

The Advertiser

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SIR DOUGLAS MAWSON.

HONOURED BY COMMONWEALTH CLUB.

The Australian antarctic hero, Sir Douglas Mawson, was entertained at luncheon by the Commonwealth Club at the Adelaide Town Hall on Wednesday. There was a large attendance of members, and the proceedings were of a demonstrative character. Sir Douglas, on entering, was greeted with hearty applause. He modestly replied, "Thank you." The chair was occupied by Sir John Downer (President), and the guest was seated on his right.

Sir John Downer said in these times of great international troubles and conflicts it was delightful to get away, if only for a brief while, from the realms of great aspirations in one direction to those of another—to leave the thoughts of war and turn to those of peace. They had met that day to do honour to a man who had proved himself a great discoverer of the mysteries of the world in which they lived. They welcomed him as a man belonging to themselves—not belonging so much as they would perhaps have liked, but still they claimed a share of him sufficient for them to live in the glory which had reflected from his splendid achievements. (Applause.) That club had on July 16, 1910, met to send their guest on his glorious way, with their heartfelt blessings, and now they had gathered together to express the deep emotions they felt at his safe return. He had gone away as Dr. Douglas Mawson, a universally admired man. That day he was Sir Douglas Mawson, and it was with great delight that they observed his evident state of health and his vigorous condition. He (the speaker) had seen Sir Douglas when he spoke to the people of Adelaide at the reception given to him at the University. The awful perils he had undergone, the strain and stress of mind through which he had passed, were then reflected on his careworn face and his weary limbs. Their guest had then said that when he was more fit he would tell them more of what he had undergone, and he had kept his word. A strong magnet might have been responsible for his safe return. While Sir Douglas was seeking for one magnetic pole in the southern polar regions, another pole, also of very strong magnetic force, might have been all the time drawing him back. (Laughter.) It might be that the enormous influence of the latter pole had been largely instrumental in giving him back to Australia again. (Applause.) Blessed was the man in whom the glory of renown and the achievement of happiness went together. He had undergone terrors of which they could not conceive; he had put up with misery on misery, which had been almost beyond human endurance, but he had come safely through them all, and none admired with more heartfelt appreciation his heroic achievement than his friends who welcomed him there that day. It was their fervent hope that he and the lady whom he had made his wife, would have the fullest measure of happiness which was within human accomplishment. (Applause.)

—The Cause of Science.—

Sir Douglas, in replying, said the business that brought him to Adelaide was that of delivering lectures. That work would take him to other parts, too. He was to have returned almost immediately to England and Europe, but the war had interfered with the programme. That would not matter very much in the ordinary course of events, but in the terms on which his companions had gone on the expedition it meant a good deal. He had agreed to give them some remuneration, and that was the work upon which he was now engaged. He had written a story of the expedition, but it was hung up by the war. It did seem a great pity that so many men should be engaged in mortal combat and so much money be wasted in the conflict when in other conditions they might all be battling against the great enemies in the field of Nature before them, and devoting their energies to fresh discoveries in the sciences. If the money being wasted in the war could be used in the direction which he had indicated, what a vast amount of beneficial work could be accomplished. Not one of them would like to live 100 years behind the present times. There would be no telephones or many other of the modern conveniences.

Only recently he had attended in England a lecture by Professor Bragg, who, with his son, was engaged in experiments, the results of which might eclipse even the discovery of radium. (Applause.) If Germany would say to England that she would give the cost of a Dreadnought for one year, if Britain would do likewise, to the cause of science, he would like to see it spent in the completion of the antarctic work. Then the whole of the salient features of that part of the world would be made known. He believed in the nations being ready and trained to act in times of hostility, but there should be a real and solid reason for action before the clash of arms should be heard. (Applause.)

