SOLAR ECLIPSE PHOTOGRAPHED

Mrs. Walter Maunder Relates the Story of Her Journey to Snap-Shot the Recent Phenomena

(In the dry realms of science woman is beginning to make her way, after the irresistible manner peculiar to her sex. A great deal has been written about the scientific men who gathered in India from the four quarters of the globe to catch and keep indelible records of the great recent solar eclipse, but nothing has been said about the one woman who endured the toil and privations of days of waiting in an obscure corner of the Indian empire, in order that she might preserve photographs of the solar phenomenon, taken with her own camera and developed by herself. These photographs are shown in the accompanying illustrations, and the plucky and determined woman's story is told by her in the following delightfully graphic manner:)

MRS. WALTER MAUNDER, WIFE OF THE ASTRONOMER

(By Mrs. Walter Maunder, in Collaboration With Her Husband, the Well-Known Astronomer

LONDON, Mar. 6.—(Special Correspondence to The Herald.) The eclipse is over. The disappointments of Norway and Japan in 1896 have been most amply atoned for in India. The whole majestic phenomena have been witnessed in a sky undimmed by the faintest trace of cloud. In the history of astronomical science there has never been an eclipse in which the observers were favored with such completely unchequered success at so large a number of stations, or which was so fully and satisfactorily observed. The little party, to which my husband and I were attached, took up their places in the observing huts on January 22d about 11 oclock, and got in final readiness for the great event. The forethought of our most considerate host, Lieut. D. O. Morris, assistant commissioner for the Amraoti district of Berar, had secured that no one was within sight of us except three or four policemen, who guarded the approaches to our station. To the south our living camp was partly seen amid the pretty grove of tamarind and Mango trees which sheltered it; to the southeast the white walls of the house of the village patel gleaming through another grove marked where the village itself stood; north and west the level fields of cotton and jowari were void of a single human being. Perfectly secluded and undisturbed, we waited, therefore, the event.

Mr. Smith, the occupant of the most easterly of our huts, warned us of the commencement of the eclipse at nine minutes before noon, when the first slight indentation appeared on the southwest limb of the sun. The hour and a half that followed seemed to pass with exceeding slowness. Gradually the dark moon crept over the bright face of the sun, and as it advanced seemed so much smaller than the sun—increased in appearance from the effect of irradiation—that one might have been forgiven if a momentary fear had seized one that the statement circulated by the Brahmins among the natives was correct, and that the eclipse would not be quite total, after all. The moon, however, kept on her way, and, as the eclipse drew near to fullness, seemed to quicken her pace. The brighter colors faded from the landscape, the sky became leaden, the grass and trees turned to ink and the intense heat of the earlier morning gave way to what the travelers from England at least regarded as a refreshing coolness. Then the event came on apace. The last thin crescent of sunlight melted away at either horn, a few fine globules of light fought for an instant against the approaching darkness, were swallowed up, the shadow swept up and covered us, and the eclipse was complete.

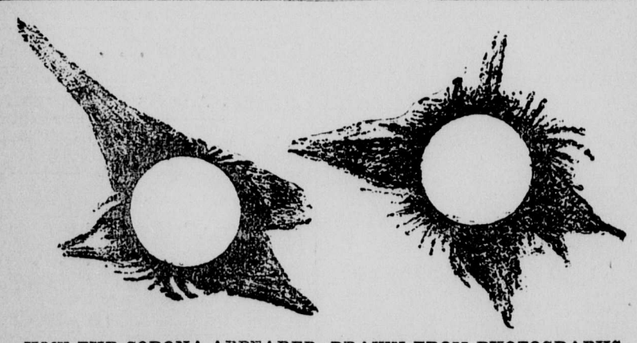
There, high in midheaven, stood the sun, "turned into darkness," but crowned in that very moment of defeat with a new and wonderful radiance. The pearl light of the corona shone out serene and steadfast. It is curious to read in the earlier descriptions of eclipses that the corona seemed "to turn round like a catherine-wheel." There was no hint of flicker or motion in the calm, unwavering light which now shone down upon us. From one point of view the eclipse was less impressive as a mere spectacle than usual, less impressive, even, than the cloud-hidden eclipse of August, 1896. The darkness was very slight. Judging from recollections of the descriptions of different observers, it would seem to have been the lightest eclipse for many years past. Ordinary spectators, therefore, who had formed their ideas of what to expect from the descriptions which are commonly current, were not a little disappointed. The approach of the shadow, though visible enough to those who looked for it, came very far short of that "rush of a wall of darkness" which has some times been spoken of, and in mid-totality there was much more light than during a midnight at the full of the moon. Those who wished, like Fear-nothing Hans," to be made "to shiver and shake," were disappointed of a sensation. But for those who wished to watch a scene of surpassing beauty, or for those who had scientific work to do, the conditions were absolutely perfect.

MRS. WALTER MAUNDER PREPARING TO SNAP THE SHUTTER

Not only was the corona seen in a cloudless sky, but it was itself of unusual size and brightness, and, because seen with such distinctness, of unusual beauty. The first rough impression of it was that it was rectangular in shape, but quickly the eye learned to pick out its details, to recognize, above and below, the radiating crown of delicate, plume-like streamers which marked out the solar poles to follow on the east the two connected extensions, something like a fish's tail, which stretched more than a full million miles in that direction, and on the west, the great ray which might easily be followed to twice that distance. The minuter details began to be recognized. Those curious and characteristic cylindrical curves could be plainly seen in the roots of the great streamers, giving their brightest parts a lobed or leaf-shaped appearance. And then, when one would gladly have looked and looked again, and made out still more details in that strange complex star of silvery, pearl-like light, with a sudden burst an immense rush of sunlight broke up the whole fairy vision, and it was gone like a dream. The shock of returning light was so sudden and so sharp that a watcher who should have declared that it was accompanied by a roar like thunder would almost have received credence.

