

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Hell with a Capital H

Katherine Lambert

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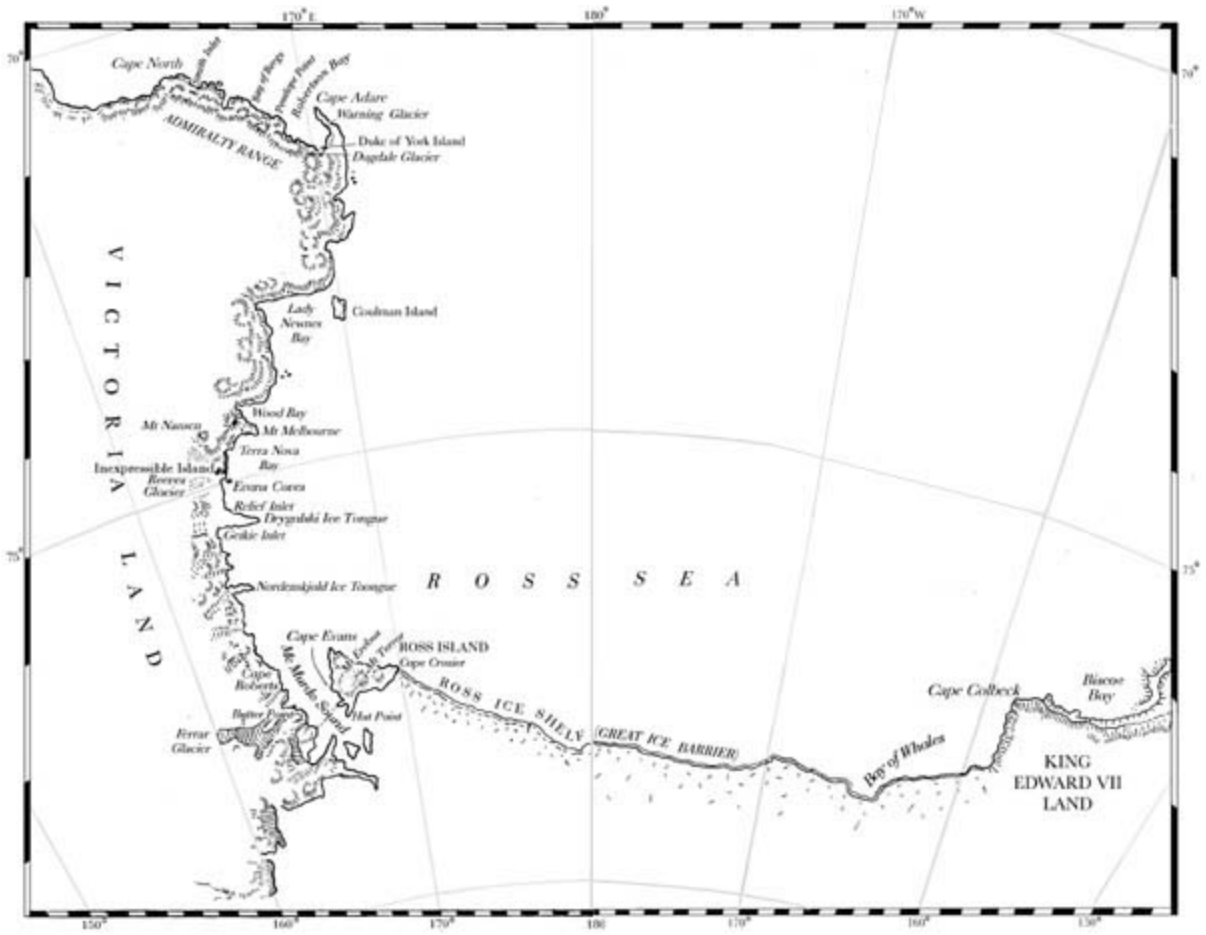
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About the Author

Katherine Lambert has worked for many years as a magazine and book editor and producer. She was assistant editor of *The Bankers' Magazine*, editor of *Expedition*, the house magazine of the World Expeditionary Association, and is currently managing editor of the annual *Good Gardens Guide*. She was co-editor, with Rosemary Verey, of *The American Man's Garden* and *Secret Gardens*, and assisted Peter King with *Scott's Last Journey*.



