

WORLD FAMED AVIATORS.

SIR ROSS SMITH AND PARTY IN IPSWICH.

HEARTY AND ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME.

LEADER'S TRIBUTE TO HIS COMRADES.

REPAIRING THE DAMAGED ENGINE.

WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT AT WORKSHOPS.

Yesterday saw enacted another notable incident in the history of Ipswich, when Capt. Ross Smith, M.C., D.F.C., Air Force Cross, Lieut. Sir Keith M. Smith, R.F.C., and Sergeant-Mechanic J. M. Bennett, M.S.M., arrived in the city by the second division of the Western mail train, and were given a welcome which did honour to the residents, as well as being distinctly worthy of the great occasion. Long before the time for the arrival of the train a large crowd had congregated on the station, and in view of the absence from the city of so many residents, who are on holidays, it was a remarkably enthusiastic and representative gathering. When the train steamed in there was a rush for the front carriage, where the party was located, and loud cheers greeted the arrival of the heroic airmen. The police and railway officials had a difficult task in endeavouring to keep the crowd back. The world-famed "birdmen" did not immediately put in an appearance, and the carriage was detached from the remainder of the train, it being the desire of Sir Ross Smith to at once inspect the railway workshops at Ipswich, with a view to seeing what could be done in the way of effecting repairs to his machine. The Mayor (Ald E. J. L. Easton) and others who were there to welcome the flyers, crossed the line to the detached carriage, and Sir Ross, in response to an urgent call from someone in the crowd, to the effect that they wanted to see the airmen, stepped on the platform, and his appearance was the signal for the renewal of the cheering. Of youthful appearance, fair-haired, medium stature, and having a responsive smile, Sir Ross and his brother at once won the hearts of the large assembly. A hearty reception also awaited Serg. Bennett. With characteristic modesty, Sir Ross, in his subsequent speech in acknowledgment of the welcome accorded the party, gave full credit to his colleagues for the success of the undertaking, and he announced their determination to complete the journey to the Southern States by air, as they had intended.

The Mayor announced the desire of the City Council and the people generally to have an opportunity of publicly welcoming the party in the Town Hall and Sir Ross Smith consented to that course being followed. The party was accompanied by Lieut. Hall, representing the Defence Department, but Serg. W. M. Shiers, the other mechanic, is in Charleville, attending to the machine. On the platform to meet the party were:—The Minister for Railways (Mr. J. A. Fihelly), and Mrs. Fihelly, the Chief Mechanical Engineer (Mr. C. F. Pemberton), the

State Commandant (Brigadier-Gen. G. H. H. Irving), Major Glover, D.S.O., Ald. G. H. Shillito, O. Perry, J. F. Lobb, S. H. Harding, A. T. Stephenson, W. V. Hefferan, F. Barker, P. W. Cameron, I. Ham Messrs F. A. Cooper and D. A. Gledson, M.L.A., the Mayor, Messrs J. G. Bishop and G. W. Allen (representing the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce and Industry), A. Butchart (president of the Queensland Pastoral and Agricultural Society), T. J. Barker (who welcomed Sir Ross Smith and party on behalf of the Ipswich Navy and Army Veterans' Association), Mr. W. Pratt (President of the Ipswich Swimming Centre), and a number of prominent residents.

The damaged engine of the aeroplane was aboard the same train and this was immediately taken to the North Ipswich workshops, which Sir Ross and party visited in the afternoon. By a happy coincidence the arrangements for the carrying out of the work of repairs will be in charge of a former associate of Sir Ross Smith, in the person of Cpl. A. H. Luxton, of Woodend, Ipswich, who was previously attached to the No. 1 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps. He was associated with Sir Ross Smith for over twelve months, and has flown with him in Egypt and Palestine, in a Bristol "Fighter." Cpl. Luxton journeyed to Charleville some days ago to meet the party. It will be remembered that it was previously announced that the Defence Department had made available for Sir Ross Smith and party the services of three mechanics to assist in the repairs. These assistants arrived in Brisbane on New Year's Eve, and yesterday morning they met the aviators at Ipswich. Their names are:—Sergs. Carter and Chester and Cpl. Graham. They have all seen service with the Australian Flying Corps and are now attached to the Aviation Instructional Staff.

A number of members of the train Tea Society were on the platform and Miss Ferrier (in the unavoidable absence of Mrs. J. A. Cameron), on behalf of the society, presented Sir Ross Smith with an Australian flag for the party.

WELCOME AT THE TOWN HALL.

The Town Hall was crowded when the visitors appeared on the platform, where a number of representative citizens had gathered to greet the aviators. At the instance of the Minister for Railways, cheers were given for Sir Ross Smith and his associates.

