

return, perhaps 50 miles, to look for another 'lead.' But the danger here is mild compared with that we were forced to undertake when running to relieve the party at the second base—rushing to get there before the ice had locked them in for the winter, when they would possibly have starved through lack of stores. Every minute reduced our chance of succouring them. So night after night the Aurora went straight ahead, with full steam and all possible sails set. All around us in the darkness were huge icebergs—some of them miles in extent, and as dangerous to strike as solid rock. Every one knew the danger. Nobody worried. After a period in the antarctic a man becomes a fatalist. Evidently we were not meant to be drowned. The discomfort of the voyage would alone destroy any foolish notion that antarctic exploration is in the nature of a beautiful picnic. On the ice grim tragedies stalk about. The ever-present crevasse which may be only a few feet deep; while, on the other hand, it may be 500 ft., with death at the end. The blizzard which may so delay a party as to wipe it out by slow starvation. The snow blindness which may lay a man up for weeks in torture. The ice avalanches, which may "plant" him effectively. For variety of sudden shocks and excitements the antarctic stands an easy first."

—Mawson an "Iron Man."

Describing Dr. Mawson's experiences after the death of Lieut. Ninnis, Mr. Eitel says:—"Dr. Mawson and Dr. Mertz turned homeward with the likelihood of starvation before them. After three weeks, during which they were terribly delayed by blizzards, and had made only slight progress, Dr. Mertz said he could not go any further. His strength gave out, and he died from malnutrition. Try to imagine Dr. Mawson's condition during this period of terrible anxiety! For three weeks afterwards the leader of the expedition plugged along on his weary way—alone. Day after day he struggled on, with very little food, without a soul to speak to, and haunted by the terrible tragedy behind him. Only the mind of an iron man could survive the strain. But then Dr. Mawson is an iron man in the full sense of the word."

DR. MAWSON HOME.

A Hurried Interview.

The Call of the Snows.

Everything had to be hurried. From the time Dr. Mawson stepped off his beloved Aurora until well into the hours of Thursday night—and beyond them as a matter of fact—every minute was precious. At the anchorage the now celebrated explorer could hardly wait until the health officer had granted pratique. He was waiting on deck, bag in hand, ready to almost literally fall into the customs launch and get his foot on shore after two years among the snows. Even domestic affairs, which has a sharp, sentimental edge on big and unique occasions like these, were pushed into the background. Dr. Mawson gave the longest and most intimate audience to his papers. The bag he carried was full of them. There was another trunkful awaiting him on land. Scores and scores were pink envelopes, for the telegraph had been busy conveying congratulations from all parts of an interested and admiring Commonwealth.

Dr. Mawson is a bigger man than when he went away. He appears to have gathered weight. His keen face is fuller and there is a healthy lustre in the blue eyes. It is a miraculous thing that the leader of the expedition, which has been singularly rich in utilitarian results, is back in South Australia at all. He has been about as near to death as it is possible for a man to get. But it is here that Dr. Mawson is so modestly reticent. He cannot be made to talk about himself, or of the pluck he displayed when unutterably lonely and torn with the pangs of hunger, he tramped for 30 days after the death of his companions, Lieut. Ninnis and Dr. Mertz, in search of his camp, then feeling that he could fight the battle no longer. That achievement against odds nearly as heavy as the menacing icefields could make

it will rank as one of the finest in pluck and endurance that has come down through the annals of polar exploration. But Dr. Mawson does not discuss that thrilling personal topic. He evades it. Still you realize that he is a finer man, finer in every way for having faced the stern realities of life in that ice prison and conquered them. Directly the episode is mentioned Dr. Mawson will swerve the question around to an enthusiastic comment on the work and loyalty of his companions of the long days and long nights in the white continent underneath.

Dr. Mawson gave a half an hour of a busy evening to the press representatives, discussing hurriedly, but with obvious enthusiasm, some general phases of the expedition work. Through all the rush and tear of a memorable day, he retained his charm of manner, and stamped all he said and did with an engaging earnestness.

"What members of the expedition have you brought back on the Aurora?"—"From Macquarie base, Messrs. G. F. Ainsworth (who was in charge), H. Hamilton, Blake, and C. A. Sandall; and from Adelie Land, Lieut. R. Page, Mr. C. T. Madigan, Lieut. Bickerton, Dr. A. L. McLean, and Messrs. A. J. Hodgman and Jeffreys. Then, in addition to the ship's crew, there were three other members of the party, Messrs. Hurley, Hunter, and Correll, who returned last year with Wild's party, but accompanied the Aurora on this occasion in special capacities during the cruise. Hunter was the biologist, Hurley the photographer, and Correll assistant in some physical experiments on the ship.

"After the ship had relieved these bases, where did she proceed?"—"After this the Aurora made an extended cruise to the west, pushing into the pack wherever possible in attempts to discover new land, and at the same time taking soundings and doing deep-sea dredging. This work was very successful; most pleasing indeed. I am sure that this collection of biological material is the best that has been obtained from the antarctic. Operations extended as far down into the seas as two miles. Very remarkable fish and animals of all kinds were discovered. Very little has been done in deep-sea work. It is difficult. We did not have much luck with it the first year, but Capt. Davis, who was in charge of this exceptionally heavy and complicated gear, became a thorough master of it, and the latter results were exceptionally fine. The world is being worked out for new spots for exploration, but there is five times as much ocean as land, and there is a wonderful opportunity for research and investigation. Operations with us have to start at 6 a.m. When the gear reaches the bottom you have to go full steam ahead, and when the first haul comes into view there is tremendous excitement. The numerous animals and so on are examined on deck by the biologists, and the job may take 24 or 26 hours."

