

THE SOUTH POLE.

There is no reason whatever to doubt the truth of the dramatic story which Captain Amundsen tells of his discovery of the South Pole. The Dr. Cook farce has made people inclined to be sceptical about the stories of polar exploration, and even to this day many people doubt whether Peary actually reached the North Pole. According to his own account, he left his companions behind, and was alone when he came to his goal. In the case of Dr. Amundsen the story is much more circumstantial. He gives distances and days, the details of temperatures, the heights of the mountains which he traversed, and so much detailed description as brings the whole picture before the minds of his readers. Moreover, he had two companions with him, spent three days in making observations, and hoisted the Norwegian flag and that of the Fram on the spot which, so far as he could get with his instruments, is exactly the Pole. Captain Amundsen has performed two exploits which will make his name live so long as the world still loves tales of daring and endurance, especially those which are connected with Arctic and Antarctic exploration. He penetrated the North-West Passage, and now has been the first man to reach the South Pole. Sir Ernest Shackleton got within ninety miles of it when he had to turn back, but apparently Captain Amundsen found weather conditions somewhat more favourable. There is, of course, the great difference between the Fram expedition and those which have preceded it that Captain Amundsen and his men are hardened Arctic tourists. They have lived for years under conditions which would be impossible to most men. Their organisation seems to have been splendid; food supplies were ample, and the hardships inseparable from such an expedition were reduced to a minimum. All this, so far from detracting from the merit of the exploit, adds to it. Leadership is everything in attempting such feats, and the first essential of a good leader is that his plans should be so arranged as to save himself and his men from unnecessary suffering. That they had to endure much appears from the account of the surmounting of lofty mountains, meeting with fierce blizzards and dangerous snowdrifts, not to speak of the crevasses which from time to time had to be surmounted. It is interesting to note how little modern scientific discoveries, which affect people in

according to how new have modern scientific discoveries, which affect people in ordinary life every day, and in the smallest details, have helped those explorers who have achieved such great results during recent years. Captain Amundsen set out in the Fram, Nansen's old boat, which is a wooden ship of somewhat ancient, though very sturdy type. His journey across the ice and snow was made in sledges drawn by dogs, in the same fashion as the older explorers. Like them, too, he had to kill a number of the dogs for food, but, by good management, was able to keep enough to get back to his headquarters in safety. There were no modern or scientifically treated foods, but simply a large supply of seal meat, obtained and prepared in the Antarctic regions. Indeed, the only intrusion of modern invention seems to have been the fitting up of the Fram with an auxiliary oil engine, which would add much to its efficiency, though it would not in any way help the explorers in

their final dash for the Pole. It is impossible to say that any results of actual utility, commercial or scientific, will come from the expedition, though scientists expect much; but a fuller report from Captain Amundsen will probably settle that question. But, without doubt, it was a great feat; the doing something which a number of men have attempted, and in which all, up to this time, have failed. It shows Captain Amundsen and his companions as intrepid, enterprising, and much-enduring men, who were deterred by no obstacles and no hardships. It will be interesting to find if Captain Scott, who went by a different route, also reached the Pole. Captain Amundsen sees no reason why he should not have succeeded, and generously adds that he hopes he has. It is the proper spirit which explorers should show towards one another, but which is so often conspicuously absent. To Hobart has fallen the distinction of being the port from which the news of this successful enterprise has been sent to all parts of the world. So far Captain Amundsen and his crew have been inaccessible, even to newspaper reporters, but no doubt now that there is nothing more in the way of news to temporarily suppress, some effort will be made to express the appreciation which the citizens will always have for men who show such qualities as mark those who have reached the goal of all Antarctic explorers.