

The Advertiser.
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HIGHER EDUCATION.

MR. MEREDITH ATKINSON'S APPOINTMENT.

Mr. Meredith Atkinson, M.A., who arrived by the Orsova to fill the newly-made appointment of Director of Tutorial Classes in the University of Sydney, is described by a Sydney "Sun" man, who travelled with him from England, as "an extremely interesting personality." Thirty years of age, he looks no more than twenty-five; very slightly built, he possesses an enormous fund of energy; owning distinctly an aristocratic type of features and of a delicately refined bearing, he is the son of a working-man; severely British in sentiment, and a member of high social circles, he is yet a man of proclaimed Labor sympathies.

Such is the man who has been appointed by the New South Wales Government to make higher education in all its forms available to the working man. A graduate of Oxford University, where he gained the highest distinction on the subject of economics, holding the positions of extension lecturer to Oxford and lecturer to tutorial classes under the University of Durham, he is well qualified for the task before him.

"Any explanation of the movement ahead of me," said Mr. Atkinson, "must necessarily be prefaced by a review of the history of the Workers' Educational Association of England. That association was inaugurated in 1903, and its progress may be judged by the fact that it now includes over 2,000 trade unions and educational societies, besides having many thousands of individual members of all parties and creeds. The object of the association is to bring within the reach of the working classes the higher education which has hitherto been to privilege of the few. It aims to enlighten, not to persuade, men along one particular line of thought. It not only tolerates differences of opinion, but welcomes and respects them. The W.E.A. is established on sound, practical lines. It seeks first to arouse the workers to a desire for higher education, and then to organise an educational supply which meets their needs. It possesses in England over 160 branches, which annually arrange for several hundreds of courses of lectures. It has established over 140 tutorial classes, attended by more than 3,000 students for three years. It has formed special classes to meet the needs of working women and rural workers, and last year it is estimated that 50,000 working men and women attended the classes and lectures. The ultimate aim of the association is that the universities should be made as accessible to the poor as to the rich.

"The association adopts various methods for attracting workers to the lure of education, such as study circles, lecture courses, &c., but its chief activity is the university tutorial class, consisting of about 30 students taught by a tutor sent down by one of the universities. The class meets one night a week for 24 weeks in the winter, the tutor gives a lecture for an hour and then the second hour is open for the students to fire questions at the tutor and carry on discussions on any points connected with the subject. One essay every fortnight is demanded of the students. You may be surprised to learn that in England there is quite a large proportion of these which are up to a standard of first-class honors at Oxford and Cambridge. Besides the classes, summer schools are held at several universities, and already a number of students have actually entered Oxford or Cambridge."

Mr. Atkinson, as is generally known, owes his appointment to the recent visit to Australia of the founder and general secretary of the movement, Mr. Albert Mansbridge. "It is greatly to the credit of the New South Wales Government," he tells us, "that an opportunity has been afforded for introducing this movement into Australia. When the offer was made to me to undertake this great task I was keenly delighted, because I have always taken a profound interest in Australian affairs. This you may easily understand when I tell you that we now realise in England that no study of economics can be considered complete without an intimate knowledge of the recent political developments in Australia. I think that if your political leaders here (and I do not refer to those of any particular party) knew as I know how great a part Australia is playing in the reform movement which is sweeping the entire world they would

feel greatly encouraged. I consider that Australia has very much to be proud of, and of nothing so much as the way in which all parties have assisted in levelling the ranks of mankind and in making the people a people truly worthy of the race to which they belong. Although I have not yet had an opportunity of forming any personal impressions of Australians, I accept it as a matter of common knowledge that the masses in this country belong to a much higher plane than they do in Great Britain, not because of any better stamina, but because they have developed their manhood to a degree which unfortunately cannot yet be attained in England. I am not here to discuss politics—in fact I propose to leave politics strictly alone—but I might be pardoned for remarking that whatever may be the merits or otherwise of the Labor Party in Australia, they are to be complimented upon their efforts to promote higher education among the masses. Of course, I do not mean to say that such a movement would not in any case have been evolved in a new country like Australia. What I wish to make clear is that it is a splendid sign when the workers through their mouth-pieces are evidencing such a keen desire for learning. I therefore feel that the seeds which I have come to sow will fall on very fertile soil. I shall not rest content till the day when the movement I represent shall have taken a grip on the whole of the Commonwealth. Of course, officially I am on the staff of the Sydney University, but my work will not be limited to any one State, and I will, I believe, have an opportunity of pushing the movement in every part of the Commonwealth, till each State will require a similar official."

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"A STAR OF SCIENCE."

Dr. Mawson Welcomed to Melbourne.

MELBOURNE, March 30.

