

quickly, cheaply and securely. And for a long while we are traveling through the great forests of the Mississippi; larger trees, nor deeper and blacker woods, are nowhere to be found; again is the man Dore vindicated as a dreamer of primeval American scenery. And here again comes a faint creeping of awe, as the mind reverts to that cold shaft of darkness swinging through the airless places without; the bigness, the loneliness, the helplessness of it, and the unavoidable certainty of it withal.

There are, apparently, not a great many sufficiently eager to include a total eclipse of the sun among their life-experiences to undertake a journey to the gulf-states for its sake. At any rate the throng to New Orleans is not great. This is perhaps due to the superior convenience of Georgia and Carolina stations to the eastern cities, where the people are understood to care more for such things. But also there is, according to the statistics, a greater liability to rain in New Orleans than in the interior districts. New Orleans, it is said, stands sixty chances out of a hundred for a clear day tomorrow, while some of the other places may claim as high as seventy-five. It is not pleasant to think of rain coming after all; but we have done our part; the event is with Allah. If he wish his eclipse to be seen, let him arrange. Meantime all we can do is (supposing our left leg to be crossed over our right) to place the right above the left, and continue to wait.

New Orleans takes its good fortune calmly, if not skeptically. A policeman is heard to say, in response to a threat of calamity, "I'll believe that, like I will the eclipse, when I see it." The word eclipse, in common parlance in this city, is accented on the first syllable. The people about the hotels are aware that something is expected to happen, but are by no means enthusiastic over it. In ancient Jackson Square, at sundown, assemble the old French people and the new Italians, and sitting in their accustomed places divert themselves with the sight of Andrew Jackson riding nobly (just as in the old geographies) over the maxim, "The Union must and shall be Preserved," while their children soil themselves upon the grass-plots and the policeman expels their dogs; but their conversation does not run upon celestial phenomena. They are content with the hollyhocks and petunias, the cornstalks and sunflowers, of the foliage beds of Jackson Square. If any of them are solicitous for the morrow's weather, it does not appear on their surfaces.

The Great Father at Washington, however, has a thoughtful care for his children, and he causes a notice to be exposed in the hotels, to the effect that "the presence of an anti-cyclonic system gives practically sure indication that the entire line of the eclipse will have clear

weather. Probably no eclipse ever occurred under finer seeing conditions than will exist tomorrow." And having this comforting assurance, one can do no better than to go to bed, for things will happen early and swiftly on the morrow.

For the plain statement of things one's self has observed, the first person singular is the most practicable vehicle. I issued, then, upon the streets of New Orleans at 5:30 o'clock on the morning of the 28th of May. It was too early to judge of the day, but thus far the east was covered with clouds. I took up my march to the northward. I knew that the primitive inhabitants dwelt in that quarter, and it was my wish to be as far removed as possible from the enlightened observer, with his note book full of data and his instruments of precision. I wished also to escape from the scientific frame of mind, and to view this phenomenon, above all others, as mere bare man, for I was thinking on the one hand of the many times our cave-dwelling forefathers had been sent howling by its occurrence, and on the other how the tip of this same pencil of shadow will continue to sweep at regular intervals over the face of this, our planet, when mankind shall have perished from off it, and no animate eye shall remain to regard darkness nor light. I wished to see whether I could call up something of the terror of my remote skin-clad ancestors at this ancient spectacle, if removed from the contamination of tourists' adjectives. I even had hopes that what the Times-Democrat's eclipse reporter called total totality might come upon me in some favored spot where white-haired Africans should beat drums and do dances of sorcery. This I have since been assured by natives was a foolish hope.

There was time to spare, and so I walked about while the anti-cyclonic system was preparing the stage-setting. As the sun mounted higher, red and dim, behind the curdled clouds in the east, I went up and down in the old French Market and saw the creole housekeepers that we have read about buying their day's supplies, their red-snappers, their crawfishes, their gumbo. Then about 7 o'clock the stream of people who had work to do became so strong that I, who had none, was borne aside; so I sat upon a bench by the wayside, where a tiny stream of New Orleans sewage flowed by the curb between me and the clanging street-cars.

New Orleans gutters are not wholly sweet, and they breed flies that are very hostile. So when the eclipse (which by this time was under way) was far enough advanced so that people began to come out and take observations through smoked glasses, I was glad to arise and strike into the unexplored interior.

Everybody has seen partial eclipses of

the sun; at least they occur often enough. Up to a certain point this one was in no wise different from those rather tame transactions. As I zigzagged about, in search of darkest Africa, among streets with such names as Hospital and Barracks, and others called Bourbon, Conti and so on, I saw only many children playing, an occasional pedestrian keeping a watchful eye on the heavens, and now and then a grocer's clerk smoking a scrap of glass at his side-door with a burning wisp of paper. But when that certain point was passed there was quite a new order of things.

The first show-piece that claimed my attention was some singular shadows on the sidewalk under the branches of a tree. The shadows did not accurately represent the form of the objects which cast them. They consisted of short curves, six to eight inches I should say in length, composed of alternate bright and dark bands, and seemed to move with a crawling motion from the sun. I stopped to watch them, for it was a rather uncanny thing to see, and like nothing known to me hitherto; then I perceived that they were probably the shadow-bands I had heard of. A short distance further on I saw them again, under an iron trellis.

My recollections of the happenings of the next few minutes are not sharply defined. They do not seem wholly real to me now, nor did they at the time. I became aware that the daylight had greatly failed. The air became thick, murky, brown, indescribably oppressive. There are sundry adjectives in Italian, used by a certain poet in describing the atmosphere of hell, that I should like to use in connection with it. I walked with hesitation, in a kind of nervous dread of stumbling or being run into; whether because of the deficient light or from a feeling of something unnatural taking place, I cannot say. Then, from some impulse that seems odd to me now, I stepped into the Treme Market, which I found at hand, and walked half-way through it. But there I was in a kind of nightmare; people were buying and selling, but I was almost feeling my way with my hands. At the first side-door I escaped from the obscurity of that place into the yellow light without again; and it was well for me that I did, for I had scarce reached the first street corner when I felt that the darkness was coming upon me.

I had been keeping track of the progress of the eclipse with occasional side glances at the sun, which left little blue images of its gradually shrinking disk impressed upon the retina. And so wholly was I unprepared for the total phase when it came, as that I had believed fully a quarter of the sun to be yet uncovered. And whether it was a feeling of sudden chill, or the rush of the approaching shadow, or whatever it was, I am quite sure that I felt the