To my father,
magician with words,
who told me about Ananias
and the strange physiognomy
of the snowy petrel

'HELL WITH A CAPITAL H'

An Epic Story of Antarctic Survival



KATHERINE LAMBERT

With an Introduction by Peter King



PIMLICO

Introduction

by Peter King

This is not an account of polar tragedy; it does not tell of mortal remains perfectly preserved in ice. Instead it chronicles a struggle for survival by a small group of men who passed through 'Hell with a capital H'¹ and who, against all the odds, came out the other side.

The six members of the Northern Party, led by Lieutenant Victor Campbell, had been specially chosen by Scott to concentrate on scientific research and exploration. Their remarkable story is retold here largely in their own words, from their diaries and notes. The diaries of four of the men have never been published before. What emerges is on the one hand a straightforward account of polar adventure, and on the other a chilling saga of misadventure, during which they endured near-starvation, physical exhaustion and acute or debilitating illness, and experienced extremities of emotion that would have felled men of lesser resilience.

For the reader today it is difficult to imagine how primitive Antarctic exploration was at the beginning of the twentieth century. The scientist Raymond Priestley - the sole civilian member of the Northern Party, and the only one of the six to return later in life to the polar continent - made two further visits to Antarctica, in 1957 and 1959. On the second occasion he realised that he had seen more of the coastline in those two months than he had seen in three

years, half a century earlier, and recalled: 'We were in the old days the prisoners of our limitations.'

Those limitations were legion. No aeroplanes to drop off team members, lift off casualties, bring in supplies. A vast land with no communications - no wireless, no telegraph system, no mobile telephones, no satellite technology. When Scott and his companions died in March 1912, the world knew nothing of the disaster until their ship, *Terra Nova*, reached New Zealand almost a year afterwards.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century - in the year that this book is published - *The Times* of 18 May 2002 reported on a lone English explorer, Dave Mill, whose ambition had been to conquer the North Pole solo, by walking some 500 miles from Resolute Bay in Canada. He had been stopped in his tracks 200 miles after he had set out, as the pack ice broke up all around him unseasonably early. Immediately a rescue operation swung into action. His back-up emergency team pinpointed his position by satellite. He e-mailed them a digital image of the 400-metre landing strip he had created with the aid of his sledge-boat. A light aircraft set off from Resolute Bay on the evening of 19 May and landed safely on his makeshift runway at 2 a.m. the following morning. By 8 a.m. that day he had been rescued. With an eye to history, his comment to *The Times* by satellite telephone was: 'As I walk, I can feel what Shackleton felt and what Scott must have experienced. They had no rescue aircraft and no mobile phones. They were the first adventurers.'

Historically, of course, Mill was mentally wiping out nearly two and a half thousand years of exploration since Pytheas in 325 BC had embarked on one of the most remarkable voyages of discovery ever made. His journey had expanded the limits of the known world northward as far as the Arctic Circle. Yet it was not until 1773, almost two thousand years later, that the Antarctic Circle was crossed for the first time by James Cook, the first explorer

of the heroic age. A hundred years later, Sir James Clark Ross sailed along hundreds of miles of Antarctic coastline, penetrated the continent as far as 78° 11'S, and fixed the position of the South Magnetic Pole with relative accuracy - an extraordinary tally of achievements. Ross was followed by Scott aboard *Discovery* in 1901-04 and Shackleton aboard *Nimrod* in 1907-09. All broke scientific and territorial barriers, yet Apsley Cherry-Garrard, a member of Scott's last expedition, was still able to write at its conclusion: 'the interior of this supposed continent is entirely unknown and uncharted except in the Ross Sea area, while the fringes of the land are only discovered in perhaps half a dozen places on a circumference of about eleven thousand miles.' Cook, Ross, Shackleton and Scott - and other great names before and in between - had still barely scratched the surface of Antarctica.

This book recreates the world in which Scott and his contemporaries operated - a world of sailing ships and sledges, of animal-driving and man-hauling, in which diaries, photographs and letters were the only reliable records of scientific achievement, daily life and private thoughts. From these, the six members of the Northern Party emerge as men of very different personalities. They became also a disciplined and positive force for good, with all - and one man in particular - working hard to make the team function, to prevent strife and to anticipate and deal with physical and mental stress. The outstanding member of the team was the naval surgeon Dr Murray Levick. He emerges from these pages as an unsung hero of the heroic age of polar exploration.

