ANTARCTIC EXPLORATION.

ARRIVAL OF THE FRAM.

CAPTAIN AMUNDSEN'S RETICENCE.

WON'T TALK ABOUT SOUTH POLE.

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Capt. Roald Amundsen, with the other members of his expedition, arrived at Hobart yesterday afternoon in Nansen's old vessel, the Fram, from the Antarctic regions. Early in the morning a barquentine was signalled from Mount Nelson as having entered the river. This at first was thought to be the Iris from Adelaide, but when the vessel was within signalling range a message was received to the effect that she was the Fram, from the Bay of Whales, in the Ross Sea, well within the Antarctic Circle. Local interest was at once aroused, and knots of people shortly afterwards collected at the wharves in anticipation of the vessel coming alongside one of the piers. At noon the Marine Board's launch Egeria left its moorings with the Chief Health Officer (Dr. Sprott) and the Harbourmaster (Capt. M. C. McArthur). Shortly afterwards the Fram showed herself off Prince's Wharf, having come up the river under motive power. Those who had gathered were of opinion that, after the medical officer had granted pratique,

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"Please don't bring in the Pole," replied Capt. Amundsen, "but say rather that when I got so near to the Antarctic regions, which I had already visited, I felt I must make another voyage there before turning to the northward."

When asked if he had seen or heard anything on his way back of Captain Scott's expedition, now nearly due at Lyttelton, New Zealand, on its return from the Antarctic, where it was Captain Scott's intention to make a "dash for the Pole" last summer, Capt. Amundsen replied in the negative. He expressed himself as very interested in what he had seen and heard of the Australasian expedition led by Dr. Mawson, and expressed the opinion that from what he had heard of him, Dr. Mawson should make a clever leader, and that the expedition should have valuable and interesting results.

In conclusion, Capt. Amundsen reiterated his regret that he was bound by pre-existing engagements not to give fuller information at present, and expressed the hope that he would be able to do so shortly.

A question as to the date on which the Fram, with Amundsen and his land party on board, left the base camp in the Antarctic to return to Hobart was decided by Capt. Amundsen, after consideration, to be trenching on dangerous ground, and he simply said he would be glad to give the full story as soon as he was able to do so, but could not anticipate.

HEALTH OF THE CREW.

The port officer of health (Dr. Sprott) stated yesterday that the crew of the Fram appeared to be all fit and well, and had evidently been well fed and cared for. As far as he could see, any hardships which they might have endured had left no permanent traces.

the medical officer had granted pratique, the Harbourmaster would bring her alongside. But this was not to be, for as soon as the launch steamed away from her, the Fram was put about, and a few minutes later dropped anchor in Sandy Bay. When the launch arrived at the wharf it was found that the leader of the expedition, Capt. Amundsen, had come ashore alone. Capt. Amundsen was immediately driven to the office of the Norwegian Consul (Hon. James Macfarlane), and went through the correspondence awaiting him.

Capt. Amundsen was sought out by a "Mercury" reporter, but his questions fell on deaf ears. A visit was paid later in the afternoon to the Fram by a "Mercury" reporter. Pulling alongside, he asked that a rope or a ladder be lowered over the side, so that he could board the vessel, but his request only brought smiles to the faces of the good-humoured looking men who were lounging over the bulwarks. They at first professed ignorance of the English tongue, but the persistent queries of the reporter at last brought out the statement that they had no power to say anything in connection with the expedition or the ship for a couple of days.

The Fram on setting out from Christiania had 115 Greenland dogs on board, but of this number only 39 were brought back by the Fram, and of these 21 will be left at the Quarantine Station before the Fram leaves Hobart, to be taken back to the Antarctic by the Aurora for the use of Dr. Mawson. The dogs, in common with their surroundings on board, looked clean, and seemed to enjoy the sun as much as their masters. They had been running about loose on deck, and while "The Mercury" representative was in the vicinity a whistle from the owner of a camera on board brought them together, and they "kept perfectly still" while the photograph was taken. What became of the remainder of the dogs is as yet a matter of conjecture. They may have passed through the culinary department, while on the other hand they may have been lost on the way to the South Pole.

HAS SCOTT REACHED THE POLE?

A RUMOUR IN SYDNEY.

SYDNEY, March 7.

A press cablegram received from Wellington to-night reads: — "Amundsen wired to Sydney that Scott discovered the South Pole."

The Norwegian Consul in Sydney has received no such message, and although there it is reported that someone in Sydney has received a message to the same effect, efforts to locate it have so far not been successful.

GENESIS OF THE EXPEDITION.

THE CHANGE OF PLANS.

