



STARDUST

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OUR SPEAKER FOR MARCH

At the next meeting of the Centre, to be held in the Planetarium at 8:15 p.m. March 9, the speaker will be our genial Librarian, Mr. Fred Jenson, who will give a talk on "Radio Astronomy". Come yourself and bring a friend if possible.

The Night Sky

We had no sooner typed this heading than we wondered whether it was a mis-nomer, for our first reminder is that there will be a daylight occultation of Mercury by the moon on March 14. The time of immergence (M.S.T.) will be 13 37.1, and of emergence, 14 26.3. The President has asked us to pass the word along. We suggest that the observation of this occultation should be made only with an expert handy. Mercury will be very close to the sun at the time. The "experts" will be available at the Planetarium that afternoon with their telescopes.

The planets will again present interesting spectacles for those who love the sky just for its beauty. Venus is still riding fairly high in the western sky in the early evening, but by early April will set soon after the sun. Mars is still in Gemini. Jupiter and Saturn may be seen low in the south-east before sunrise. Both planets will be close to the waning moon on March 21 and April 13.

Spring begins officially on March 20, at 13:32. The first full moon after this date comes on Saturday, April 1, hence Easter Sunday this year falls on April 2. We wish all our readers a happy holiday.

Solar Eclipse of February 15

It was not visible here, of course, but Southern Europe had a good view of it, and we think an excerpt from a report on the pages of the "Manchester Guardian" might be of interest to our readers. It is an excellent example of good journalism:

"Through a glass the sun was now as slender as a new moon, though to the naked eye it was still unbearable. But then it took on suddenly a distinctly lopsided appearance, like a faulty Catherine wheel, and within 15 seconds the sky changed from blue to purple, the sun's disc seemed to be boiling like molten metal, and then like a ball clicking into a socket the whole of the black disc moved suddenly over the surface.

"With the click a ring of stark, but now bearable, light appeared where the sun had been. By the size of the black circle in the middle it was possible

to see how the everyday sun is exaggerated in size by its sheer brilliance.

"From the diamond necklace stretching round the circle it could be guessed how much ordinary daylight comes from these outer parts of the sun, made up, as it is now known, of tenuous hydrogen gas. Furtive glances at this uncanny object showed a pattern of streaks of light reaching out from the base of the corona to a distance at least as great as the diameter of the sun.

"Along with this image went the curious sight of a horizon lined all the way round--north, south, east, and west--with the familiar colors of sunrise. It was as if the high Alps still gleaming in pink and white like ice-cream. For they were outside the patch of shadow 140 miles across, in which the eclipse was complete."

The Race in Space Of the many space races which have taken place on both sides of the Iron Curtain recently, two in particular are of special interest. On February 12 the Russians launched from a satellite a half-ton rocket aimed at Venus. It is hoped that from observations made it may be possible to estimate more accurately the scale of the solar system, to measure the intensity of the stream of electronic particles emanating from the sun, to measure the electro-magnetic field between the earth and Venus, and possibly to secure close-up photographs of the atmosphere of this latter planet.

The successful rocket-flight and recovery of the now-famous chimpanzee "Ham" on January 31 was undoubtedly the prelude to an attempt manned flight in the very near future. On February 21 the Americans fired a Mercury space-capsule, launched by an Atlas rocket, a distance of 1425 miles. It reached a height of 107 miles and a top speed of 12,850 M.p.h., and was placed on the deck of one of the recovery ships within 45 minutes of its launching. Now the Americans have actually chosen three men who will be given final intensive training to undertake--unless Russia scores a hurried first--the first manned rocket flight in history. It could happen anytime now.

Dazzle the Public Yes, here is your chance to exhibit your oratorical talents. Ian McLennan, our director of the "Theatre of the Stars", announces a course for the training of future part-time lecturers. This course, which will begin in the near future, is open to all members of the Edmonton Centre and their friends. This summer, especially during the week-ends, the Planetarium expects some very large audiences during the day. In order to hear the voices of the present lecturers Messrs. McLennan, Loehde, Jensen and Milton, volunteers from our group are invited to help out. Of course you will be paid for your service to the city but more than this the pleasure you will derive is beyond mere monetary considerations. So-- be ready to step forward when the call comes.

Annual Meeting

At the regular meeting of the Edmonton Centre in February it was decided unanimously to endeavor to convince the rest Royal Astronomical Society of Canada that the Annual Convention of the RASC should be held in Edmonton for 1962. With this in mind the stalwart three of Ian McLennan, Earl Milton, and Franklin Loehde will invade Toronto on the 15th of this month to present our case. We feel our chances are very good in coping this plum for our city but to add ammunition to their vocal efforts they are armed with a letter from His Worship Mayor Elmer Roper extending a welcome to the amateurs in astronomy across our land to visit "Canada's Fastest Growing City" in the spring of 1962.

Here we will have the opportunity and the responsibilities to show our brand of "Western Hospitality" and put on the greatest astronomical convention Canada has or will ever see. What are your ideas on the subject? Any suggestions will be most welcome.

F.C.L.

What Eclipse?

The morning of March 2 was one to be remembered especially to those who invaded the privacy of their own dreams and struggled out of their beds to view the first partial eclipse of the moon. Those that did break the sleep habit were Rickey and Gurd the inseparable pair, Earl Milton, Franklin Loehde, Ian and Adrienne McLennan and none other than Arthur J. Dalton who flew from Hamilton, Ontario to take in the event with his old astronomical buddies. Art will be in town, unfortunately, only for a few days but never-the-less his stay here certainly brought back old and very fond memories.

The eclipse itself was marred only shortly by clouds when viewed by the group from the Planetarium. Despite the poor telescopes available the group managed to obtain some fairly good pictures of the event and these even managed to reach the first page of the Edmonton Journal. We would like to extend our thanks to the Journal for their excellent coverage of the eclipse.

F.C.L.

IMPORTANT!

We should like to remind all contributors that articles should be in the Editor's hands two weeks before the monthly meeting, or, at latest, two Saturdays before that meeting. This gives enough time then for editing, stencilling, duplicating, assembling, and mailing so as to get STARDUST into members' hands a few days before the actual meeting.

EDITOR: S. Frank Page, 8444-117 Street, Edmonton, Alberta
SECRETARY, EDMONTON CENTRE: Dr. D.R. Crosby, 7821
Saskatchewan Drive, Edmonton, Alberta.