

OBITUARIES

JACOB CROSS died on 8 July 1946. He joined the National Antarctic Expedition ship *Discovery* as Petty Officer first class in 1901 and served throughout Captain Scott's first expedition. Apart from his value as a Petty Officer, Helmsman and Quartermaster, Cross proved himself in all respects an excellent explorer. He had the temperament and physique most suitable for Polar conditions; he was good at sledging and most resourceful in making and improvising the gear necessary for every occasion which arose. He was interested in natural history and became Dr Wilson's right-hand man. Wilson says of him: "What a good right hand I was given in Cross, who not only learned to make good skins for our bird collection, but who, in the matter of making Emperor Penguin's skins, improved upon his teacher. Always willing and thoroughly capable, it was to a large extent thanks to him that I was enabled at times to save much of what otherwise would have been lost, when, as on our visit to the Macquarie islands, we had far more in hand than one man could possibly have managed." After leaving the *Discovery* in late 1904, Cross returned to the Royal Navy, served in the First World War, and, after retiring, settled at Gillingham in Kent. He always kept up his interest in polar exploration, and never missed any of the gatherings, until his death.

R. W. S.

H. G. MELSOM was born at Sandar in Norway in 1870 and he died there on 19 August 1946. Having started life in the seal hunting and bottle-nose fishing he graduated to the greater whale fisheries and became a whaling captain of very wide experience. Work in North Atlantic waters was followed by a number of seasons in the North Pacific, at the turn of the century, and finally he captained a series of ships in the Antarctic Fishery. Melsom will be particularly remembered for the leading part which he took in the development of pelagic whaling. He was largely responsible for the introduction of the modern system of hauling up the whales by a slipway on to the deck of the factory ship. The *Lancing*, in 1925, was the first vessel fitted in this way. So was inaugurated the most recent phase in the development of the great Southern Ocean whale fishery, the factory ships now being able to operate in the open ocean. Following his invention of the slipway it is interesting to speculate on Melsom's indirect influence on the recent development of vehicle-landing craft in war.

Dr NIKOLAUS PETERS, who died in late 1940, was the leading German biological authority on whales and whaling. From its foundation in 1937, Dr Peters was leader of the German "Reichstelle für Walforschung" in Hamburg. He edited *Der neue deutsche Walfang* (Hamburg, 1938). This important work covered, with Teutonic thoroughness, all aspects of the pre-war German participation in the Southern Ocean fishery, from the whales themselves to the mechanism and chemistry of their disposal, and from the hydrography of the Southern Ocean to the statistics of the yearly yield of the fishery.

Lieutenant CHOKU SHIRASE died at Nagoya in Japan on 10 September 1946, aged eighty-six. In 1911-12 he led a Japanese Antarctic expedition. This expedition was unable to reach the South Pole as planned, but in January 1912 a party sledged 160 miles south-eastward across the Ross Shelf Ice from the Bay of Whales to a point in lat. 80° 5' S., long. 156° 37' W. Here the party paraded before the Sun-flag and raised a threefold *Banzai* for the Emperor. The region was named "Yamato Setsugen" (i.e. Yamato Snowplain; Yamato being the poetical name for Japan).

On 23 January Shirase also made a landing in Biscoe Bay, King Edward VII Land, but none of his party penetrated more than ten miles inland into this area, which had first been visited only six weeks earlier by the Eastern Sledge Party of Roald Amundsen's expedition. Shirase's expedition made no new geographical discoveries, but it is of interest because it still represents the sole Japanese attempt at Antarctic exploration. In spite of unlimited enthusiasm and devotion to the Emperor, Shirase failed to win recognition in Japan until 1939, when there was a considerable revival of Japanese interest in the Antarctic in connection with whaling developments. Earlier, in 1933, when the Nippon Polar Research Institute was founded at Sito-Shi, Shirase was the first President.