On August 10, 1910, it was announced that Captain Roald Amundsen had left Christiansand, in Norway, on an expedition to the Arctic regions in Nansen's old vessel, the Fram. It was stated that the Fram would proceed, via Cape Horn, to San Francisco, and then go through Behring Straits into the Arctic Ocean. It was understood that on getting into the Arctic the Fram would be put into the ice in the hope that the drift of the ice would carry her across the Polar basin, and out into the sea between Greenland and Spitzbergen, and it was stated that oceanographical investigations would be carried out. It may be remembered that Nansen evolved a theory, from the course of the drift of the Jeannette and from other things, that there was a steady drift of the ice from the Siberian coast across the Polar basin. The Fram was provisioned for seven years, so that she was ready to endure a long confinement in the ice.

After leaving Christiansand the Fram called at Funchal, in Madeira, and at the beginning of October a letter was received from Amundsen, posted at this port, stating that he had altered his plans. He wrote that he would call at Buenos Ayres, and then proceed to the Antarctic regions. He expected that nothing more would be heard of him until March, 1912.

The Fram not coming alongside the wharf may be accounted for in several ways. In the first place, had the vessel berthed all of the dogs would have to be quarantined; in the second, nothing in the way of stores was required, there being sufficient on board to last for seven years; and lastly, and doubtless the real reason, if she had berthed there would have been a possibility of members of the crew getting ashore, and spreading broadcast, if they so wished, the intelligence that the Pole had been reached or otherwise.

INTERVIEW WITH ARMUNDSEN.

HIS PLANS FOR FUTURE EXPLORATION.

Captain Amundsen, when seen yesterday afternoon by a "Mercury" reporter, gave an outline of the movements of the Fram, but declined to enter into any details regarding his movements in the Antarctic, stating that he was bound at present not to give this information. He added that he was very sorry that this was so, in view of the fact that this was his first port of call after his return from the Antarctic regions, and that he had already received much kindness since his arrival here. As soon as he could do so he would be very glad to take the inquirer on board the Fram, show him the charts and everything of interest, and give the fullest possible information, but for the time being he had regretfully to keep silent on the very points which people seemed most anxious to know about.

Asked on what date the expedition started, Captain Amundsen said they left Europe in the Fram in August, 1910, and called at Funchal, in Madeira, and Buenos Ayres. From the latter port they made direct for the Antarctic, and there, on January 13, 1911, they met Captain Scott's ship, the Terra Nova, in the Bay of Whales. Captain Amundsen then went on to say that he formed his base camp at a point on the great ice barrier, between King Edward Land and Victoria Land, in latitude 78deg. 38min. S. and longitude 164deg. W., or about 48deg. to the eastward of the longitude of Hobart, when he would leave the Antarctic regions, and proceed to San Francisco. He would then go through Behring Strait, and carry out his original programme. It is interesting to remark, in passing, that, so far, Captain Amundsen has done exactly what he had laid down. After over 15 months in the Antarctic he has returned thence in March, 1912, as he said 18 months ago that he would.

When Captain Scott's ship, the Terra Nova, reached the Bay of Whales on February 4, 1911, it found that the Fram was already there, and that Captain Amundsen was preparing to go into winter quarters. The message sent by the Terra Nova stated that he had with him eight men and 116 Greenland dogs, and was furnished with full equipment for a journey to the Pole. It was stated, however, that great uncertainty existed as to Captain Amundsen's future plans, as, according to one account, he intended laying down depots at 80deg. S. and 83deg. S., while according to another he intended making an attempt to reach the Pole by a winter journey. A question was put to Captain Amundsen yesterday about the depots, but he declined to commit himself to saying whether he had established any, still less to saying where they were if he had.

Something of a sensation was caused in exploration circles by the announcement that Captain Amundsen had established himself at the Bay of Whales, many of those interested contending that it was a breach of etiquette for Amundsen to go to this particular place, and that he should have left this part of the Antarctic to Captain Scott. On the other hand, Professor David, of Sydney, who had been a member of Shackleton's expedition, expressed the opinion that there was ample scope for the Amundsen expedition, as well as for that of Captain Scott, to work without coming into undesirable conflict or competition. Had Amundsen established his winter quarters near Mount Erebus, and utilised Sir Ernest Shackleton's routes, he might have been accused of "Pole jumping," but his base was nearly 500 miles to the east. He thought Captain Amundsen would strike out an entirely new route for himself.

and a long way to the eastward of the part of the Antarctic coast which Dr. Mawson's expedition intends to explore. He, himself, with nine men under his command, remained on shore, while the Fram, under Captain Neilsen, returned to Buenos Ayres. After leaving that port the Fram made a voyage across to the Cape of Good Hope and back, carrying out oceanographical investigations, observations of currents, etc. Observations were made at more than sixty stations, and scientific work of great value, which had not hitherto been attempted in this part of the ocean, was carried out.

