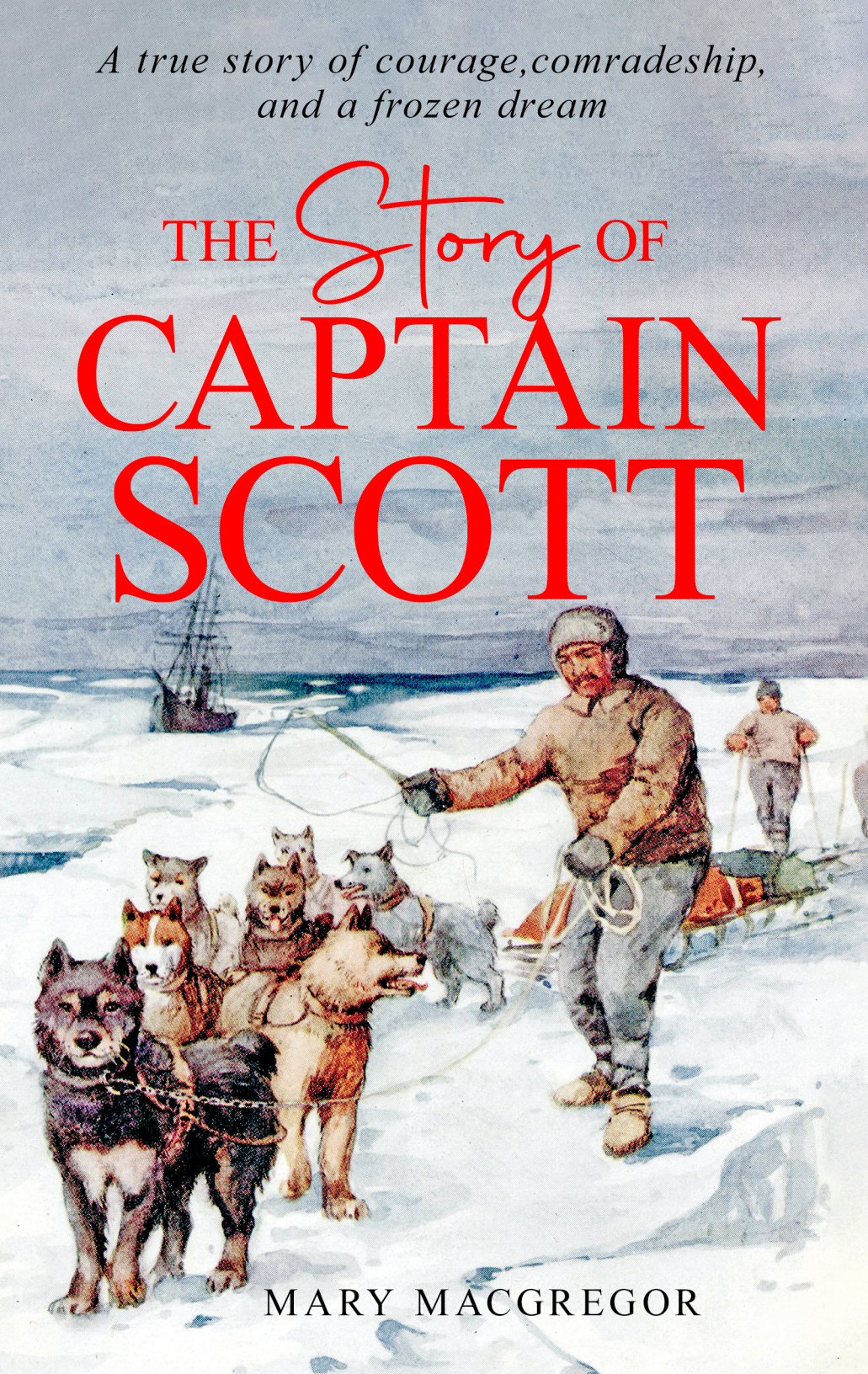
A true story of courage, comradeship, and a frozen dream

THE Story OF CAPTAIN SCOTT



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by

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THE DOGS WERE TAKEN OUT AND HARNESSED TO A SLEDGE

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CHAPTER I

THE TERRA NOVA LEAVES LYTTELTON

"HAD we lived," wrote Captain Scott, in his last message to the public, "I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman."

Although Scott did not live to tell the tale of the heroism of those who followed him so loyally, he wrote in his journal enough to thrill the heart not only of every Englishman, but of everyone who reads. And the journal which records the bravery and the endurance of his companions, tells us unawares of the strength, the unwavering courage of their leader.

It is the story of Scott's expedition to the South Pole which I am going to tell in this little book. It is a sad story of a brave adventure.

First of all you will wish to know something

about Scott before he became one of our greatest explorers.

