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FLYING TO THE POLE

Chat with Antarctic Aviator. Monoplane Flights in Adelaide.

[By our Special Reporter.]

Now I wonder if the south pole is really waiting to be discovered by a man with a flying machine! Every other attack of science, pushed to the limit of endurance by the energy and skill of brave men, has been repulsed. In hazardous isolation, the secret has been kept from us since the beginning of time, wrapped among the impenetrable folds of great glaciers and packed away in a wilderness of ice. So, those who think about these mighty problems of travel, have an idea that you may be able to fly over the obstacles first and discover a way to go round them. They purpose to do that by a huge bird of nickel steel. It has a body 34 ft. long from nose to tail, and wings that spread 45 ft. from tip to tip. It weighs 1,200 pounds, and cost exactly that number of sovereigns. It has such powerful lungs that it can remain in the air for five consecutive hours and cover 300 miles during that time. This marvellous bird is called "Vickers I," the advance guard of the campaign which Dr. Douglas Mawson is to lead against the ramparts of the south pole. What a triumph for aviation if it shall build a nest there!

On Saturday I met the man who is going to take the bird, Lieut. H. E. Watkins, of the Essex Regiment. Mr. Graham White says he is the safest flyer in England, and coming from a practical authority, that is a pretty big compliment. I spent half an hour or more in Mr. Watkins's cabin while the mail steamer China was travelling from the anchorage to the Outer Harbour. He was packing up and arguing to himself that it was impossible originally to have placed the things he had spread over the floor into a bag like that one. But I noticed they all got back again—somehow. While Mr. Watkins was doing this I was interviewing him. "Don't mind me," he explained, "I can listen—tut, tut, tut, how can I get that jolly thing in?—and pack—bullo, I've left my slippers out—at the same time." Candidly, I began to doubt it. Mr. Watkins was right. We had a very entertaining talk, but I was glad when the jaws of that bag snapped together and this famous young explorer of the air gave the final grunt of triumph. Mr. Watkins will take a lot of sunshine to the antarctic. He has a personality full of it. A solid physique and a light heart, a kindly, earnest face, and bappy smile, altogether a genial fellow, a man of accomplishments, but singularly modest, the aviator who is to pilot "Vickers I" in its voyaging down south will make jolly fine company.

"I never knew what flying was until I got into this machine," remarked Mr. Watkins when I asked him to say something about "Vickers I." He reckons she is the finest ever turned out—a perfect beauty. "I had her for about a month prior to leaving England, and she is absolutely delightful. On every fine day I had her out. I took up some of the officials from the Foreign Office and from the War Office. The machine has behaved magnificently. One of my passengers was Mrs. Scott, whose husband is in the antarctic now. I have lifted into the air more than 400 people since I have been flying." "But tell me," I interrupted, "how you came to go on this trip?" "Oh, Mrs. Scott mentioned the matter to me. That was in March. She said Dr. Mawson had decided to take an aeroplane on the expedition, and that she had given him my name. I was delighted. I simply jumped at the chance, and here I am. This was something quite new in flying, and I love adventure." I could not help thinking of the things he would see when up aloft in the wonder-world underneath—a world of vast, white fields, broken into glittering valleys, of the majestic sculpture of glaciers, and of mountains with their coronets of sun-flashed ice lifted far into the sky. The imagination is excited over the prospect. It is the privilege of a lifetime. Mr. Watkins says he is a lucky man. I know he is a plucky man, and skilful, too. He is only 30—and single. "I've said 'goodby' to all my friends for two years," he told me, "and now I am anxious to get to work as soon as possible. No, I don't mind the isolation. We ought to have a jolly good time. Think of the possibilities that lay ahead for my work." Yes! Think of it. Fancy being the pioneer in the trackless wastes hundreds of feet above the ice world of the antarctic. "You don't want any nerves?" I said. "Nerves?" queried Mr. Watkins, with a frown. "What are they?" I might have known he never possessed any.

...I came up...had a passenger up 1,500 ft., and she was still climbing when I had to come down owing to approaching darkness. The machine gets off the ground after a 40 yards' run. "Will you give exhibitions in Adelaide?" "Yes. Dr. Mawson has arranged that. If you have not seen real flying I think these trips will interest you. The monoplane is coming in a fortnight by the Macedonia. I was afraid to ship it in this boat because the maritime trouble was on, and the strikers might have wrecked it. In half an hour the machine can be converted into a sledge, which should be able to move along at 30 or 40 miles an hour. The undercarriage has been built for that purpose."

