

THE ECLIPSE OF THE SUN OF JUNE 20, 1629 AT MANILA

A manuscript document, entitled "Relación de los sucesos de las Islas Filipinas y otros reinos vecinos desde el mes de julio de 1628 al mes de julio de 1629" contains an account of an eclipse of the sun, at Manila, on June 20, 1629.¹

The document.—The document was published by E. H. Blair and J. A. Robertson in the Collection "*The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*." The manuscript is to be found in the *Papeles de los Jesuitas* vol. 169, n. 3 and vol. 84, n. 13, in the Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid.² The paragraph, that refers to the eclipse, reads this way: "On the twentieth of June, an eclipse of the sun began at eleven o'clock, and at thirteen minutes after twelve it was so far eclipsed, that it could not be seen at all. It seemed as if it were night and the stars were seen in the sky, so that we were forced to light candles in order to eat; for there was a dinner that afternoon, on the occasion of a certain feast. As far as I know, this eclipse was not seen in Nueva España: it is the most complete one that I have ever seen, though I have seen many."³

The author.—The document published by Blair and Robertson contains three accounts of the events in the Philippines, during 1628-1629. The first account⁴ is signed by Hernando Estrada, S. J., born in Ecija, who, after having done missionary work in Naujan and Ternate and amongst the Visayans and Tagalogs, died at Manila in 1646. The second account⁵ was written by Pedro del Prado, S. J., who in 1631 was holding the office of General Procurator of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines. About the third account, which contains the report of the eclipse, no more can be said at present than that its author was a member of the Society of Jesus, but his name is at present unknown. The similarity of style, composition, and form between the *Relación* of 1627-1628 and the *Relación* of 1628-1629 leads one to suspect that both are due to the same author.

The eclipse.—From the analysis of the *Relación* two facts of importance can be derived: the first is the date of the eclipse, and the second is its magnitude.

The date.—The *Relación* explicitly states that the eclipse took place on June 20. There can be no doubt that the year was 1629, inasmuch as the *Relación* embraces the period July 1628 to July 1629 and therefore the only June within the period is the June of 1629. Again, the sequence of other historical events, as given by the *Relación*, necessarily brings the eclipse to 1629. The events reported are three: the collapse of the Jesuit Church at Manila, on November 25th,⁶ the sacrilegious profanation of the

¹ The Philippine Islands 1493-1898, Explorations by early navigators, Descriptions of the Islands and their Peoples, their History and Records of the Catholic Missions, as related in the contemporaneous Books and Manuscripts, showing the Political, Economic, Commercial, and Religious conditions of those Islands from their earliest relations with European Nations to the close of the Nineteenth Century—Translated from the originals—Edited and annotated by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, with historical introduction and additional notes by Edward Gaylord Bourne. With maps, portraits and other illustrations, Volume XXII, 1625-1629.

² Blair and Robertson, Vol. XXII, p. 323.

³ Blair and Robertson, Vol. XXII, p. 303.

⁴ Blair and Robertson, Vol. XXII, pp. 293-295.

⁵ Blair and Robertson, Vol. XXII, pp. 295-299.

⁶ Blair and Robertson, Vol. XXII, p. 301.