

"This Little Bit of the World Belongs to us."

The colonising instincts of his forbears are strong in this Australian explorer. "I hope the Government will think about making some sort of claim on it," observed he, with a twinkle in his eye, amid laughter. Here was a new job, and the Governor-General suddenly took a fresh interest in the proceedings. "There is no need to spend money upon it," naively continued the doctor, and proceeded to explain that Canada had issued an edict to the effect that all the land north of Canada to the North Pole belonged to her, and might not Australia similarly lay claim to that little bit of country down south? Hearty laughter and applause greeted the observation. There was a great land extending from the equator to the Pole, with intervals of ocean, of course. Why not have it? Now, will the Federal Government take the tip?

Something Attempted, Something Done.

By way of a change the speaker touched upon the work of the expedition. "We started out with the intention of doing something, that was about it," remarked the doctor, now grown cautious again. They had gone ahead with the mobile equipment, so that they could play the game with pawns, so to speak. Macquarie Island formed their first stopping place.

A Land of Go-As-You-Please.

Macquarie Island is the happy land of "go-as-you-please." "The island is governed by the Commonwealth Government," explained the speaker, but added, "They hardly know they own it. A hundred years ago the British Government passed the island over to Tasmania, and when federation became an established fact, of course it came under the control of the Federal Government. The island is seldom visited except by occasional sealing parties, most Nova Scotians. A New Zealand company is also working in the vicinity. No Customs duties are paid there," proceeded the doctor, amid laughter. "I landed some things there myself, but then I had a special dispensation," he added. A party landed from the Aurora and made a thorough geographical and biological investigation, and prepared a very fine map of the island; also a wireless station was established, and a competent member of the Commonwealth meteorological staff has been stationed there, whose reports were already proving valuable."

Face to Face With the Ice Wall.

From Macquarie Island the Aurora steamed south until the Great Ice Barrier prevented further progress. A vain attempt was made to put in at the 158th meridian. Finally a landing was effected at the 145th meridian, somewhere east of where land was observed by a French expedition in 1840. Here the main base was laid down, and Captain Davis took the Aurora west to land another party, which he succeeded in doing. The parties carried on their work for a year, despite the fact that the weather at the main base was unusually bad. "The men were most determined and willing and the results achieved were very satisfactory." The outpost party was picked up the second year. The men who had remained at the main base and Macquarie Island were with them that afternoon. (Loud applause.)

The Dreary Monotony of Polar Existence.

During the second year it was a little more monotonous than during the first year, explained the doctor. Some of the results had been made known through the newspapers, and he hoped they would be satisfied when the results were published in full shortly.

Immense Amount of Work Accomplished.

He anticipated that the labors of about 70 men in special branches of work would be published. The tabulation of the work required an army of experts, and these were already at work. The investigations ranged from meteorological data to deep-sea fish. Some folk wondered what "routine work" at the base was. Let him illustrate what it was. The total number of synopsis of weather taken at the various bases was 17,000. The taking of a synopsis included the observation of cloud effects, the velocity of the wind, direction of the sunshine, &c. In fact, it meant 17,000 multiplied by about eight, if each separate phase be taken into account. It would not be until August that the preliminary statement would be made. That statement would be made at the meetings of the Australasian Society for the Advancement of Science to be held in Sydney.

A Story That Was Not Told.

The story of that thrilling sledging journey was not told. The doctor did not like referring to the journey, he told his auditors. "We all have to do sledging journeys, you know," he remarked, "and they are all very arduous and trying. His comrades had gone through thrilling experiences. The curious part is," proceeded the doctor, "that all the men want to go back to the Antarctic. (Laughter.) "I feel I have had enough," he went on, and then, after a thoughtful pause, "Still one never knows." (Laughter.)

The Story of Mertz and Ninnis.

Very quietly, very seriously, with an occasional quiver in the voice, was the story of the two heroes, who lie amid arctic snows, Dr. Mertz and Lieutenant Ninnis, related by the speaker. They had been referred to, and it was only right that he should say a little about them. There were no better men in the expedition. They were fine fellows, both of them. "I do not think they would regret their own deaths if they could but hear the splendid things said about them this afternoon," said the doctor. They had gone out to do their best, and there was not a word of complaint from either of them. Ninnis was suffering from a painful inflammation of the finger before he lost his life, but he never said a word. "We were supposed to be having a good time then, too," added the speaker. Since returning Dr. Mawson said he had had a look through Ninnis' diary, and his experience must have indeed been a painful one. Ninnis came from fine stock. Himself a lieutenant in the Fusiliers, he was the son of a distinguished British officer.

How Ninnis and Mertz Died.

"Ninnis joined the expedition determined to do something, and stood by to the last," quietly proceeded the doctor. "Not a word did he say as he disappeared into the crevasse. Mertz was of Swedish extraction, but he was such a man as every Britisher would like to call an Englishman. He was a man of great feelings and generous heart. I cannot say I do not like thinking about him. He was one of Nature's gentlemen. When he was passing away he never said a word. In fact, he pretended to be better than he was, so that I should not be alarmed. He was un-

conscious at the last, or he might have said something. Ninnis slipped into a crevasse, and I never saw him again."

