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COMETS ANALOGOUS
TO WOMEN.

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MR. PRINTER,

Sir,—Having transcribed a few remarks I made on the Comet of 1811, and which are equally applicable to the one now (Oct. 1858) delighting every spectator, I make no apology in forwarding them, to be made such use of as you may think proper; for not an iota have we advanced true science in regard to the nature of our eccentric visitors—unlike the general advancement made on mother earth by the ingenuity of man, which is progressing at a railroad pace, if not so swiftly as this evening *diamond* passing through the endless atmosphere. I have compared this Koh-i-noor in the heavens to ~~man~~ woman on earth, and leave you to decide which of the two you love best.—I have made up my mind.

I am, Sir,

Yours truly,

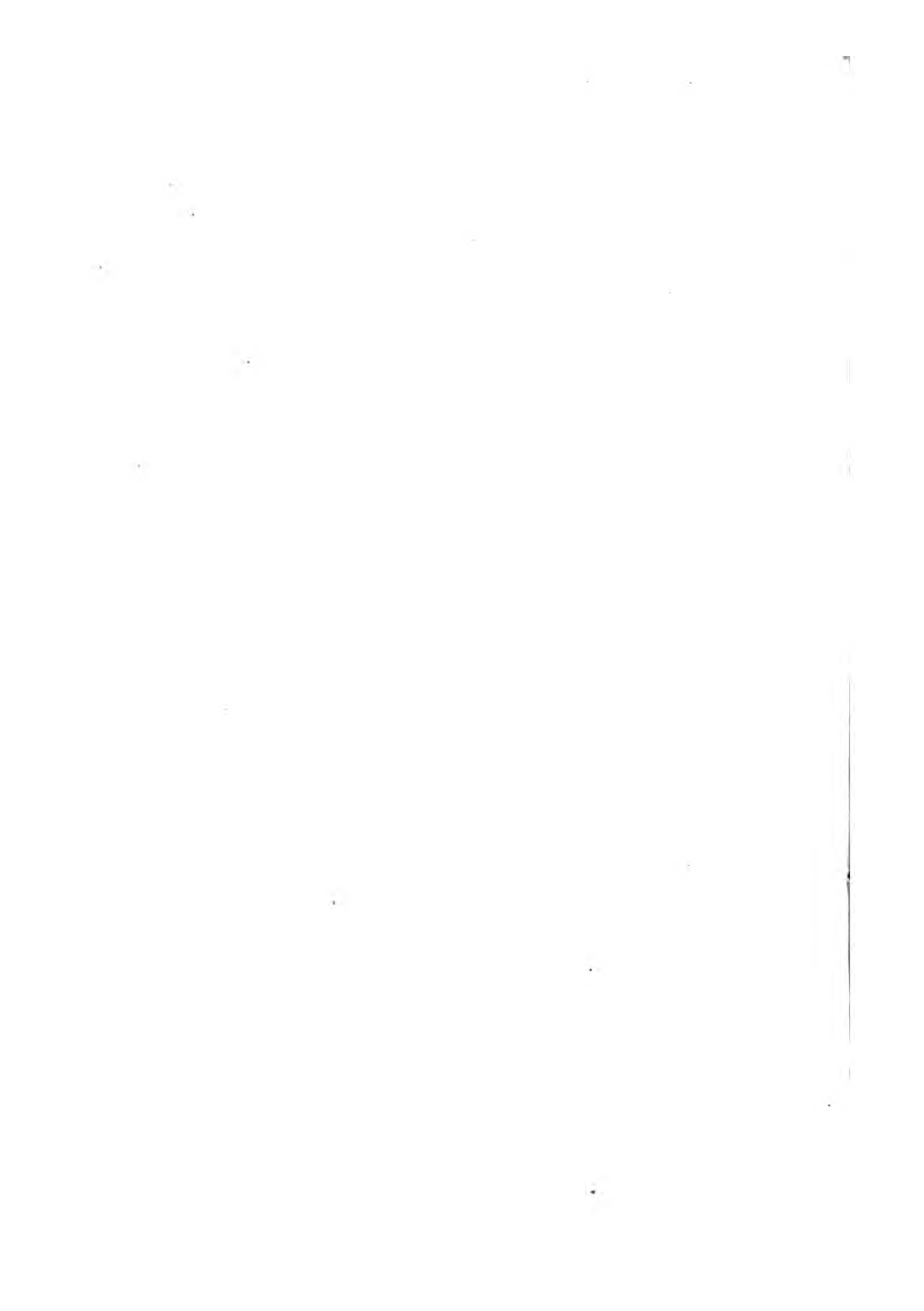
CAROLUS,

M.R.C.S.E.

