

tail, which stretched half-way across the sky after sunset in March of that year. But its head, as we here saw it, was not worthy such a tail. Farther south, however, it was seen in great splendour. I possess a picture by Mr Piazzzi Smythe, Astronomer-Royal of Edinburgh, of its appearance at the Cape of Good Hope, which represents it with an immensely long, brilliant, but very slender and *forked* tail. Of all the comets on record, that approached nearest the sun—indeed, it was at first supposed that it had actually grazed the sun's surface, but it proved to have just missed by an interval of not more than 80,000 miles—about a third of the distance of the moon from the earth, which (in such a matter) is a very close shave indeed to get clear off. There seems very considerable reason to believe that this comet has figured as a great comet on many occasions in history, and especially in the year 1668, when just such a comet, with the same remarkable peculiarity, of a comparatively feeble head and an immense train, was seen at the same season of the year, and in the very same situation among the stars. Thirty-five years has been assigned with considerable probability as its period of return, but it cannot be regarded as quite certain. (It will of course be understood that the return of a great comet to the neighbourhood of the sun by no means implies that it should be a conspicuous one, as seen from the earth. The phase of its greatest development may be, and is, indeed, more likely than not to be, ill-timed, as regards the relative situations of the earth and sun, for its exhibition as a great celestial phenomenon.)