For us at Talni the eclipse lasted eight seconds short of two minutes—four seconds less than we had expected. But during that short two minutes what a number of impressions we were receiving over and above the attention which had been given to the actual work on which we were engaged!

I made five exposures with my wide-angled lense, a sixth at the instant of the return of the light, and a seventh on the portrait phase for orientation purposes. My husband had watched the eclipse with a prismatic binocular and given the signal for me to begin operations with my camera.



HOW THE CORONA APPEARED. DRAWN FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

A busy afternoon followed. There were photographs to develop, telegrams to send and receive, and reports to write, and it was a very tired, though jubilant, party that met at dinner in the mess tent at 8:30. Dinner was scarcely over when we were invited to witness and take part in the villagers' rejoicings. These consisted of an illumination—very pretty and effective—of long lines of native lamps and a liberal exhibition of fireworks. The fireworks were all of native make, and resembled what schoolboys call a "flower-pot," but many of them being of considerable size and throwing a fountain of golden rain fairly high, by combining and crossing them in pairs and threes and fours, some very effective arrangements were made, and the whole did the utmost credit to the organizers, the tashildar of the district and the headmen of the villages for far around. To conclude the ceremony, the headmen came forward and decorated the party with garlands of flowers and made the usual offering of betel-nut. To these and other compliments Mr. Smith, as the senior member of the party, replied, thanking those present for their courtesy and readiness to help, and reminding them of the blessings of peace which they enjoy under the present government. The village fort just before them—ruined, because no longer needed, as in the old times, for protection against marauders—might remind them how much safer they were now than then.

So passed the day of the eclipse, a memorable day to all who took part in it. Perfect weather, perfect arrangement made for us by our most thoughtful hosts, a magnificent eclipse and this interesting piece of native ceremony to conclude. I had heard much before we came out from England of "how things were done in India," but to actually watch the process gave a very keen and additional interest to the expedition. It was at the very eleventh hour, almost the twelfth, that we were handed over from the Bombay presidency, where all our arrangements had at first been made, and were commended to the care of the president of the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, Mr. T. C. Chichele-Plowden, C. S. I., and of Mr. F. S. Bullock, C. I. E., commissioner of the Hyderabad assigned districts, just within the borders of which the little village of Talni stands. But though thus asked only at the very last moment to help, that help could not possibly have been more thorough and complete. Capt. Horsburgh, deputy commissioner of the Amraoti district, directed Lieut. D. O. Morris, his assistant commissioner, to personally see that we lacked for nothing, and that instruction was faithfully carried out both in the spirit and the letter. The president and commissioner both paid us a visit before the eclipse, that they might see that everything necessary had been done for us, and that they might themselves share in the spectacle of the day; and it was an additional interest to us to see our little camp develop as if by magic into a far-spreading canvas village. One day our eight or nine tents stood alone, the next they were joined by a score of others; two days later and they were gone ,and we were also alone again. To make our little "bunderbust" probably seemed a very trivial thing to men accustomed to vastly larger undertakings, but our gratitude is none the less due to them, and the promptitude, precision and forethought with which it was carried through enabled us to appreciate better than any amount of description could do what British administration means in India.

Another New Theater

The following particulars of a new theatrical enterprise, as given in San Francisco Music and Drama, will be read with interest:

Although San Francisco is well supplied with theaters we are promised another in the near future. Last Saturday articles of incorporation were filed by the Alhambra Theater Company, which has leased the Auditorium, on the corner of Jones and Eddy streets, for a term of ten years. The incorporators are Gregory de Kannet, Sol J. Levy, A. Reuf, Thos. P. Woodward, M. J. Waldheimer, H. P. Taylor and L. A. Rea. The capital stock is $300,000, three-fourths of which has already been subscribed for. The balance is to be reserved as a working capital. It is the purpose of the company to remodel the building in the Moorish style. The theater, which will be named the Alhambra, will have a frontage of 100 feet on Eddy street and a depth of 137½ feet on Jones. Brick, cement and terra cotta will be the principal materials used on the exterior; while the interior will present a combination of light pink, light green and white, striped with gold as color effects. The proscenium will be forty-two feet wide, with a depth of thirty-seven and one-half feet. The seating capacity will be 2300. There will be 1,100 seats on the ground floor, an equal number in the gallery, and 156 box seats. About $25,000 will be expended on the building. The electric lighting effects will be something novel here, and electricity will be utilized in the ventilation.. The gallery will have two special exits. Dr.Gregory de Kannet will be the managing director. It is intended that the performances will be of the best vaudeville character, and arangements have already been made to secure leading artists in Europe. It is expected that everything will be completed in time to open the Alhambra about June 1st.

There is a poetry of thought far above the poetry of dictation; the test is translation; you scrape off all mere veneered beauty when you squeeze an idea through the doorway into another language.

At times Ada Rehan suffers intensely from vertigo, but her physicians have advised her that it is far wiser for her to continue to play than to retire from the stage.

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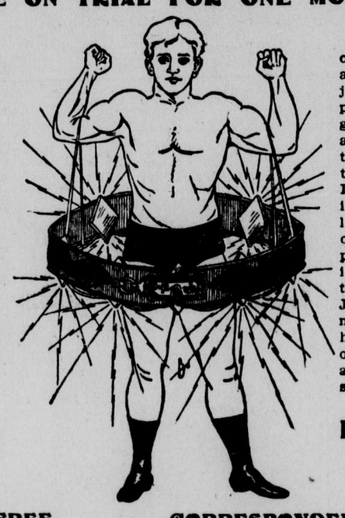

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