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Major DARWIN: There are two names I ought to have mentioned—Captain Prittie, who was the assistant commissioner, and Dr. Marshall, medical officer of the expedition. I am quite sure Captain Jack would wish those names mentioned in connection with his. In bringing this meeting to a close, I am quite sure I may associate these names with the name of Captain Jack when according him a hearty thanks.

THE AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

Report by Captain J. K. DAVIS.

THE *Aurora* left Hobart on December 26, 1912, for Adelie Land, and encountered a good deal of heavy weather. We arrived in the vicinity of the ice barrier we had sheltered under on our previous voyage on January 11, 1913. This barrier was found to have disappeared, and we proceeded south over its former position. The following day we encountered heavy pack ice, which, however, we managed to push through without much delay, and on January 12, at 2 a.m., dropped anchor in Commonwealth bay. It was blowing a fresh gale, and we were unable to communicate with the shore until the afternoon; on doing so we found the party at the hut all well, and three sledging parties out, whose return was expected by January 15.

We learnt that Commonwealth bay had proved to be a terribly windy place, and that during the winter months it blew a constant gale. The average velocity of the wind for the year, we were informed, was 50 miles an hour. By January 18 two of the sledging parties had returned, and we now awaited the arrival of the remaining party under the leader of the expedition. On January 23, a party was despatched to the Five Mile camp to look out for signs of the returning party. On January 25, a fully-equipped relief party left winter quarters to make a thorough search for signs of the missing party, whose non-return had given rise to grave anxiety.

A provisional relief party was now appointed to remain at winter quarters if necessary for another year, under the leadership of Mr. C. Madigan, consisting of Messrs. Bage, Bickerton, Hodgeman, Jefferies, and Dr. Maclean. Stores, coal, and equipment were landed as opportunity offered in the violent weather we experienced after January 20. The wireless mast was lengthened and re-stayed. I had instructed the relief party that it was urgent that the *Aurora* should proceed to Mr. Wild's base on February 1, as the lengthening nights would make our voyage south from Termination barrier one of great difficulty on account of the enormous masses of ice which collect in this region.

The weather in Commonwealth bay was steadily growing worse, and by January 27 we had lost our three anchors and parted our cable twice. No sign of the missing party having been seen at 6 p.m. on January 29, the weather being clear, the *Aurora* proceeded eastward along the coast

looking for any sign of the party. Nothing was to be seen of any flag or depôt, and on the night of January 30 we were stopped by heavy pack-ice, and returned to winter quarters the following night. There as usual we found it blowing hard, and steamed about waiting for it to moderate sufficiently to send a boat ashore to pick up the eleven members of the expedition who were returning with us. Instead of moderating, however, it freshened up, and for the following seven days blew a very heavy gale. During this period I do not think the velocity of the wind was ever below 40 miles an hour, and frequent squalls were recorded by the anemometer on shore as 80 miles an hour. For the whole of this seven days we maintained a constant struggle to keep the shelter of the shore. This by driving the vessel at full speed we were able to do, although during the squalls we were frequently blown well out of the bay. The growing length of the darkness and numerous reefs and grounded bergs made it evident that unless we could maintain our position the situation would be a very serious one. The gale continued without a lull until February 8, by which time all hands were exhausted and the vessel covered with ice, and our likelihood of being able to reach the second base this year looked doubtful.

On February 8 at daylight the wind suddenly moderated, and at 10 a.m. full calm. We immediately steamed inshore and picked up the returning party consisting of Messrs. Murphy, Stillwell, Hannam, Close, Hunter, Laseron, Whetter, Hurley, Webb, and Correll. We received the report of the search party, said good-bye to the relief party, and started on our voyage west. I was already ten days later than I considered prudent. We had 1500 miles of ice-strewn water to traverse at what in these latitudes— 64° S. to 66° S.—is late in the season, the duration of which is controlled, not by the temperature, but by the increasing length of the nights. I knew that unless we could arrive at the second base before February 20, our getting in at all past Termination barrier would be an extremely difficult matter, as the sea from here for 180 miles south is just a sea of bergs and heavy floes. At 8.30 p.m. the same evening, when we were about 50 miles distant from the main base and were approaching heavy pack, Mr. Hannam received a wireless message on board the vessel informing us that Dr. Mawson had arrived at the hut, and that his two companions, Dr. Xavier Mertz, of Switzerland, and Lieut. B. E. S. Ninnis, Royal Fusiliers, London, had perished, and instructing me to return and pick up all hands. We immediately turned round and steered back again, hoping that the fine weather would last long enough to enable us to pick up the party. At 8 a.m. on February 9, when we were approaching the base, the wind had freshened to a gale again and showed signs of getting worse. At noon we stood right up to the ice face to see if it were possible to send a boat ashore, but the wind was too violent, the vessel herself only just steering. I then signalled for instructions, but although these signals were observed, we could get no answer. We then stood on and off hoping

that the wind would moderate. At 6 p.m. it was evident that the weather was getting steadily worse with a falling barometer.

