

28 Men Cut Off From the World—Adventures on a Frozen Continent

The Little Band of Heroes Locked in the Grip of Ice While All Europe Rocked and Reeled

A Book Being Read Now

South. The Story of the 1914-1917 Antarctic Expedition. By Sir Ernest Shackleton. With magnificent photographs. Heinemann. 25s.

THERE are a few heroic stories that the world will never forget, some old, some new, and the newest has just been told in Sir Ernest Shackleton's enthralling book.

During the first two years of the Great War, while the people of the British race and their friends among the nations were battling with desperate bravery for all they and the world held dear, 56 Britishers, in two ships, under the leadership of Sir Ernest Shackleton, were battling in the ice, far off in the desolation around the South Pole, out of call from all the rest of mankind.

Three Shining Names

Imperishably noble are the stories of the Great War, but not one whit more noble than the doings of those isolated little bands of men striving to overcome the rigours of the blizzard-swept continent at the southern limit of the earth.

Among the men who have dared the uttermost in the bleak Antarctic three names shine resplendently: Scott, Amundsen, and Shackleton. Amundsen was the only one who conquered and lived. Scott conquered and died. Shackleton failed; but his heroic failure takes no second place.

As a story of how men can dare and do, suffer undaunted, and go on, triumphing in spirit over the extremity of human weakness, wringing victory from defeat, this great, simple, modest book by Sir Ernest Shackleton is unexcelled in the annals of endurance, bravery, and loyal companionship.

What They Set Out To Do

The object of Shackleton's 1914 expedition was to cross the everlasting snow of the Antarctic continent from coast to coast.

Hitherto only dashes had been made from one coast to the South Pole and back again. Shackleton's plan was to approach the continent from Buenos Aires through the Weddell Sea in one ship, the *Endurance*, while another ship, the *Aurora*, under Captain Mackintosh, approached the opposite side of the continent from New Zealand through Ross Sea. Mackintosh would then land and advance across the ice-clad mountains towards the Pole, leaving stores for Shackleton on the way.

The party crossing under Shackleton from the Weddell Sea was to number six, with 100 dogs and two motor sledges, and their land journey of 1800 miles was expected to occupy five months. The party meeting them and provisioning the last part of the route would also number six. Other members of the two ships' companies would take journeys from their landing places on either coast, making scientific observations and returning to their ships.

Nature and Her Might

That was the general scheme of exploration to be carried out by 56 men, chosen out of nearly 5000 volunteers. The ships had been built to face the dangers of frozen seas, and their officers were selected by an experienced, thoughtful, and great-hearted leader; yet they failed.

Nor could the failure be prevented. Success or failure in Antarctic exploration depends on the chance of weather at certain points. It is within the power of Nature to frustrate any attempt to invade her Polar privacy. The means she used against Shackleton

were to close her ice-floes in upon both his ships when they were near the shore, freeze them fast so that they could not escape, and then break off the whole ice-field from the coast and float it away into the open ocean, with the ships gripped by the ice.

Kidnapped by a Hurricane

The *Aurora* reached her destination and landed her shore party with some of their stores. After she was prepared to winter in the ice by the shore, secured by six steel cables and anchors, a hurricane rushed upon the ship from the land in May, 1915, and, detaching the ice from the coast, drifted it out to sea, bearing the *Aurora* imprisoned in its midst.

Nor was it till more than nine months later that the *Aurora* got free from the grip of the ice, far away from the party left stranded on the Ross Sea coast. To them she could not return through the ice-pack, and so she steamed towards civilisation; and more than ten months after she had been borne adrift, kidnapped by

was frozen in between the floes and drifted with them, to be released as they cracked into lesser pieces. Sometimes she was in danger of being squeezed between an ice-field and a towering iceberg. But gradually, by steam or by drifting, they drew nearer to their destination—the frozen land beyond the frozen sea.

The Ice that Never Broke

As they made their way slowly forward they had much to do, landing on the great floes to kill seals and penguins for food; taking soundings to find the depth of the seas they were traversing; bringing up fragments of the far-down sea bed; and studying the directions of the drift of the ice-fields, for always these great expanses of ice were moving hither and thither, sometimes grinding against each other and piling up broken ice.

At last they came within sight of the land on which they hoped to begin their journey after safely settling their ship by the shore; but, unlike the

floes that would be formed from the shattered ice-fields, they might have another chance of life.

And at last, after the *Endurance* had stubbornly resisted the strains caused by the moving ice in which she was held while she drifted 1500 miles, the fatal time came. Nipped between masses of ice that piled themselves around her, the gallant ship was slowly overwhelmed, and 28 men with 49 dogs and three boats were left on a floating island, far away from all human help.

Journey on an Ice-Drift

Two more stages, crowded with increasing dangers, followed. First, there was the journey on the drifting floe. It was on November 21 that one of the crew called out to Shackleton, "She's going, boss!" and the *Endurance* sank through the ice into deep water, after being crushed almost out of all likeness to a ship. It was on April 9 that the ice-floe on which they were adrift broke up so small that the 28 men had to take to the three boats in a sea where floating ice masses were constantly jostling each other. All the dogs had now been shot, and the two last teams eaten.

