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Antarctic Tragedy

SCOTT, WILSON AND BOWERS

Died From Exposure, March 29

Health of Remainder of Expedition Good--History of the Expedition--Relief Party Forced to Return Owing to Persistent Bad Weather.

Christchurch, New Zealand, Feb. 10. The steamer Terra Nova, arrived at Cape Evans on January 16, of this year, and obtained the following information from a shore party there: Captain Scott reached the South Pole on January 18, 1912. Found Amundsen's tent and records. On return journey the whole Southern party perished. Scott, Wilson and Bowers died from exposure during the blizzard about March 29, 1912. Their last camp was eleven miles south of the One Ton Depot, or 155 miles from the hut at Cape Evans. Oates died from exposure on March 17. Seamen Edgar Evans died of concussion of the brain on the 17th of February. The health of the remainder of the expedition excellent, including Lieut. Campbell's party, who wintered in Terra Nova Bay. The history of the expedition is as follows:

The Western Party.

Before the Terra Nova left for New Zealand last March, Surgeon Atkinson, who had been left in charge of the western party until Scott's return, despatched Garrard and Demetri (dog-driven) with two dog-teams to assist the southern party whose return to Hut Point was expected about March 10th, 1912. Atkinson would have accompanied this party, but was kept back in medical charge of Lieut. Evans, second in command, who, it will be remembered, nearly died of scurvy.

The Relief Party.

This relief party reached One Ton Depot on March 3rd, but was compelled to return on 10th March, owing primarily to the dog food running short, also to persistent bad weather and the poor condition of the dogs after the strain of the hard season's work. The dog teams returned to Hut Point on the 16th of March, the poor animals mostly frostbitten and incapable of further work. Garrard collapsed through an over-stained heart, his companion was also sick, and it was impossible to communicate with Cape Evans, the ship having left on the 4th of March, and the open sea lying between Atkinson and Keohane.

The only men left sledged out to Corner Camp to render any help that might be wanted by the Southern party. They fought their way out to Corner Camp against the unusually severe weather, and realizing they could be of no assistance, were forced to return to Hut Point after depositing one week's provisions. In April when communication with Cape Evans was established, gallant attempts to relieve Lieut. Campbell were made by Atkinson, Wright, Williamson and Keohane. This party reached Butter Point when they were stopped by open water. Their return was exciting, and nearly ended in disaster, owing to the sea ice breaking up.

The Searching Party.

The search party left Cape Evans

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after the winter on October 30th last. The party, which was organized by Surgeon Atkinson, consisted of two divisions, Atkinson taking the dog teams with Garrard and Demetri, and Mr. Wright in charge of a party including Nelson, Grant, Lashley, Green, Williamson, Keohane, and Hoper, with seven Indian mules. They were provisioned for three months, as they expected an extended search. One Ton Camp was found in order, and all provisions, proceeding along the old southern route.

Found the Bodies.

On November 12, Wright's party sighted Scott's tent. Within it were found the bodies of Capt. Robt. Scott, Royal Navy, Dr. E. A. Wilson, Chief of Scientific Staff and Lieut. H. R. Bowers, Royal Indian Marine. From the records the following information was gleaned: The first death was that of Seaman Edgar Evans, petty officer Royal Navy, official number 160,225, who died on February 17 at the foot of the Beardmore Glacier. His death was accelerated by a concussion of the brain, sustained while travelling over rough ice, sometime before.

A Brave Man.

Capt. L. E. G. Oates, 6th Enniskilling Dragoons was the next lost. His feet and hands were badly frost-bitten, and although he struggled heroically on March 16 his comrades knew his end was approaching. He had borne intense suffering for weeks without complaint, and he did not give up hope to the very end.

Capt. Scott writes: He was a brave soul. He slept through the night hoping not to wake. But he woke on the morning it was blowing a blizzard. Oates said I am just going outside and may be sometime. He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since. Scott adds, we knew at Oates was walking to his death, although we tried to dissuade him he knew it was the act of a brave man and English gentleman.

Party Pushed On.

On March 16 Oates was really unable to travel but the others could not leave him. After his gallant death Scott, Wilson, and Bowers pushed northward when the abnormally bad weather would permit them, but they were forced to camp on March 21 in latitude 75 degrees 40 minutes South, longitude 169 degrees 40 minutes East, eleven miles south of the big depot at One Ton Camp.