Those officers of Royal Navy status who took part in Scott's expeditions were obliged as a condition of service to keep diaries which might later be written up to form part of the official record rushed into print by Smith, Elder & Co in 1913, and of the body of scientific reports published over several years by the British Museum. Campbell and Levick

both kept diaries, and so did Priestley, who, as one of the expedition's three geologists was anyway accustomed to writing comprehensive and accurate notes as part of the scientific discipline. The three 'men' of the party, Abbott, Dickason and Browning, who were carefully chosen from the most experienced seamen of the Royal Navy, were unusual in also choosing to keep written records.

Two types of diary were issued to members of the expedition - a 100-page book for daily use when in camp or aboard ship, and the so-called sledging diaries. The latter were small red-bound books that would slip easily into a pocket, and were written up in pencil (ink would run) in tents during breaks in daily travels. Those preserved today at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge show signs of hard wear and tear. When the sledgers returned to their base, the rough notes scrawled in the pages of the sledging diaries were worked up and added to the narrative of the 'fair copy' journals. These were rather splendid black, cloth-bound volumes, supplied as standard to the expedition by a City of London stationer. Levick broke his only stylographic pen during the voyage out to Antarctica, so he swapped his 12-bore double-barrelled shotgun for a crew member's fountain pen: 'This will give some idea of how the relative value of articles out here changes as their owner require them or not.'

Priestley alone of the Northern Party typed out his comprehensive diaries, on the machine allocated to Apsley Cherry-Garrard as editor of the 'in-house' magazine, *The South Polar Times*, and in 1914 polished them up in narrative form for publication as a book under the title *Antarctic Adventure*. There can be little doubt that he intended his notes for publication the moment he began them, otherwise he would have been unable to meet the rigorous timetable imposed by his publishers.

Levick was also racing to meet the keen publishing deadline of March 1914 set by Heinemann, publishers of

his classic book *Antarctic Penguins*. This, a popular version of the careful zoological report he wrote for the British Museum Natural History series, was the outcome of copious observations taken when the Northern Party were living in the middle of a penguin rookery, and was graphically illustrated with his own photographs. Levick also supplied photographs for the reports on glaciology and physiography, and others for Priestley's book. The majority of the photographs for the second volume of the official account, *Scott's Last Expedition*, published by Smith, Elder in 1913, are his too. This was a remarkable effort, as he knew nothing about photography until he set out. Herbert Ponting, the expedition's 'camera artist', gave him lessons, and, in Priestley's view, 'some very peculiar things happened while he was learning, but he finished up second only to the master himself, with this advantage over [Ponting] - he would take anything he was asked'.



1. The keeping of diaries was regarded as an essential tool of polar expeditions. According to taste, they ranged from mere lists of facts and data to full-blown

autobiography. Dr Murray Levick, who tended towards the latter, illustrated his fair-copy journal with photographs, usually his own.

Like his photographs, Levick's diaries reveal an ability to observe both the natural world and his fellows. He writes simply and directly, with touches of humour and introspection. Unlike Campbell, he was under no obligation to use his diaries as the basis of an official publication; unlike Priestley, his ambition was not to produce a narrative of the Northern Party but a book of popular zoology, and there is some evidence that he also had ambitions to become a novelist and travel writer. His journals display a freshness uninhibited by ulterior motives or 'political correctness', and it is upon them that this book is principally based.

George Murray Levick, born in 1877 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was the only child of a civil engineer who must have been reasonably well off. He was sent to St Paul's School in London, where he was a scholar. His last school report does not record any particular academic brilliance, although he was said to be a keen rugby player, a good oar and a magnificent gymnast. His friend Priestley wrote that it was at St Paul's that Levick developed the concern for physical fitness and enthusiasm for outdoor activities which remained with him always and which, combined with a very real interest in his fellow men, 'became the dominant factor in his life'. Levick's aim was to be a surgeon, so after leaving school he went, not to university, but to one of London's great teaching hospitals, St Bartholomew's. He qualified as a surgeon in 1902, and in the same year was commissioned as a surgeon/doctor in the Royal Navy. This allowed him to continue his athletic and sporting activities in a milieu similar to that he had previously enjoyed, meeting many of his old friends on the field of play.

