

**“THE ASPECT OF THINGS WAS THE MOST FEARFUL THAT I EVER SAW”:  
EMOTIONS AND VICTORIAN ECLIPSE OBSERVATIONS**

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Existing investigations of nineteenth and twentieth-century Lick Observatory eclipse expeditions have articulated the importance of Elizabeth Campbell’s regulation of her husband’s emotions. With just minutes to take observations that had often taken months or years to prepare for, those involved in these eclipse expeditions had to remain focused under the stress of the conditions. Although erased from published expedition reports, many observers were open in correspondence about their feelings of dread, terror and awe, and worried about the threat this posed on their ability to observe.

I will survey the emotional impact of eclipse observations between 1836 and 1860, mainly drawing on material from the family of George Airy, the British Astronomer Royal, and paying particular attention to the impact of gender and audience. I will additionally explore attempted strategies to manage emotions, and how the idealisation of unaffected observation was used to de-value observations of particular people, often including women and observers local to the zone of totality.