

Theodor Fohrerthser, September 8th 1914.

THE FROZEN SOUTH.

THE AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

LECTURE BY SIR DOUGLAS MAWSON.

The first of a series of illustrated lectures by Sir Douglas Mawson, the leader of the Australian Antarctic Expedition, was given in the Town Hall on Monday to a large audience. The Mayor (Mr. A. A. Simpson) presided) and in introducing the lecturer, said it was six months ago that they had the privilege of welcoming Sir Douglas from the Antarctic, and since then he had been honored by the King, and his reputation had been enhanced by his fellow scientists. (Applause.)

Sir Douglas Mawson, who was warmly received, explained that the proceeds from the lectures would go towards paying off the debt that was still owing on account of the expedition. He could go on talking for hours, but he had something better in the form of a phenomenally good set of pictures, which had been taken by Mr. Frank Hurley, the official photographer with the expedition. Some of the photographs had been colored by a new process, and added greatly to their interest and value.

A Seventh Continent.

The first picture thrown on the screen was what Sir Douglas called a seventh continent, with the South Pole approximately as the centre. Most of the Antarctic expeditions sent from Britain, he said, had gone with the object of reaching the pole, and had left a lot of the most interesting and valuable exploration work for the Australian Antarctic expedition, which left for the southern regions purely for scientific purposes, without any desire to reach the pole. After the lecturer had explained the geographical features of the continent, he gave a description of the voyage in the *Aurora* from Hobart. The pictures, illustrating the floe ice, pack ice, and icebergs encountered on the journey, gave a fine and realistic effect of the grandeur, but risk, of the undertaking. He gave a good description of the floe ice. "It is a wonderful sight," he said. "The pieces of floating ice exude different tones of blue and green, and the most beautiful vaporous and ethereal colors." Describing the landing of the expedition on the coast of Adelie Land, he narrated how hardships soon came upon them. The stores and equipment were landed by means of a motor launch, and with the aid of a "flying fox" were transferred to high land. The force divided into three parties, going east, west, and south respectively. Sir Douglas went with the southern party. The whole force wintered at the main base. A hut was erected, but it was not long before it was buried in drift snow to the roof, and the skylights were hermetically sealed by 5 in. of ice on the inside. The only ventilation was by means of a small chimney, but they found that more than adequate, owing to the strength of the blizzards, which sucked out the air too freely. A series of color photographs were shown, depicting scenes at Adelie Land and Commonwealth Bay. The most conspicuous vegetation of the Antarctic Continent was in the form of lichen, growing on erratic red sandstone boulders, that were found near the coast.

Strong Winds.

Cinematograph views gave a realistic view of the force of the blizzards that raged for a great part of the year. The winds blew with a terrific velocity, and at first the members of the expedition could not stand against them, but had to get about on all fours. Later, when they were used to the strong winds, they used to literally lean on them in order to make progress. The snow particles were so dense during the blizzards, which lasted about 30 per cent. of the winter, that it was often impossible to see one's hand in front of his face. The blizzards actually formed an ice mask over their faces, which had to be broken away occasionally to enable them

to breathe. It was on account of this that Maddigan, the meteorologist, had his cheeks frostbitten. Their hut became buried in snow, and they had to dig tunnels to get in and out of it. A picture of one of the tunnels was thrown on the screen and was humorously described by Sir Douglas as "the main drive." They called the passages the "catacombs." Inside the hut they were fairly comfortable. They had acetylene gas light, warmth, and a well-equipped library. In the workshop were a variety of tools and machines, including a lathe, by means of which the instruments for ascertaining the velocity of the wind were remade in stronger metal to defy the terrific blasts. On the average for the whole year the wind blew at the rate of 50 miles per hour. It had reached 116 miles an hour, and puff velocities had exceeded 200 miles per hour.

