The new comet : drawn at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich.

THE NEW COMET. DRAWN AT THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY, GREENWICH.

ADDRESS TO THE COMET.

Cœlivagæ flammæ.

Art thou the same mysterious traveller,
That in our last bright circuit of the sun
Paid visit to our gaze,
And woke up mixt surprise—
Filling the many with an awful dread,
The few with deep delight?

Art thou the same return'd with reinforce
Of heav'nly ammunition—Light and Heat,
Which in thy last campaign
'Gainst other worlds was spent
Ere thou had'st meditated war on us?
Hast thou been back to where

The storehouse of the thunderbolt is kept,
And steep'd thy long hair in the lightning stream
That 'round it ever flows,
Keeping it prisoner there
Till the destroying angel lifts the sluice
To pour both on some world?

Or art though on a kindly mission sent?—
Or on thy own research a wand'ring orb
Curious to see in which
Of all the breathing stars
The happiest Eden was by folly lost?
If so—come not to us!

Thou'lt find no remnants of that blissful place
Where we imagine our first kindred dwelt—
Dreary and desolate
Is all around it now!—
Turn—turn away and give us not the fear
Of thy consuming touch!

W.

A beautiful comet has recently appeared in our northern heavens, but whether it be a new one—that is, one that has previously escaped the observation of astronomers—can only be determined by further observations on its orbit. Since its first discovery in this country, it has passed ϕ Bootis, μ Corona Borealis, and on the night of July 23, when our drawing was made, it was not far from μ Bootis. Its daily change in R. A. = —4m. 30s.; ditto in N. E. D. = + 44m. In its course towards the sun, it is rapidly approaching the earth, a circumstance which has caused timid and visionary people some alarm. The fever of apprehension is not, however, so great as that which disturbed the Parisian population in 1773, when a similar phenomenon occurred. On that occasion, many persons are said to have died of fright; while numbers prepared for the worst by purchasing—what were offered at high premiums—places in paradise. To relieve the fear of such a catastrophe, we may inform the public of the result of some very curious and elaborate calculations made by Arago to show the extremely small probability of a contact between ourselves and any comet whatever. "Let us suppose," says that great man, "a comet, of which we only know that at its perihelion it is nearer the sun than we are, and that its diameter is one-fourth of that of the earth, the calculation of probabilities shows that of 281,000,000 of chances, there is only one unfavourable, there exists but one which can produce a collision between the two bodies. As for the *nebulosity*, in its most general dimensions, the unfavourable chances will be from ten to twenty in the same number of two hundred and eighty one millions. Admitting then, for a moment, that the comets which may strike the earth with their *nuclei*, would annihilate the whole human race, then the danger of death to each individual, resulting from the appearance of an *unknown* comet, would be exactly equal to the risk he would run if in an urn there was only one single white ball, of a total number of 281,000 000 balls, and that his condemnation to death would be the inevitable consequence of the white ball being produced at the first drawing."

The comet is of a bright white colour, with its tail turned from the earth. Stars of small magnitude are seen through its body. At present, it is only visible with a telescope; but in a few nights it is expected to be seen with the naked eye. Its luminosity is so intense that it has been easily detected during the bright sunsets of the past week.

We are indebted to the Astronomer Royal, for permitting our artist to make the drawing from which our cut is engraved.

S. S.

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