Advertiser, August 24/1911.

AUSTRALIA AND THE ANTARCTIC.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. MAWSON.

EXPEDITION TO LEAVE IN NOVEMBER.

Among the passengers who arrived at the Outer Harbor by the R.M.S. Morea on Saturday afternoon was Dr. Douglas Mawson, who was a member of Sir Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition, and intends setting out in November next in charge of an Australasian scientific expedition, which has the support of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. Dr. Mawson was most optimistic in regard to the project, which is not aimed at discovering the Pole, but at conducting scientific investigations on the practically unknown northern boundary of the vast Antarctic continent. Until he is ready to sail in November next he will make Adelaide his headquarters in seeking the co-operation of the people of Australia in the scheme. When interviewed by a reporter of "The Advertiser" after his arrival in Adelaide Dr. Mawson said he had met with splendid support in England so far.

Giving Captain Scott a Chance.

"I was late in bringing my project forward, and did not move in it until January last, when it was necessary for me to leave for England," said Dr. Mawson. "My reason for the delay was to allow Captain Scott to secure from Australia all the money he could for his expedition, as I consider it is only right and just that the man first in the field should be given a fair chance. It will be a lasting benefit to the British Empire if Captain Scott reaches the South Pole. My plans are very different from Captain Scott's. I shall not clash with him in any way, as I shall be working on a different area and with a different object in view. Captain Scott's aim is to reach the south geographical pole, and in his wisdom he has taken with him a specially qualified scientific staff, so as to be able to make observations in all branches of geographical science. This Antarctic continent is about twice the size of Europe. Its great dimensions and possible future function in the economics of the world are not fully realised by the public. I have followed the subject closely and feel qualified to express an opinion, and I think there is a great future for this continent—not a future such as that of Australia or any other country with a more temperate climate, but in its own particular way it will certainly have a future. The part of that practically unknown land holding forth most prospects is that nearest the continent of Australia, and it is to that part that my attention is specially directed. Australia, if she will seize the opportunity, has a chance to lay claim by exploration to a large area of this territory.

Objects of the Expedition.

"My object is to proceed to this coastline, which is most adjacent to Australia, to make charts and plans of its boundaries, and to collect as much scientific data as is possible. Our party will be better equipped for that than any other which has set out. It is a scientific expedition, fathered and backed up by the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, and so far I have left no step untaken to secure the best results by the use of suitable instruments and the most careful selection of staff. I do not intend to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar, and everything is solid and of the best. Therefore, I expect that the energies of the committee and myself in Australia during the next few months will complete the arrangements satisfactorily. Before leaving for England I had the assurance of strong financial support from five of the leading citizens of Australia, the hearty co-operation and backing of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, and the sympathies of the Federal Government. As I had not secured the Government backing at the time of my arrival in England, when it was necessary to go forward with the plans, I was in a rather awkward position, and it was only through the powerful assistance of Sir George Reid, Lord Denman, Lord Northcliffe, Sir Ernest Shackleton, and Mr. W. A. Horn (formerly of South Australia) that I could make important progress. Although I had delayed taking any definite steps in purchasing and equipping a vessel, the time came when, if longer deferred, the project would have to be abandoned until next year on account of the season. Knowing what steps were being taken in Europe towards securing portions of this Antarctic continent for foreign nations, I felt I was doing right in stepping boldly forward in purchasing and equipping the Aurora.

Description of the Aurora.

"The little Aurora is one of the finest vessels of her class. She carries about 650 tons of cargo, was built at Dundee of teak wood, and is practically a sister ship to the Terra Nova, now under commission by Captain Scott in Antarctic work. The Aurora is a roomy vessel, quite different in size from the Nimrod, which carried Shackleton's expedition. The success of that party was partially paralysed through not having sufficient room, and if that party had had a ship of the capacity of the Aurora I believe Shackleton would have reached the pole, the cramped quarters on board having been responsible for the death of several ponies.

Substantial Donations.

"As soon as it became known that a British Antarctic expedition was to proceed south many of the old and well-established firms in Europe kindly offered substantial donations of their wares. In this way the greater part of the provisions and a considerable amount of other equipment has been received. I have steadfastly refused to take English or foreign preparations of similar classes to those produced on a large scale in Australia or New Zealand, so that the Australasian producers would not be debarred of a fine opportunity of demonstrating the value of their goods. Such commodities as spirts were offered on a most liberal scale; in fact, we could almost have floated the Aurora in whisky, for every whisky firm in the United Kingdom offered to supply the expedition. We appreciated their liberality, but found it necessary to refuse any more than a few cases, which are to be used for medicinal purposes.

Plans of the Expedition.