"Many important discoveries were made?"—"Undoubtedly. Nearly everything we got is new to science, and on the whole it is a really splendid collection. I have no hesitation in saying that the scientific results of the expedition will not lose anything by comparison with any other that has gone to the antarctic. When the British Association meetings take place in August in Australia I shall give a preliminary outline of what has been achieved. It will be an enormous work marshalling this voluminous data properly, and it will take a considerable time. In addition to the large number of animals, we have secured hundreds of birds' skins, many of which have never been known before. These specimens will be distributed throughout the Australian museums gratis, the Australian Museum in Sydney having undertaken that task."

"Then the sojourn on Adelie Land was a blessing in disguise?" Dr. Mawson met the question with smiling repudiation. "It was no blessing. I can assure you," he said, "although the stay enhanced the value of our work. As a matter of fact, we had very trying times on Adelie Land. There is no place in the world with a climate so bad as that one. And yet even the terrific storms were a scientific study. Still, there is not one man who came back after that long and sensational sojourn there who would not commit suicide rather than step another year."

"Would you tell us, Dr. Mawson, something of your own heroic achievements when, after the death of Lieut. Ninnis and Dr. Mertz, you traveled many lonely and hungry weeks in regaining the base?"—"I would rather not say too much about that, if you don't mind. I was 30 days absolutely alone, and I had a most marvellous escape. In the end I was reduced to the last stages of starvation. I was tramping along through the deep snow when I noticed something black in front of me. It was a bit of food that had been dropped by the search party sent to ascertain my whereabouts. It was by the luckiest accident that I saw it. At that time I was within 20 miles of the hut. It was in a

place where no previous expeditions had ever been. That was the big point about this undertaking of ours. We were for the most part travelling in new country. I reckon I had on that occasion the closest shave I ever want to experience, and coming after the death of Ninnis and Mertz, it was a most melancholy journey apart from the sufferings I was called upon to endure."

"How did the wireless work?"—"Reports concerning the operations at the main base during the sledging season of 1912-13, a year ago, have appeared in the press already, but they are of a very meagre character. It is too late to go into them now, but the results will be published as early as possible. We managed to get the wireless going very early down there. We heard of Capt. Scott's disaster before our ship got back here. It was very depressing news, and yet in a sense we had expected it. With the exception of the death of Ninnis and Mertz, our expedition was very fortunate. Those two died like heroes. Nobody ever lived a braver life than either of those men. If you take into account the number of deaths and the number of men in the field for that time, no expedition suffered fewer losses than ours, except the two that came through without any loss of

life at all. Those were Shackleton's and Amundsen's. When you come to consider the risks that men take in these regions it is not surprising that there are disaster and death. Anyhow, none of us can live for ever. Here, I come back with my men from all the perils of antarctic exploration, and I find that a lot of people have died in Adelie Land who in the natural order of things I had quite expected to see again. But there you are."

"The health of the whole party has been remarkably good?"—"Yes; wonderfully so. I took a great deal of trouble with the provisioning. I went into the whole matter personally, as I knew so many expeditions had been marred by scurvy. Shackleton taught me to be very careful about the provisions. I learnt the business from him. No expedition can claim great originality in these things. One improves on the methods of the other. And as the advance goes on. For instance, we have improved some of the equipment. Our experiences in Adelie Land demonstrate very emphatically the need for strengthening and revising equipment. There was a very nearly loss of life at the start. Several parties were sent out, and the one led by Madigan proved the most successful. And yet in that instance the tent was carried away, and the men had to make a long march in. Madigan, particularly, was badly frostbitten on the toes and fingers, the nails of which were floating off."

"How many of your expedition would go back to the antarctic to-morrow if they had the chance?"—"Some of them had a very great sickness, but the younger members, particularly, forgot the hardships they have gone through."

"Have you any inclination to go back?"—"Not at the present moment. I can assure you that I have no thought in that direction just now. I am too jolly glad to get home. How I will feel towards the idea later on is quite another matter. You remember, Shackleton said he would not go away again. But he did. For a long time I shall be engaged in working up the scientific results of the expedition, and that is a big enough job to keep my mind off another trip."

"Will that involve your going to England again?"—"Oh, of course, I will have to go home, and arrangements will have to be made very soon. I would like to say that the University has been good to me in every way. It is the policy of that institution to advance science, and that policy is being interpreted in a very liberal way. So long as my absence does not interfere with the work they are prepared to do everything to help me, and I am very anxious that the expedition will be a credit to them."

"You have had something to say by wireless from time to time about the winds of Adelie Land?"—"My word, yes. They are terrific. Very little sledging was undertaken this year. In the first place, it was late summer after the ship left, and I was, of course, in a very poor condition. I could not possibly have done the job myself. Then there was always the possibility that the Aurora might return, as Capt. Davis had left word that he would try and come in again. But, talking of winds, it had a velocity for one month of 63 miles an hour; that is, for every hour of the whole month. On one occasion it recorded 116 miles. Mind you, that was not puff velocity, which gets up from 200 to 300 miles an hour. If one of those winds struck Adelie Land it would knock every building over. By an instrument we made down there the winds on some of the worst days were over 200 miles an hour."