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SHACKLETON'S LAST EXPEDITION—A REVIEW

Hugh Robert Mill, D.Sc.

South. The Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition, 1914-1917.— Sir Ernest Shackleton, C.V.O. London: William Heinemann. 1919. Pp. xxii., 376. Illustrations. Price 25s.

THE story of the *Endurance* as told in the first part of this volume is a memorable achievement. The polar regions have seen many triumphs and tragedies of exploration in the last four hundred years, and when our mind turns to the journeys of Nansen and Peary over the Arctic floes, the drift of the *Hansa* and the *Deutschland* in the northern and southern polar pack, and the long boat voyages of Willem Barents's comrades and of Leigh Smith after unexpected winterings in inhospitable islands, we cannot say that the past has left much chance for breaking the record of human endurance, courage, and resourcefulness in the polar regions. Nevertheless we are inclined to place this story of the *Endurance* at the very head of all records of polar adventure on account of the variety of the risks encountered, the accumulated difficulties overcome, and the almost incredible deliverance of the whole ship's company. The Britons of the twentieth century in this adventure stand in the front rank of adventurers of all time. The story is well told and finely illustrated. If the narrator keeps himself as leader in the forefront throughout, the reader can but acknowledge the fitness of the position. Shackleton did things that other explorers might have done, but which no other explorers, as a matter of fact, have done. Seeing what his deeds were, we are struck with the combination of fearlessness and modesty with which he tells what he did.

Little is added to the essential facts of the narrative which have been summarized in these pages (*Geographical Journal*, 48 (1916), p. 68) from the first telegraphic report. The *Endurance* with Sir Ernest Shackleton's party left England on 8 August 1914, after the services of the ship and all on board had been offered to the Admiralty for war purposes and declined. They left South Georgia, of the stay at which further particulars would have been very interesting, on 5 December 1914, and navigated the eastern side of the Weddell Sea to 76° 34' S., where the *Endurance* was beset by the pack on 18 January 1915, after coasting Coats Land and coming within sight of Luitpold Land. The drift of the pack carried the ship along the coast south-westwards until on 22 February 1915 she was in 77° S. about 60 miles north of Vahsel Bay, where it had been intended to land and whence Sir Ernest Shackleton was to have started for his march across the continent to Ross Sea, passing the South Pole on the way. It became clear then that no start could be made that season, and soon afterwards the drift of the ice began to carry the ship to the north. On 27 October 1915 the *Endurance* was crushed in the ice in 69° S., and she sank a few weeks later, leaving the party camped on the moving floe, where they remained during the whole of the following summer. The account of the destruction of the ship is very moving, and the photographs enable the reader to realize in a very vivid way the grim ending of the hopes of the expedition. Until 6 April 1916 the twenty-eight men lived on the floe in hourly danger from the cracks that often opened close to their tents, and on that day the three boats were launched in 62° S., and on 13 April 1916 they all succeeded in landing on a narrow beach on Elephant Island. If the party had remained here waiting for a relief expedition, the chance of any surviving to return home would have been