Robert Falcon Scott was born in Devonport in June 1868. When he was thirteen years old he became a naval cadet on board the *Britannia*. Two years afterwards, he was a midshipman and served on different ships and at different stations until he was nineteen. In 1889 he reached the rank of lieutenant. A year or two later, he entered a schoolship to study the duties of a torpedo lieutenant. Soon after this, he was made staff officer on the *Defiance*, a torpedo schoolship stationed at Devonport, his own early home.

When Scott was twenty-eight years old, he went to sea as torpedo lieutenant of a battleship. In about a year, he was removed to the *Majestic*, the flagship of the Channel Squadron. One of the admirals under whom he served on the flagship was Sir Henry Stephenson, who had been an explorer in the Arctic regions when his lieutenant was seven years of age.

In June 1900, Scott was promoted to the rank of Commander. It was now that he left the Royal Navy for a time to become an explorer in the Antarctic regions.

The voyage of the *Discovery*, in which ship he sailed on his first expedition, has been told by Scott in a book which you will read for yourself some day.

His return to England in 1904 was a great event. The gallant explorer was feted by societies, honoured by universities. King Edward created him C.V.O., which letters stand for the words Commander of the Victorian Order. In London, a great meeting was held by the Royal Geographical Society at which he was awarded a Royal Medal, and also a special one to commemorate the expedition.

In 1906, Scott was again at sea, but three years later he resigned his appointment that he might prepare for his last great expedition to the South Pole. His object was not only to reach the Pole, but to carry farther the scientific work which had been begun on his first voyage.

In November 1910, the *Terra Nova*, the ship which had been fitted out for the expedition, reached New Zealand. She was leaking badly, so as soon as she arrived at Lyttelton Harbour, she was overhauled. The leak, which was found in the stern of the vessel, was repaired. Water still made its way into the ship, but to keep it under it was necessary now to use only a hand pump for a short time twice a day.

Meanwhile, the stores had been taken out of the ship and were being marked plainly and repacked, so that no time would be wasted when the South was reached.

The men packed with skill gained by practice.

Tents, sledges, provisions, and scientific instruments were stowed away. When this was done, no small part of the men's quarters had been invaded. But the men were so eager for the success of the expedition that they were ready to endure any discomfort.

To provide stalls for the nineteen ponies, to find space for the thirty-three dogs that were going South, was no easy task. Fifteen stalls were built under the forecastle, while four more were placed on the port side of the vessel.

The dogs were perhaps better off than the ponies, for they were chained on deck. All the dogs were Siberian, except two, and they were Esquimaux. Most of the animals had been given to the expedition by schools in England and Scotland. They had been brought across Siberia by Meares, who was to have charge of them on the southern journey. Demetri Gerof had been engaged as dog driver, and had helped Meares in his task, which had been no easy one.

There was an ice-house on board in which large stores of mutton and beef, sweetbreads and kidneys were packed. Scott wished to supply his men with fresh meat as long as possible, as that would help to keep them strong. Bags of coal, cases of petrol, bales of fodder, as well as the things of which I have

already told you, and many more which I have not mentioned, were packed away, until every corner of the ship was loaded.

On the 26th November 1910 all was ready, and the *Terra Nova* set sail from Lyttelton Harbour, followed by tugs crowded with friends and well-wishers.

Three days later Scott joined the ship at Port Chalmers. The sun was shining as she left the harbour, surrounded by even more boats and tugs than at Lyttelton. For about two hours they followed the vessel, then slowly and sadly the boats turned back, while the ship sailed on alone.

CHAPTER II

THE STORM

BEFORE a week was over, the *Terra Nova* was tossing on a stormy sea. The ponies in their cramped stalls suffered more than the men, as the ship rolled and pitched before the wind. Again and again in his journal Scott wrote of what the ponies and the dogs had to endure. He told how by looking through a hole in the bulkhead one could see "a row of heads with sad, patient eyes come swinging up together from the starboard side, whilst those on the port swing back; then up come the port heads, while the starboard recede."

But although they suffered, the ponies still ate well. They slept standing, for there was not room to lie down. This was not a hardship, as horses have in each leg a ligament which supports their weight.

The dogs, as I told you, were chained on deck, and during the storm the waves which were constantly breaking over the ship drenched them until they looked poor, miserable creatures. While the storm raged, Oates and Atkinson, two of the officers,

did all they could for the comfort of the beasts. A strange thing befell one of the ponies, for a wave of unusual strength snapped his chain and swept him overboard, while the next wave lifted the animal and dropped him again on deck. He must have been a hardy little pony, for he recovered from the shock in a very short time.

Forage cases, petrol cases, instrument cases — all were in danger of serious damage from loose bags of coal which the waves lifted and dashed heedlessly down among them. The men were ordered to the waist of the ship to throw overboard the coal sacks and to try to lash the cases together. It was difficult work, for the men themselves were in danger of being washed away by the heavy seas that broke over them, and they were often forced to stop and cling to anything they could find for safety.

