

burst into a great number of small bodies which continued to the south-eastern horizon."

Another witness reported seeing "a meteor break into about fifty pieces like the explosion of a skyrocket." A group of New Jersey churchgoers was treated to an especially dazzling show. According to a local newspaper account, "As the congregation was leaving the musical service last evening at Watchung, the members were astonished to see 7 stars shooting across the sky . . . They followed each other in rapid succession, and 5 of them passed out of the line of vision, but the remaining 2 seemed to explode like skyrockets, and burst into a thousand tiny stars. . . ."

But even though Professor Chant identified the bodies as natural meteors, they were not "shooting stars." Rather than plunging toward the ground like most meteors, these bursting, flaring objects held a constant altitude, as Professor Chant remarked, while maintaining a kind of formation in flight. "One was following directly in the path of the other," stated a Boyne City, Michigan, resident. "Like they were strung on a wire" was an expression used by two different observers. At Fenlon Falls, Ontario, one man likened the Procession's leisurely movement to "the angular speed of a flying crow."

The Canadian Fireball Procession of 1913 maintained an almost horizontal path, neither gaining nor losing altitude, for some 5,600 miles, or almost one-quarter revolution of our planet before disappearing. "There is nothing in the annals of meteoritics," exclaimed one investigator, "that can compare with this path-length."

With the glare of air friction, meteors plunging to Earth usually become visible about 90 miles above the globe. The atmosphere quickly brakes their burning speed, however, cooling the surface, quenching flames; and the object disappears from view at an average height of some 30 miles. Professor Chant's calculations placed the Procession at an altitude of not more than 30 miles—remarkably low for a sustained trajectory of any natural bodies and close to the bottom line of visibility. Furthermore, despite their low velocity—Professor Chant estimated that the Toronto aerial display lasted 3.3 minutes—the bodies apparently produced what we now call sonic booms. (Back in 1913, of course, practically no jargon of the Air Age had entered people's vocabularies.) Professor Chant compared the Procession's noise to "a carriage passing