Dr. Mawson’s Story.

TWO TRAGIC DEATHS.

SWALLOWED BY A CREVASSE.

ALONE IN THE DESOLATE WASTE.

LONDON, February 27.

The “Daily Mail” publishes the following personal narrative from Dr. Mawson concerning the tragic deaths of Lieutenant Niniss and Dr. Mertz: December 14 was a beautiful day, and Lieutenant Niniss, Dr. Mertz, and myself were bent on the work. Owing to our arrival at an unbroken plateau our troubles seemed ended. Dr. Mertz was the trail, a quarter of a mile ahead of myself, and the first dog team, then came Lieutenant Niniss with the sledge containing our last necessary stores. This plan was adopted in order that the sledge should not suffer if a crevasse were encountered.

Unexpectedly I found my team crossing a crevasse, of which we had already negotiated scores. I called out “Crevase!” to put Lieutenant Niniss on his guard. Looking back again afterwards in Niniss’ direction, nothing met my eye but an expanse of snow and ice. Then the possibility of the crevasse having swallowed Niniss dawned on me.

To Lieutenant Mertz I hastened back, we came to a yawning abyss. When my eyes were accustomed to the dark blue light we saw a dog moaning on the ledge 100 ft. below. We found a curio case of Niniss. Hours were spent in calling for him without an answer. The dog ceased, and an eerie stillness rose from the depths.

The remaining sledge contained only 14 weeks’ man’s food and none for the six dogs. We improved a tent from a tent-cover and a pair of skis. Nine hours after the accident I read the burial service and we started on our return, when our dog teams gave out daily, and we used them as food. But there was no nourishment in the flesh and no marrow in the bones. On New Year’s Day we were 100 miles from the sea and the sledges were still with us. Dense snow fell daily. Mertz was very cheerful, and I could not have wished for a better companion. On January 6 Mertz was unable to move, and the sledge with much toil a distance of 24 miles, with the help of a sail.

Mertz died at midnight on January 7. My own condition was not good, but I was determined to push on, not willing to be reminded of what was to follow. For a month we gave out daily. Several times I fell into a crevasse to the length of a sledge rope. I was scarcely able to climb out. My skin, hair, and nails came off. The discovery of a cache we had established, containing food, enabled me to reach the hut.

The Dead Explorers.


The “Daily Mail” states that the story of the heroic struggles of Niniss and Mertz, as related by Dr. Mawson, after the death of Lieutenant Niniss. “There are few more brilliant pages in polar history,” the “Standard” declared.

The Story in Detail.

How Lieutenant Niniss and Dr. Mertz Died.

DR. MAWSON’S TERRIBLE PLOUGH.

VALUABLE DATA SECURED.

Dr. Mawson last night made a statement, which amplified the cable message received from London to the incident of the fatal sledge journey, and added further information of interest. He said:

Further details concerning the eastern party, which are of immediate concern to account on the kind of life involved.

Dr. Mawson added that the weather conditions were unfavorable and rapid progress was made. His companions were Lieutenant Niniss and Dr. Mertz, and the party’s object was to reach the south of the crested coastal downland.

In the Benton Spirit.

We were in a position to make rapid progress, and we were elected at winter quarters by the middle of January. Dr. Mawson and I were both determined to reach the south of the crested coastal downland.

Was Niniss?

Presently, whilst sketching our plans, I observed that Mertz was casting back every now and then a glance at Niniss. I was convinced that Niniss might be having trouble with his dogs. Looking behind, what was my astonishment when I saw that Mertz had not only a great expenditure of snow and ice, but also a large crevasse. Without regarding it as of special danger, we went on, but there was a breach in the snow between the two dogs. However, I felt it was the custom, I called back “Crevasse!” and continued, looking behind me I observed him splashing in the sledge leader’s place at the right angle to the crevasse.

Where was Niniss?

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A Terrible Plough.

All the rope left was of no avail to reach the sledge 150 ft. below, where the remains of Niniss and Mertz and the sledges might have been secured, any of which might give us some clue to the position in which Mertz and I were left. The sledge that remained belonged to the two dogs and the maw-food, and no food at all for the six dogs, which were nevertheless could not be expected to help us. We gladly exchanged the sledging equipment for some of the food lost. Fortunately for us, a wood frame and a frame was improved by using a pair of ski and the sledges were fitted out and a bed placed in the sledges. We were decided that a descent to the frozen sea would be dangerous, and decided not to attempt it. That direction, and would undoubtedly have been disastrous.