"The Aurora is now about to take her departure from London, and will sail direct for Hobart via the Cape of Good Hope. It is expected that she will arrive in Tasmania toward the end of October. The ship has auxiliary steam and can do 9½ knots an hour, but on her way out she will rely mainly on her sails. She will leave Hobart for Melbourne and Sydney to collect cargo, and if there is time she may visit Adelaide also before returning to Hobart. We hope to go south from Hobart about the end of November, and expect to make our first base at the 156th parallel of east longitude. After landing one party there the ship will proceed west, making plans of the coastline. About 500 miles westward of the first base it is intended to land a second and smaller party with another hut, and to allow them to winter separately from the rest. The Aurora will then proceed further westward in the hope of landing a third party another 500 miles from the second base. In that way about 2,500 miles of coastline will be divided into four sections by the three depots, and sledging parties will proceed east and west from each base and make surveys and geographical and other scientific examinations. I expect to land with the first party, as we will have a larger scientific programme to carry out there. After dropping the third part, the ship, coal permitting, will proceed further westward and make additional investigation in Antarctic waters. When the coal is used up, she must necessarily proceed north to the latitudes where the strong westerly winds will bring her to Australian waters, and we expect she will get to Fremantle early in April next. There she will load with coal, and will not remain idle, but will be employed in taking systematic soundings, dredging, and other oceanographical survey work on a zig-zag course as far south as the ice will permit her to go. She is particularly well-fitted for this work. No ship has ever been in these waters with a better equipment than that on the Aurora. She has been fitted out with scientific apparatus partly by the Admiralty and largely by the Prince of Monaco, who is an enthusiast in oceanographical research. I spent a day with the Prince in Paris, and he pointed out that there is absolutely nothing known of the scientific conditions of the greater part of the Southern Ocean, and there is scarcely a sounding on record in reference to it.

An Unknown Coastline.

"As that particular part of the coastline has not been visited before, we are much in doubt as to how our work will have to be conducted. When on the Nimrod with Shackleton we saw 50 miles of this new land, but it has not been landed on, and the conditions are probably different from those in the neighborhood of McMurdo Sound, where previous expeditions have wintered. For sledging purposes I intend to restrict myself to dogs, as sledging over sea ice with ponies is not so safe as with dogs. I have 50 dogs from the best teams of Greenland, where they were selected by the Danish Government.

Combined Aeroplane and Sledge.

"For exploratory work and for depot-laying, in the event of good surface being met with, I have obtained a combined aeroplane and motor sledge. In half an hour this can be converted from a flying machine to a sledge, and vice versa. It is the heaviest, but the best aeroplane made, being constructed of nickel steel, and it is the make that seems most likely to be adopted by the British military authorities. I left instructions for it to be sent to Australia at an early date so that demonstrations of its capabilities can be given out here. The demonstrations should be valuable to our own defence officials. It would be useless for me to take an appliance of this kind if I were not prepared at the same time to secure the services of a thoroughly qualified aviator. This has been done, and Lieutenant H. E. Watkins, of the Essex Regiment, who has been flying for three years, and has taken up over 300 passengers, will be in charge of the aeroplane, which will carry one passenger in addition to the driver, and a good deal of gear. Lieutenant Watkins was described by Mr. Grahame White as being the safest flier in England. Mrs. Scott, wife of Captain Scott, is an enthusiast in aviation, and she arranged for both Lieutenant Watkin and the machine.

The Staff.

"As I always intended, I have kept practically the whole of the positions on the staff free for appointments to be made, by nomination, by a special committee of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. All these are to be Australians, but I had to appoint five specialists, namely, the aviator and a specialist in motor engines; Dr. Mertz, a champion Swiss iceman, who has been spending six weeks with the Prince of Monaco in the Mediterranean, perfecting himself in dredging, sounding, and other deep-sea work; Mr. F. Wild, an expert sledger, who was a member of both Scott and Shackleton's parties; and Lieutenant B. E. S. Ninnis, of the Royal Fusiliers, a specialist in field survey work and sketching, as well as a specially good sledger.

Co-operation of the People Wanted.

"I shall now be busy up to the time of sailing in securing the co-operation of Australians in the work. I am convinced that this exploration is going to be of permanent advantage to Australia, and it will afford the world an opportunity of seeing what Australians can do. The project is well founded and well set out, and I feel confident that the people of the Commonwealth will not allow it to languish for want of funds when the conditions have been explained to them. In London I found the people were most enthusiastic. This high-minded project has already done much to bring Australia prominently before the people of Europe. They are looking on the Commonwealth in a new light, and it is a fresh idea to them that Australia is strong enough to investigate and claim new territory. Lord Denman, the new Governor-General of Australia, gave me some money for the expedition, and then went to the British Government with a recommendation in my favor, with the result that I was voted £2,000."

Register, July 24/11.

Mr. J. Glasson, of Kadina, has received information that his son (Mr. Leslie Glasson), who is at present at Cambridge, receive his Bachelor of Arts degree at the close of the June term. Mr. L. Glasson had graduated as a Bachelor of Science at the Adelaide University before going to England.