In welcoming the three members of the crew, the Mayor said he was sure they were all highly honoured at the presence of such personages as their visitors, and they were deeply indebted to Sir Ross Smith and party for

presence of such personages as their visitors, and they were deeply indebted to Sir Ross Smith and party for having consented to come to the Town Hall at that time, as he knew they were anxious to see what could be done for their engine. They were sorry when they learned that Sir Ross Smith could not continue his flight, and they sincerely hoped that the engine trouble would be overcome, and that they would be able to accomplish what they had set out to do. They understood that the Minister for Railways was prepared to give the aviators every assistance possible and they all sincerely trusted that the mechanics would secure a "feather in their caps" by having the engine rectified in the Ipswich shops. They must acknowledge that the feat which had been accomplished was something extraordinary—something the world did not expect—and they offered Sir Ross Smith and his comrades their heartiest congratulations, as they had done something marvellous. He hoped they would be able to fly over their native city of Adelaide. The feat which had been accomplished was an historical one, and the story in connection therewith would be handed down from generation to generation. He trusted the visitors would have a pleasant stay in Ipswich.

Alderman G. H. Shillito said that the residents of Ipswich wanted to honour the aviators for the great work which they had done for aviation and for Australia. Air service had come to stay, and whether the battles of the future would be fought in the air or not, the achievement of these men showed what could be done. He referred to the fact that the first men to fly from England to Australia were Australians. (Loud applause.)

The Minister for Railways (Mr. J. A. Fihelly) said he did not think they could get a more fitting occasion for him to address them as fellow Australians. These young men had accomplished what had been done by their

own brains, ingenuity, and courage. Their deeds stirred our pride, and the pride of every Australian born person. Battles and wars had been mentioned, but he hoped that what these young men had accomplished was not going to encourage more battles and more wars. He liked to think that men such as they would be able to apply the knowledge they had gained for the furtherance of the peace and prosperity of the world. "On behalf of the Government of Queensland, I tender you the warmest possible welcome," added Mr. Fihelly. "Anything we can do for you will be done—£1000, £2000, or £3000 is nothing.—(Laughter and cheers)—I welcome you as fellow Australians to Queensland." (Applause.)

Sir Ross Smith, on rising to reply, was greeted with great enthusiasm and cheers. "It is quite impossible for me to thank you for the reception which has been tendered us," said Sir Ross. "It is quite unexpected. When we were coming along on the train we were told there would be a few people to meet us at Ipswich, and we were more than surprised to find that a large number of people turned up at the station to give us a welcome. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for this splendid reception, and all the kind remarks which have been made. It is true that we have done something; we have had a capital machine, in fact, the finest in the world for the job. We also had the

machine, in fact, the finest in the world for the job. We also had the finest engine—Rolls Royce. There are only four of them in existence. Two were used by the late Captain Sir John Alcock in his flight across the Atlantic, and we have the other two. At first we were sorry that we met with an engine mishap at Charleville, but now I am beginning to think that it is a good thing, for had it not occurred, we would, perhaps, not have visited Ipswich. (Laughter.) We sent spare parts to Darwin before we left England, but, unfortunately, they were not the parts which had been broken. However, owing to the kindness of the State Government, and the Minister for Railways, the resources of the Ipswich workshops have been placed at our disposal. That has bucked us up tremendously. You cannot imagine how happy we felt because we were very keen to finish the job in the 'old 'bus.' (Cheers.) If we get the engine repaired here we will have it railed to Charleville and then fly on south. The Defence Department has offered us a machine in which to continue our flight, but we really think we ought to continue in our own machine. We want everyone to see the old Viny. A matter which appears to have been overlooked in some quarters, is the splendid work which has been accomplished by our two Sergeant-mechanics. (Cheers.) Sergeant Bennett is here to-day, but Sergeant Shiers has had to stay behind to overhaul the machine at Charleville. I would like to say what fine work these men have done. At every place we landed they would hop off and practically have their coats off before the machine was at a standstill. On some occasions they worked all night, so that we could get an early start in the morning. Without men like them we could not have done what we did. Not only in the whole of the expedition were they keen on the job, but they were determined to get there, and it was to that no doubt, that the success of the flight was due. My brother was the navigator all through. They overcame all difficulties of rain and clouds without an undue trouble. I want to say how thankful we are for the kindness shown us by the people everywhere, and to thank the people of Ipswich, and the Government and the Minister for Railways, for their assistance in offering to do everything possible to repair the machine."

Sir Keith Smith also spoke a few words of thanks, remarking that speech making was "not in his line," and expressing his thanks for the kindness shown the members of the party in Ipswich.

Work of Dismantling the Engine.