Captain Amundsen, while speaking in very high terms of the work carried out by Captain Neilsen and his companions at sea, gently, but firmly, resisted the most pertinacious efforts to turn the conversation to what he, himself, and those with him, had been doing on land, or on the ice, while the vessel was away. Of the South Pole itself, or the expedition's "furthest south," he declined to speak at all, and would not be led to the subject of Antarctic long-distance travelling, beyond remarking that the Greenland dogs, of which the expedition took a hundred and fifty down, were what the expedition used, not ponies, and that much use was made of skis, the national snowshoes of the Norwegians. He observed that a Norwegian would be quite at a loss in getting over ice without his skis, and that his proficiency with them gave Norwegians an advantage over those not accustomed to this means of locomotion.

A very interesting piece of information incidentally supplied by Capt. Amundsen was that the Fram met on January 16 the Japanese Antarctic expedition, which, it will remembered, left Sydney just before Dr. Mawson's expedition departed from Hobart. Capt. Amundsen said that this was before he himself came on board the Fram, and that consequently he did not see the Japanese himself, and knew nothing as to their plans or future movements. He did not know exactly where the meeting took place, but it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the great ice barrier.

Capt. Amundsen was then asked what would be the future movements of the Fram? He replied that she would stay

CAPTAIN DAVIS'S OPINION.

Captain Davis, who is now in command of the Aurora, and commanded the Nimrod in Shackleton's expedition, said at the time when Amundsen started that he believed Captain Amundsen would succeed in reaching the Pole, and added:—"He, as a Norwegian, was born to work as no Englishman could, and he has a wonderful team of dogs, which will take him almost anywhere. He has been called the "hardest nut in all Norway." His daring is shown in landing where huge tracts of ice frequently break away. Captain Amundsen is a leader of men, and no difficulties will turn him back."

THE LEADER OF THE EXPEDITION.

Captain Roald Amundsen, the leader of the Norwegian expedition, is still a comparatively young man, being only 39 years of age, but he has the appearance, perhaps due to the hardships he has encountered, of being somewhat older. This is not his first visit to the Antarctic, since as a young man he went down as first officer of the Belgica, the vessel used by the Belgian expedition in 1897-1899.

The achievement on which Captain Amundsen's fame chiefly rests, however, is his navigation of the North-West Passage. In 1903-1906 he made an expedition to the Arctic regions, north of North America, in the Djoa, a little vessel of 47 tons. Nearly two years were spent in the neighbourhood of the north magnetic pole, in making observations and investigations, and the Djoa then proceeded to the westward, and down through Behring Straits, going right through from the Atlantic to the Pacific. She was the first vessel to accomplish this feat, though the existence of the passage had been proved by land and ice journeys. In this connection it is interesting to notice that it was in attempting to solve the mystery of the North-West Passage that Sir John Franklin, once Governor of Tasmania, lost his life, together with all his companions.

Captain Amundsen has had a good deal of Arctic experience, in addition to that gained on this voyage, having been on several whaling and sealing voyages to the north of Norway, in the vicinity of Spitzbergen.

for two or three days in Hobart, and would then sail direct for Buenos Ayres. She would not need to revictual in this port, since she was provisioned for seven years when she left Norway in 1910. From Buenos Ayres she would go round Cape Horn, in order to carry out the original programme announced when the Fram left Europe, that is, that she should go north from the Horn, call at San Francisco, and then go through Behring Straits, and try to cross the polar sea in the drift ice, with the hope of coming out on the other side, somewhere between Greenland and Spitzbergen.

"I suppose," said the interviewer, "that when you got so near to the South Pole as Cape Horn you felt that the Arctic would have to wait, and that you must make a dash to the southward?"

The crew of the Fram is composed of Norwegians, many of whom, like Captain Amundsen, have had considerable experience in the ice of the Arctic regions.

HOBART AND ANTARCTIC EXPLORATION.

It may be of interest to notice that the arrival of the Fram marks the fourth Antarctic exploring expedition which has visited Hobart since Sir James Ross made this his last port of call before his voyage to the Antarctic with the Erebus and Terror, in 1841. The next Antarctic-bound vessel to put into Hobart was Borchgrevinck's vessel, the Belgica, in 1897, and some years later came Scott's Morning and Terra Nova.

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the close of last year. Mawson's expedition made this the fitting-out port for the Aurora, and now the first of the five expeditions now working in the Antarctic to get back to civilisation makes this its first port of call.

The other expeditions still in the Antarctic for possibly now, in some instances, on the way back) are Captain Scott's British expedition, in the Terra Nova, due shortly at Lyttelton, in New Zealand; Dr. Mawson's Australasian expedition, the German expedition under Lieutenant Filchner, which is working from the South American side, and the Japanese expedition.

CAPTAIN AMUNDSEN'S VESSEL.