Bad as all this was, it was nothing to the blow that followed. It was found that the pumps in the engine-room were choked. Lashly, the chief stoker, stood up to his neck in water trying vainly to get them clear. But in spite of all his efforts, the water grew deeper and deeper until it reached the boiler.

With the engine-room flooded and heavy seas sweeping the deck, it seemed that the ship must founder. Nothing could be done except, as a last hope, to bale out the water with buckets. The men

worked with a will, in shifts of two hours, and at length, after a day and a night of constant peril, the water began to decrease. At the same time the gale blew less fiercely, and although the engine fires were still out and the ship was tossing helplessly from side to side, the danger gradually grew less.

Soon after this, E. Evans, the second in command, found his way to the choked pump, and going down the shaft cleared out the coal and oil that had choked it. The pump was then once more in working order, and the water was kept under without difficulty. So the engine fires were lighted, and the ship sailed away toward the South.

During the storm two ponies died, and one dog was washed overboard.

Osman, the leader of the dog team, was also nearly lost. But after being covered in hay for twenty-four hours, during which time he ate nothing, he began to recover. In another twenty-four hours, he was as well as ever.

The loss of the animals was serious, and perhaps almost as grave was the loss of tons of coal and cases of petrol which had had to be thrown overboard.

While the storm lasted, the men had not spared themselves. They had been drenched to the skin, the mess deck had been streaming with water, there was nothing that had not been jostled out of its

place. Yet not only was there no complaint, but the sound of songs and of laughter was heard coming from their quarters.

It was little wonder that Scott had nothing but praise for the conduct of his men.

CHAPTER III

THE ICE-PACK

THE *TERRA NOVA* was caught in the midst of an ice-pack:

This pack was formed of ice which had frozen the winter before on the edge of the Antarctic Continent, of heavy old ice-floes which had broken out of bays and inlets in summer but had not got far north before another winter had begun, as well as of heavy and thin ice which had formed over the Ross Sea at different times.

There are three ways by which a ship can get through a pack. It can break the pieces of ice — or ice-floes, as these pieces are called — it can push them out of the way if they are not too large, or it can sail round them.

Sometimes the floes are so close together that it seems as though months may pass before a ship can get through the pack; yet, perhaps in an hour, a gap of a foot or more may have been made by the wind. If there are several of these gaps, a ship can soon push its way forward.

From about the middle of December until after Christmas, the *Terra Nova* was struggling to get out of the pack it had encountered. It was the uncertainty of what might happen from hour to hour that made the demand on Scott's patience so great.

Sometimes the ship would succeed in pushing her way through the floes in a zigzag course for an hour or two. Then she would stop entirely, having run into a belt of big floes. If she stopped, the engine-room fires were, when it was possible, allowed to go out to save coal. While the ship was anchored, the officers put on their ski shoes and went off to practise skiing on the large floes. They were so hungry after the unaccustomed exercise that the cook despaired of satisfying their hunger.

Later in the day, ski shoes were given to the men, and Gran, the ski expert, gave them lessons in their use.

Then the dogs were taken out and harnessed to a sledge. They had grown fat without exercise, although their one meal each day consisted of two and a half biscuits. At first, they panted as they ran and did not seem to enjoy the new experience.

There was bird life and fish life all around the ship, so the men had much to interest and amuse them while they were wedged in among the floes. Of the birds, none were so amusing as the penguins,

HE WOULD GO TO ONE OF THE FLOES AND LIE FLAT AND QUITE STILL.

with their quaint movements and curious ways. On land or on ice, they were not only awkward but absurd. In water, they were beautiful, as they dived and darted under the surface or leaped for a moment through the air before again falling into the sea.

Wilson, the doctor on board, used to try to capture some of these birds. He would go to one of the floes and lie there flat and quite still. As the penguins were inquisitive birds, they came with their ludicrous, jerky gait towards the strange object they saw upon the floe. But when they were quite close, they suddenly turned and flapped along in the other direction. Sometimes he would sing to them, and that never failed to attract them, but the moment he stopped they were off and away to their own haunts.

The crew soon learned that the penguins listened to singing, and Scott often laughed as he heard a group of men on the poop singing nonsense rhymes. The audience, he knew, was a group of fascinated penguins.

Scott admired the spirit of his men during these trying weeks. "Everyone is wonderfully cheerful; there is laughter all day long," he wrote in his journal. And the kindliness of each to the other delighted him. "I have not heard a harsh word or seen a black look," was the tribute he paid them.

Christmas Eve came while the ship was still unable to move. Great as Scott's patience was, his journal showed how anxious the delay made him, because of the extra coal that was used when the ship was at a standstill or moving slowly among the floes. "Oh, but it's mighty trying to be delayed and delayed like this and coal going all the time," he wrote.

