ANOTHER SUN IN FLAMES.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE CONSTELLATION OF THE SWAN.

The Alarming Side of Astronomy—A Celestial Conflagration—Probable Destruction of Life in an Entire Solar System.

From the London Echo.

We have within the last fortnight had new evidence in the star depths of a danger to which our own sun, and we alone with it, would seem to be exposed. There is some astronomical satisfaction in knowing, though it may late to bodies from very, very remote, concern its inhabitants of earth very nearly. It is, for instance, a question of considerable interest to us whether the evidence we have about the sun suggests or not the probability that the orb of fire, light, and life of our system is gradually paring with its chief loss, in such sort that our descendants will be less thoroughly warmed and lighted than we are ourselves. It is a question of interest again whether there is any truth in such a theory as was once thrown out (to the amazement of astronomers by Professor Newcomb) that the fragments of the destroyed planet might be the vehicles whereby the seeds of life are carried to new worlds, and that as our earth, visited in remote ages by such fragments, was thus supplied with the germs of that life which is now so abundant on her surface, so also, when our sun shall undergo destruction, will no seed in fragments be thrown through space, scattering about the germs of life for the benefit of other worlds as yet unseen. Another question of very great interest was that started by Sir Isaac Newton. In the well-known suggestion that comets might be the means whereby our sun would be supplied with fuel, the fragments of the destroyed planet might be the vehicles whereby the seeds of life are carried to new worlds, and that as our earth, visited in remote ages by such fragments, was thus supplied with the germs of that life which is now so abundant on her surface, so also, when our sun shall undergo destruction, will no seed in fragments be thrown through space, scattering about the germs of life for the benefit of other worlds as yet unseen. Another question of very great interest was that started by Sir Isaac Newton. In the well-known suggestion that comets might be the means whereby our sun would be supplied with fuel, the idea was that the fuel would somehow run short. Misfortune might have not attracted much attention, though matter of very real importance, if our own sun were suddenly to lose three-fourths of its heat, as has happened with the middle star of the Plough, or ninety-nine hundredths, as has happened with the star Algol. But when we remember that our own Rigel is thrown forth to its destruction—we are impressed with the thought that this may possibly one day happen with our own sun. The circumstances are very curious, and though they do not show that such a thing is near, they do show that we are exposed to the same kind of danger which has overtaken the worlds circling round those remote suns, they are sufficiently suggestive.

On Nov. 24, quite early in the evening, Prof. Schmidt, the well-known director of the Athens observatory, noticed a star of the third magnitude in a part of the constellation of the Swan, where no such star should be. At midnight the new star's light was seen to be of a markedly yellow color. The news was, of course, spread about among the chief astronomers, and as soon as the cloudy weather permitted, the new comer was submitted to the searching scrutiny of the spectroscope. Unfortunately, it had already diminished down to the fifth magnitude by Dec. 2, when first it was thus examined, and its light had become much fainter when, a week later, it was found to have really satisfactory observations were made. Then Mr. Copeland obtained the following very curious results: The light of the star showed the usual rainbow-tinted streak crossed by dark lines, which forms the spectrum of a star; but, in addition to the rainbow-tinted streak, as on a dark background, there were seen the bright lines of hydrogen, a bright line belonging to magnesium (in the state of glowing vapor), and two other bright lines, one of which seemed to be identical with a bright line shown by our own planet Saturn and by our moon.

Now, a doubt between Mr. Copeland would call special attention is, that all the elements of the catastrophe, if one may so speak, which has befallen the remote sun in the Swan exist in our own sun. At times of marked disturbance parts of the sun's surface show the lines of hydrogen bright instead of dark, while the lines of hydrogen over those parts of the sun are hotter than the glowing surface of the sun there. We have all heard, again, how facilmi and Secchi, in Italy, at their end some exceptionally hot weather, we found a few years ago to outbursts of glowing magnesium. And, lastly, our sun is certainly well supplied with that element, which, when it is in vapor, gives the bright line of his corona during eclipses. For we know that the whole of the streaked and radiated corona, extending to a region twenty times greater than the globe of the sun (which itself exceeds our earth 1,250,000 times in volume), belongs to the sun. Again, though the sun has shone steadily for thousands of years, yet so far as can be judged, the stars which, like this one in the Swan, have burst out suddenly, blossoming into the skies with a splendor which, when the star's heart core grows with them, fades and times of former heat, have long been for ages coming steadily amid the star depths. We know that the one which blazed out two years ago in the Northern Crown (the star Argelander's list, a star of the tenth magnitude, was then after blowing with 800 times its former orig times) is, a few days, it is reported that Fraser Lake, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 1876. We know, lastly, that the one which blazed out in Cassiopeia was unboubtedly the cause of a nebula, which, in the centre of a volume of one hundred millions of millions, each of which is probably, like it, the centre of a scheme of circling worlds. Each sun is rushing along through space, with its train of worlds, each having, perhaps, like our earth, its living freight, its course prescribed by the laws of other of its existence, beginning inevitable for a longer or shorter period. Thus the suns may be compared to engines, each drawing along its well-regulated train. Accidents among those celestial engines seem fortunately to be rare. Only once in the long ages of antiquity that is in the course of a few hundred years, which in celestial chronometry amounts to a mere instant) do we have lost a large part of their energy, as though the supply of fuel had somehow run short. Misfortunes that