Death of Lieutenant Ninnis

The audience listened in almost painful silence as Sir Douglas narrated the incidents which led up to the deaths of Lieutenant Ninnis and Dr. Mertz, and more than once his voice quivered with emotion as he called the scenes before his memory. The three of them went out with the intention of mapping in a part of the coastline some distance from their winter quarters. The first accident happened on December 14, 1912. It was a beautiful morning, and Sir Douglas was figuring out the latitude, when he noticed an indication of a crevasse. Dr. Mertz was turning his sledge ahead, and to Lieutenant Ninnis who was bringing his up in the rear, Sir Douglas Mawson shouted out, "Crevasse!" He saw Ninnis swing his dogs round, and he continued with his observations. Shortly afterwards he noticed Dr. Mertz looking anxiously behind. Sir Douglas stopped and turned round, but no living thing was seen. He and Dr. Mertz went back some distance, and they arrived at a great hole in the ice. They looked down, but could see nothing in the gloom. They shouted, but got no answer. After a while they got used to the dimness of the crevasse and could see a ledge about 150 ft. below, and lying on it was a dead dog and another with its back broken. They then noticed certain articles that belonged to the sledge and to Ninnis, but he was out of sight, and he must have been killed instantly. They thought there might be some hope that he was stunned, but although they waited for nine hours they got no answer. During that time the injured dog had stiffened. When they considered there was no possibility of his being alive they had to give it up.

Death of Dr. Mertz

They were about 300 miles from their winter quarters. He and Mertz thought if they could do a certain mileage a day they would be all right. At first they did 18 to 20 miles a day, but they soon got weak, and the weather was abominably bad. It was difficult to steer, as the magnetic needle was useless so close to the magnetic pole, and the sun was never visible. The dogs died at the rate of about one a day. They got so weak that they had to be shot. Sir Douglas Mawson and Dr. Mertz ate part of them, and gave the rest to the remaining dogs, but neither got much nourishment. By January 1 they had gone a good distance, but they were very weak. The last dog had been killed, and the wind was blowing with great force. They travelled by night as it was easier, and they were able to sleep rather better during the slightly warmer daytime. It was difficult to sleep, and they had all kinds of dreams, but mostly of food. A few days later Dr. Mertz got noticeably weaker, and on the night of January 7-8 he died. It was very hard to be left alone, and he had still a hundred miles to go. Sir Douglas was very weak, and the skin was peeling off his feet, making travelling very difficult. He cut up the sledge, which took three days, and with half of it made a cross, which he placed over Dr. Mertz's grave.

Almost Another Tragedy

On January 11 Sir Douglas restarted in bad weather. He kept slipping into crevasses, until he once fell the full length of the 14-ft. rope. It was an unpleasant sensation, and he was almost too weak to climb out. When he got to the top the ice again gave way, and he was again sus-

pended in mid-air. He stayed like it for 10 minutes. He thought it was the end for him, and he began to feel in his pockets for a penknife in order to cut the rope. He did not have a knife, and he decided to make one supreme effort. He seemed to attain new strength, and managed to get out of the crevasse. He did not remember exactly what happened for some time afterwards, but when he came to his senses snow was falling. He began to philosophise, and there being plenty of food he had a good meal, thinking it was worth while to have a merry life if only a short one. He took fresh courage, and began his one-man sledge journey, the first that has been accomplished. He fell into crevasses three more times, but eventually

got across the glacier. On the morning of January 29 he saw a dark object in the distance, and found that it was a depot of provisions that had been left by a search party only a few hours before. After further difficulties he got to the base, to find that the vessel was going over the horizon. It was called back by wireless, but just then bad weather returned, and it was impossible to relieve the party. It was over two years from when he left the vessel to the time when he again saw the captain and crew.

A splendid series of views and cinematograph films depicted incidents and scenes in Antarctica. Considerable interest was evinced in the concluding views, taken on Macquarie Island, of the various kinds of animal life. The photographs of the penguins were interesting, and often amusing.