

MAWSON EXPEDITION.

Universal Regret.

LONDON, February 26.

The Times says that universal regret will be felt at the death of Lieut. Ninnis and Dr. Mertz, members of the Mawson Expedition in the antarctic. Their work was interlocked with the very raison d'être of the expedition.

The interesting fact is recorded in connection with the notices of the death of Lieut. Ninnis that his father was naturalist to the South Australian surveying expedition to the Northern Territory in 1864, and was also a member of the arctic expedition under Capt. G. S. Nares, in command of the Alert.

ACTING PREMIER'S INTEREST.

When seen on Wednesday morning concerning the news which has been received from the Mawson Antarctic Expedition, the Acting Premier (Hon. R. Butler) stated:—The Government of South Australia regrets exceedingly to hear of the loss of two members of Dr. Mawson's party—Lieut. Ninnis and Dr. Mertz—and is anxiously awaiting further news." Mr. Butler is personally interested particularly in the expedition owing to the fact that Mr. Cecil Madigan (South Australian Rhodes scholar for 1910), who is a nephew of his wife, is with Dr. Mawson.

SACRIFICE OF HUMAN LIVES.

A DEFENCE BY PROFESSOR DAVID.

SYDNEY, February 26.

The second recent antarctic tragedy, in which Lieut. B. E. S. Ninnis and Dr. Xavier Mertz, young explorers of Dr. Mawson's Australian Antarctic Expedition, lost their lives, has revived a feeling that the sacrifice of human life on such quests is altogether out of proportion to the results achieved and the advantages gained. Professor David had the query put to him wherever he went to-day, and even when bidding farewell to Lieut. Campbell and Lieut. Drake, R.N., on board the R.M.S. Otway, as they were leaving Sydney for England, he was questioned on the subject. The professor subsequently said to a reporter:—In relation to these statements which one hears made in regard to this double antarctic tragedy—in both the case of the Mawson Australian Expedition and Capt. Scott's expedition, that this sacrifice of human life is altogether out of proportion to the advantages gained to science as the result of the exploration, and also remarks of a more cynical nature that polar travellers undertake the risk partly for the sake of sensation for themselves and partly with a view to bringing themselves prominently before the eyes of the public, it may be stated that, of course, a motive which induces any man to join a polar expedition is the one of doing some worthy act which will win for himself and his family name honour in his own country and also throughout the world. Surely this aspiration to fame is no dishonour, but that this is the sole or even the moving motive is disproved by many facts. Among these might simply be mentioned that in the case of the Scott expedition, in spite of the members of the polar party being in a state of extreme exhaustion, and being fully aware that they were taking enormous risks, even at a time when every extra ounce of weight on the sledge must have been of extreme importance, they never for one moment abandoned their 35 lb. weight of geological specimens, including fossils, coal, and various rocks of priceless value to science. Apart from the gain to geology and biology, the observations made by the Australian expedition, as the result of a patient day-to-day study of meteorology, are of vast scientific value, and will eventually prove to be of a commercial value beyond monetary estimate. The toll in human life for this gain to humanity has undoubtedly been heavy, but if the work of the searchers in geological exploration, as well as in any other branch of science, is bringing all the members of the human family into closer touch and sympathy with one another, ameliorating the conditions of work, lessening the hours of labour for workers so that they may have some time to call their own, and making, in spite of the example of the recent wars, for the general peace of mankind, then is not such a great end worth the sacrifice of even the brightest and best of human lives? And who shall estimate the ethical gain to the British Empire and to the world from the examples of Scott's heroic band, and his own dying message? The worldwide sympathy for Scott and his comrades, and now for the loss of the brave young explorers, Lieut. Ninnis and Dr. Mertz, of the Mawson Australian Antarctic Expedition, has proved to be that touch of Nature which make the whole world kin. Surely Scott's sublime devotion to duty is a lesson to all men for all time.

Confidence in the Expedition.

