

A WONDERFUL ECLIPSE

By Professor Bart J. Bok

I am basically a Milky way astronomer and night watchman, and when it comes to an eclipse, I am a bystander, who loves to see it. I have seen several of them. I have never seen one as beautiful as this one. The reason for that is ofcourse quite obvious and we expected already before the eclipse that it would be one of the great ones to view because there was a naked-eye sunspot visible on the disk of the sun just before and ofcourse again after the eclipse. A naked-eye sunspot is a rare phenomenon. That sunspot indicated that there was much activity all over the sun. The corona that showed up was beautiful all the way around the sun. About two and a half years ago, Jackie (Bok's friend)† and I saw a total eclipse of the sun in the middle of the Pacific. That was a completely different sight. Because in that one, the corona was largely limited to a narrow band with some streamers coming out. This one had streamers shooting out in all directions and that way it was one of the most glorious sights I have seen. The diamond ring that we saw at the beginning and end were fine; especially the one at the end, I enjoyed. But to be frank with you the pure chance diamond ring that we saw in the middle of the Pacific was even better. That one lasted for fifteen seconds; yours I would say for about five seconds. But that depends ofcourse entirely on that little hole in the moon you see the last sunlight

† She was at the Camp too.

through and noone can really predict what a diamond ring is going to be like. I was very much impressed by the quality and quietness of the observers. I have been to eclipses where a few minutes before, everything was battled and people were changing things. This is very important because ten seconds wasted or lost over half a minute of confusion can spoil a whole programme.

This was probably one of the great eclipses of our times, because it was with more activity than I think most other eclipses have had. I have seen other eclipses. I saw one in 1927, my first one in Norway. That was a beautiful one. It failed completely because of a cloud but from that one I have never forgotten the beauty of the shadow of the moon racing across the white snow of the mountains in the valley where we were. I saw second eclipse that came off perfectly. That was in 1932. I was in the little piece of coast in New Hampshire. And there everything went off beautifully. The corona was very nice to look at but not as good as here this time. But that time I earned fifty dollars by speaking for the first time over the public-address system. And when I sat down in the chair to give my half-an-hour address before the eclipse, the chairman of the group said: "You will be interested to know Dr Bok that two weeks ago, we had here the governor Roosevelt of the State of New York". At so long ago that Rooevelt had not even been the President.