I felt it was necessary to decide whether I was justified in remaining any longer trying to pick up a party who were in safety and fully provisioned and equipped in every way for a second year, or whether I was not bound to proceed westward without further delay to the relief of the party under Mr. Wild, whose position on a floating barrier was such that it seemed absolutely imperative that we should reach them this year. It was a difficult position, but after careful consideration, I decided to proceed west for the following reasons:—

1. The party at the main base were in perfect safety and fully equipped in every way for a second winter.

2. The short summer season at Adelie Land was evidently over, the violent weather having apparently set in with falling temperatures, the gales often lasted for a week without cessation, as we were able to see from the previous year's records.

3. The further detention of the vessel was seriously endangering our chance of being able to relieve Mr. Wild's base this year, to reach which we had to traverse a distance of 1500 miles, the navigation of which distance was rendered extremely difficult on account of constant snow-storms and growing darkness.

4. The only other vessel which had penetrated south in this region, *The Gauss*, had been frozen in on February 22. The *Aurora* was not provisioned for a winter in the ice, as we had landed most of our spare stores for the relief party at the main base.

5. As a seaman, knowing the difficulties that we encountered both in getting to and getting away from the second base the previous year, I felt that nothing could exonerate me from blame if we further delayed our departure, and that, being unable to communicate with Dr. Mawson, it was clearly my duty to act as I was convinced he would wish me to do were I able to make him acquainted with the situation of the western party.

At 6.30 p.m. on February 9, I gave orders for our departure. As we left Commonwealth bay and got away from the snow slopes the weather again improved. We met the pack ice the following day, and after a very trying morning got through the heaviest of it and continued our course in fairly open water. For the next three days we encountered fresh westerly winds, and were making little more than 60 miles a day to the westward. Our chances of getting to the second base party were looking gloomy, when an easterly gale burst upon us which soon developed into a heavy blizzard. This lasted three days, and we drove west before it under steam and sail at times unable to see a length ahead of the vessel. There was no alternative, however, if we were to get west in time, but to keep going. As daylight came in each morning we could feel thankful that another night (which now lasted five hours) had passed without disaster.

We made good progress until February 18, when icebergs became very

numerous, and on the 19th, at 8.30 a.m., were brought up by a heavy pack extending right across our course. We were at this time about 90 miles from the northern point of Termination barrier, and had found open water right up to this barrier on our previous voyage. There was nothing to be done but to follow the pack to the northward, and this we had to do for 80 miles before being able to steer west again. The position of the pack was a terrible disappointment, it appeared unlikely that we should be able to penetrate to the second base at all. Countless numbers of bergs made navigation after dark a matter of great difficulty, and the easterly wind which generally freshened at sunset brought snow as a rule. The following afternoon we were in the longitude of Termination barrier, but 20 miles of close pack separated us from it. We tried to push south through this, but after a couple of hours it was evident that progress in this direction was impossible. Anxious to retain our freedom of action, I decided to come further west before pushing into the pack, and on February 21, at noon, finding the ice looser, pushed south into it. We were able to get through here without much difficulty, and at noon the following day had pushed through 80 miles, which were fortunately separated by wide leads of open water, and reached a sea of bergs which constitute the chief danger to navigation in this region, as they are so numerous as only to be avoided with difficulty in clear weather.

The wind was rapidly growing to a blizzard, and a short confused sea rendered our position one of much anxiety. At 8 p.m. the darkness and snow rendered it impossible to see any distance. The night that followed was one of the worst I have experienced. Soon after 4 a.m. the Shackleton glacier was sighted to windward, and on the weather clearing we were able to see that we had reached much clearer waters. At noon, February 23, we were approaching the second base, and made fast to the floe ice at 12.30. There we found all hands safe and well. The work of transferring stores and watering ship began at once. No one required any urging to hasten; the last four days had made it evident that if we were to get out this year in safety it would have to be before the next blizzard. By 9 p.m. on this day (February 23) all specimens and most of the stores were on board, and the fresh-water tanks filled. As I wished to spend the night steaming north under shelter of the glacier, we now got under way and were favoured with fine clear weather. The following day we were travelling the sea of bergs again, but this time in fine weather. For nearly 400 miles we made north amongst great numbers of bergs and floes. It appeared astonishing how we could have escaped running into them during our last blizzard. We did not get out of the icebergs until north of the 60th parallel. There appears to be some current or meeting of currents which collects the ice in this locality, as I have seen nothing like it in any other part of the Antarctic. The last icebergs were sighted in $55\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ S., and the *Aurora* continued her voyage towards Hobart before strong westerly gales and high seas, arriving there on March 15.