His Honor the Chief Justice (Sir Samuel Way), who took a foremost part in the work by the Adelaide committee during the organization of the expedition, when informed of the message concerning the deaths, stated:—"I am very distressed to learn that there have been casualties in connection with the party; but looking at the terrible perils through which they had to go one cannot after all be surprised that some deaths should happen. We all sympathize deeply with the sufferers and their friends. I am very grateful to hear that Dr. Mawson is well, because I am sure that everything possible will be done by him to ensure the safety of the other members of the party. It is evident that the leader considers there is still work to accomplish by the expedition when he is remaining in Antarctica for another winter. These casualties will not diminish our confidence in Dr. Mawson or the other members of the expedition, and we hope that they will all be spared to return home when their

work is finished. The messages to the Governor-General show that practical results have been attained by Dr. Mawson and his men, and that they are facing the perils of another winter with courage. If anything were necessary to renew our confidence in the party messages like those of the success of the undertaking and the value of the discoveries would do it. These messages are most timely, coming as they do after those of the terrible tragedy of the Scott expedition. They have relieved our anxiety in every way. We may rest assured that Dr. Mawson will be supported by the University in the further leave of absence which he will require."

Annexe of Australia.

The President of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian branch (Mr. A. W. Piper, K.C.) stated:—"All Australia will regret the loss of Lieut. Ninnis and Dr. Mertz. Although they were not Australians, they have given their lives in the first great work which Australasia has undertaken outside its own borders. The information, brief as it is, of the success of the scientific explorations, is exceedingly gratifying, and has every indication of abundantly justifying the part which the Commonwealth and the States have taken in outfitting and dispatching the expedition. The objects of the undertaking have been entirely scientific, and what it has gained will be to the advantage not only of the Commonwealth, but to the whole world. We may be sure that Dr. Mawson remaining in Antarctica for a further period will result in maturing and making more complete and valuable the knowledge which has so far been obtained. One important consequence of what has been already done will be to make the portion of Antarctica visited by Dr. Mawson's expedition more and more a valuable dependency and annexe of Australia. My society has always felt that Australia had an important duty and function to fulfil in respect of the Great South Polar Land. The Commonwealth throughout will be proud of what its own men have already done, and South Australia will be especially gratified that one of its own citizens has been the organizer and leader."

Gratified With Results.

Dr. J. C. Verco (President of the Royal Society) was grieved at the sad tidings. He remarked:—"I express, in behalf of the Royal Society, sincere regret at the loss of these two scientific gentlemen. My work in connection with the arrangements for the expedition was chiefly with Dr. Mawson, and I did not know the men who have unfortunately lost their lives. We must all be gratified at the results of the expedition so far as the scientific investigations are concerned, and I hope that the party will meet with still further success, and arrive back in Australia safely in due course."

WANTED—BEAUTIFUL BUILDINGS.

When the older Jews who had returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity saw the Second Temple, they reflected on the far superior beauty of that erected by Solomon, and could not refrain from lamentation. If the shade of Col. Light could visit and inspect the metropolitan area of this State, he would discover much to admire, and not a little to deplore. South Australians are proud to honour the memory of the far-seeing genius who selected the capital site, and planned for it a model city which should be a constant source of delight; but many of them might be glad to avoid listening to his opinions upon their professions of admiration for his work. The scathing censure he might utter concerning the disregard of some of his ideals would cause them to feel decidedly uncomfortable. Col. Light would assuredly bewail the shortsighted folly of the Legislature and Municipal Corporations in permitting the construction of extensive residential suburban towns in a shiftless happy-go-lucky fashion. He might justly complain that the present generation had been largely content that he should have done most of the thinking and planning in relation to the main features of the capital, and acted on the supposition that their duty was narrowed to the brief span of their own lives, and had no reference to the esthetic and hygienic needs of future generations. Col. Light lived and laboured for generations then unborn. It is a great pity that more of those who have benefited by his achievements did not "enter into his labours" in the sense of continuing and widely extending them. Why were not the principles upon which "Beautiful Adelaide" was designed adopted and improved upon with reference to the great straggling suburban towns? The comparative absence of open squares and public gardens at regular intervals in municipalities like Unley, Norwood, and St. Peters is a crying reproach to authorities who had constantly before them evidences of the immense value and importance of such a provision to the life of a town.

In the hurry and rush of expanding commerce and industry—in the creation of new homes and in the acquisition of the wherewithal to pay for and maintain them—the residents of Greater Adelaide have too long overlooked the duty of arranging their edifices in accordance with a concerted scheme. Such a scheme should contemplate the possible requirements of times when their numerous descendants shall throng the metropolis and take a prominent part in transacting the business and controlling the affairs of a mighty and populous State. The rapid advancement observable, particularly during the last five or six years, is both a pledge and a warning. It is a sure indication of coming greatness, far exceeding even the most sanguine predictions of the level-headed early settlers, and it is a warning and an invitation to public men to at least place no obstacles in the pathway of true and enlightened progress.