

## BACK FROM ANTARCTIC ICE.

### RETURN OF THE MAWSON EXPEDITION.

#### ALL IN GOOD HEALTH.

#### AN INTERVIEW WITH THE LEADER.

#### IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENCE.

An event of unique interest in the history of Antarctic exploration was the arrival at the Semaphore yesterday afternoon of the Aurora, with Dr. Mawson and the members of his Antarctic exploration party on board. It was not a spectacular return, but it was one in quiet harmony with the unostentatious but valuable work that it is known the expedition has accomplished in the land of eternal ice. The arrival of the vessel was attended by a certain air of perhaps unavoidable mystery. No one knew with any degree of certainty when the vessel might be expected, and the wildest guesses were hazarded. So it was that the scenes that marked the return of the Antarctic ship were apparently lacking in enthusiasm. There was little display of feeling. The Aurora steamed slowly into the roadstead off the Semaphore and awaited the arrival of the quarantine officer. Three launches containing officials

council of the University at their meeting by the Chancellor (Sir Samuel Way).

##### Weary Watching.

Possibly some of the interest that the Aurora's arrival would otherwise have aroused leaked out in the course of the weary waiting for her appearance, and in the absence of any definite information as to the time of her arrival. During the morning there was practically no sign of excitement at the Semaphore, although, for anything that was known to the contrary, the vessel might have been sighted at any moment. The watchful expectancy with which the boat's arrival was awaited was confined to a few in official circles. Speaking generally, the public appeared to be in total ignorance of the fact that the Aurora had entered the gulf. Those who knew of the vessel's approach had no definite knowledge of the time of her arrival. There was no means of estimating this, since the speed of the Aurora could only be

and a few relatives of members of the party, together with half a dozen press representatives, hovered round her, but there were singularly few greetings exchanged.

##### Leader's Quiet Landing.

The reception accorded Dr. Mawson when he went ashore at the Semaphore was so lacking in all the incidents that might have been expected in such circumstances that it was with difficulty one persuaded oneself that the explorer had journeyed from any more far-away place than Port Lincoln. As he walked along the jetty, attired in white flannel trousers and grey Norfolk coat, and bag in hand, he might easily have been mistaken for a returned holiday tripper. He stepped ashore in silence, and as he walked towards a waiting motor car the holidaymakers sitting all about him hardly raised their eyes from their pleasant and leisurely occupations. It is doubtful whether they realised that anything unusual was afoot until the manoeuvring of a press photographer directed attention to the explorer and his silent escort. The escort, he it added in explanation of the unlooked-for lack of public demonstration, was small, and consisted largely of photographers and pressmen.

##### The Real Welcome to Come.

One could not but feel that the reception of the Aurora was of a kind calculated to damp the spirits of the home-coming sojourners in Adelie Land. Notwithstanding the unexpectedness of their arrival and the unpreparedness of the general public for an event of such interest, the Antarctic voyagers might surely have anticipated some demonstration of enthusiasm. They looked in vain for the cheering multitude and the floral arches which are properly associated with the home-coming of a victor. It is satisfactory to reflect, however, that there will be nothing lacking in plaudits when the southern voyagers are brought in the course of the next day or two prominently before the eye of an appreciative public, and if yesterday there was not one cheer heartfelt thankfulness was the sentiment uppermost in the hearts of many who watched the Aurora take shape out of the haze and come slowly over the few miles of water which alone separated those who had been parted for so many months by snow and ice and a little-known sea. News of the arrival of the party at the Semaphore was quickly conveyed to Adelaide, and was announced to the members of the

guessed at. A liberal estimate of her speed, totally in excess of her possibilities, gave rise to an impression that she would be sighted in the early hours of the morning. It was declared that she might be expected to anchor off the Semaphore between 6 and 7 o'clock, and, as a result, several pressmen were on the Semaphore jetty before half-past 6. Two spent the night at the Semaphore in the expectation that the Antarctic adventurers would arrive before daybreak.

##### Miscalculations.

The hours of waiting which followed allowed ample time for speculation as to the Aurora's speed, and the time of her arrival. Captain Richardson, the pilot in charge, was on the jetty at an early hour, and out of his professional knowledge he could offer to the watchers little or no consolation. He pointed out that, since the Aurora has such a large coal accommodation, her engines are small, and her speed is strictly limited. She is not capable of more than eight knots, and it was at once evident that with a diminished coal supply her speed might well be much less. The rate which formed the basis of the calculations was diminished, and it was estimated that the Aurora would arrive between 10 and 11 o'clock. A puff of smoke seen in the far-away south-west justified a hope that this estimate would prove to be accurate, but a Blue Funnel steamer followed the smoke, and one of her company presently told a Customs official that they had passed the Aurora some time before, that she was doing only five knots, and could not be expected before 5 o'clock in the evening.

##### Sighted!

In the meantime the courteous officials of the Semaphore signal station kept an untiring watch, and kept those interested informed of the lack of news—all they could do in the circumstances. At about noon it was ascertained that the Aurora passed the Troubridge light station at 10 o'clock, and it was said she would probably be off the Semaphore at 2 o'clock. Even this expectation was not fulfilled, and data for a fresh calculation were being sought when, at about five minutes past 2, the long-delayed steamer was sighted from the signal station. The little group of people interested experienced the first thrill of excitement, and their impatience impelled them towards the seaward end of the jetty. There were, in addition to the reporters and press photographers, several relatives of members of the party,

the brief period at their disposal. Commonwealth Bay, Adelie Land, where Dr. Mawson had established his base, is only accessible during a short time of the year, and when the Aurora called for him and his companions they were temporarily absent, and valuable time was spent by the vessel in beating up and down the coast.

When their whereabouts was discovered it was hopeless to attempt to reach them through the beleaguering gales which kept driving the vessel out of the shelter of the shore, till Captain Davis was forced to abandon the effort in order that he might be in time to rescue another party waiting for him westward at a spot only to be reached by traversing 1,500 miles of ice-strewn water. As their base, unlike Dr. Mawson's, was not provisioned for a winter in the ice, all have agreed, as the leader himself has doubtless done, that however disappointing and disagreeable to themselves, there was no alternative but to leave Dr. Mawson and his companions to their own resources till the return of fine weather. That they will have used the period for the enlargement of their scientific gains there is little doubt. Already it is known that the two main objects of their expedition have been achieved, the exploration of the long and previously almost unknown coastline from Cape Adare, and the attainment of the South

Magnetic Pole from a direction opposite to that by which it was reached by a section—including Dr. Mawson—of the last Shackleton expedition. As almost every branch of science was represented in Dr. Mawson's party, the additions made to our knowledge of Victoria Land, not in one or two directions only, but in many, will not be scanty. They have accomplished the one thing hitherto needed—systematic exploration over limited areas at a time. Perhaps they will confirm Borchgrevink's indications of the existence of another Klondyke, annexable and exploitable. Possibly their geological researches will throw invaluable light on the problem whether the South Polar region like the north, has passed more than once through periods of temperate climate. We may learn whether or not there is any truth in the theory that Australia and South America, and even South Africa, were once connected with the great Antarctic continent. And the expedition will not fully have answered expectations unless it has done something to establish the science of atmospheric phenomena, as affecting our own part of the world, on a firmer basis, and, perhaps, to solve problems connected with the chain of anti-cyclones by which the continent of Australia is continually swept. For the present it is enough to say that Australia rejoices at the safe return of the gallant little band, whose combination of the spirit of adventure with devotion to the cause of science shows that British—or shall we not say Australian?—pluck is one of those things which, with the lapse of time, exhibit no sign of decadence.