London,

St. James', Westminster, S.W.,

October 1858.



COMETS ANALOGOUS TO WOMEN.



“Nugis addere pondus.”

IF astronomico-philosophical gentlemen as Ferguson, Walker, Herschel, &c., in place of vague hypothesis, had informed us of the nature and uses of comets with as much truth and accuracy as Mandeville, Swift, Crabbe, and others, have unveiled the secret springs and movements of the human heart, the above quotation, however applicable to others, would not have been so to them; but the fact is, that these gentlemen are deficient in that precise point wherein we most want information; for though, from the Newtonian principles, they may show us by what laws their motions are regulated, they can proceed no further, and were we to ask of them to explain their nature &c., they would be at their wits' end, or, as the French more happily express it, “*ils*

ne sauroient sur quel pied danser.” It is true they might tell us that these bodies recruit the heat expended by the sun in warming the planets ; that they are planets themselves, only moving in more eccentric orbits ; that they are the abodes of the damned, or the habitations of the blessed ; that they are balls of fire, formed by concentrated solar light, firmly condensed ; that they are thrown from sun to sun by the repellency of the light that strikes on them ; that they are meteors of a larger size ; that they are opaque or transparent, water or ice ; that one of them was the cause of the deluge ; that another may produce the conflagration ; that one came in contact with the sun, struck off a piece of it, which formed a globe on which we live ; and much more to the same import : but I would beg leave to ask, what real information these *aniles fabulæ* (for they are no better) convey ? About as much, I conceive, as the answer of the Rev. Dr. Spintext, who, while smoking a pipe over a jorum of nappy with a friend, was asked, “ Brother Spintext, what is your opinion of a comet ? ” when, after much deliberation, he sapiently replied, “ Brother, it is a *luminous* body of *light* ; ” or that of my much esteemed friend, Dr. Pottingen, the learned professor of astronomy in

the University of Gottingen, who terms them in his lectures "*corpora ignea in vacuo bombulantia*;" that is, as my other learned friend, Count Reginald*, would translate it for the benefit of his unlearned reader, *fiery meteors, sporting in empty space.*

Now, though I will not, like these men of learning, attempt to inform you what a comet is, I will tell you, however, to what I think it is most analogous, and that is to a woman. Yes, to woman; lovely, bewitching, enchanting woman; she who for an apple damned mankind, who laid old Troy in ashes, and who lost Mark Antony the world.

Comets, doubtless, answer some wise and good purpose in the creation; so do women: comets are incomprehensible, beautiful, and eccentric; so are women: comets shine with peculiar splendour, but at night are most brilliant; so do women: comets are enveloped with a lucid nebula, through which their forms are visible; so are those of women through their light and elegant attire: comets confound the most learned when they at-

* Count Reginald de St. Lion.—*Vide* Godwin's St. Lion.

tempt to ascertain their nature; so do women: comets equally excite the admiration of the philosopher and of the clod of the valley; so do women. Comets and women therefore are closely analogous, but the nature of each being inscrutable, all that remains for us to do is to view with admiration the one, and to adoration love the other.

A Mr. Page, an able mathematician, says this is the very same comet that appeared in 1681, and whose period is 150, and *not* 129 years, which had been generally imagined and expected in 1789, and mistaken with the one seen in 1532. I think these bodies are more easily accounted for than is mostly conceived. They are certainly planets moving in very eccentric orbits, describing equal areas in equal times; and if their return cannot be accurately prognosticated, the conjecture most reasonable is, that they are put out of their course and thrown to an inconceivable distance, either from strong propulsion or by violent attraction brought near other bodies. I think with Halley, that the periods are reducible, in some measure, to calcula-

tion, and that the comet which appeared in 1305, 1456, 1607, and 1682, is one and the same; and that the irregularity of such periods was occasioned by the attraction of Jupiter, as the comet's orbit lay near him. The opinion of Sir Isaac Newton, that the tails of comets are formed by a vapoury atmosphere rarefied by the sun and driven behind it, deserves credit; but his vague hypothesis of the comet, after its supposed heat having been exhausted, falls into the sun for a renewal of its fuel, is, I think, erroneous;—worse than the chimera of Dr. Darwin and some other philosophers, who maintained our earth to have been occasioned by a *sun shute*, *i.e.* thrown from off his body together with many other planets, and which gave rise to the specky appearance of his face. Hevelius thinks the nucleus, or head of a comet, to be transparent; and that the sun's rays passing through it, form the coma, or tail. Walker says, "This is ingenious." How? If the sun's light pass through a body, where is the reflected light by which it is to be perceived?

“—— Silence is only commendable
 In a neat's tongue dried, and a maid not vendible.”

SHAKSPEARE.