In spite of everything, Christmas was a happy day. There was service in the morning, to which everyone went, and the heartiness with which the men sang showed that they were there with good-will in their hearts.

There was a dinner of many courses, ending with plum pudding and mince pies. The meal lasted for

an hour, while for five hours afterwards the party sat round the table singing songs.

At length, on the 30th of December, Scott was able to write, "We are out of the pack at length and at last," and beneath the words we catch a glimpse of the terrible strain to which his patience had been put.

In a few days, everyone hoped to reach Cape Crozier, which Scott wished to make his base or chief station; but before the Cape was reached, the ship was caught in a blizzard. Little progress could be made, for it blew right in their teeth.

The ponies again suffered greatly from the violence of the storm, and Scott was as distressed as ever over the misery they endured.

"I begin to wonder if fortune will ever turn her wheel," he wrote. "On every possible occasion she seems to have decided against us."

CHAPTER IV

THE *TERRA NOVA* UNLOADED

ON New Year's Eve, the *Terra Nova* was in Ross Sea."It was a horrible night," wrote Scott, who slept little, thinking, as he did always in a storm, of the misery of the ponies.

The wind was blowing hard, and loose ice-floes were floating about, full of danger to the ship. It was only with difficulty that she was guided behind a solid mass of floes, where she was sheltered from the wind.

Before the year ended, all on board were cheered by the sight of land. For the storm clouds lifted, and far away in the west, the peaks of two great mountains were seen.

The New Year was only a few days old when the ship approached Cape Crozier, where Scott hoped to winter. To his disappointment, he found it would be nearly impossible to carry the stores from the ship to the land, and wholly impossible to get the ponies and motor sledges across.

So the *Terra Nova* sailed on, and five miles east

of Cape Crozier came to the Barrier. This was a great sheet of ice more than four hundred miles wide, and of much greater length, which lay to the west of Victoria Land. In height, the Barrier was not more than sixty feet.

Scott now determined to winter at a point which had been known to the crew of the *Discovery* as the Skuary, but which was renamed by Scott Cape Evans, in honour of E. Evans, the second in command.

When about a mile from the Skuary, the ship struck on hard ice. Anchors were at once let down, and Scott, E. Evans, and Wilson set out across the ice to inspect the Cape where they hoped to winter.

The position pleased them, for here they could not easily be cut off from the Barrier. There was, too, a beach protected by several small hills, on which their hut could be built. Scott decided to begin at once to unload the ship.

Two motor sledges were first hauled on to the ice, which formed a safe and useful wharf. So well had they been protected by tarpaulin covers that when these were stripped off, the motors were as bright as though no heavy seas had washed over them.

Most of the ponies were coaxed by Oates into the horse-box, but some had to be lifted in by the sailors. After their cramped position in the stalls,

they enjoyed being able to stretch themselves on the floe and were soon frisking about, the misery they had endured forgotten.

Meanwhile, Meares had got his dog teams out, and harnessed to the sledges, they were already at work carrying stores from the ship to the Cape. The dogs would have given no trouble had not the penguins been curious about the strange creatures that had invaded their haunts. They stepped fearlessly toward the dogs; they poked their heads forward in their desire to examine these unknown objects.

This was more than the dogs could stand, and they made a dash to reach the birds, but were held back by their harness. Unalarmed, the birds waddled nearer still, making an angry noise and with their ruffles standing up. One rash bird ventured too close, and in a moment a dog's paw had descended and the foolish penguin was seen no more. In spite of the loss of a comrade or two, the birds refused to be driven away and went on with their study of the new arrivals.

The next morning all hands were at work by six o'clock, building the hut which was to be their home.

While the men were at work, Scott saw a strange sight. In front of the ship, close to an ice floe, were six or seven whales, called killer whales. After diving again and again, they appeared astern of the

ship, near the spot where the two Esquimaux dogs chanced to be tethered.

Ponting, one of the scientific staff, was on shore with his camera, and he ran to the edge of the floe to take a photograph of the whales. But they had dived again and were for the moment out of sight. As Ponting waited for them to appear, the floe on which he and the dogs stood suddenly broke into pieces. Ponting managed to reach a place of safety, while the dogs were left each on a separate piece of ice and surrounded by water.

This is what had happened: the whales had struck the ice with their backs with such force that the floe had been splintered into fragments. These fragments swayed dangerously as the whales rose to the surface and thrust their huge heads through the cracks they had made. Scott said it was plain that they were looking to see what had become of the man and the dogs. Soon afterwards, the whales disappeared, and the dogs, who were now shivering with fear, were rescued from the dangerous ice island on which they had been stranded.

It was no new thing for killer whales to skirt the edge of floes, but the strength they had shown in breaking ice which was 2½ feet thick surprised everyone, while the wise way in which they seemed

OFF STARTED THE PONY AT A GALLOP