

THE VOYAGE OF THE AURORA

326

CAPTAIN DAVIS TELLS THE STORY

FAIR WEATHER ALL THE WAY

"GLAD TO BRING DR. MAWSON AND HIS PARTY BACK."

Captain Davis came back from this latest trip to the land of ice in a state of good health, which was testified to by his appearance. Proceedings at the anchorage, following the granting of pratique, represented a busy time for the "skipper" of the little vessel, and it was not until the engines were clanking once more and the boat headed towards the Outer Harbor that he had time to receive the pressmen. This he eventually did in his cabin, a snug little apartment which seemed to represent compactness in its every phase, and yet find space for cosy pieces of comfortable furniture. It is true that half a dozen humans would suffice to crowd the limited room, but for one person the quarters seemed at least convenient and comfortable.

The Meteorological Station.

"I don't know that I can tell you much," Captain Davis remarked. "In fact, there is not a great deal to tell," he added with a twinkle in his eye that made the pressmen's thoughts flash to those gold rights for the exclusive story that the public which subscribed the money for the expedition expected to hear.

Questioned on the subject of the voyage the captain intimated that the Aurora left Hobart southward bound on November 19 last, having on board Messrs. J. Hunter (biologist), F. Hurley (photographer), and P. C. Correll (assistant to official photographer) of the Mawson party. There were also on the vessel the members of the party deputized by the Commonwealth Govern-

ment to take over the expedition's meteorological station on Macquarie Island. These latter comprised Messrs. Sower (meteorologist-in-charge), Hender (on wireless operator), and Fergusson (assistant).

Macquarie Island.

"We experienced some very fine weather on our passage to Macquarie Island," Captain Davis indicated, "and some further oceanographical work was carried out en route. We arrived at the island at 8:20 p.m. on November 28. A week's stay at the point followed, and during that period stores were landed for the party who were to remain on the spot.

The work of taking on board the collections obtained by the party under control of Mr. Ainsworth was also accomplished. The latter gentleman and his associate, who remained two years on the island were embarked upon the Aurora once more and, in good weather, the voyage to Polar regions was resumed. The island was left on December 5, and as the weather favored us we made good progress southward.

Ice Sighted.

"Four days passed and then, on December 9, the first ice was sighted. That was in latitude 62 south longitude 151 degrees 42 minutes east. On the following day we encountered a good deal of loose pack ice.

Blown Out of a Bar.

"At 7 a.m. on December 13 we reached Commonwealth Bay and dropped anchor. Dr. Mawson and his party of six, who had been left at that point, were found to be all well. We left the bay on Christmas Eve. In fact we were blown out of it. It was then decided to follow out Dr. Mawson's original plans, and the Aurora proceeded along the coastline as far west as possible, in an endeavor to complete the work of two previous cruises in that direction.

Away from the Ice.

"We left the ice on February 7 and had a very fine run up. The weather was favorable; in fact, it was fairly good throughout the whole voyage.

Glad to Get Back.

"Glad to get back? I am extremely glad and I am extremely glad to have brought Dr. Mawson and his party back. Yes, we have the whole of the expedition on board. We have brought along a large collection of specimens of all kinds, which will be discharged to-morrow. The articles will then be sorted and dispatched to various museums."

"I think that is all I can tell you," Captain Davis remarked in conclusion, and courteously shaking hands he left his questioners. The next impression of the tall skipper with the ruddy beard was gained as he stood upon the bridge silhouetted against a play of sunshine which poured down to welcome home the voyageurs from Antarctica.

HISTORY OF THE EXPEDITION

DR. MAWSON'S TWO YEARS IN THE ICE

TWO MEMBERS OF THE PARTY DIE

EXTENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC WORK.

