April 1880.  Comet 1880 b (Schaberleon).


I send the following account of a Comet seen here, for insertion in the R. A. S. Notices if it is deemed of sufficient importance.

The earliest notice of the Comet which I can obtain is from a gentleman living a ‘Missis’ in the northern part of this colony. On Sunday, February 1, he went out shooting quail just after sunset, and on looking to S.W. was surprised by a bright streak of light, stretching from the horizon towards the South Pole. It was a striking object from its brightness, and about three degrees wide (he does not give the length). On Monday he saw it again but it was much fainter; this evening it was seen by many persons in different parts of this and the neighbouring colonies. The nights of February 1 and 2 were cloudy in Sydney, but on the 3rd I saw the comet’s tail; between the clouds I could trace it for 30° to a bank of clouds 5° above the horizon. At its widest part, near β Grus, the tail was 1½ degree wide (I enclose sketch taken on 5th). On 4th and 5th the tail was seen; but owing to clouds I could not detect the nucleus. On the 6th it became cloudy and wet until February 13th when I saw the nucleus in (approximately) R. A. 6h 41m, Decl. 32° 57’ south. On the 14th another glimpse was obtained, giving approximate position R.A. 1h 1m 9’s, Decl. 32° 23’ south. In both cases only small stars of comparison could be used, and they will have to be observed with the transit before exact position can be obtained. On the 13th comet had faded so much that it was difficult to see any part of it with the naked eye. The nucleus was very faint, about 5 seconds (time) long, and about 1 minute (arc) wide; the tail at the head was about 30” wide, about 1½ at its widest part, and about 15° long. On the 14th it turned cloudy again after a few minutes clear sky, and it does not seem probable that the comet will be again observed, as it is fading so rapidly. In the southern colonies the weather has been more favourable.

Sydney Observatory,
1880, February 16.

(From a Circular of the Vienna Academy.)

Comet 1880 b (Schaberleon).

Elements:—

Per. Pass. 1880, June 11° 7666 Berlin M.T.

Long. Per. 25° 51’ 19’’
Long. Node 254° 17’ 15’’ Mean Eq. 1880° 0
Inclination 123° 40’ 13’’
Log. Per. Dist. 0° 28667.

Computed by Drs. Holetschek and Zellbr, from observations on April 10, 11, and 13.