At the invitation of the Lord Mayor (Cr. Hennessey), a large number of citizens assembled at the town hall to-day to publicly welcome Dr. Mawson. The Prime Minister (Mr. Cook), in supporting the toast of the health and prosperity of Dr. Mawson, Capt. Davies, and the members of the expedition, congratulated Dr. Mawson and his party upon that display of pluck and courage which they called British. (Applause.) They in Australia could surely be forgiven if they took and expressed pride in the achievement of young Australia in this expedition. Dr. Mawson had won his way, even while a young man, into the hierarchy of the world's great men. He was one of the stars of science. He (Mr. Cook) believed that when the story of the expedition came to be closely told it would be found that Dr. Mawson had served Australia very well indeed.

The Premier (Mr. Watt), who also supported the toast, said he believed that the achievements of the expedition would benefit science more than any other previous exploration venture, either antarctic or arctic. He hoped that no financial barrier would prevent the completion of the work of this expedition which Dr. Mawson contemplated. If any such difficulty threatened it would be the duty of the people of Australia to keep the burden of these worries from the shoulders of the explorers. (Applause.)

Dr. Mawson, in responding, said with regard to the finances of the expedition, the cost had not yet been worked out. There would, however, be about £4,000 owing, which he would pay off by lectures and the earnings of a popular volume on the work of the expedition. The arrangements for this publication were the chief purpose of his visit to London. It was a great deal more pleasant to earn money than to beg it. In fact, he would rather have the antarctic all over again than the task of raising money.

Capt. Davies also responded.

THE MAN AND HIS JOURNEY.

[By Sir Ernest Shackleton, in The London Daily Mail.]

Fully to estimate the work of the Australasian expedition a personal knowledge of the man and the conditions under which he worked is a great asset. Mawson was born to be a leader of a polar expedition. That he was the man to do such work I know well, for on my arrival in Australia en route for the antarctic, he boarded the ship, ardently desirous of accompanying the expedition. A typical Australian in appearance—though he is really of Yorkshire origin—he has every quality to make him a great leader. He is one of the most brilliant of the younger Australian geologists and mineralogists. Until he came to me he held an important post in Adelaide University. With his scientific knowledge he combined the desire, capability, and strength for arduous enterprise. It is known to the world that he was one of the party that reached the summit of Mount Erebus, that great active volcano over 13,000 ft. high. He was one of the party of three that reached the south magnetic pole for the first time and planted there the Union Jack. He was the observer who located the spot with his instruments. Now the south has claimed him again. Over 2,000 miles of hitherto unknown coastline he has now mapped. Long journeys have been made into the interior of that great frozen continent. Observations have been taken under immensely hard conditions of great scientific importance; observations too that have notable significance for the economic world.

—The Economic Answer.—

He is the first man to use wireless installation in the antarctic, and he has demonstrated both the feasibility of such modern methods and their utility in the world of every day. Throughout the whole expedition we read that almost daily messages were transmitted direct to Australia warning the Government Meteorological Office of the approach of those southerly gales that destroy shipping and ruin crops. Thus the man searching for mere economic reasons for polar work such as this has his answer. The discovery of the ledges of the continental shelf will throw light on many oceanographic mysteries. Indeed, science has everything to be grateful for in Dr. Mawson's achievement, and nothing in which to find disappointment. From the scientific side the expedition has been eminently successful. From its sentimental side—I use the word advisedly and not in the meaning to which it has been debased to-day—it has been equally remarkable. Sentiment and science have so far gone hand in hand. It will be a sorry day when they are divorced.

—A Vision of the Disaster.—

The outstanding feature of Mawson's inland journeys has been that tragic march in which two lives were lost. It has been a march that has shown once more to the world that men are capable of enduring and working against desperate odds without a thought of surrender. As I write I can visualize that endless white undulating plateau, windswept and cold even in the height of summer. The little party of three is steadily working south to see what lay beyond their horizon. I can feel their relief at having apparently come out from the treacherous maze of crevasses—some of unplumbed depth. And then there comes the sudden change from relief to the shock of disaster. But no one can realize what Mawson's feelings must have been when he looked back and instead of seeing his principal sledge, dog team, and companion following sturdily behind—saw nothing but an empty white expanse! And looked down into the yawning cavern in which he could just see the moaning dog far below and knew that at a much greater depth lay not only his trusty comrade, but, practically speaking—the means of retreat! We read:—"Decided that by eating dogs we should have food enough to reach hut across plateau. Sea ice breaking up. Nine hours after accident read burial service, and started return. Food apportioned on mileage basis. Owing delays bad weather and reduction in rations, dogs gave out daily. Soon none left. No nutriment in their flesh, and no marrow in their bones." And I can picture that terrible march back through the area of crevasses; Mertz becoming weaker day by day, the food giving out, and at last Mawson, no thought of desertion in his mind, placing his sick comrade upon the sledge and dragging him painfully those weary miles—short distances in reality if you will, but age-long in effort and anxiety! Then came the death of Mertz. Then the final struggle alone, utterly alone day after day with no adequate shelter, no nourishing food. What those 30 lonely days must have meant to Mawson he alone can tell.