telescope it is for the most part seen only as a small, faint, round, or oval patch of foggy, or, as it is called, *nebulous* light, somewhat brighter in the middle. By degrees it grows larger and brighter, and at the same time more oval, and at length begins to throw out a "*tail*," that is to say a streak of light extending always in a direction *from* the sun, or in the continuation of a line supposed to be drawn from the place of the sun below the horizon to the head of the comet above it. As time goes on, night after night the tail grows longer and brighter, the "*head*," or nebulous mass from which the tail seems to spring also increases, and within it begins to be seen what is called a "*nucleus*" or kernel, a sort of rounded, misty lump of light dying off rapidly into a haziness called the "*coma*" or *hair*. Within this, but often a good deal out of the centre, there is seen with a good telescope and a high magnifying power a very small spark or pellet of light which may or may not be the solid body of the comet, and which is the real nucleus. What in an indifferent telescope looks like a rather large puffy ball, more or less oval, is certainly not a solid substance. All the while the comet is getting every evening nearer and nearer to the place of the sun,