I have again ventured to trouble you relative to our northern luminary (the comet), when for the future I shall leave to others to verify the quotation just mentioned. This celestial phenomenon is of course “the burden of my song.” A truly *philosophic* correspondent of the “British Press,” under the signature of *Dorcas*, has indeed pointed out a way to the Royal Astronomer, by which the most satisfactory information of the nature of the constituent particles that compose its body might soon undoubtedly be ascertained. The spirited proposition which will, I think, entitle this gentleman to public thanks, is a request to the Royal Astronomer to ascend and consult the stars, by the assistance of a balloon from Sadler*, and with gas-lights from Winsor†. If I might be allowed to hazard an opinion, by way of an amendment, without being deemed arrogant, I would wish

* Sadler, who at the period, was ascending in his balloons.

† Winsor first exhibited his gas in Pall Mall.

to suggest to the ingenious projector, that instead of dispatching the royal servant by himself, to recommend to Mr. Dorcas himself to accompany him ; and rather than pursuing half measures, I would advise him, that in place of consulting the stars for an *éclaircissement* of its nature, &c., to steer his course immediately to this wonderful stranger. *Tot omnes quot sententiæ*, that many heads are better than one, nobody will deny ; and that it might not be amiss to hint at the same time, also, the advantage that might accrue, were they to solicit a number of experimental chemists and licensed physicians, with as many itinerant preachers, to sojourn thither, to attempt an establishment *à l'Anglaise* (many of whom might be very well spared), by ushering in those innovations which *malheureusement pour nous*, are become almost universal with us. How this prevailing new system of experiments of physicing and of preaching might agree with the cometary inhabitants, whose constitutions differ widely probably from those of our own, remains to be proved. One satisfaction will be, however, that a greater alarm and apprehension would not be likely to ensue than has been already excited with us poor

devils. The flattering reception, likewise, which our *literati* may expect to meet with on the new world need scarcely be doubted ; novelty, however absurd, is at all times eagerly received from whatever Rosicrucian it may proceed ; and it is a well-attested maxim among the French, and as applicable to us now as ever it was to them, that “ *on prend le peuple par les oreilles, comme on fait un pot par les anses.*” One observation more and I have done, and which may be highly essential to be made known to our aërial travellers ; and that is to halt on their way at the Great Bear for a fresh supply of air and lights, conceiving they may stand in need of them in passing from one atmosphere to another *in vacuo*. *Apropos*—a friend has just informed me, which, should it be true, might prove very commodious, that a person who kept formerly the Black Bear in Piccadilly has been induced, by the advice of his physicians, to remove to the hemispherical Great Bear for the benefit of his health, and who could most likely afford the necessary information for prosecuting their journey.

P.S.—I do not credit the statement as true, that of the comet being formed by a number of French soldiers, out of service on half-pay, agree-

ing to chum together, by which means the nucleus or body of the comet has been occasioned.
—*Tantum.*

“ Animum picturâ pascit inani.”—VIRGIL.

May I presume to ask, what satisfaction has the public derived from the very numerous communications relative to the comet? The pseudo-astronomical philosophers, from all parts of the metropolis as well as from the country, have industriously emptied their shallow pates of their most flimsy and insignificant conjectures, equally as puerile and as irrelevant to reason and common sense as could possibly have been penned. Nor have they been contented with these; they have proceeded to accuse our first astronomers of inertness and neglect of the duty that they owe to the public. Neglect of what? In not satisfying their ignorant curiosity. Is it to be supposed that men of sound philosophical pursuits are to waste their time in replying to the many absurd hypotheses that daily appear in the public papers? Who do they imagine would answer such old womanish ideas

as appeared, for instance, in the "Morning Advertiser" for October 7th, 1811, by a Rev. Mr. F——s, of Lewisham, who conceived that planets and stars were *large* and *ponderous* globes, and that many of them, in point of size, were far *superior* to that on which we live; and that, if it were possible for us to be situated on some distant planet or star at the time of the conflagration of the earth, its appearance, he thinks, would be similar to that of the comet. On such grounds, and by *such analogical reasoning*, does this gentleman suppose the comet to be a planet in a state of combustion, which, having been inhabited like our earth, and having accomplished the purposes destined by the Creator, is now vanishing into thin air? That such an event is possible, I do not mean to deny, all things being so to the Deity: it is, however, highly improbable, and a mere conjecture, and that too of the wildest kind, as it appears to deviate from his Divine Establishment, which is uniform and fixed, whole in itself, and whole in every part. Let us, therefore, "reasoning only from what we know," confine ourselves to the limited sphere of our own understanding, and not indulge in chimerical disquisitions, losing ourselves in the labyrinths of