

Register, Nov. 11/11.

THE ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

There should be a large and enthusiastic gathering of South Australians in the Adelaide Town Hall at noon to-day, to bid goodby and to wish "good luck" to Dr. Mawson and his comrades, who a few hours later will leave the city for Hobart, en route to the South Polar regions. Appropriately, His Excellency the Governor, an experienced British sailor and geographer, will express to the intrepid mariners and explorers the community's hearty goodwill and fervent desire that they may be spared to accomplish the exceedingly important, and probably no less difficult and arduous, tasks they have volunteered to discharge, and that thereafter they may return in safety in the good ship, the Aurora, to their Australian homeland. The history of Antarctic research does not warrant glowingly sanguine predictions concerning the enterprise, but this is only a way of saying that the gallant band of explorers from Australia will be confronted with numerous perils by land, water, and ice, and that therefore they are the more thoroughly deserving of the practical, whole-hearted encouragement which Australians are able to bestow upon men in whose performances they take delight. Relatively to finances, the bank overdraft at present is about £9,000, the total sum subscribed (including donations of stores) having reached a little over £40,000. In consideration of the faith, zeal, and courage imparted to the work of the expedition, and of the devoted services offered by it to Australia, Dr. Mawson ought to be given the pleasure of starting from Hobart quite relieved of anxiety on account of indebtedness incurred. In any case, he may be assured that Australians will pay off the balance of £9,000, but the good name of the Commonwealth would shine with brighter lustre if this purely Australian venture—the first of the kind—were launched quite free of monetary liabilities.

The leader has earned the confidence of the public by his splendid services as a member of the Shackleton party, his brilliant scientific attainments, and the single-heartedness, knowledge, and resourcefulness which he possesses in an eminent degree. He has elaborated his plans with care and skill, and has induced Parliaments, scientific and learned bodies, and the people generally, to see eye to eye with himself regarding the practicability and desirableness of Australia becoming, in a sense, the suzerain of a vast area of the Antarctic continent, which geographically lies within her "sphere of interest." Dr. Mawson is out to "do noble deeds, not dream them, all day long." One may fairly say that he is

In the very May morn of his youth,
Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises.

The example he and his companions are setting, in boldly attempting to penetrate mysterious regions in the Far South, will be worth much to the minds and imaginations of "young Australia." The stories they may have

to relate, and the surprising information they may impart, can hardly fail to add fresh zest and value to the study of geography, zoology, and meteorology. As Dr. Mawson points out, extensive commercial and industrial developments are not unlikely to follow the discoveries which may be made. Sceptics may smile incredulously at these "speculations," but in all ages the men of imagination, who cheerfully undertake risks in the pursuit of hidden knowledge, are the pioneers of all true progress.

The expedition is not a "wild goose chase," nor is it undertaken chiefly from love of adventure—which, within legitimate bounds, is an admirable enough sentiment. Taking high ground, it may be said to have originated in reverence for the memories of brave geographers and seamen who, a generation or more ago, endeavoured with only slight success to unravel the secrets of the long stretch of coastline and the vast hinterland which Dr. Mawson proposes to visit. The spirit of these pioneers is happily still with us, and it is moving a band of hardy Australians to resume and complete a task which was scarcely begun when it had to be abandoned. Taking still loftier ground, the expedition may be attributed to the Divinely-imparted intuition which prompts and nerves to continuous investigation of the wonders of the planet that affords the human race a temporary home. Intelligent men restlessly hunger for light and knowledge; and because the mind of the Creator is partially expressed in the material universe, they are impelled constantly to search for new marvels. Thus the labours of the explorer, as of the scientist, may be prosecuted from a deep and pleasing sense of solemn duty—the sacred obligation of unlocking Nature's secrets and bringing to light fresh treasures, which may prove of incalculable benefit to mankind.

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BOTANY, VEGETABLE PATHOLOGY, AND PARASITOLOGY.

