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have for a century lived accustomed to the sight of the centesimal system in use by the *Service Géographique de l'Armée*, but no one of them has adopted it, and none has shown any tendency to do so. Finally, in reply to Mr. Barton's well-worn contention that British weights and measures are responsible for two years' waste of time in our schools, I would suggest that any waste of time is due to bad teaching, and that the two years must be spent upon arithmetical exercises of some sort, for which a complex system is not disadvantageous.

Captain Henrici has spoken of the use of the chain and the decimals of an acre in the Ordnance Survey. We must not forget to give due praise to Gunter for this admirable system, one of the few good pieces of decimalization in our practice.

In conclusion I ought to say that I had prepared my notes without reference to, and indeed in ignorance of, the excellent paper on the subject read by Dr. Mill at the International Geographical Congress of Berlin in 1899.

Dr. MILL: I must now sum up this discussion, which has been the most interesting we have had for some time. You will wish to express your thanks to the reader of the paper, and to the enthusiasts for and against, who have spoken out of the fullness of their hearts.

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## THE RELIEF OF SHACKLETON'S ROSS SEA PARTY

Dr. Hugh Robert Mill

ON the return of the *Aurora* to New Zealand in March last it became known that ten men of the Shackleton expedition had been left in the Antarctic in May 1915. Of these four were at the winter station at Cape Evans, and six under the leadership of Captain Mackintosh had not returned from their expedition southward on the Barrier; but it was hoped that they were safe at Hut Point. Sir Ernest Shackleton's fate with the Weddell Sea party was unknown, and as immediate steps had to be taken if the Ross Sea party were to be rescued this year, the British, Australian, and New Zealand Governments undertook the organization of a relief expedition. The British Government contributed half the cost, the other half was borne by the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments in proportion to their respective populations. The *Aurora*, seriously damaged as she had been in her long drift in the ice, was the only ship available. On survey she was found to be badly hogged (*i.e.* forced up amidships), the stem and stern were seriously strained, and a large amount of her sheathing needed renewal. An Australian committee was formed in Melbourne, consisting of Rear-Admiral Sir William Cresswell, Prof. Orme Masson, Captain J. R. Barter, Commander Stevenson, R.N., and Dr. Griffith Taylor, to whom we are indebted for much of this information. They worked in conjunction with Mr. J. J. Kinsey of Christchurch and Mr. John Mill of Dunedin. Mr. Kinsey, whose experience with the final equipment of the earlier Antarctic expeditions gave him unique advantages in superintending the fitting out, gave his whole

time to the task, and the *Aurora* after being put into thorough repair at Port Chalmers was ready for sea early in December. The command of the relief expeditions was offered by the Governments who had undertaken it to Captain J. King Davis and accepted by him. His fine work, first as chief officer and then in command of the *Nimrod* on Sir Ernest Shackleton's first expedition, and again in command of the *Aurora* on Sir Douglas Mawson's expedition, is well known. He was supported by a number of his old subordinates. Sir Ernest Shackleton was fortunate in being able to reach New Zealand in time to sail with the *Aurora*, and he was to be responsible for any land operations that might be necessary. It was highly probable that Captain Mackintosh had gone south again this season in the expectation of meeting Sir Ernest Shackleton on his way from the south pole; if so he could not return to the base before the month of March. In that case it would have been necessary to send a search party, involving the risk of another wintering.

The *Aurora*, provisioned for two years, left Port Chalmers on 20 December 1916, and made a remarkably rapid voyage, reaching Cape Evans on January 10. Here seven of the ten members of the expedition who had been left behind in 1915 were found and rescued. Unhappily Captain Mackintosh and V. C. Hayward had lost their lives in a blizzard which broke up the sea-ice while they were on the way from Hut Point to Cape Evans on 8 May 1916, and shortly before the Rev. A. P. Spencer Smith had died of scurvy on the Barrier. The remaining members of the party were taken on board and the *Aurora*, leaving McMurdo Sound on January 19, arrived within wireless range of Wellington on February 5, a remarkably fine achievement.

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A detailed telegram from Sir Ernest Shackleton appearing in the *Daily Chronicle* of February 12 enables us to give a brief account of the work of the Ross Sea party. Cope, Jack, and Hayward, forming one of the southern parties, got back to Hut Point on 14 March 1915, three days after the *Aurora* had gone to seek winter-quarters, and on the 22nd Mackintosh, Wild, and Joyce arrived. They had laid two depôts on the Barrier, one at 79° S., the other at 80° S. Of the sixteen dogs of the first party two survived, but all of Mackintosh's party had died. It was June 1 before the six men were able to reach Cape Evans over the sea-ice, and by that time the *Aurora* had been blown away. The winter passed without incident, and on September 1 sledge journeys with stores to Hut Point were commenced. The work was very heavy as only four dogs remained. On 9 October 1915 three parties of three men each started sledging stores southward from Hut Point to the Bluff depôt in 79° S., and after making four journeys between these points the whole party started south to lay out the remoter depôts on which Sir Ernest Shackleton's expected party would depend for their existence. Three men, Jack, George, and Cope, were sent back from 80° S. as their stove was worn out, and they reached Hut Point on