small indeed. Had they attempted to reach a frequented coast in the three battered boats, most of the men would undoubtedly have perished. Their safety was due to Shackleton's instant decision to make for South Georgia in the largest boat, and to Frank Wild's unique experience of the art of living on next to nothing in the Antarctic, and his power to keep up the heart of the companions left under his charge. Fortunately the conditions of the twenty-two men left on the island were not so terrible as at first reported. They were not compelled to take refuge from the waves in a cave dug out of the glacial ice ; but were able to build a hut, roofed with the two upturned boats, on a strip of beach beyond high-water mark. The least diminutive boat, the *James Caird*, was partly decked by means of sledge-runners, box-lids and the canvas of a wrecked tent, and in this little whaler of 22 feet in length (about two-thirds the length of the ordinary ship's lifeboat familiar to travellers by sea as an encumbrance to the upper deck) Shackleton with five companions set out on 24 April 1916, in the hope of reaching South Georgia, 750 miles distant across the wildest stretch of ocean in the world. South Georgia is a small target to hit at such a range, and on the few occasions when astronomical observations were possible the use of a sextant on such an unstable platform as the heaving boat must have been nearly impossible ; but the nearly impossible was an almost daily occurrence in this whole adventure, and Captain Worsley succeeded in taking and working out some very serviceable positions. On 10 May 1916 the boat entered Haakon Bay, and after a few days' rest and feeding up on albatross chickens, Shackleton and two companions faced another labour as nearly impossible as the last, and in a continuous march found their way across the snow-mountains of South Georgia, which had never been crossed before, and arrived at the whaling-station of Stromness on the morning of 21 May 1916, if we have divined the date aright from the text. Without rest Shackleton set himself to the task of relieving the men on Elephant Island, first from South Georgia, then from the Falkland Islands with the help of an Uruguayan vessel, and twice from Punta Arenas in Chilean vessels. None of the four small craft was fit to enter the ice, and three times he had to turn from the close investment of the floes ; but the fourth attempt, almost impossible as it was to reach the island in the depth of winter, succeeded, and the *Yelcho* brought the whole party safely to Chile.

So far the book carries the reader along in a torrent of emotion and ever-changing incident ; it tells of no disaster that was not retrieved, of no difficulty that was not surmounted, and the failure of the plan is forgotten in the final deliverance.

An excellent map shows the route of the *Endurance* as a free agent and in the pack, the drift of the floes and the various relief expeditions, so that every incident can be followed and the sense of position is never lost.

The second part of the book runs less smoothly, and there is some difficulty in following the comings and goings of the various parties. The Ross Sea expedition was more successful than that in the Weddell Sea. The landing was made as planned, the whole system of dépôts for the relief of the trans-continental party was laid out on the Barrier ice as far as the base of Mount Hope at the mouth of the Beardmore glacier ; and the *Aurora*, though blown from her moorings, escaped with her life and was fit after repair to return and bring back the survivors of the land party. The success of the dépôt-laying parties was purchased at a terrible price of suffering, and was clouded by the loss of three lives ; Captain Mackintosh, the leader of the Ross Sea side of the Expedition, perished, and much of his journal was lost with him. Mistakes or

delays were made which left the shore party imperfectly provided for when the ship broke away. Sir Ernest Shackleton observes that it is easy to be wise after the event, and makes no harsh reflections. We can only follow his example. After all, the miscalculations that may have been made, while no doubt adding much to the hardships of the southern party, did not prevent them from carrying out their full programme. Their heroism and devotion were beyond praise, and seeing how narrowly they escaped the fate of Scott's southern party, the fact that they did escape redounds immensely to their credit.

The *Aurora* reached Cape Evans on Ross Island on 16 January 1915, and depôt-laying to the south was started before the end of the month. On 20 February 1915 a depôt was placed in 80° S., the farthest point reached that season, and Mackintosh with five companions was back at Hut Point on March 25, though it was 2 June 1915 before the sea-ice in McMurdo Sound was strong enough to enable him to reach the men left at Cape Evans. The *Aurora* with most of the stores for wintering had been blown away a month before. On 1 September 1915 (when the *Endurance* and the *Aurora* were both drifting north ice-locked in 70° S. on opposite sides of the world) Mackintosh began to sledge stores southward, and on 6 January 1916 he was back in 80° S., proceeding thence with five companions. He and several others developed symptoms of scurvy, but the thought of Shackleton's dependence on the supplies they were hauling inspired them to struggle on, and they laid the depôt at Mount Hope in 83° 30' S. on 26 January 1916. They little thought that the men of the *Endurance* had never set foot on land, but that they like the *Aurora* had been drifted north beyond the Antarctic circle. The return journey was as full of hardship and risk as any in the Antarctic record. Had the party held together they would undoubtedly have perished as Scott had done; but starvation was avoided by the stronger leaving the weaker behind while they made a forced march to the next depôt to the north and returned with supplies. Mr. Spenser-Smith, whose condition had long been hopeless, succumbed; but all the others regained Hut Point on 18 March 1916. The *Aurora* by this time had been clear of the ice for a few days and was heading for New Zealand, while the crew of the *Endurance* had been drifted close up to the South Shetlands; but of course Mackintosh knew nothing of these things.

