

DR. MAWSON'S ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

After a long and perilous expedition, extending over two years and three months, Dr. Mawson and his intrepid party have returned from their great Antarctic explorations, and thanks to the influence and thoughtfulness of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Samuel Way, South Australia has the honor and privilege of being the first to welcome them back. Dr. Mawson's connection with the Adelaide University and the inclusion of at least two South Australians in the party make it peculiarly fitting that Adelaide should enjoy the signal pleasure of being the first place to give the wanderers welcome home. The greetings yesterday were hearty and wholesouled, but they are only the beginning of the manifestations of joy and appreciation in Australia of the splendid work which Dr. Mawson and his assistants have accomplished. At present the full extent of what has been done cannot be known and realised, but when the details have been published there can be no doubt that the name of Dr. Mawson will rank among the best of those who have devoted themselves to Antarctic exploration.

At the outset it must be borne in mind that Dr. Mawson has not surrounded himself with any dramatic effects appertaining to a rush to the pole, but has applied himself solely to exploration and scientific research in that desolate icy region. When the Aurora set out from Hobart in November, 1911, it was anticipated that the return journey would have been made last year, but, though the ship came back, through unavoidable misadventure Dr. Mawson was left to endure another winter in the icefields. It was unfortunate but unavoidable. Thanks, however, to the installation of wireless telegraphy—that great marvel of modern science—the world has been assured from time to time of the wellbeing of the explorer and his comrades. Without these wireless consolations the general public would have endured the gravest anxieties for the party's safety. But it has been spared all that, and can now, with the most generous abandon, welcome the wanderers home. In the unfeigned gladness of those rejoicings there is, however, a tone of regret for the untimely end of Lieutenant Ninnis and Dr. Mertz, who lost their lives toward the end of 1912 and in the beginning of 1913 respectively, the former falling into a crevasse and the latter succumbing to the severity of a protracted Antarctic storm. They died like heroes, and the immortelles of world-wide laments enshrine their memory, but the spontaneous joyousness of the homecoming salutations are still tinged with the sorrow which the vacant places engender.

Admiration of Dr. Mawson's efforts should be even greater than for the brilliant accomplishments of Amundsen and Scott, who reached the pole under circumstances which will live in history probably when Dr. Mawson's achievements are forgotten. The probabilities are, however, that his explorations and discoveries in Adele Land and his scientific observations during his two years sojourn in the Antarctic latitudes will be of more practical advantage to the world at large, and certainly the Southern Hemisphere, than all the spectacular scampers for the mythical pole, which only enrich history with examples of the physical courage, endurance, and dogged determination which exist in some human beings. On the other hand, Dr. Mawson will endow the scientific world with a wealth of reliable data, which will prove invaluable for all time. Already those who returned last year have given some information in regard to the exploratory work which had been concluded, but that will be as nothing compared with the fuller history of the expedition's doings which Dr. Mawson will be able to impart. He will, no doubt, supply ampler details of the disaster which befell Lieutenant Ninnis and Dr. Mertz, and he will also have much of interest to relate concerning his second winter in Adele Land. It was a season of more than ordinary severity, in which tremendous difficulties and perils had to be faced and met, not with the resources of a well-provisioned commissariat and a plentifully equipped outfit, but with what was left of a larder depleted beyond calculation, and camp implements and paraphernalia which already had had their day. Some of his vicissitudes have been briefly indicated by the wireless words which kept the plucky leader in touch with the civilised world, but there is more to be told of the privations endured in that Antarctic prison which the world is greedy to hear. The story is sure to be full of interest, for the fascination of these Arctic and Antarctic journeyings is all-pervading, and it grips all minds in all nations. It is this world-wide interest which is provoking so many journeys to the northern and southern snows in these days, and if in years to come the glamor of it weaken and public interest wane, still the good which has been done will not have been in vain. The data they have collected will be the basis of future scientific calculations, just as the observations and determinations of explorers like McDouall Stuart and McKinley have been the guide and direction of those who have undertaken the surveys of the interior of Australia. However, in the public mind the element of physical courage is the dominating factor, and the usefulness of what has been accomplished is largely lost sight of, so that, among the echoing plaudits which herald Dr. Mawson's return but few will be inspired by the realisation of the true value of all that he has achieved. Perhaps that is of little consequence so long as he receives the proper recompense and recognition of his dauntless courage, his enduring patience, his splendid leadership, and his scientific achievements. If he had not been assisted by a loyal party equally well endowed the success of the expedition which is acclaimed to-day would be a very poor thing. So much, no doubt, Dr. Mawson generously concedes to his colleagues, as they, with equal liberality and appreciation, give the glory to him.