Immediately after the arrival of the engine in Ipswich steps were taken to have it taken to the workshops. The whole machine weighs a ton, is 67 feet in length—or longer than a cricket pitch. The engine alone weighs 1100 lbs. It was taken by rail to the railway workshops, and placed by means of a stout crane on a bench. The workmen at the shops were enthusiastic, and did everything possible to assist the aero-mechanics to immediately proceed with the work of stripping the engine. Two connecting rods, made of chrome valadium, are missing, and were lost in the scrub around Charleville. They broke while the machine was in the air, and were fired against the sump (the oil drainer) with such velocity that a large hole was rent in the side. It is thought

with such velocity that a large hole was rent in the side. It is thought that it will take more than a fortnight to effect the repairs, for it was found necessary yesterday to send to Brisbane for material with which to attend to the connecting rods. Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith, Sergeant Bennett, and Lieutenant V. Hall, A.F.C., were in attendance at the workshops shortly after luncheon, to witness the stripping of the engine. The last-named comes from Brisbane, and in his capacity as an officer of the A.F.C. had been at Charleville for some days giving the crew whatever assistance was possible. Sergeant Carter is working on the engine, having been detailed to do so by the Defence authorities in Melbourne. He arrived in Ipswich the previous night, with Sergeant Chester and Corporal Grange, but the two last-named left for Charleville yesterday morning, to assist Sergeant Shiers to overhaul the starboard engine. It is the portside engine which is undergoing repairs.

Some of the Party's Experiences.

In the course of an interesting conversation with representatives of the Press, Sir Ross Smith gave a few particulars of the experiences of his party during the big trip. He said they found that quite a number of machines were in use in India, in connection with the trouble existing there with some of the natives. The coldest time which they experienced was soon after they had crossed the Channel, where they encountered 25 degrees of frost. They were at an altitude of about 8000 or 9000 feet at the time endeavouring to get above some clouds which might otherwise have caused trouble. They had flown, however, as low as 500 feet. The longest period covered without landing was between Timor and Port Darwin, a distance of about 450 miles. They were not in the habit of carrying a full weight of petrol, as it created unnecessary weight. "It is remarkable," said Sir Ross, "that wherever we went our arrival was marked by rains, and I hope that Queensland will have the same experience. At Crete they had the first rain after their arrival which they had experienced for a long time, and similar conditions prevailed after our advent at Egypt, Mesopotamia, Siam and the Peninsula.

"It was very curious to learn what the niggers thought of us in various

places," continued the noted aviator. "In Timor, for instance, the niggers thought we were spirits of the departed, who were flying about year in and year out, looking for a place of rest, which we could not find. In Siam the natives had been informed that our machine was piloted by God, and had the devil aboard. In Persia they did not know what to make of us, so they put us down as 'common or garden devils.' At Akiab one of the very few European women residents pestered us for a long time, requesting a souvenir. We were working at full speed, in order that we might get away at day-break. However, she was not to be denied, and at last, in sheer desperation, my brother Keith presented her with an empty six-gallon petrol tin. The lady was delighted."

"I wish through the medium of the 'Queensland Times,' said Sir Ross, "to thank the good people of Queensland who have sent me and my colleagues messages of congratulation. We were very pleased to receive them in out of way parts, but, owing to the large number we received, it has been

in out of way parts, but, owing to the large number we received, it has been impossible to reply to them individually. Queensland, I had always heard, was a very hospitable State to strangers, and I can vouch for that to the fullest extent."

Records of the Men.

The record of Sir Ross-Smith has been a somewhat meteoric one. He joined the A.I.F. as a trooper as soon as the Imperial authorities accepted the offer of the Commonwealth to send an expeditionary force overseas. His brother Keith also volunteered, but was rejected as medically unfit. He made two other unsuccessful attempts to join, and then proceeded to England, where he was accepted by the Royal Flying Corps. Sir Ross was promoted, while in camp at Adelaide, and was in charge of a machine-gun position on Gallipoli, where he accomplished such splendid work that the famous Queensland cavalry leader, Lieut-Gen. Sir Harry Chauvel, promoted him to commissioned rank, as soon as the evacuation was accomplished. He won the Military Cross, and the Distinguished Flying Cross, before he was selected to leave Palestine and report in England to Generals Borton and Salmon. He piloted these officers to India on an important Imperial errand, and on return to England learned that the Australian Government had offered a prize of £10,000 to the first Australian to fly from Britain to Australia.

Sergt. J. M. Bennett, Air Force Medal, (with bar and M.S.M.), who accompanied Capt. Sir Ross-Smith and Lieut. Sir Keith Smith to Ipswich, won his decorations for good work with the Australian Flying Corps. Sergt. W. M. Shiers, Australian Flying Cross (with bar), left Australia in the early days of the war, as a member of the First Light Horse, but transferred to the A.F.C. after the Gallipoli campaign. Sir Ross-Smith is 27 years of age, and has performed the duties of pilot during the trip. His brother, the navigating officer, is two years older. Neither of them is married.

The Work of Dismantling.

The work of dismantling the engine will be continued to-day. Sir Ross-Smith pointed out yesterday, that it is impossible to say just now exactly what damage has been done, but this will be revealed in the course of a day or two, when the work of stripping has been completed. It is considered that excellent substitutes for the wooden parts that will have to be renewed will be made from Queensland maple, and the workmen have confidence in being able to effect repairs to the remaining parts.

Last night Sir Ross-Smith and party attended the picture entertainment at Martoo's Olympia, the Mayor being also present.