Nothing could now be done but to make for the nearest land. During that terrible journey they toiled for 108 hours, almost on the brink of death, with no sleep at all, and then, after miraculous escapes, were landed, in the last stage of exhaustion, on the barren shores of Elephant Island, 800 miles from all other human beings.

Heights of Heroism

Leaving Wild, his second in command, in charge of the party sheltering on the rocky shore under an upturned boat, Shackleton, with five picked men, took one of the boats, and set out on an 800 miles' sail through the stormiest sea in the world.

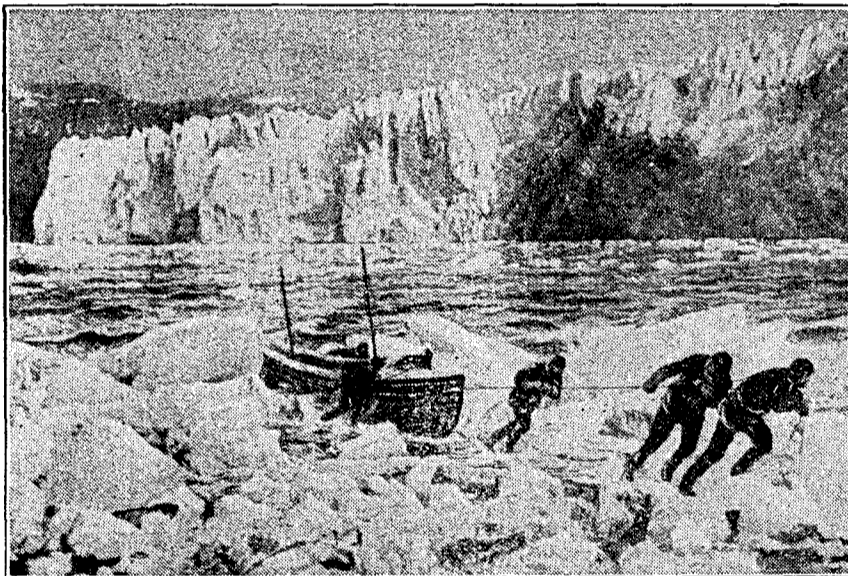
In the story of that voyage this noble book rises to the topmost heights of marvel and heroism. In very truth it reads as if those brave men's lives were shielded by the hand of God.

When they reached the desolate shores of South Georgia, it was on the side of the island remote from the whaling station they were seeking that they found shelter; and Shackleton and two of his men crossed the ice-clothed mountains of the island on foot, where none had ever been before, and staggered into the whaling station in such a desperate plight that the first three human beings they saw fled from them in terror.

The Spirit of the Book

But now their chief privations were over. The rest of the book is a tale of rescues. Not one of the men who sailed in the *Endurance* was lost, and finally they sailed to the other side of the polar continent and rescued the survivors of the *Aurora* party.

Marvellous as it is as a succession of brave deeds, the best part of this book is the account given of the spirit of the men who endured all with unshaken courage, inspired by their trusted leaders, Shackleton and Wild. We are shown the very utmost that men can dare and bear, and the tale is told with a noble simplicity and a lofty generosity of mind. The book is worthy of the deeds it records, and can more be said? *Photographs on page 12*



Shackleton and his party, after their long and thrilling voyage of 800 miles in an open boat, find themselves too weak to pull the boat ashore at South Georgia

ice and hurricane, her gallant commander, Lieutenant Stenhouse, was able to report to New Zealand by wireless of his ship's marvellous escape, and of the lonely state of the shore party left on the icy edge of the southern continent.

Jig-Saw of Icebergs

Just at the time when Shackleton was leaving England in the *Endurance*, war was declared, and the whole of his ship's company instantly volunteered to stay and fight; but the Admiralty wired back the single word "Proceed." Even the war was not allowed to stop this brave attempt.

Presently they found themselves in the midst of the ice-floes and icebergs of the Weddell Sea, slowly forcing their way. A vivid description is given in this book of the ice-covered southern ocean. Huge fields of ice were outspread everywhere like a jig-saw puzzle, with narrower or wider lanes of open water between the drifting ice-fields. Sometimes the *Endurance* was steaming slowly through a narrow channel with an ice-field on either side.

Sometimes her bows were driven against ice up to two feet thick, to open out a great crack in front, which the sea currents would widen till the sturdy ship could creep along the opened channel. Sometimes she

landing party of the *Aurora* on the other side of the continent, they were never able to land. Before that became possible the *Endurance* was frozen firmly in the ice, which, with the ship embedded in its midst, began to drift way from the hoped-for land. Like the *Aurora*, the *Endurance* was caught and held, and all they could do was to wait until the ice broke up and released them. And this it never did. The winter winds that sometimes break up ice-fields would not come.

Life in a Blizzard

So strong was the ice that they treated it as if it had been land, erecting observation posts on it, exercising the dogs in the sledges, building ice pillars all round the ship at a distance, and connecting them by a steel wire, so that in blinding snow blizzards men could find their way home to the ship.

Now they could not hope for a change until the spring thaw set in, and when it came their position was still worse. The great ice-fields began to grind each other, with the danger that they would catch the *Endurance* between their crunching edges, and crush her to pieces. To be prepared for that time, if it came, they got out her boats and provisioned them, so that in the boat, or on the smaller ice-