When he joined the Royal Navy, Levick, twenty-six years old, was at the height of his physical powers. After nearly a

year of service on shore, he earned a commission aboard HMS *Bulwark*, flag ship of the Mediterranean Fleet, following which he served on HMS *Queen* and at the Royal Hospital, Chatham. A new challenge came in 1908. He was appointed to the battleship HMS *Essex*, commanded by Scott, who was drawing together his crew for the polar expedition of 1910. The following year he went to HMS *Ganges*, a boys' training ship, as medical officer with special responsibility for physical training, before being selected by Scott.

Levick's duties had not, as far as we know, been spelled out in detail by Scott, but no doubt he expected to deal with routine accidents and would have hoped to pursue his new interest in diet and fitness. In fact, as expedition doctor his medical duties were few – although on two occasions he was literally responsible for saving life and limb. Instead, he acted primarily as photographer and zoologist, and became increasingly skilled at both. His journals show that he was also fully alert to the psychological problems facing a small group of men forced to rely on themselves and each other for extended periods. He used a variety of methods to ease difficulties – jokes, lectures, physical exercises and medicinal tots of brandy – but we are also able to read in his journals comments of a critical nature on other members of the party (a rare experience in Antarctic literature, since they are edited out of most 'fair copies'). As their situation worsened, Levick's criticisms diminished.

This is the background to the unknown man who emerges as the star of this book at the point where he joined Scott's expedition. It was at one and the same time a select and a motley group. The scientists had been chosen by Dr Edward Wilson, Chief of Scientific Staff. Lieutenant Edward Evans as second-in-command of the expedition and Campbell as First Mate of *Terra Nova* were largely responsible for picking the ratings. Scott naturally took a keen interest in interviewing the officers himself. (Some

8,000 had volunteered for the 60-odd places.) Most of the recruits were strangers to one another, and strangers to the Antarctic. They had volunteered for many reasons: for adventure, for love of the icy wastes, to advance careers, to escape from wives. The senior members certainly were not in it for the money – Scott had found it so difficult to meet the budget that many of the officers had been required to forego their salaries if the expedition ran into a third year, while a major consideration in accepting two of their number was that they brought with them the substantial sum of £1,000 each.

From very early on, Campbell's small group was set apart from the rest of the expedition. The six men were scheduled to operate independently of both the Polar Party and the rest of the shore party (scientists and others) whose base was Cape Evans. As a roving satellite group, the Northern Party were therefore detached physically from the other members of the expedition and cut off from the momentous events in train. They gathered snatches of news from time to time from the crew of *Terra Nova* as they were embarked and disembarked at different destinations, but they would not be able to grasp the whole picture until the very end of the expedition. They knew nothing of the drama unfolding at Cape Crozier – which forms the heart of Cherry-Garrard's polar classic, *The Worst Journey in the World* – nor of the acute attack of scurvy which nearly killed Scott's second-in-command, nor of the growing anxiety about the fate of the Polar Party and the final news of their deaths. They were in effect confined within their own small bubble, seeing the wider picture through a limited and distorted lens.

In London and the wider world, the focus was all on Scott – his personality and his strategy. When it became clear that he and Amundsen would be racing to the Pole, opinions were divided largely along national lines. But nobody – not those eagerly awaiting the outcome of Scott's

expedition, nor those encamped in Antarctica - expected Scott, Wilson, Oates, Bowers and Petty Officer Evans to perish. Far less did they envisage that the Northern Party would be the main focus of concern for seven long months. However, once Campbell and his five companions were beyond recall, this was very much the case. The leader of one of Scott's other scientific groups, Griffith Taylor, wrote: 'I had never anticipated any serious accident to the Pole party ... But I should not have been surprised to hear of disaster in Campbell's northern party, for no one had lived through a winter in such a fashion before.'