"What will the monoplane be used for?" "For reconnaissance and depot laying. We shall take a surveyor to map out the country. On a clear day there should be no limit to the field of observation." "Been flying long?" "Oh, just a year or two. Before I took to flying I knocked a lot of fun out of ballooning. Very good sport that, although quite different from whizzing along in a monoplane. Going up in the air has always fascinated me. I've had the usual batch of narrow escapes. Once I slipped sideways 120 ft. and landed on the edge of a precipice 200 ft. deep. That was at Shorecliffe, in Kent. A lot of fellows won't go up again after a spill, and some have dozens and seem to like the game better after every one. Flying is claiming new devotees every day, and it is getting safer. The British War Office has 10 aeroplanes, and they are to be used on an extensive scale in the manoeuvres this year. There is no doubt we must have a fleet of flying machines and keep pace with France and Germany."

"Do you expect any difficulties dodging about in the Antarctic?" "This, of course, is an experiment and might have very good results. I've got to find all that out. In any case we shall gather valuable experience concerning the type of machine needed down there. I've got plenty of spare parts, and I don't think there'll be trouble over the petrol freezing. I may have a job to start the engine in the mornings, but once I'm away it should be plain sailing." "What is the worst accident you fear?" "I should imagine breaking the propeller against lumps of ice and damage to the under carriage, while alighting. I'm perfectly safe in the air." I liked that colossal confidence! "Everything seems alright," resumed Mr. Watkins, in a tone of happy assurance. That's the advantage of his sort of pluck. It is so delightfully, so optimistically philosophical. I say the best of luck to pluck like that.

"I suppose Sir Ernest Shackleton wished you all sorts of joy and good fortune?" "Of course he is very interested in the expedition. I think we shall be very happy under Dr. Mawson's leadership. Sir Ernest has a high opinion of his professional and social qualities. He is thinking of having another dash for the pole one of these days, but does not mention any particular time. Sir Ernest was arranging to take an expedition to Mongolia after minerals when I left England."

With Lieut. Watkins is Mr. F. H. Bickerton, the engineer. One is 30, the other only 25 years of age. Both are lovers of adventure, and both have had a good deal of it for young men. Mr. Watkins had 17 months in South Africa. Mr. Bickerton has been hunting for lost treasure in romantic islands. Both want something more exciting than they have ever had. I guess they'll get it in that two years' sojourn among the great icefields of the antarctic.

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GLACIAL CONTROVERSY.

Dr. Basedow Interviewed.

On Monday a representative of The Register had an interview with Dr. H. Basedow, who recently returned from the Northern Territory, in reply to Dr. Fritz Noetling's opinions expressed during the latter's absence on the subject of glacial phenomena in beds occurring in the Sturt Valley and elsewhere in South Australia. Dr. Basedow stated:—I was not altogether surprised to hear upon my return to Adelaide that during my absence in the Northern Territory the old Cambrian glacial controversy had been revived. It is about 10 years ago that Mr. W. Howchin first announced he had discovered glacial beds of Cambrian age in South Australia. I remember it well, because it was just about the time my late teacher, adviser, and friend, Professor Ralph Tate, lay upon his deathbed, and I used to visit him several times a day to attend to geological matters under his personal supervision. The dying professor was too feeble to oppose the views of Mr. Howchin in a scientific paper, but referred me to his lecture notes and marginal notes in Geikie's Textbook of Geology, where he had referred to the formations in South Australia, but had certainly not called them glacial deposits. Professor Tate died soon after. My colleague, Mr. J. D. Hiffe, B.Sc., who had been Acting Lecturer in Geology at the University, and I made a very thorough examination of the beds in the Sturt Valley. We were very courteously assisted by correspondence with a leading member of the Geological Survey of Great Britain. Our conclusions were not in harmony with those of Mr. Howchin, and we ventured to express opinion that the evidence attributed to glaciation in the formation referred to could be equally well explained as being due to cataclysmic and mountain building forces. We submitted papers before several scientific societies.

—Theoretical Geology.— Theoretical geology is at any time a most unsatisfactory branch of the science, especially when the formation considered is one of the oldest in the geological scale, and has been so altered by metamorphic processes. If two surgeons disagree in a diagnosis, the case can, in most instances, be proved by operation; a doubtful question of economic geology can often be decided by boring down into the depths of the earth, but in a theoretical case such as the one before us one opinion is as good as another, and scientists endeavour to get to the truth by debating and discussing the evidence adduced. It may therefore take years, possibly tens of years, to prove a theory; perhaps it may never be decided. At the meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in Adelaide in 1907, this was realized by the geologists present, and the opinions were divided. Mr. Twelveteens, Government Geologist of Tasmania, explained the situation very truly when he published the following statement:—"The whole question of the Cambrian glaciation has apparently been revived, and the interpretation in its favour assailed. The views of official geologists seem to be opposed to it, while Mr. Howchin and university geologists support it. Accordingly the material for a pretty discussion exists, and it is probable that more will be heard of the subject."

