

EXPLORERS' EXPERIENCES.

SIX THOUSAND MILES' SAIL.

IN A 30-TON AUXILIARY YAWL.
VISIT TO AN ACTIVE VOLCANO.

One of the most exciting voyages that have been made on this side of the Pacific was completed yesterday by the auxiliary yawl-schooner *Alfreda II*. This vessel, only 30 tons displacement, has, since March 18 last, when she left for a cruise among the islands, including the New Hebrides and the Solomons, travelled over 6000 miles.

The yachting party comprised Mr. C. H. Relph, Mr. Donald G. Mackay (the well-known explorer), Messrs. C. H. Jordan and George Wing, of Sydney, and Mr. C. W. Sinclair, of New Zealand. The lastnamed gentleman was picked up in the New Hebrides. The craft, in addition, carried Captain Dernier (master), a deckhand, and a cook. The yachtsmen joined the yawl at Noumea, to which place they journeyed by the French mail steamer *Armand Behic*. Their first destination was the New Hebrides, and with a permit they went into Tanna. While there they visited the active volcano Yasan, and saw the fierce belching lava rising in the air. This scene, however, only lasted a few minutes. According to a description given last night by Mr. Relph it was a sight long to be remembered. It was what he termed a nerve-breaking spectacle. The party took 2½ days to reach the summit of this great volcano from Port Resolution, and about the same time to get back. What was particularly noticeable before reaching the top was that the ground around appeared quite hot in some places, and steam was being emitted from the soil. The earth had a hollow sound when walked upon. At intervals they came across hot springs. The crater itself was found to be 1½ mile round, and 900ft deep.

From there the yawl sailed across to Vila (New Hebrides), where the party was hospitably received by Mr. King, the British resident, and the port medical officer, Dr. Crombie. Thence they proceeded to Malekula, sailing along the southern and western coasts. Nothing of extraordinary interest was sighted, and the natives both at Tanna and Malekula were found to be quiet. Most of these were aboriginals who had been deported from the sugar plantations in Queensland, while others were of the type civilised by the missionaries. The trip from Malekula to the Solomon Islands occupied six days.

A course was then shaped to Gaudal Canal, and then on to Aola and Tulagal. On arrival at the last-mentioned place the travellers got a surprise in the form of a fine of £25 for having called at places such as Tanna and Malekula without having first entered Tulagal. Mr. Relph explained that his reason for not calling first at Tulagal was that a south-easterly breeze favoured their course to Tanna and the other places. Mr. King recognised the permit granted by the Government of New Caledonia, and in return gave them a letter to Mr. Woodford, Resident Commissioner of the Solomons. It happened, however, that Mr. Woodford was absent, and the duty of imposing the penalty fell to a banker's clerk, who stated on fining him £25 that if Mr. Woodford had been there the amount would probably have been £100. Mr. Relph, however, is quite confident

there the amount would probably have been £100. Mr. Relph, however, is quite confident that Mr. Woodford would have honoured the permit from Mr. King, just as the latter gentleman had in turn honoured that from the Governor of New Caledonia. This same clerk, according to Mr. Relph, fined Mr. Jack London, the American novelist, £5 for a similar "offence."

They next called at Gizo. Here Mr. Mackay left the yawl and returned by steamer. On the *Alfreda's* return terrific weather was met with on the run across the Pacific. An unpleasant incident on this account was the sea-sickness of Mr. Jordan, who was without food for 10 days. It was ultimately decided to make Bowen in order to save his life. The bad weather continued from Bowen down the Queensland coast, the little craft having continually to seek shelter. Two days had to be spent at Mackay, and further down Coff's Harbour and Trial Bay protected the weather-bound vessel. Incidentally it may be mentioned that a report received by the Navigation Department from Bellinger stated that a buoy marked "*Alfreda II*" had been washed ashore at that port. The *Alfreda* left Trial Bay at 5 o'clock on Sunday morning, and reached Sydney at 1 p.m. yesterday.

The daring vessel's dimensions are:—Length, 55ft, beam 15ft, draft 6ft. She carried five tons of lead on her keel and five tons inside. She is yawl-rigged, and fitted with a 16-h.p. oil engine. Her accommodation consists of six berths and two private cabins. There are also a sail-room and a large galley.