Dr. Mawson, who was lecturer on mineralogy and petrology at the Adelaide University, accompanied Sir Ernest Shackleton on the English explorer's visit to the Antarctic in 1908-9. He did magnificent work, being practically the discoverer of the magnetic pole, and was highly eulogised by his leader. Early in 1910 it was decided that, all going well, an Australian expedition would start for the south during the next year. The leader was, if possible, to be Sir Ernest Shackleton, but if he were unable to go the chief position was to be taken by Dr. Mawson. Sir Ernest had been promised £11,000 by two supporters, who were either Australians or interested in Australia. The total sum required was between £30,000 and £40,000, and a successful appeal for support was made to the Commonwealth Government and several of the State Governments. Dr. Mawson, speaking at that time, said it was believed that the scientific material that would be collected by the expedition would outclass any previous undertaking of the kind. Ever since he had been connected with the Antarctic he had recognized that the part which it was scientifically most important to explore was the great unknown coastline directly south of Australia. It covered a length of 2400 miles, between Cape Adele at one end and Gaussberg at the other. Only once in the whole of history had that coast been touched, and then but during one isolated call of a few hours.

Previous Expeditions.

It was no less than 70 years ago that Dourmont and D'Urville, sailing south in charge of the famous old French expedition, which called at Sydney and Hobart, just touched a point on that long coast. No ship had ever since attempted to do so. No part of the Antarctic contained such potentialities for research as did that shore. It was the nearest part

to Australia, and it should be Australia's special duty and her obligation to contribute to the world at large whatever store of the secrets that land held. Whatever material of economic value—gold and mineral wealth, whale oil, seal oil, or anything else—it might contain would, of course, be to the advantage of Australia. The expedition would have a station close to the magnetic pole, and would make more definite the magnetic work which Australia already had the credit of achieving. The meteorological results should be of very special value, because it was from that coast that Australian weather comes. If the Commonwealth Government ever ventured so far as to erect a wireless station for advising changes in the weather conditions it would be on that coast, and not where any of the previous expeditions had wintered.

Plans of the Party.

Setting out from Hobart at the beginning of December, 1911, the Aurora first put in at Macquarie Island, where a party was left with a wireless apparatus of sufficient power to communicate, on the one hand with Hobart, and on the other with South Victoria Land, the nearest portion of the antarctic continent. From Macquarie Island the vessel passed on to a point on the coast nearest to the magnetic pole, which was only about 250 miles inland. Here the main party, under command of Dr. Mawson, landed. The Aurora next passed around the coast, leaving one party at Clarie Land and another at Knox Land. It was hoped that these parties would be able to maintain wireless communication with each other, and with Dr. Mawson. Australia would by that means be the pioneer in the scientific use of wireless telegraphy for the work of exploration. It was intended that from Knox Land the explorers, passing westward, would probably make an attempt to penetrate southward near to the coast—its coast it can be called—on

which Captain Nares touched in 1874. The 1500 miles of ice land between the points at which the first and third parties were to land and an extension on either side of Cape Adare and Gaussberg, seemed marked out as a natural possession of Australia. Portions of it are nearer to Hobart than that city is, for instance, to Albany or Cairns. This nearness was realised by D'Urville, the French captain, who, many years ago, made a dash from Hobart in a sailing ship, and coasted along, conferring the names Sabrina Land, Clarie Land, and Adele Land on different parts. He then returned to Hobart, after an absence of only seven weeks. Dr. Mawson, however, at the time of his departure, did not expect to return until April, 1913, and by that time hoped to have charted the coast definitely, to have found harbors suitable for sealers or whalers, to have searched for indications of minerals, and to have done valuable meteorological work, especially in predicting the appearance in Australia of those antarctic depressions which so often trouble us. It was expected that with wireless communications the exact time would be available for the observers, and that in many respects the scientific results would surpass in accuracy anything previously obtained. During the winter oceanographic surveys on the lines followed by the Prince of Monaco were to be made. Trawling to a depth of 500 to 2000 fathoms was to be attempted, and it was thought that in this almost unexplored ocean every haul of the net would bring up species new to science. "Few vessels," said Dr. Mawson, "have ever come within sight of this coast, and practically none since the days of Wilkes and D'Urville. We desire to raise the Union Jack and take possession of this land for