—Old-World Comparisons.— During my three and a half years' sojourn in England and on the Continent I attended countless meetings of scientific societies, where many heated arguments and discussions ensued, but a noble and manly spirit dominated, and I do not recollect a single instance where one scientist would attack the person of another in the public press. How different is the case before us. An honest discussion in a recognised scientific journal seems to be less important to Messrs. Howchin and Noetling than to show how ignorant, untrained, and inexperienced we are in their opinion. I do not know Dr. Noetling personally, but know all about him, as I met his late principal, the Director of the Geological Survey of India, and many of his late colleagues at the meeting of British scientists at Leicester in 1907.

—Dr. Noetling's Kangaroo Theory.— More recently I had occasion to oppose his views in a geological magazine concerning the interpretation of the fossil imprints in the Warrambool sandstone of Victoria. These, Dr. Noetling described as having been produced by the stern of a squatting kangaroo. In view of the complicated anatomy of the kangaroo in this particular part, and the fact, as a whole, this explanation is not only improbable, and practically impossible. Secondly, it was stated that the track of any kangaroo could be modified slightly, because these animals have the peculiar habit of following one behind the other, and always jumping into the exact imprints left in the ground by the leading kangaroo. We all know that kangaroos follow beaten pads in the bush leading to water or pasture, but anybody who has lived among them in Nature will admit that the statement published by Dr. Noetling in a scientific journal could only be received as a "bush yarn."

—Misleading Impressions.— Dr. Noetling regrets that I "attacked" Mr. Howchin's theory in a leading German geological journal, thus giving those who could not judge for themselves by actual observation quite a wrong impression. If Dr. Noetling had acquainted himself with English scientific literature on the subject he would have noticed that our paper was first submitted to the Royal Society in Adelaide, but for reasons still unknown to me its publication was suppressed. The editor of the society's "Transactions" (Mr. Howchin), however, was allowed to quote and criticise in an unscientific manner an unpublished manuscript without allowing us to defend our case. We then submitted our paper before the meeting of the Australasian Association in Adelaide in 1907, when we received strong support, and it was published. Dr. Meclaren, late of the Indian Geological Survey, then communicated our paper at a meeting of the Geological Society in London. Having been elected a fellow of the Geological Society in Berlin, I was asked to embody my views in a general geological paper I read at one of their meetings, and I did so. Dr. Noetling will therefore see that we submitted our paper before two Australian societies and the Geological Society in London, before going to a continental society. Besides, scientists have nowadays to peruse the literature of all sorts of foreign societies to keep abreast of the times. I exchange papers myself with scientists of all nations, even Russians and Chinese. The German, French, and Italian languages ought to be comprehensible to all scientists if they wish to enlarge their comparative knowledge and broaden their views.

—Opinions of Other Scientists.— If Messrs. Howchin and Noetling maintain that our paper is "crude," "primitive," "unscientific," "littile," "superficial," "schematic," and so on, that is their own fault, unfortunately. Other geologists of note, such as Mr. A. G. Maitland, Government Geologist of Western Australia, Dr. Meclaren, Professor McKenny Hughes (Cambridge), Professor Frösch, Professor Pas-

sage, and very many more, state that ours is an "excellent" and "able" paper, and our evidence "incontestable."
—Dr. Basedow's Career as Geologist.— He, too, I am so utterly inexperienced and untrained, as Dr. Noetling has written in the papers, it seems strange that among other things Professor Tate should have entrusted the leadership of his first class to me when still a youth of under 20 years; that I should have gained first-class honours in practical and theoretical geology in my final exams for the D.P.A. degree; that the University of Adelaide should have awarded me the Tate Memorial Medal for Geology; that such famous men as Professor Judd, late of Royal School of Mines, London, Dr. Tyabli, Director of the Geological Survey, London, and Professor Garwood, London University, should have proposed me as an F.G.S., London; that the Working Men's College asked me, through the Agent-General in London, to deliver a course of lectures on geology to them; that the Geographical Society in Hamburg should have invited me from London to lecture on Australian Geology and afterwards conferred an Honorary Fellowship on me; that the Conservative Geological Club, London, should have invited me as one of two guests only to their annual meeting; that I should have been appointed geological correspondent of the leading mining journal in Great Britain for Australia; that I should have been asked to deliver addresses in Germany, Holland, and Switzerland; that the Director of the Geological Survey, Switzerland, Professor Heim, who recently received an honorary D.Sc. from Oxford, should have invited me to accompany him for several days on an excursion to inspect the local glacial deposits; that a leading institution in Berlin should have asked me, as a stranger, to report on country in Canada supposed to contain mercury; that the South Australian Government should have employed me off and on since 1903, and when I left for England and the Continent commissioned me to enquire into recent developments in economic geology; that upon my return I should have been appointed Assistant Geologist with the recommendation of Mr. H. Y. L. Brown; that the Treasurer should have referred to my appointment in Budget and elsewhere; and that when I was appointed Chief Protector in the Northern Territory the Commonwealth Government should have asked me if I would attend to geological matters for them, and later accept the position of Government Geologist, in addition to my medical appointment.