15 January 1916. Mackintosh proceeded southward with the others, and on January 22 at 83° S. Spencer Smith broke down with scurvy, and was left in the tent with provisions while the others pushed on to Mount Hope (near 84 S.) and laid the last depôt there at the foot of the Beardmore Glacier on January 26. The return journey was a terrible experience. Scurvy attacked one member after another, and Spencer Smith had to be hauled on a sledge from the beginning, while on February 17 when within 30 miles of the point where Scott perished the whole party were kept in camp by a blizzard for six days until their food was exhausted. Notwithstanding the weather they made a start in the faint hope of reaching a depôt 11 miles away; but Mackintosh fell exhausted, and was left with Spencer Smith, and Wild to look after them, while the others struggled to the depôt and returned with food and fuel. They started again on February 29, with Smith and Mackintosh lashed on a sledge, and next day Hayward also had to be added to the load dragged by the others. Progress was hopelessly slow, so to save the others Mackintosh insisted on being left behind in a tent while the others pushed on. Spencer Smith died on March 9 after forty-seven days' illness, cheerful to the end. Two days later the survivors reached Hut Point, and returning for Mackintosh brought him in on 18 March 1916. They had fulfilled their mission, laid all the depôts, and travelled 1500 miles over the Barrier. The invalids speedily recovered with fresh food, and on May 8 Mackintosh and Hayward started to cross the young sea-ice to Cape Evans, but were never heard of again. Two days later the rest of the party found the tracks of the two pioneers stopped abruptly by open water. Every search was made; and eight months later Sir Ernest Shackleton landed at several points from the *Aurora* and searched the coast for relics, but found none. Mackintosh had perished like Scott, his work well done; but happily most of his party survive.

From all the facts which are now before us we can form a fair opinion as to the success of the expedition as a whole. It is obvious that as a trans-continental journey it has completely failed, because no landing-place on the Weddell Sea could be reached. There are consequently no results as regards the geography of the unknown portion of the Antarctic continent across which Sir Ernest Shackleton hoped to make his way. We have long urged that an exploring survey of the whole of the accessible coast of Antarctica from the sea is a necessary preliminary to any inland exploration from new coast bases. This desideratum remains, and when Antarctic exploration is resumed we hope that it will take the form of a cruise in the highest attainable latitude from Queen Mary Land westward to and if possible beyond Coats Land; and another from the neighbourhood of Alexander I. Land westward to King Edward Land. Possibly a favourable opening for land journeys may be discovered in this way. While a failure from the point of view of fulfilling a programme, Sir Ernest Shackleton's attempt cannot have failed to produce results of importance.

The observations on the *Endurance* in her push to the south and on the *Endurance* and *Aurora* in their respective drifts to the north should produce, when published, new facts as to the ice-movements outward from the Antarctic circle. The Weddell Sea has been traversed along a new line with important bearings on the interpretations of earlier voyages; and the meteorological observations made on both sides of the continent must add materially to a branch of knowledge the practical importance of which to the people of the southern continents is becoming plainer every year. The greatest interest, however, attaches to the renewed proof that failure due to physical causes served only to throw into relief once more the magnificent courage, tenacity, and comradeship of the British explorers. Mackintosh's devotion to his disabled companions and his choice of the place of greatest danger for himself is a worthy companion-picture to Shackleton's heroic struggle with winter and frozen seas in rescuing his men on Elephant Island. They all lived up to the noblest traditions, and we rejoice that so many came through in safety.

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### CAPTAIN FREDERICK COURTENAY SELOUS, D.S.O.

AS briefly recorded in the February number, Captain F. C. Selous has been killed in East Africa while gallantly leading his men to the attack; and yet another African explorer of note has thus fallen a victim to the war. Two friends who knew him well have written for us appreciations of Selous' achievements in Empire-building and in natural history; these we print below, but must preface them with some connected account of his strenuous career, and especially of his important contributions to our knowledge of the geography of South Central Africa—a region now incorporated in the British Empire largely through his adventurous doings. The nature and extent of those contributions can be well understood by a reference to the publications of the Society during the period of his most active life in South Africa, records of new and fruitful journeys having appeared in most of the volumes issued through a long period.

Frederick Courtenay Selous was of French and English extraction on his father's side, English and Scottish on his mother's. Born in London on 31 December 1851 and educated at Rugby, Neuchatel, and Wiesbaden, he was only nineteen years old when he started for South Africa, bent on making a living as an elephant hunter. In 1872 he set out on his first serious expedition into the northern interior, then to a large extent virgin ground for both hunter and explorer. Making his way to the court of the Matebele chief Lobengula, whose goodwill it was necessary to secure, he after some difficulty obtained the necessary permission to hunt elephants in the remoter parts of the chief's dominions, to which most of the herds had then retreated. Selous quickly became noted