This they never reached owing to a blizzard which is known from records to have lasted nine days, overtaking them, and food and fuel giving out. In Capt. Scott's diary Surgeon Atkinson found the following which is quoted verbatim:

Cause of the Disaster.

Message to the Public:

"The causes of this disaster are not due to faulty organization, but to misfortune in all risks which had to be undertaken, one of the loss of pony transport in March, 1911, obliged me to start later than I had intended, and obliged the limits of the stuff transported to be narrowed. The weather throughout the outward journey, and especially with a long gale in 83 degrees South stopped us. The soft snow in the lower reaches of the glacier again reduced the pace. We fought these untoward events with a will and conquered but it ate into our provision reserve. Every detail of our food supply, clothing and depots made on the interior ice sheet and on that long stretch of 70 miles to the Pole and back, worked out to perfection.

Met Bad Weather.

"The advance party would have returned to the glacier in fine form and with surplus of food but for the astonishing failure of the man whom we had least expected to fail. Seaman Edgar Evans was thought the strongest man of the party and Beardmore glacier is not difficult in fine weather. But on our return we did not get a single completely fine day. This with a sick companion enormously increased our anxieties. I have said elsewhere we got into

frightfully rough ice, and Edgar Evans received a concussion of the brain. He died an admiral death, but left us a shaken party, with the season unduly advanced.

"But all the facts above enumerated were nothing to the surprise which awaited us on the barrier. I maintain that our arrangements for returning were quite adequate, and that no one in the world would have expected the temperatures and surfaces which we encountered at this time of the year.

Terrible Weather.

"On the summit in lat. 85 degrees to 86 degrees we had minus twenty to minus thirty. On the barrier in lat. 82 degrees, 10,000 feet lower, we had minus thirty in the day, and minus forty-seven at night pretty regularly with continuous head wind during our day marches. It is clear that these circumstances came on very suddenly, and our wreck is certainly due to this sudden advent of severe weather which does not seem to have any satisfactory cause.

The Last Blow.

"I do not think human beings ever came through such a month as we have come through, and we should have got through in spite of the weather but for the sickening of a second companion, Capt. Oates, and a shortage of fuel in our depots, for which I cannot account, and finally but for the storm which has fallen on us within eleven miles of this depot at which we hoped to secure the final supplies. Surely misfortune could scarcely have exceeded this last blow.

Brave To The Last.

"We arrived within eleven miles of our old One Ton Camp with fuel for one hot meal and food for two days. For four days we have been unable to leave the tent, the gale blowing about us. We are weak, writing is difficult, but for my own sake I do not regret this journey, which has shown that Englishmen can endure hardships, help one another, and meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past. We took risks we knew we took them. Things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best, to the last.

"But if we have been willing to give our lives to this enterprise, which is for the honor of our country, I appeal to our countrymen to see that those who depend on us are properly cared for. Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance and courage of my poor companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman.

"These rough notes and our bodies must tell the tale, but surely, surely a great rich country like ours will see that those who are dependent on us are properly provided for."

Signed,

R. Scott, March 25, 1912.

Surgeon Atkinson and his party gathered the records and effects of the dead men, read the burial service over their bodies and erected a cairn and cross to their memory over the inner tent in which they buried them. A record of the finding of their bodies was left attached to the cross.

The party then searched for twenty miles South, endeavouring to discover the body of Captain Oates. It was never found but another cairn and record were left in the vicinity to his memory.

Stood By Companions.

It should here most certainly be noted that the Southern party nobly stood by their sick companions to the end, and in spite of their distressing condition they had retained every record and thirty-five pounds of geological specimens, which proved to be of the greatest scientific value. This emphasized the nature of their journey. The search party then turned northward, having decided to next direct their efforts to the relief of Lieut. Campbell and the northern party.

The despatch was written and signed by Lieut. E. R. G. Evans, R. N., who was Captain Scott's second in command.

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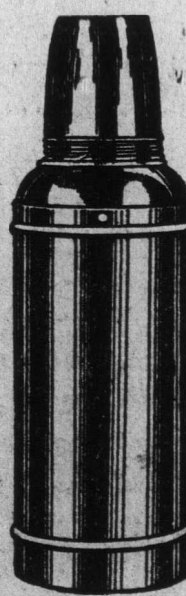
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