The Council of the University of Adelaide is inviting applications for the Professorship of Botany, Vegetable Pathology, and Parasitology, at a salary of £800 per annum. The successful candidate will be required to undertake investigations in connection with the diseases of plants; to act as Consulting Botanist and Vegetable Pathologist to the Government without additional salary; to give instruction in systematic, physiological, and economic botany in the University; to act as curator of the herbarium, and be responsible for the organization and management of the botanical department of the University generally. Subject to the statutes, the appointment will be for a fixed term of four and a half years, and the duties will begin on July 1, 1912. The Council of the University has appointed a committee of selection in England to choose candidates for the post. Applications from candidates in Australia will be forwarded to the committee in England, who will submit to the council the names of the three candidates who appear to them best fitted for the position. The council will make the final selection.

response. Of this committee, Professor Orme Masson, the President, Professor T. W. E. David, the President-elect, and Professor G. C. Henderson, the President of the geographical section, were specially energetic. Nobody can imagine how disheartened I was at this stage. Then I brought the matter before Australians in England. To Sir George Reid, the High Commissioner, the expedition owes its warmest thanks for the great attention and advice that he bestowed upon it in that time of crisis. Lord Denman, now Governor-General of the Commonwealth, was particularly kind and generous. Through Lord Denman, a grant was obtained from the British Government. The Royal Society gave an equal amount with that presented to Capt. Scott for his expedition. At this stage Sir Ernest Shackleton appealed for support to the Australasian expedition, and Lord Northcliffe conducted a campaign under the auspices of the Press Association. As a result of this a large amount of support was forthcoming, mostly from Australians. Mr. Samuel Hordern increased his donation to the sum of £2,500; Mr. W. A. Horn gave £1,000; Lord Strathcona, representing Canada, presented £1,000; and Mr. Eugene Sandow, sympathizing with the physical side of the undertaking, generously offered 1,000 guineas, and there were also a large number of smaller but important donations coming from all classes of the people. Most of the largest manufacturing firms offered supplies of their productions, and through their generosity the equipment of the expedition has been specially satisfactory. It is now the best-equipped expedition that has set forth. Thus, after a great deal of anxiety and disappointment, the expedition was now successfully launched."

—Strenuous Labour.—

Dr. Mawson left London a day before the Coronation, and proceeded at once to Australia, where he threw himself into the work of improving the deplorable condition of the finances. As time went on greater public interest in the expedition was awakened, and large donations of money have been received from private and Government sources. The older States of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia have been specially generous in this regard. Few people can realize the cost of equipping such an expedition. The total amount of the donations in cash and kind is about £40,000; but, owing to the recent extension of the scope of

the expedition by the addition of the wireless station at Macquarie Island, the expenditure will be enormously increased, and there is every likelihood that there will be a heavy deficit unless additional funds are forthcoming. The fact that the State Governments were offering practical support led to the decision at this late stage to include Macquarie Island as a fourth base of operations. This island is nearly 1,000 miles south of Hobart, but its importance lies in the fact that it is right in the path of the meteorological disturbances that reach Australia, and will enable the weather forecasts of the Federal Bureau in Melbourne to be compiled with infinitely greater accuracy. The practical value of this to the shipping industry will be enormous. But when this extra expenditure was determined upon, it was thought by Dr. Mawson that the States of Western Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania would contribute something towards the funds of the expedition. As, however, each of these States has pleaded financial weakness, the expedition is now left with a considerable prospective overdraft. It will require the united assistance of Australians if the expedition is to start from Australia free from the mental incubus of a heavy debt. At the present time it is estimated that the overdraft will approximate to £9,000.

—Donations.—

Among the other Australian contributions were:—Lord Denman, £100; Mr. Lionel Robinson, £250; Mr. S. Y. Buchanan, £100; Mr. Mackellar, £150; Mr. G. H. Angas, £100; Mr. A. M. Simpson (Adelaide), £50; Sydney Morning Herald, £100; Mr. John Danks (Melbourne), £50; Mr. T. Searle, £50; Professor David (private donation and proceeds of lectures), £80. The contributions received in England included the following:—Madame Melba, £100; Lady Russell, £100, and Mr. Algernon Moreing, £50. Besides these there were a great many smaller sums coming from all quarters. In more than one case children emptied their money boxes so as to contribute towards the fitting out of this expedition.

—An Appeal.—

The question is—Will Australia permit this expedition to sail from Hobart with the burden of debt hanging round their necks? Considering that this is an Australian expedition composed of Australian scientists under the leadership of an Australian band, and that they are setting forth to officially hoist the Australian flag on a coastline that may some day form an important part of the Australian Commonwealth, it would hardly be to the credit of Australians to allow these men to risk their lives in this national undertaking, and at the same time be tortured with the thought of the huge deficit that will have to be met when they return home.