

## Explorations and Hardships

**Diary of the "Discovery" Expedition to the Antarctic Regions, 1901-1904.** EDWARD WILSON. Ann Savours, Ed. Humanities Press, New York, 1967. 416 pp., illus. \$22.50.

The brilliance and the tragedy of the second Scott, or *Terra Nova*, expedition (1910-1913), of which Wilson was a member and on which he, along with Scott and others, lost his life, has understandably obscured the significance of the *Discovery* expedition. Except for the experience and the achievements of the first expedition, however, the second one could hardly have been made.

Wilson's diary is primarily a personal record. It is a moving self-portrait of one of the most extraordinary men who

ever participated in Antarctic exploration. Wilson was both a physician and a zoologist. He must have been a man of inexhaustible energy, for he was continuously busy in both capacities. He was a deeply religious and tolerant man. Yet the inevitable irritations of crowding during the winter night caused him to observe, "Men don't improve when they live together alone cut off from all of the better half of humanity that encourages decency and kindness." Wilson's diary is not filled with comments about his companions, but the occasional ones he does make are significant. Of his leader, Captain Scott, he wrote, "He has always got some new idea for obtaining new facts, an excellent man for this job, full of theories and ingenuity—and always thinking." The most frequently men-

tioned man in this diary is E. H. Shackleton, whom Wilson usually refers to by the affectionate term "Shackle."

Lack of experience and of knowledge of the harshness of the Antarctic climate made the early sledge journeys undertaken by the expedition very rough indeed. Most of the men suffered from frostbite and snow blindness, and one man, isolated from his companions in a blizzard, slid off an ice cliff into the sea. The main thrust of the expedition was a journey south over the Ross Ice Shelf which began from McMurdo Sound on 2 November 1902. Scott, Shackleton, and Wilson made up the party, which reached a latitude of 87°17', the farthest south man had ever been. It was a truly heroic journey. The dogs were unable to perform as expected, and relaying, which involved 15 miles' journey to make good only five on the way, was tried. Dog power had to be supplemented by back-breaking hauling by the men. Frostbite, snow blindness, and other discomforts were the lot of all. Wilson suffered so badly from snow blindness that he had to travel for some time with his eyes bandaged. Shackleton became so ill on the return journey that he was unable to do more than walk.

The party arrived back at the *Discovery* on 3 February 1903 to find that the relief ship *Morning* had arrived.

It was a great hardship for Shackleton that he was sent home on the relief ship as a result of his breakdown on the southern sledge journey. This is the same Shackleton who was later to make one of the greatest sledge journeys of all time and carry out further important Antarctic explorations.

In addition to his many other gifts, Wilson was a sensitive artist. The book contains many of his beautiful pencil drawings and 47 reproductions of his own watercolors, which portray with great fidelity the unusual colors one finds in Antarctica. The Scott Polar Research Institute is to be congratulated on sponsoring this volume. It fills a great void in the records of Scott's first expedition, but it does more than that. It is one of the great diaries in the English language. It is a "must" for every student of Antarctic exploration, and it will be scarcely less interesting to the general reader.

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for the place where we had seen the white giant Petrels as the ship rounded the Cape - we found them there standing on the shore ice & I killed four white ones & one dark one as they made off for the ice floating on the sea - One I lost & it floated away on the tide - I also shot two MacComich's Skuas - and Shackleton too, there were any number of them flying over the Pinguins ready to pounce on the first nestling found unprotected - The Pinguins as usual were very amusing. They had eggs some of them & carefully laid in a nest made of pebbles - Some had just hatched out - and some had big downy or woolly young ones more than half as big as they were themselves - These they tried to sit on but all they could cover was the head so it looked very absurd - Although

the bird lays two eggs - hardly ever more than one young one survives. . . Then they had a strange way of flying at one very often - a big penguin would start running towards one from some considerable distance, and without a moment's hesitation would seize one's

trousers & begin battering one's shin with its very heavy flipper. The



number of these birds was simply incredible - they covered the 200 odd acres - they covered the sides of the mountain, ft. high, & they spread in small colonies over the top - There was a constant stream of them up & down the side of the mountain & their paths were very useful to us in getting up the steep snow & rocky slopes - We found several Skuas on the way up, with their fledgelings - pretty little grayish white fluffy things with pale blue bill & feet - but the old birds kept up a continual attack on us when we were anywhere near their young, chattering excitedly & dashing at our heads so boldly & persistently that we had to protect ourselves with a stick & one of the

A page from Wilson's diary. This page is part of the entry for 9 January 1902, the day on which the party first landed on the Antarctic continent. The original manuscript is in the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge.