

slope at the rear of the camp at the rate of nearly 40 miles an hour. The engine was incapacitated 13 miles out, and the journey was continued on foot. The party covered 300 miles, and returned on January 18. Subsequently they retrieved the motor, which slid from the 5-mile camp at a great pace. The total sledging from the main base, excluding that done by Mawson's party, was 2,100 miles, mostly in unprecedentedly bad conditions, both as regards the weather and the surface."

-Death of Ninnes and Mertz.-

Dr. Mawson had stated definitely in a letter left behind that he would return from sledging on January 13. When that date passed without any appearance of him no particular anxiety was felt for some time, and his party was very strong. Mawson, Mertz, and Ninnes were all of splendid physique. The two lastnamed had had charge of the dogs ever since they were placed on the Aurora at the London docks, and had achieved great success in training them for harness. The party had the advantage of 18 Greenland dogs to haul their sledges. As the days went on and Dr. Mawson did not return, doubt as to the safety of his party loomed large. Sledge parties were sent out searching. The Aurora cruised along the eastern coast, a kite was flown, detonators were fired at frequent intervals, and the ice cliffs were scrutinized. All the members of the shore party were anxious to leave the place, but their courage was indicated by their unanimously agreeing to remain behind another year. While the ship proceeded to the rescue of Wild's party, who were located on the ice barrier, 1,600 miles to the westward, it was decided that only six men should be left behind. Cecil Madigan, the South Australian, was appointed leader, and his comrades were:—R. Baga (Melbourne), A. N. H. Bickerton (London), Hodgeman (Adelaide), McLean (Sydney), and S. Jeffries (wireless). Not a murmur was raised by them, though they felt keenly the disappointment of being kept on the ice prison another year. It was a special sacrifice for Madigan, as he had doubts whether his scholarship could be kept open. No man was more admirably fitted as leader. All were physically strong, hardened by long sledging, and provided with plenty of food and coal. The ship also landed the Amundsen expedition dogs, and with sad hearts the party bade farewell to the Aurora, which steamed out of Commonwealth Bay on February 8. Eight hours afterwards a wireless message was received as follows:—"Returned to main base safely. Ninnes and Mertz dead. Return and pick up shore party immediately. Signed, Mawson." The effect of the message on the light-hearted voyagers was striking. Many had previously feared that the whole party had met with disaster, but lived in hope. Now that it was definitely known that two comrades were dead, gloom spread over the vessel. Eyes were dimmed, and all the men—strong men, too—spoke with a huskiness they tried hard to hide. The action of Mawson in recalling the ship, when he and the shore party were in complete safety, and endangering the lives on the ship and at Wild's Base, would probably be criticised, but Mawson was such a thoughtful leader that it might with confidence be said that he would provide a satisfactory explanation. "The circumstances, however, justified Capt. Davis in questioning whether he should obey the order, but the instructions were so explicit that they gave no discretionary power. The Aurora," added Mr. Eitel, "returned to Commonwealth Bay next morning, but a strong hurricane prevented communication with the land. The ship flagged a message to send instructions. The signal was observed by the shore party, who made no attempt to reply either by wireless or flags. On the same evening the hurricane increased with such intensity that the anchorless Aurora found it impossible to keep her ground."

-An Anxious Conference.-

"Capt. Davis called us together in the messroom, explained the situation regarding Wild's Base, and said the delay was jeopardizing their lives. There was great solemnity in this little ceremony. A glance at the captain showed that the responsibility weighed keenly on him. He looked positively haggard. All sympathized with him, knowing the terrible strain that he endured, and unanimously supported his decision to start immediately for Wild's Base, leaving Mawson and the relief party to be brought back in 1914. If ever blame is laid at the captain's door for deserting the main base every member will stand shoulder to shoulder with him. It is true that earlier that day volunteers were forthcoming to row the whaleboat to the shore, but the captain refused to allow the men to risk their lives. There was little doubt, even in the minds of the volunteers, that the boat would have been swamped by the high seas, the crests of which were lashed into spindrift by hurricane gusts."

-Mawson at Adelie Land.-

"The captain left us in the saloon discussing the situation. In a few minutes we heard the engine telegraph ring 'full speed ahead.' We rushed on deck, and saw the helm pointed once more towards the open sea. The blue ensign was raised and dipped, but the telescopes levelled on the camp could discern no movement. The flag announcing Mawson's return was still flying on the wireless mast, and there is every reason to believe that the ship's departure was unobserved. We pictured their dismay upon discovering next day that they were condemned to another year's imprisonment in this windy ice waste. There was nothing in the nature of a sudden panic about the decision to desert Mawson. The only reason was that we believed Wild's party would perish, and we had every reason to believe that the brief season of summer calms were over for another year. Shortly after leaving the main base we crossed the antarctic circle for the fourth time. Apparently the winds in Commonwealth Bay are of a local character, as 20 miles out the gale moderated to a breeze, although the telescope showed the bay to be still the fulcrum of storm activity. That night no wireless message reached the Aurora, thus

confirming the impression that her departure had been unobserved. Late next afternoon we came abreast of a tubular iceberg, 36 miles long. That night Mawson attempted to communicate by wireless, but as the Aurora was nearly 200 miles distant the signals were indistinct. All that could be deciphered were the words:—"Please wait—Ninnes and Mertz"—and the word 'crevasse' repeated several times. It is understood that this meant that before complying with the news contracts we should cable the relatives of Ninnes and Mertz stating that they had been killed in a crevasse. This was another instance of Mawson's thoughtfulness."

-Making for Wild's Base.-

Anxious to reach Wild's base quickly Capt. Davis pushed the Aurora at full speed under engines and sail, even right through the iceberg region. He was suffering great anxiety. The base was safely reached. "Evidently our approach was early discovered," the record goes on, "as when the camp was sighted two sledge teams loaded with provisions were already progressing to the ice edge. Eagerly we counted the men. Yes, thank God. All there. Eight. At this we cheered from deep thankfulness. Our anxiety was over. Soon the nose of the ship pressed against the edge of the ice. The men of the second base stood in a row. We crowded the fore-castle head and exchanged greetings, but they could see something and transpired. Sad to see our gloomy faces, we saw them exchange whispers. Then their eyes searched our ranks. More whispers were exchanged. We knew they were looking for Dr. Mawson. Finally Wild shouted, 'Is all well with the first base?' Many of us felt a lump in our throats. The deaths of two comrades seemed to be too sacred for even us roughened men to shout about. None answered, but our solemn countenances told that all was not well. The silence was significant. With the tact of strong men they deliberately forgot having asked the question. Explanations came later. The second base was just as remorseful as we at the loss of two comrades."

-New Territory for Britain.-

"Frank Wild, who holds the Scott and Shackleton polar medals, told us that his base had accomplished an aggregate of 1,524 miles by sledge journeys, without counting relay work. The party had taken formal possession for Great Britain of the whole area of land from Kaiser Wilhelm Land to a longitude of 101 deg. 30 min. east, and as far south as 67 deg. 30 min. The trend of the land is almost due east and west of the coastline, and almost on the antarctic circle. This land was ceremonially named King George the Fifth Land. Probably this was the only opportunity the Australians had to confer their Sovereign's name upon new territory. The leader delivered a patriotic address. Cheers were given for the King. Wild's party originally had nine dogs. Only two had survived. Three had been killed for food. Two died naturally. The other two wandered off, and very probably were engulfed in crevasses. The Aurora remained at Wild's base for a sufficient time to take on board specimens, scientific instruments, and a few stores. The water-tanks were replenished with ice. At 9 o'clock that night the Aurora sailed for Hobart."