The death of Mackintosh and Hayward on a premature attempt to reach Cape Evans from Hut Point over the sea-ice was clearly a mere accident due to an error of judgment, and was in no way attributable to the plan of the expedition or to the hardships of polar travel.

The reader is heavily handicapped in following the comings and goings of the Ross Sea party by the want of a map, and we doubt if any one unfamiliar with the earlier expeditions in this area could derive from the text a proper idea of the relative positions of Cape Royds, Cape Evans, and Hut Point, not to speak of the Barrier edge and the depôt stations on the way to Mount Hope. So too the drift of the *Aurora* is left obscure, and little is added to the information derived from the first telegraphic report which was summarized in this *Journal* (vol. 47 (1916), p. 369). Some passages in Stenhouse's abridged log are confused either from the use of technicalities with which we are unfamiliar or from misprints that have escaped correction. That he was thrown unexpectedly into a position of extraordinary danger and responsibility quite accounts for the scant justice he does to his own splendid seamanship in getting the crushed and shattered *Aurora* safe to port. Some sort of chart of

the drift of the ship should have been given in the volume. To our mind the drift of the *Endurance* and of the *Aurora* constitutes the solid claim of this expedition to new discovery.

The courses of the ice-floes moving north off the north-running east coasts of Victoria Land and Graham Land respectively were curiously parallel; at the beginning of May 1915 they were both in 76° S., and by the beginning of October they had both reached or approached 69° S., while at the beginning of the following March both ships were nearly in 64° S. That the floe which wrecked the *Endurance* kept nearly in the same meridian is comprehensible from the fact of the peninsula of Graham Land and the islands which lie off it barring any general westward drift until north of the South Shetlands; but it is by no means easy to see why the *Aurora* was not drifted far to the westward after passing the Balleny Islands. No doubt her positions in longitude are uncertain; but there must be more information in her log than appears in the book, and we greatly desire some such account of the drift of the *Aurora* as was given by Lieut. Wordie of the drift of the *Endurance* (*Geographical Journal*, vol. 51 (1918), p. 210). As Sir Ernest Shackleton promises the subsequent publication of the scientific results of his expedition, we can trust to this important matter being dealt with in the fullness of time. We note a curious oversight in the absence of a list of the *personnel* of the expedition. In referring to individuals the Author rarely gives their initials or indicates their status, whether scientific men, officers, or members of the crew. It would only be fair to all hands that this should be remedied in a later edition, and some notes of their earlier record added.

There are interesting appendices dealing in a popular way with some of the scientific results, and the compression of the work into one volume adds much to its appeal to the general public.

THE ORDNANCE SURVEY AND THE WAR

The Ordnance Survey and the War 1914-1919. — Printed at the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, 1919.

NO branch of the Government service has been put to a severer test by the war than the Ordnance Survey; and certainly none has better risen to the emergency, acquitted itself more creditably, or done work of greater importance than that department. The demand made upon it for the production of maps for the use of the armies in France and elsewhere abroad was tremendous and ever increasing, but this demand was fully met, thanks to the able superintendence of the Director-General, and the hearty and energetic support of the officers and staff working under him. Not only was there this large demand for trench and other maps for the various fronts, but a great many maps and charts were prepared and printed for the Admiralty, and for military use at home, besides the keeping up, as far as circumstances would admit, of a certain amount of the ordinary work of the Survey.

A good idea of the work carried out can be obtained from a small volume just issued by the Office at Southampton, a copy of which has been forwarded to the Society, entitled 'The Ordnance Survey and the War 1914-1919.' This consists of the report of the Survey as affected by the war, 4 August 1914 to 21 June 1915; the annual reports for the financial years April 1 to March 31 following for each subsequent year; an account of the Overseas Branch of the