

## —Dr. Mawson's Great Feat.—

I am going to touch upon what was perhaps the most striking feature of this expedition, and that was the sledging journey undertaken by Dr. Mawson in company with Lieut. Ninnis and Dr. Mertz. (Applause.) Perhaps some day the tale of this particular sledging expedition will be told to the world as to my mind it should be told, but I am a little doubtful about it, because, as we know, it unfortunately happens that two members of the expedition lost their lives, and Dr. Mawson was the only one who came through. Dr. Mawson is the only one who can give us that narrative, and I know Dr. Mawson sufficiently well to know that he is not a person who is given to talk about himself, and so possibly we may not know as much as we would like to. In a few words I can perhaps outline what occurred upon that journey. This party of three started to explore a new coastline some 450 miles to the east of Commodore Bay. When 300 miles out Lieut. Ninnis fell down a crevasse with his sledge, and took with him the bulk of the provisions of the small expedition. Now I have been told by members of the expedition that the crossing of crevasses is one of the pretty well every day ordinary risks that antarctic explorers have to take. These crevasses—sometimes 1,000 ft. deep, sometimes more—have to be crossed. The only way to cross them is by a bridge made of drifting snow, from which you may not see the bottom. The drifting snow is frozen, and if you wish to ascertain whether it will bear you have to walk across it. If it bears you will get across, and if it will not bear, then you will fall in. If you happen to be tied to a sledge and you do not pull it afterwards then your comrades will come along and pull you over the edge of the crevasse. In this particular instance Dr. Mertz and Dr. Mawson had passed over, but Lieut. Ninnis—a gallant officer of a well-known British regiment, disappeared, and one more honoured name was added to the death roll of the antarctic.

## The Solitary March.—

Then Dr. Mawson and his companion were 300 miles from the base, and they had to recognise that most of their provisions were in the sledge that was lost, and they had to reckon on the possibility of getting back to the base, 300 miles away. They thought they had a chance if everything went well, perhaps a fair one, of getting in. For about a fortnight things did go well, but then unfortunately Mertz, who was a splendid type of vigorous manhood, fell ill, and in about a week's time died. Dr. Mawson was left alone about 100 miles from the base, with little hope of getting in. He struggled on. (Applause.) Once he fell down a crevasse, but being tied to a sledge he managed to struggle up the rope, and pulled himself out. That was a wonderful feat of strength for a man worn out by privations and hardships. (Hear, hear.) But he went on. His dogs were killed, his stock of provisions exhausted, all his finger nails came off, and his hair came out. Dr. Mawson must have been in a terrible state of mental depression from the loss of his companions, whom he had to leave behind, and the solitude of the ice continent. His

plight must have been as bad as any one could have been in. (Applause.) But he came through. (Applause.)

## —The Base Party.—

Now, I wish to say a few words about the base party, which was under the leadership of a gallant young South Australian, Mr. Cecil Madigan. (Applause.) With the foresight which I think all through has been characteristic of this expedition, this base party had placed several depots containing food on the arc of the circle about 30 miles distant from headquarters, so that any sledging party returning from any likely direction would be almost certain to come across one of these, and obtain food. Dr. Mawson, when he was in the direct straits that man could be, came upon one of these and obtained supplies, and he was able to push on another 25 miles to a cave dug out of the ice about five miles away from the base camp. Then, I think, this is an illustration of the weather conditions of the antarctic. A blizzard came down and shut out everything from sight or sound, and in this cave Dr. Mawson had to remain for nine days until the storm, and at length he got safely in. (Loud applause.)

## —A Marvellous Escape.—

It was nearly a year ago that Commander Evans, of the Scott Expedition, said to me in Melbourne, shortly after he knew that Dr. Mawson's expedition had come through, that Dr. Mawson must have had a marvellous escape, and must have had a terrible time to get through. (Hear, hear.) He told me that it is an axiom of polar travel that owing to hardships and severity of climate it is almost impossible

for a man to travel any distance by himself. Dr. Mawson was alone for 30 days, and yet he completed that wonderful march under the most trying conditions that it is possible to concede. It is one of the most splendid individual feats of endurance in the history of arctic or antarctic exploration, and I do not think that any man has ever put up a greater fight against what looked like overwhelming odds than Dr. Mawson did.

## —Left Behind.—

Then just about the time that he managed to get back to camp Capt. Davis had to come to a very momentous decision. The winter was coming on again, the ice was closing in, and terrible gales were springing up. Capt. Davis had to decide whether he would stay for Dr. Mawson's party or go to the rescue of the western party, which was some 1,300 miles distant—I think 1,500 miles by sea. Capt. Davis decided to relieve the western party. Dr. Mawson came in after these harrowing experiences, and had the bitter disappointment of seeing the Aurora sailing away, because Capt. Davis realized that he had not time to take both parties, and he had to make up his mind what to do. I believe he did come back, and get close into shore; then a gale sprang up, and the boats were unable to come in. So he had to steam away, and do the best he could for the western party. I may fairly describe myself as rather a mild and peaceful sort of individual, but I confess that if I had been a member of Dr. Mawson's party, and if Capt. Davis had left me to endure the joys of another winter in Adelie Land, well, if ever I came out alive and saw Capt. Davis, I am sure I should have emphasized my feelings in language more forcible than polite. (Laughter.) Speaking, as I do, in the presence of so many ladies, I hardly dare to even hint the kind of language I would have used. I think it is characteristic of the fine spirit that pervaded this expedition when I tell you that no member of Dr. Mawson's party uttered one word of reproach or regret that Capt. Davis had to take the course he did. (Applause.)