Prepared to Sacrifice their Lives.

So graphically the sad story was told. "These men gave up their lives, but I feel right in saying that anyone of their comrades, who are present to-day, would have done the same thing. You see, they went out prepared for the idea. I do not claim to have done any more than anyone else in the expedition. Had someone else been placed in my position he might have done better. It was unfortunate that Mertz could not live on dog meat as I could. Mertz and Ninnis are gone, and it is my luck that I did not go too."

Captain Davis, the Mainstay.

"Captain Davis had been one of the mainstays of the expedition," said the doctor. "He had resource and knowledge, qualities, which, in one placed in his circumstances, were almost indispensable. The captain's unequalled knowledge of the sea had been of the greatest value to the expedition. They could not have done without him." (Loud applause.)

THE PREMIER'S UTTERANCES

The impressiveness of the occasion seized the Premier. They had come to do honor to a man, who, by his achievements, had shown himself to be a leader of men, declared Mr. Peake. Dr. Mawson and his companions had done honor to South Australia and the Commonwealth. (Applause.) That afternoon's proceedings were stamped and invested with very great lustre, firstly by reason of the message from the King, and secondly by the presence on that platform of the King's representative in Lord Denman. (Applause.) South Australians might be pardoned if they took a special pride in the gathering, for Dr. Mawson and several of his companions were South Australians. (Applause.) It must be a peculiar satisfaction to those in this State who had taken such a prominent part in the equipment of the expedition, to know that such valuable results had been achieved.

Those Who "Fell by the Way."

While they rejoiced at the safe return of Dr. Mawson and his brave companions they must not be unmindful of the brave fellows who fell by the way. Probably most of them had seen the picture depicting an old seaman gazing at a map of the Polar regions, and remarking, "The North Pole must be found, and England must find it." That spirit still survived in the British race, which impelled Britishers to carry on exploratory work in unknown regions. They were not content with being the owners of vast areas of land, but were desirous of exploring the Polar regions.

The Spirit of Adventure.

It was that spirit of adventure which characterised the Arctic heroes of the past. It was Ross, Barry, Franklin, Drake, and Raleigh made that expedition possible. No doubt in due time the doctor would make known the scientific and meteorological results of the expedition. The party may not have discovered green and fertile fields, but even if they had found nothing it would be valuable in that it would obviate the necessity for sending other expeditions to the same locality. They believed that Dr. Mawson and his party had rendered a great service to the race and the people of Australia in that they had shown that courage, determination, and love of adventure were not lost arts, so far as the British race was concerned. Certain of the Antarctic explorers bore Scandinavian names—Amundsen and Nansen, for instance—but they, as Britishers, were proud to remember that those brave men belonged to the same stock they themselves could claim kinship with. (Applause.)

"My Own Countree."

With what feelings of joy must the returned explorers have picked our familiar spots as they steamed up the gulf to the anchorage. With the ancient mariner they could exclaim—

"Oh, dream of joy. Is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see!
Is this the hill? Is this the kirk?
Is this my own countree?"

MODERN COMFORTS

The Governor-General (Lord Denman) excels at word pictures. They have the somewhat rare virtue of holding auditors, too. Tears were suspiciously near the surface in many eyes yesterday at Dr. Mawson's reception as his Excellency told, in graphic language, the wonderful story of the endurance of the doctor, as, battling against unnumbered odds, he fought his way back to safety after his two companions, Mertz and Ninnis, had perished on that memorable exploratory trip away 300 miles west of the main base. The next moment his Excellency's auditors were smiling audibly at the doleful picture he humorously drew of life amid Arctic snows. "Just think what it means for the people living behind the ice wall," he observed, "doomed to pass the winter in a hut with the gale blowing so strongly that when one went outside he had to crawl on his hands and knees. There were none of the amenities and concomitants of civilised life; no race meetings, no picture shows, no strikes, no speeches from Sir George Reid—(laughter)—no elections, no Sydney "Bulletin"—(laughter)—nothing, in short, that makes life interesting and possibly enjoyable." (Laughter.)

MESSAGES OF CONGRATULATION

PRIME MINISTER'S REGRETS.

Messages were sent far and wide over the Commonwealth by the Chancellor of the University, inviting heads of State Governments to attend the function. From several of these replies came regretting their inability to be present, and conveying congratulations to the returned explorers. Sir Samuel Way read a number at the gathering. "Much regret unable to accept your kind invitation to be present at the Mawson welcome" wired the Prime Minister (Mr. J. Cook): "hope welcome will best the heroes' achievements." (Applause.) From Mr. Holman (Premier of New South Wales) came the message:—"Extremely regret that the opening of the Parliamentary session on Tuesday precludes my participating in the reception in honor of Dr. Mawson. Will you be good enough on behalf of this State to convey warm welcome and hearty congratulations on his great work." "Deeply appreciate invitation to attend welcome to Dr. Mawson, but regret prior engagement, render it impossible to attend. Heartiest congratulations," wired the Premier of Victoria (Mr. Watt).