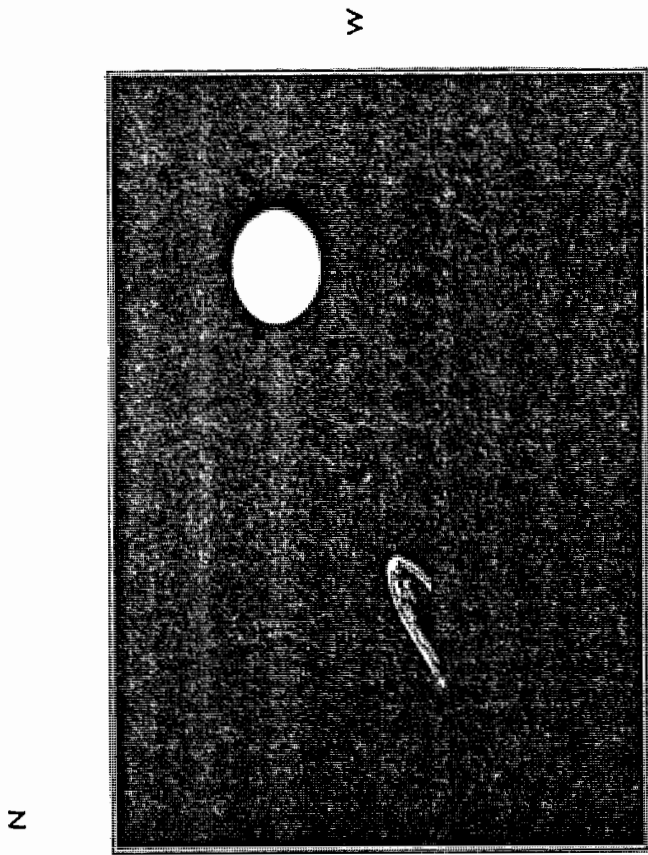


Comet Skjellerup (1927 k). By P. R. Chidambara Aiyar.
(Plate 3.)

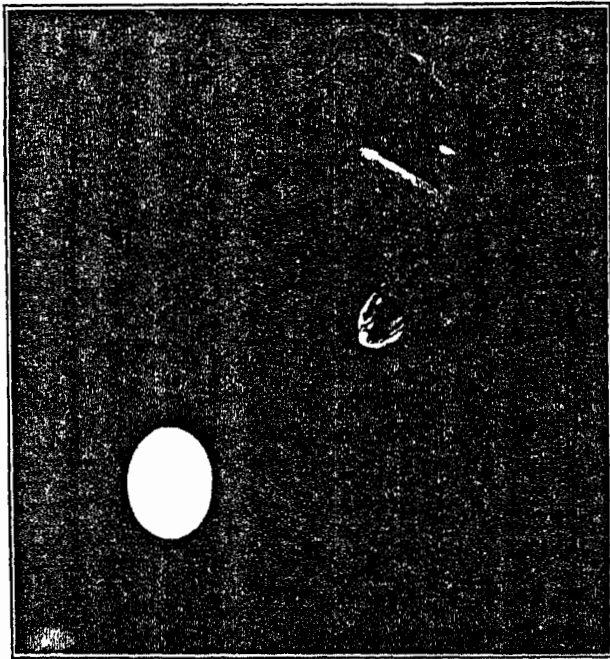
[The following is an extract from a letter to the Astronomer Royal from P. R. Chidambara Aiyar, in confirmation of a cablegram sent 1927 December 15.]

I believe that I shall be expected to state something about how this remarkable daylight comet came to be noticed by me and what observations I have been able to subject it to.

As Dr. Royds, the Director of the Observatory, was not in the station, I was the assistant engaged in taking spectroheliograms of the Sun on the morning of the 15th inst. At 8.30 a.m. (I.S.T.), my attention happened to be directed to a bright object near the Sun. As there were small patches of cloud floating in the neighbourhood of the Sun, I first took this also to be one such, but in a moment it became quite plain to me that I was looking at a brilliant comet near the Sun. It was, as estimated by the eye, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ apparent diameters of the Sun distant from his nearest edge to the east and a little to the south. I at once made a sketch of it, and also wired to the Madras Observatory to observe and verify the apparition. Strange to say, it could not be observed in a telescope that day, but as there was some change in its appearance, I made another sketch of it at 12.10 p.m. From 2.30 p.m. clouds made further observations impossible. I am enclosing herewith a copy



Bright Comet near Sun 12^h 10^m p.m., I.S.T.
1927 Dec. 15.



Bright Comet near Sun 8^h 35^m a.m., I.S.T.
1927 Dec. 15.

Sketched by P. R. Chidambara Aiyar, Assistant, Kodaikanal Observatory.

of my sketch of its naked-eye appearance on the 15th inst. The head of the comet was much brighter and larger than Venus seen some distance ahead in the west.

On the morning of the 16th I again made a sketch of it as it was visible to the unaided eye. It had got separated from the Sun, had become northerly from it, and had become less bright. I made a series of sketches as it was seen in the smaller telescopes of the Observatory, which revealed it with a remarkable wealth of detail. It was a magnificent object to look at. The head was a nebulous mass with an extremely bright nucleus from which emanated two luminous, curved arms. They were rather unsymmetrical, one being more curved than the other. The tail was bifurcated and enormous, not so much in length as in bulk. This was before noon. In the afternoon the tail increased in length as well as in volume to such an extent that I thought it was a huge giantess who had let loose the terrific glory of her copper-coloured mass of tresses, and who was running away with her back turned against us. By this time symmetry had begun to be established between the two portions of the tail as well as in the internal arrangements in the head.

I was able to note its positions on the 16th, 17th, and 18th, which are given below. On the 19th the sky was thick and no observations were possible. I hope that the Madras Observatory has been able to keep it under observation, and I have requested that the records of observations be sent to me. My cablegram should have reached you on the 16th in the usual course, and I trust that observations have been possible since then, especially as it has moved north of the Sun.

The comet was plainly visible to the naked eye on the 15th, 16th, and 17th, and was quite invisible on the 18th. I hope that by now several observatories have picked it up and have been observing it.

Position of Comet.

Date.	I.S.T.	R.A.	Dec.
16.12.27	12 ^h 0 ^m	17 ^h 37 ^m	S. 20° 7'
17.12.27	10 ^h 10 ^m	17 ^h 43 ^m	S. 17° 20'
18.12.27	11 ^h 14 ^m	17 ^h 46 ^m	S. 14° 43'