## —Think of It.—

Just think what it meant for the people who were left behind. They were faced with at least six months practically in darkness in a little hut, with hurricanes raging outside so vigorously that it meant crawling on hands and knees; it meant, too, that they would be deprived of the ordinary amenities or concomitants of civilization which we more fortunate people take as a matter of course. For example, there would be no race meetings. (Laughter.) No picture shows. (Laughter.) No general elections. (Loud laughter.) No strikes, no speeches by Sir George Reid, no Sydney Bulletin, nothing in short that makes life interesting and possibly enjoyable. (Laughter.) I think it is highly to the credit of this party that no word of

reproach or regret was ever spoken by them. It was fine, too, of Mr. Cecil Madigan to have preferred to stay behind because he thought he could be of use to the expedition, in view of the fact that Madigan had just won a Rhodes scholarship. (Applause.) I sincerely hope—in fact it could scarcely be otherwise—that the trustees of the Rhodes fund will give him the opportunity to take up his duties in due course. (Applause.) His Excellency has just informed me that he has been advised by cable that they will do so. (Applause.) And further, that the Rhodes trustees are proud of what Mr. Cecil Madigan has done. (Applause.)

## Capt. Davis's Responsibilities.—

When all the members of the expedition have behaved so finely, one does not like to single out individuals, but I would like to say one word about the part that has been played by Capt. Davis, of the Aurora. (Applause.) It was his fifth expedition to antarctic seas. Twice he had to go down and relieve members of the expedition. On him rested very grave responsibilities. It is, I think you may say, in a great measure due to his skill and seamanship that the members are back with us to-day. (Applause.) It was also owing to Capt. Davis's ability that so much success was achieved with the marine dredging and the oceanographic work. It is pleasant to learn that on the whole the health of the party was good. Possibly the leader himself suffered more than any of those who have returned. But the great fact over which we rejoice to-day is that Dr. Mawson has returned to Australia, home, and beauty. (Applause and laughter.) We all wish him every possible happiness, and the best that this world can give him and to the lady whom I believe is to become his bride. (Applause.) In conclusion, I wish to say this. Whether we are Englishmen or Australians, the qualities we respect and admire perhaps above all are courage, grit, and determination. (Applause.) It is because they have

shown they possess these qualities in a high degree, because they have fought against Nature, and wrested secrets from Nature in her sternest and most cruel moods, because they faced uncomplainingly bitter hardship and dire peril, because they were ready to lay down their lives—and a man can do nothing more than give his life—it is because for all of these reasons that we welcome and honour them to-day. (Loud applause.)

## —Commonwealth Congratulations.—

Sir Samuel Way read the telegrams from the Prime Minister and the Premiers of New South Wales and Victoria, who expressed regret for unavoidable absence, and sent heartiest congratulations to Dr. Mawson and his men.

## —Love for Adventure.—

The Premier (Hon. A. H. Peake) said they realized that that was a great and impressive gathering, and that it had come together to do honour to a man who had by his achievements stamped himself as a leader of men and also to do honour to his companions, because they had joined together in their work to do honour to South Australia and the Commonwealth. (Hear, hear.) The proceedings were stamped with very great lustre, because of the message from His Majesty the King, because of the attendance of His Excellency the Governor-General, and because of the splendid speech which Lord Denman had delivered, and which had pleased them all so much. (Applause.) Deep though they might consider the interest of the Commonwealth was in the proceedings, they might be pardoned if they felt pride in the fact that Dr. Mawson and several of his companions were especially South Australians and that this State had contributed towards the cost of the equipment of the expedition which had accomplished such famous work. (Hear, hear.) They were delighted at the return of Dr. Mawson and his companions, and while two of the party had fallen by the way they would always be remembered when the expedition would be spoken of. (Hear, hear.) Most of them had seen a picture representing an old seaman looking at a map, and saying, "The north pole must be found, and England must find it." He did not know whether they could lay claim to having discovered the south pole. Had it been discovered? He did not think they had discovered the north pole, but whether it were discovered or not, there was a strange feeling surviving that peculiarly it was the work of the British people to discover and explore. That spirit and love for intrepid adventure accounted for courage-

ous quests north and south. It was responsible for the deeds of Peary, Nares, Ross, Franklin, Scott, Shackleton, and Mawson. (Applause.)

## —Valuable Discoveries.—

In due course the full details of the discoveries, the meteorological and scientific observations of Dr. Mawson's party would be made known, and they would be of great value to the scientific world. Human knowledge had been pushed further forward than ever before so far as Antarctica was concerned. (Hear, hear.) Although they might not have brought back accounts of the discovery of new grounds, they would realize that was so because there was none down there to discover. (Laughter.) Dr. Mawson and his party had done a great service to the rest of the Commonwealth in that they had shown that the love of adventure, courage, devotion to duty, and endurance were not lost arts so far as the British race was concerned. (Applause.) There was no doubt in his mind that the same love of adventure had inspired them as had inspired Drake, Raleigh, Cook, Flinders, Amundsen, Nansen, and the others whom he had previously mentioned. (Applause.) They all belonged to that great Scandinavian stock, to which they, too, claimed to belong, and which was responsible for their enterprise and bravery. It was that spirit which promoted the interest taken in that event, and which also kept the navy afloat, and which would submit to nothing less than Britain's unquestioned supremacy in that respect. (Applause.) They could imagine the joy of the homecoming of the party. They could imagine the feelings of Dr. Mawson, Capt. Davis, and all the rest of the crew as they came nearer to the Australian coast, and saw well-known objects as they came up the gulf. The party could indeed say with the ancient mariner:—

Oh dream of joy! is this indeed  
The lighthouse top I see?  
Is this the hill? Is this the kirk?  
Is this mine own Countree?

Dr. Mawson and his party might well say they had attempted something and done something, and if he might make a slight personal reference to Dr. Mawson he might say in one respect he imitated the great Caesar. His head was bald, but he had covered it with laurels. (Applause.)