—Results of the Expedition.—

He had taken up the work of exploration for several reasons. One was that he possessed, perhaps, a roving spirit. The Australians with the Shackleton expedition had done very well. As Australia was nearest to the antarctic continent, he hoped the Commonwealth would take some part in its destiny. (Hear, hear.) The money spent in his trip was not very great, although it was difficult enough to raise. (Laughter.) Sixty men had been engaged for two years, and the results achieved must be valuable and helpful. (Applause.) Although some people did not think so, there were volumes of facts in Antarctica. The facts of science were like a jig-saw puzzle. They must have them all to make the pattern complete. The work they had done in the expedition would aid the chemist in his laboratory. One of the practical results was what had been ascertained about Macquarie Island. The only map that had previously existed of it was an imperfect one made by sealers. Now, however, they had an up-to-date one, the coastline had been sounded, probable harbours had been investigated thoroughly, and the native flora and fauna had been studied and named. (Hear, hear.) The early scientists had spoken of wingless parrots, good eating, which had inhabited the island in great numbers. Those birds were practically extinct now. The sealers had left cats there, and they had wrought the mischief. The biologists had found other specimens, such as finches, which also were almost extinct from the same cause. There were any quantity of moths about. The party were able to say that Macquarie Island was the tip of the sunken land. The ocean to the south of Australia was once dry country. That was enough to account for ice in South Australia. The winds from Adele Land were exceptionally cold, and were it not for the great stretch of water between there and Australia it would be considerably colder here than is now the case. They might in the old conditions even find snow on Mount Lofty with glaciers in the valleys. (Hear, hear.) Whaling in the waters between Australia and the antarctic was not a thing of the past. If they could find a small harbour in the ice system which could be reached with safety by the ships there would be an immense profit from whaling there. The whales were the same as were being worked to the south of America at present, and from which last year the takings in British waters were £1,000,000. Macquarie Island offered a harbour, but if the wind should be in a certain direction it would not be safe. There were immense numbers of hair seals there, too. They had found some fur seals—and the best of that kind in the world had been obtained to the south of Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand—but in the absence of regulations tremendous havoc had been created among them in years gone by as a result of the operations of the hunters. Some specimens were even now obtained off Kangaroo Island, although he believed the taking of them was illegal. It was stated that 150,000 skins were obtained at Macquarie Island in the first two seasons. His party had found minerals on that island, but had not followed them up to see if they could be obtained in payable quantities. A good occurrence of coal had, however, been discovered. They were but some of the results of their labours. (Hear, hear.) About 70 men were now engaged working out the achievements of the expedition, all free of charge, and when they were printed they would extend over about 20 quarto volumes. That was in addition to his own book telling the story of the party's experiences and operations. He would leave for Brisbane on Thursday, and would subsequently go to Tasmania and New Zealand, and on to London by way of New York, and deliver lectures. By that time perhaps the war would be over, and then he would speak in the Continent. He thanked them for their kindness. (Applause.)

The singing of the National Anthem concluded the proceedings.

ITALY AND GREAT BRITAIN.

In proposing a vote of thanks to Dr. P. Ashby for his lecture at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, in the Adelaide University, on "The British School at Rome" on Wednesday evening, Professor Darnley Naylor paid a tribute to the Eternal City as a great art centre, which was no longer a dead city, but an awakened centre of art and beauty. He believed its people were once more going to take their place, and that a large one, in the history of the world. He hoped that Dr. Ashby when he returned to Italy, if the hell which had overtaken Europe had not by that time come to an end, would let the people there know that Australia hoped that if the Italian nation was to be dragged into the conflict it would take sides with the struggle for liberty and freedom. An Italian gentleman present asked permission to make a few remarks. After referring in terms of appreciation to the "immense artistic service" rendered to Rome by Dr. Ashby, he said the Italian people felt the keenest interest in all British affairs. They never forgot that England was always on the side of freedom, and they knew how much they owed to her. Italy could find an army of 3,000,000 men, and she had 200 ships in the navy. He was sure there was not a naval officer in Italy who would fight against Great Britain. They knew that the Teutons were not their friends, either artistically or politically; but Britain's people were, and they were not likely to take sides against them. The statement was received with cheers.