

XI. *Observations on a remarkable Meteor seen on the 18th of August, 1783, communicated in a Letter to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. P. R. S. By William Cooper, D. D. F. R. S. Archdeacon of York.*

Read Jan. 15, 1784.

DEAR SIR,

Hartlepool, near Stockton,
Aug. 19, 1783.

NO person could have a better opportunity of discerning this awful meteor than myself. The weather being, for this climate, astonishingly hot, my FAHRENHEIT's thermometer, on a north position, and in the open air, having for several days preceding graduated between the hours of ten o'clock in the morning and seven o'clock in the evening from 74° to 82° , I set out upon a journey to the sea-side. The weather was sultry, the atmosphere hazy, and not a breath of air stirring. Towards nine o'clock at night it was so dark, that I could scarcely discern the hedges, road, or even the horses heads. As we proceeded, I observed to my attendants, that there was something singularly striking in the appearance of the night, not merely from its stillness and darkness, but from the sulphureous vapours which seemed to surround us on every side. In the midst of this gloom, and on an instant, a brilliant tremulous light appeared to the N. W. by N. At the first it seemed stationary; but in a small space of time it burst from its position, and took its course to the S. E. by E. It passed directly

rectly over our heads with a buzzing noise, seemingly at the height of sixty yards. Its tail, as far as the eye could form any judgement, was about eight or ten yards in length. At last, this wonderful meteor divided into several glowing parts or balls of fire, the chief part still remaining in its full splendor. Soon after this I heard two great explosions, each equal to the report of a canon carrying a nine-pound ball. During its awful progress, the whole of the atmosphere, as far as I could discern, was perfectly illuminated with the most beautifully vivid light I ever remember to have seen. The horses on which we rode shrunk with fear; and some people whom we met upon the road declared their consternation in the most expressive terms.

I have the honor to be, &c.

WILLIAM COOPER.

