

TAKING THE QUEEN'S COLOURS SOUTH.

A BREEZY LECTURE.

Lieut. Shackleton presented a verbal miniature of the big literary photograph of the antarctic expedition at the Elder Hall, Adelaide University, on Saturday night. A crowd which filled the building to the doors and the front steps was there to see it. The lecturer had a wonderful constituency—viceregal patrons, scientists, doctors, legal men, professors of all shades of thought, legislators, clergymen, military and naval officers, a batch of students, and the rank and file of the public. Everybody wanted to hear the story of that brave and historical journey which will loom large in polar history. The seating capacity fell short of the demand for seats by hundreds, and the disappointment must have been keen. The Chancellor said afterwards that the hall was the best available, so the University authorities had done their part. Little time was wasted in preliminaries.

His Excellency the Governor, who presided, remarked upon the magnificent privilege they all enjoyed that night, and expressed the admiration of the people for the heroic physical and intellectual qualities of Lieut. Shackleton and his men and of the self-sacrifice displayed for scientific advancement. In a subsequent vote of thanks, moved by Admiral Bosanquet, and seconded by His Honor the Chief Justice, the lecture was described as "wonderfully fascinating and instructive," and the audience clinched the compliment by ringing acclamation. Cheers were given for Mr. Shackleton, another round for His Excellency and Lady Bosanquet, and somebody called for a similar compliment to Mr. Douglas Mawson, South Australia's hero in the expedition, and another thunder of applause followed.

—Royal Good Wishes.—

Lieut. Shackleton took it all modestly. His opening words were few—a hasty reference to the compliment paid to him by the King and Queen when their Majesties inspected the *Nimrod* at Cowes and gave the brave young lieutenant their good wishes. Another might have made a big incident of that. "Queen Alexandra gave me a Union Jack, and we planted it away out on the great southern plateau, at a point man had not before reached. His Excellency the Governor, who was then Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth, also came on board the little ship to wish us godspeed on the journey to the antarctic. There is double pleasure in the fact that he is presiding to-night, on our return towards civilization." The people laughed at the suggestion of Australia being only approximately civilized, and Mr. Shackleton saw the slip. "Or, rather, we are in civilization, aren't we? It is a young country, this Australia, and it has been a great help to us."

There was not a note to help the ruddy-faced lecturer in his unpretentious narrative. He must have a remarkable memory, the way he talked of altitudes and distances and dates, sometimes correcting himself by a foot or two, and stating to the hour when certain things happened. His style was deliberate, without being in the least irksome. The voice came mostly from behind closed teeth, but the intonation was consistent with few undulations of expression. No attempt was made to paint pictures. Little colour was put into the lecture, although here there was scope for the pageantry of words. That is another phase of the man's reticence about accomplishments. There could have been thrilling narratives of dangers encountered in death-lurking crevasses and the privations of antarctic residence: of hunger and illness, stabbing cold, and awful fatigue. But these perils were sketched only in outline; the audience could think out the details for itself. Mr. Shackleton just said where they went; how they got there was a matter for inference. The simplest phrases were employed when the sentences could have been sensationally ornate. But the speaker suggested enough to convince the people that deeds of genuine heroism were performed while the men of the expedition were taking the Queen's colours to "farthest south" and were returning to the brave little *Nimrod* waiting in the ice wedge.

—A White World.—

The trim young explorer in the dress suit started at the beginning, from the time he wore out boot leather hunting up the millionaires of London for funds and bought the 41-year-old *Nimrod*. Down went the lights, and the long stick was pointing out Cowes on a world map. "There is Capetown, and away over here New Zealand. That's where we started from, you know, and down here is the antarctic region." It was like that all the time, just an explanatory, but an effectively grouping of words. "This is the *Nimrod* steaming out of New Zealand, so we are off." The picture looked life-size. The *Nimrod* seemed merely a trim tug sweeping past the grey sides of the warship *Powerful*. The next view was a wonderful piece of sea photography. It showed the *Koonya*, the towing vessel, or as much of it as an enormous shoulder of water did not hide. Bits of the masts and sails and a bit of the funnel—the rest was behind and in that riot of sea. "The towrope is underneath somewhere. That sea smashed away the bulwarks and made things a little uncomfortable for us on the *Nimrod*." A little uncomfortable! Why, the audience was nearly seasick. Next came a series of pictures of the ice pack, which the *Nimrod* had to squeeze her nose and sides in. The great white world was magnificently portrayed—the far-stretching white landscapes, white mountains, white cliffs, miles of dazzling purity thrust up through cloudland from a solid, unyielding white floor. The *Nimrod* was a black smudge in the immensity of the great ice barrier. It seemed as though those huge, glittering edifices would tumble and crush her as she rode snugly in the basin of dull grey water which washed their feet.