The Fram, an auxiliary barquentine of 402 tons register, is a famous vessel, and will always take a prominent place in the history of Arctic and Antarctic exploration. Practically speaking, she has been as far as possible to the two ends of the earth, having been used by Dr. Nansen in his Arctic voyage in 1893-6, and now has taken Captain Amundsen to the southern ice barrier. According to Nansen's account in "Farthest North" of the building of the vessel, two points were particularly observed in the building of the Fram; one, the shape of the hull, is such as to best withstand the attacks of ice. And thus she was built, more attention being paid to making her safe and a warm stronghold while drifting in the ice, than to endowing her with speed or good sailing qualities. One other aim was to make her as small as possible. The reason for this was that a small ship was, of course, lighter than a large one, and could be made stronger in proportion to her weight. A small ship, too, was more suitable for navigation in the ice than a large one. She was easier to handle, and a berth could more easily be found for her in the packing ice-floes.

found for her in the packing ice-floes. It was also the aim of Nansen that the vessel should be short, so that she could thread her way easily among the ice-floes especially, as great length would have been a source of weakness when ice pressure set in. But in order that such a ship, which has, moreover, very sloping sides, should possess the necessary carrying capacity, she was built very broad, and her breadth is in fact about a third of her length. Another point that was considered was the making of her sides as smooth as possible without projecting edges, while plane surfaces were, as much as possible, avoided in the neighbourhood of the most vulnerable points, and the hull assumed a rounded, plump form. Bow, stern, and keel, all were rounded off so that the ice should not be able to get a grip of her anywhere. For this reason, too, the keel was sunk in the planking so that barely three inches projected, and its edges were rounded off. The hull is made pointed fore and aft and somewhat resembles a pilot boat minus the keel and the sharp garboard strakes. The stem consists of three stout oak beams, one inside the other, forming a thickness of 4ft. of solid oak; inside the stem are fitted solid breast-hooks of oak and iron, to bind the ship's sides together, and from these breast-hooks stays are placed against the pawl-bit. The bow is protected by an iron stem ,and across it are fitted transverse bars, which run some small distance backwards on either side, as is usual in sealers. The stern is of special and somewhat peculiar construction. On either side of the rudder and propeller ports, which are sided, 24 inches, is fitted a stout oak counter-timber, following the curvature of the stern right up to the upper deck, and forming, so to speak, a double sternpost.

The planking is carried outside these timbers, and the stern protected by heavy iron plates wrought outside the planking. Between these two counter timbers there is a well for the screw, and also one for the rudder, through which they can both be hoisted up on deck. The frame timbers are of oak, and had originally been intended for the Norwegian navy, and had laid under cover at Horten for 30 years. The frames are about 21 inches wide, and are placed close together, with only about an inch or an inch and a half between, and these interstices were filled with pitch and sawdust mixed, from the keel to a little distance above the waterline, in order to keep the ship moderately watertight, even should the outer skin

he chafed off. The inner of the three outside plankings is of oak, three inches thick, fastened with spikes and carefully caulked; outside this is another oak sheathing, 4 inches thick, fastened with through bolts and caulked; and outside these comes the ice skin of greenheart, which runs down to the keel. The lining inside the frame timbers is of pitch pine planks, some 4in. and some 8in. thick. The total thickness of the ship's sides, therefore, is from 24in. to 28in., of water-tight solid wood. The hold looks like a cobweb of balks, stanchions, and braces. The keel consists of two heavy American elm logs, 14in. square. The sides of the hull are rounded downwards to the keel, so that a transverse section of the frame reminds one of half a cocoanut. The principal dimensions of the ship are as follow:—Length of keel, 102 ft.; length of water-line, 113ft.; length from stem to stern on deck, 128ft.; extreme breadth, 36ft.; breadth of water-line, exclusive of ice skin, 34ft.; depth, 17ft.; draught of water with light cargo, 12½ft.; displacement with light cargo, 420 tons. With heavy cargo the draught is over 15ft., and the displacement 800 tons. There is a freeboard of about 3ft. 6in. In addition to the requisite provisions for dogs and men for more than five years she could carry coal for four months' steaming at full speed. The Fram was originally rigged as a three-masted fore-and-aft schooner, but is now converted into a barquentine. The mainmast is 80ft. high, the main topmast is 50ft., so that the crow's nest, which is on the main topmast, is about 102ft. above the

water. The engine is an oil one, and is fed with petroleum. It has an indicated horse-power of 220, and is capable of driving the vessel at a speed of between six and seven knots. She is manned by a crew of eleven, and the landing party consisted of nine, making the total number of souls on board on arrival 20. The officers responsible for the navigation of the Fram are as follow:—Captain Nielsen, Lieut. Prestrud, Lieut. Sjeitsen, Chief Engineer Sinderek; second, Christiansen.