

DR. MAWSON'S STORY.

TWO TRAGIC DEATHS.

THRILLING DESCRIPTION.

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 Ninnis and Dr. Mertz:—

December 14 was a beautiful day, and Lieutenant Ninnis, Dr. Mertz, and myself were in the highest spirits. Owing to our arrival at an unbroken plateau our troubles seemed ended. Dr. Mertz was the trail-breaker, a quarter of a mile ahead of myself and the first dog team; then came Lieutenant Ninnis with the sledge containing our most vital necessaries. 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 "Crevasse," to put Lieutenant Ninnis on his guard. Looking back soon afterwards in Ninnis' direction, nothing met my eye but an expanse of snow and ice. Then the possibility of the crevasse having swallowed Ninnis dawned on me.

I called to Dr. Mertz. Hastening back, we came to a yawning abyss. When our eyes were accustomed to the dark blue light we saw a dog moaning on the ledge 150 ft. below. There was no trace of Ninnis. Hours were spent in calling for him, without an answer. The dog ceased moaning, and an eerie stillness rose from the depths.

The remaining sledge contained only 1½ weeks' man's food and none for the six dogs. We improvised 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. The dogs gave out daily, and we used them as food, but there was no nutriment in the flesh and no marrow in the bones. On New Year's Day we were 100 miles from the hut. Mertz was very weak. 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 walk. I dragged the sledge with much toil a distance of 2½ miles, with the help of a sail.

Mertz died at midnight on January 7. My own condition offered little hope, but I was determined to push on, not wishing to be reminded of what was to follow. For a month it snowed 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.

PRAISE FOR DR. MAWSON

A MODEST AND MOVING
NARRATIVE.

The "Daily Mail," commenting on Dr. Mawson's story, says:—"It is touched with the majesty of love and death, and reveals the sacrifices the men of our race are prepared to make in pursuit of scientific knowledge and their readiness to face death in an unselfish cause. The impression made by Scott's story is confirmed by Dr. Mawson's modest, moving narrative. Nothing in the whole story of Antarctic exploration compares with Dr. Mawson's solitary journey through an unutterably savage waste."

Sir Ernest Shackleton, in reply to an interviewer yesterday, said that Dr. Mawson was a born leader of a Polar expedition. He had every quality of a great leader. The manner in which the ship was negotiated in pack ice was due to Captain Davis' splendid seamanship. Captain Davis would be capable of caution when caution was needed and of going boldly ahead if the occasion demanded.

"BRILLIANT PAGE IN POLAR HISTORY."

THE DEAD EXPLORERS.

LONDON, February 26.

The "Evening Standard," commenting on the story published by Dr. Mawson, states that although the tragedies connected with the work of the expedition were eclipsed by those which overwhelmed Captain Scott and his comrades, the world will not willingly let die the story of the heroic struggles of Dr. Mawson, and the late Dr. Mertz, after the sad death of Lieutenant Ninnis. "There are few more brilliant pages in polar history," the "Standard" declares.

THE STORY IN DETAIL.

HOW LIEUTENANT NINNIS
AND DR. MERTZ DIED.

DR. MAWSON'S TERRIBLE
PLIGHT.

VALUABLE DATA SECURED.

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

Further details concerning the eastern party, which I myself led, are of more immediate concern on account of the loss of life involved. The weather conditions precluded extended sledging journeys until early in November, and it was not until November 16 that a point on the highlands 18 miles from winter quarters had been reached. From that time on the weather markedly improved and rapid progress was made. My companions were Lieutenant Ninnis and Dr. Mertz, and the party's object was a dash as far east as possible in order to ascertain the nature of the land in that direction. We were assisted by 16 dogs dragging a load of over 1,700 lb. On the morning of December 14 we found ourselves in latitude 68.53 deg. S. and longitude 151.35 E., having covered a distance of 311 miles. The track had lain across the highlands at no great

distance from the coast over plateau heights and crevassed glacial depressions, three of which had been encountered aggregating 9,000 ft. of ascents and as much in descents. All the members of the party were in the highest of spirits, for though there had been anxieties enough occasioned by one or other of the sledges breaking through into small crevasses from time to time all trouble seemed then at an end, for we had arrived on the unbroken plateau with a clear sweep of coast to the east, and it was intended to keep a track at a safe distance to the south of the crevassed coastal downfalls.

In the Best of Spirits.

We were in a position to make rapid progress, but as the Aurora was expected at winter quarters by the middle of January, only a few days more could be devoted to the outward march. December 14 was a beautiful day of brilliant sunshine, the best during the whole journey, and we were just revelling in it when the calamity overtook us. Mertz had gone ahead on ski as trail breaker, and was quite a quarter of a mile in advance of myself and the first dog team. Close behind me came Ninnis with a select team of dogs dragging a sledge on which were packed the more vital necessaries. This arrangement had been adopted because it was thought that if any was to suffer by crevasses it would be the first sledge. Soon after noon, believing that we were outside the danger zone, I was greatly surprised to observe the outline of a crevasse crossing our track obliquely. It was only very faintly indicated by a slight depression in the surface, and Mertz had crossed without regarding it as specially dangerous. My team was on top of it before being aware of the fact, but I do not remember being specially anxious, for we had already negotiated scores of crevasses. However, as was the custom, I called back "Crevasse" to put Ninnis on his guard. Glancing behind I observed him swing the leaders so as to cross the crevasse at right angles to its length.

Where Was Ninnis?

Presently, whilst meditating on our plans, I observed that Mertz was casting back enquiring glances, which led me to think that Ninnis might be having trouble with his dogs. Looking behind, what was my astonishment when nothing met my eye but a great expanse of snow and ice. Where was Ninnis and his team? Then the possibilities of the crevasse dawned upon me, and hastening back I came to a great hole in the surface leading into a yawning abyss of great depth. Presently Mertz arrived with the dog team. As our eyes became accustomed to the dark blue light from below an injured dog was observed caught on a ledge, and he presently began to moan. Some other fragments were also observed at the same spot, but no trace of our comrade, who must have gone on down to where we knew not, but certainly to an instantaneous death. We called for hours, answered only by the faint echo of our own voices. The dog ceased to moan, and an eerie stillness arose from the depths.

A Terrible Position.

All the rope left was of no avail to reach the ledge 150 ft. below, where the remains of one or more dogs and a few scraps might have been secured, any of which would have been of great value to us in the position in which Mertz and I were left. The sledge that remained had on it only one and a half weeks' man-food, and no food at all for the six dogs, who were already woefully emaciated and could not be expected to help much. We would gladly have exchanged the scientific instruments and spare clothing for some of the food lost. Fortunately there was saved a spare tent cover, and a frame was improvised by using a pair of ski and the theodolite legs. Later on a broken spade was picked up at an old camp, deliberating on what was to be done, it was decided that a descent to the frozen sea would be dangerous, on account of heavy crevassing in that direction, and would undoubtedly cause delay. Further, the nature of the surface of the sea-ice along that coast was entirely unknown, and it was extremely likely that it would be breaking up. On the other hand, on sea-ice there