The process of ice-packing took marvelously fantastic forms, from the disc stage, which had the appearance of masses of broken glass—the crystals might easily have been frozen chrysanthemums—to the wide consolidation of the barrier, hundreds of miles in extent. Once the *Nimrod* missed being smashed like an eggshell by a hundred yards. "It was a narrow shave," remarked Mr. Shackleton, and the perils incident claimed no further reference. A frozen lake, "where we used to exercise"—was portrayed, and then a panoramic glimpse of an antarctic landscape, which had the appearance of a bit of foam-washed rugged coastal scenery. Sledging made us absolutely indifferent to these glories," commented the lecturer. "Beautiful pictures are not worth much when you're tired and hungry. We got jolly cold sometimes. Even in summer you can get 70 deg. of it. That's not nice. Our feet used to get frozen and went black. We planted them in another fellow's chest to get warm again. Poor old Brocklehurst—Sir Philip Brocklehurst—had to have a toe off. He carries it about in a bottle now as a memento. He was anxious to go with the southern party and had to stay home. But these are the sort of things that happen down there." That piece of philosophy dismissed the tragedy of a baronet's toe!

—Ascent of Mount Erebus.—

The narrative was brimful of interest every minute. The establishment of the winter quarters, of the building of huts, and the laying of depots; the wrecking energy of 70-mile-an-hour blizzards—all this was plainly and graphically told—no embellishment, no soaring after the picturesque. Every member of the expedition was singled out for commendation as brave men. The dogs—"We started with nine and came back with 22 and more arriving"—and horses ("they did wonderful work") got a pat on the back. There was little about Shackleton and the work he did. The ascent of Mount Erebus was a descriptive triumph—Mount Erebus, with its pipe still burning and sending a steam cloud 30,000 ft. in the air; Mount Erebus, with the yawning crater, rising like a gigantic ice fortress over the silence of a white land. "For the first time in history that mountain gave up its secrets to these men." What a world of significance in that unvarnished sentence!

Breezily and as quietly as ever Mr. Shackleton related facts about their social life in the antarctic, particularly during that long night from April to September; the routine of those courageous parties, the making history at every step, and the desperate industry which caused that Union Jack to flutter somewhere in the wilds of that wonderful continent of ice. It was a thrilling story, from the crowning triumph of Great Britain taking possession of "furthest south" to the smallest detail about the kind of boots they wore and the crackers they hung up on Christmas Day. The glories of the photography—who will forget the exquisite cloud effects,

of the expedition, had tried to do his best, he had noticed that throughout, not once or twice, but many times there were circumstances which arose and which no leadership could foresee, and they had had to rely on some Power whose help was greater than that of the men who were working there. There were times he could mention—and he would speak of them at his lecture that evening—when they were almost starving on the plateau, when Mawson returned from his journey, when the western party went out on the iceflow—these and other instances, where, if it had been left to leadership alone, it must have failed. He wanted to say that very carefully and straight in speaking to the public of South Australia, because every one in the expedition had realized it in his heart, and knew that the credit of a great deal was not due to themselves. Then there was another aspect of the case. He had followed in the footsteps of his former captain. (Applause.) Capt. Scott, of the *Discovery*, had done the pioneer work, and every pioneer, as the people in this as yet new country were aware, had to find the way, and the townfolk and others followed in their footsteps. He knew the 260 miles which Capt. Scott had covered, and they were 260 easy miles for him on that account, besides meaning that before he started he had been able to arrange equipment suitable to the needs in country which before had been entirely unknown. (Applause.) He had come out to Australia desperately in need of funds and hampered by the shortage at home, and the Commonwealth Government had unanimously voted a sum of money which had been so useful in enabling them to carry out their scientific work. (Applause.) Therefore it was the greater pleasure to him to feel that the men who had gone from Australia had done good work, and done it well—(applause)—and it was also pleasing to feel that the money was used as far as they had been able to do so in a manner which they hoped would be acceptable to those who had shown their belief in the expedition in those early days by granting the money. (Applause.) He could say nothing more except that when he left Australia in a few days he would take with him the remembrance of the kindness he and his party had met with—the 15 members of the shore party and 22 men of the ship which had comprised the expedition. It was not by one, two, or three men that the expedition had been able to do anything, but it was the active co-operation of all, as His Excellency the Governor had said, working for one object. If they had not arrived at their goal they had done something, and to his companions he would convey the kindly greeting and sympathy of South Australia. (Cheers.)

—"One of the Ruck."—

Mr. Douglas Mawson, who was pressed into saying a few words, and who was received with cheers, said that he was one of the ruck of the expedition, and he took it that the gathering had not been arranged to receive him. (Laughter.) In some manner he had helped to get it up in honour of Lieut. Shackleton. He was very pleased indeed to see the spontaneous reception which had resulted. The newspaper reporters had been very busy, and he had impressed them with an idea of the sort of man Lieut. Shackleton was; but those present could now judge for themselves. Although their leader took no special credit to himself, the results were due mainly to him, and, as a South Australian, he was exceedingly grateful for the way the people of Adelaide had received Lieut. Shackleton and the members of his party generally. It showed such a grand spirit. (Cheers.)