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THE UNIVERSAL RACES CONGRESS.

SCIENCE AND THE MILLENNIUM.

(FROM A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS.)

What a praiseworthy, amiable Conference! These good people have met "to discuss, in the light of science and the modern conscience, the general relations subsisting between the peoples of the West and those of the East, between the so-called white and so-called coloured peoples, with a view to encouraging between them a fuller understanding, the most friendly feelings, and a heartier co-operation." More power to their elbow! They have met, not merely to discuss this important question, but to discuss it "in the light of science" and that rather vague thing "the modern conscience." To discuss it in two lights, that is the worst of it; the one light so trustworthy, so indisputable, but still rather cold and penetrating, uncomfortably apt to show up all the faults of structure and surface; the other light, how warm, how rosy, but then how dim and inexact! Can we discuss the same question in both lights? That is the difficulty.

On the whole it must be admitted that the Congress lacks unity of purpose. It is, in fact, a double-faced Congress; it keeps going round, with a disconcerting click, like the flap with the statue on it in Miss Lydia Kyasht's ballet at the Empire. On the one side a cold grey discouraging marble figure faces us; then flip! at the right moment round it goes, and there is a pink living delightful God of Love there, ready to skip about the stage, to heal, to reconcile, to make everything end happily. At one moment stern-visaged anthropologists stand before us, discussing hard unforgiving facts; the next, the President touches a button, and a smile-wreathed delegate in turban or fez is bowing from the platform, breathing peace and brotherhood in broken English or very slightly chipped French. And, unfortunately, the logical connexion between these successive growlings and cooings is very hard to trace. Sir Sydney Olivier expressed the feelings of the majority of the audience—of all the representatives, that is, of the "modern conscience"—when he denounced them on Wednesday afternoon, these anthropologists (who, as is well known, have crabbed little out-~~lets~~, unsympathetically voracious consciences, instead of the perfected sensitive modern apparatus) much as if they were a set of lazy, rebellious Jamaicans. Of much use they had been to the Conference! he said, with their big-end and little-end monogenesis or polygenesis controversies; they had failed just in what was wanted of them; they had provided no material for Sir Sydney and his brother-idealists, the architects of the millennium; they might as well not have been there at all.

The fact is that there is a scientific foundation for something provided by the anthropologists, and there is this immense superstructure of idealism; but, handle them as you will, the two cannot be made to fit.

Still, considering everything, it is going off pretty well; the decencies are preserved; and everything is covered up by the applause that we, the members, give to everything, quite indiscriminately; we show our approval of quite irreconcilable propositions with equal enthusiasm, as long as they have the right ring about them. If one speaker says that what we must do above all things is to regard other nations as our equals in every way, and leave them respectfully alone to work out their own national ideals, we applaud him warmly. If the next says that the purdah system and infant marriage are degrading institutions, and we must crush them out at any cost, we applaud no less.

All is peace and harmony, as it should be. Yet, in the body of the hall, there are complaints. That the place of meeting is out in the wilds of Kensington, in an inconvenient and unnecessarily big building (perhaps they expected a bigger congress), that the speeches are inaudible, that there are no sections in which the scientific people can escape from the monotonous Millenniumists—these are trifling, material affairs. What is more serious is that the merely fact-loving people who joined to reap information believe, rightly or wrongly, that the Idealists are gagging the assembly to prevent discordant notes, that the lists of speakers are as it were "packed" beforehand, lest inconvenient people should say inconvenient things; or, if that is not so, they feel that the discussions are at any rate strangled and killed by keeping them "closed" the whole time, and converting them into a series of harangues instead of real debates. Of course the scientists who have been invited as stalking horses to deceive the quarry must be allowed to speak, however inconvenient the things they say (and they were dreadfully inconvenient, those remarks about battleships and national rivalry which von Luschan made; and Dr. Haddon, with his protest against "common humanity"; and Dr. Gray, the President of the Anthropological Institute, with his sturdy denial of racial equality), but it seems as if they meant to let as few inconvenient people as possible speak. Of course the public, reading in the paper that Professor Earl Finch, of Wilberforce University, praised the results of crosses between black and white, is immensely impressed; from an American professor! But then it ought to be noted that Professor Earl Finch, like all those who took that line, is a negro; there was no real discussion of the question at all. Quacks quacked; but serious scientists, who had studied miscegenation, or crossing of varieties, came away without having had an opportunity of speaking. Professor Margoliouth (a philologist, be it said in passing, and not a student of physical science) was put up to open the ball on Miscegenation, and with delightful aplomb used the opportunity to make a speech in favour of woman suffrage. If one were not used to suffragists cropping up unexpectedly in all manner of unexpected places (in organ pipes