-The Reasons Why.-

Capt. Davis, of the Aurora, referring to his having left Mawson, stated:—"It was a difficult position, but, after careful consideration, I decided to proceed west for the following reasons:—1. The party at the main base were in perfect safety and fully equipped in every way for a second winter. 2. The short summer season at

Adelie Land was evidently over, violent weather having apparently set in, with falling temperatures. The gales often lasted for a week and without cessation, which facts we were able to learn from the previous year's records. 3. The further detention of the vessel was seriously endangering our chance of being able to relieve Mr. Wild's base this year, to reach which we had to traverse a distance of 1,500 miles, the navigation of which distance was rendered extremely difficult on account of the constant snowstorms and the growing darkness. 4. The only other vessel which had penetrated south of this region, the Gauss, had been frozen in on February 22, and the Aurora was not provisioned for a winter in ice, as we had landed most of our spare stores for the relief party at the main base. 5. As a seaman, knowing the difficulties that we encountered both in getting to and getting away from the second base the previous year, I felt that nothing could exonerate me from blame if we further delayed our departure, and that, being unable to communicate with Dr. Mawson, it was clearly my duty to act, as I was convinced he would wish me to do, were I able to make him acquainted with the situation of the western party."

-The Captain Justified.-

Professor David, when interviewed in Sydney, said:—"The news of the safe arrival of Wild's party, and the remainder of the party from Dr. Mawson's main base, comes as an immense relief after what has undoubtedly been a time of anxious suspense. The statement by Capt. Davis makes it absolutely clear that at a very critical time, when he was recalled by Dr. Mawson at the moment he was starting on his voyage to Wild's base, his decision not to risk the ship by attempting to land in order to take Dr. Mawson and his party off was absolutely sound. Commander E. R. Evans, now in charge of Capt. Scott's antarctic expedition, as well as Commander Naves, of H.M.S. Fantome, are both emphatic in the opinion that at this most critical juncture Capt. Davis did absolutely the right thing. There can be no doubt that when Dr. Mawson hears the details he will be one of the first to commend the decision of his captain. The results of the Australasian antarctic expedition will be considered throughout the scientific world as brilliant."

-The Present Voyage.-

It was in September last that the crew of the Aurora rejoined her for the voyage to bring Dr. Mawson and his party home. The ship has come unheralded because her wireless apparatus—which had been responsible for so many absorbingly interesting messages from the party when wintering in Adelie Land—broke down just as the vessel left the ice barrier.

PLOUGHING THE ICE.

Mr. C. Eitel, who went to the antarctic in the Aurora, when Capt. Davis took his ship down to bring back the expedition in 1912, gave in The Lone Hand for January last an interesting description of the voyage among the icefields:—"A trip in the Aurora is not a yachting cruise," wrote Mr. Eitel, "sometimes it is really more like a nightmare. The 1,500-mile span of sea is acknowledged to be the roughest in the world. In the 'roaring forties' the 'shrieking fifties,' and the 'howling sixties,' you curse the ship as a lumbering old tub; but when you come into the vast fields of floating ice through which you have to force a path, you bless the Aurora for the stanchness of her build and the thickness of her timbers—19 inches of English oak and Baltic pine. On one occasion I had to take the lee-wheel. The wind was over 80 miles an hour, shrieking horribly. To add to our misery it was snowing hard. Rarely could you open two eyes at once, for the wind hurled the hard, gritty snow at you with such force that it felt like gravel thrown in handfuls at short distance. In a couple of minutes my eyes were smarting, and my teeth chattering with the cold. We were threading a narrow 'lead' or path through the ice. The orders came from the officer on the bridge—'Port'—'Starboard' almost incessantly. No sooner was the helm down than you had to climb the pokes to bring it hard up again, encouraged into a perfect frenzy by the apparent imminence of a collision with the enormous icefloes which

lined the narrow lane. Sometimes you felt a thrill of exultation when you safely twisted the Aurora round a right-angle bend in her own length. The next moment your heart would drop into your boots—the lane was barred by a thick ice-floe. You steer for the thinnest part. There is a loud crash, and a shock which throws you off your feet if you are not careful. The bow rises slightly, and then slips back again. You go astern for perhaps 50 yards, and then the vessel takes a running leap at the obstacle. She may have to pound away at the same place 20 times before it gives way. Sometimes you are blocked completely, and have to