1 A remark made by their leader to another number of the party.

1

Terra Nova to Terra Incognita

1 June 1910–25 January 1911

FOR CENTURIES LONDON'S great artery, the Thames, has hosted events of national mourning or rejoicing. The Lord Mayor's Show was held on the river annually from the fifteenth century until the City of London reluctantly ceded control of the capital's waterway in 1857. In the winter of 1564–5 a great freeze enabled archery, dancing and the roasting of an ox to take place, and 130 years later crowds walked across the ice to mourn the death of Mary II, William III's queen, at Westminster Abbey. On 15 May 1749 the Duke of Richmond staged a famous fireworks display from his town house in Whitehall. In 1806, draped in black, Nelson's coffin was borne silently upstream from Greenwich for his funeral at St Paul's Cathedral; in 1965 Churchill's was the next to be accorded this sombre honour.

Further east the buildings which line the banks of the Thames are (fewer and fewer now) wharves and warehouses, the river craft ocean-going liners or dirty great instruments of commerce. This mercantile stretch has seen its displays of pageantry too: Henry VIII launched his flagship 'Great Harry', built at Deptford, with a spectacular ceremony at Greenwich in 1514; 335 years later a royal procession sailed down the river to mark the

opening of the Coal Exchange in the City of London. Still further east, as it winds towards the sea, the Thames transcribes a perfect 'U', which since the early nineteenth century has enclosed and protected the Isle of Dogs and the West India Docks.

Here, on 1 June 1910, all eyes were on an old terrier of a ship - the *Terra Nova*, a 3-masted, 747-ton Dundee whaler with massive oak timbers and a bow sheathed in iron plates. Veteran of many seasons' hard labour among the ice floes, the paint and patches applied during her latest refit could not disguise her age.¹ On one of her journeys she had been crushed in pack ice to the point where her hatches had popped out of line.

Terra Nova had not been Scott's first choice for his second Antarctic venture. He had hoped to sail again aboard *Discovery*, the ship which, having survived two winters in the pack in 1902 and 1903, had brought his first National Antarctic Expedition safely home. She too was a Dundee whaler, but had been designed by no less a person than the Chief Contractor of the Admiralty, and had been disposed of by the Admiralty in the sour aftermath of the expedition for £10,000 (well over £500,000 today). The price for *Terra Nova* was £5,000 down and £7,500 to pay. She had also played a small part in Scott's first Antarctic expedition, backing up *Morning* as an extra, unexpected and unwelcome relief ship. Now she was the bride; by an irony of fate her bridesmaid *Discovery* was also moored in the West India Docks on that day in June, looking rather tatty and weather-beaten.

Scott's last enterprise must be viewed in the wider context of Arctic and Antarctic exploration. His was just the latest in a long line of expeditions inspired by curiosity, patriotism or greed to make sense of the blank canvases at opposite ends of the globe. The fantastical maps devised by early cartographers had been progressively corrected, unexplored land masses claimed, lucrative whale and seal

fishing grounds identified. By 1910 Antarctica had taken shape as a large continent (but by no means as large as originally envisaged) protected by a broad ice-belt. The exploration of this inner core was a genuine scientific enterprise, the race to the South Pole a purely human conceit.



2. The expedition ship, *Terra Nova*, was a sturdy 747-ton Dundee whaler, three-masted and barque-rigged and carrying auxiliary steam and screw.

Most of the eighteenth-and nineteenth-century naval ships and whalers had approached Antarctica from Australia, South America or South Africa via Cape Horn. It was the British explorers, Ross, Shackleton and Scott himself, who had established a tradition of using New Zealand as their terminus. For Scott this pinpointed Ross Island as his landing point in Antarctica, gave him a direct route to the Pole, and dictated the number and extent of scientific researches his team would be able to undertake. The *Terra Nova* expedition's brief was to make a thorough geographical and scientific survey of the territory spreading out eastwards, westwards and possibly also northwards from their anticipated base on Ross Island. To the south lay the Pole, and data would be collected along that route also.

Scott's ambitions were sharply defined by the weather - anticipated and actual. By setting out in June, he expected to arrive in Antarctica in plenty of time to establish his main base and to lay the essential depots on the route to

the Pole before the onset of winter. This interlude would also allow substantial scientific journeys to be made before all work closed down for the dead months of darkness, which lasted from the middle of May until the end of July. Towards the end of spring - August to October - the five-month push for the Pole would take place, while the rest of the expedition would fulfil other scientific programmes. The Pole reached and the Polar Party safely back at base, the expedition would reassemble to await the return of the ship. A contingency plan allowed for a further winter on the continent.

For many of the men assembled at the dockside, it was an unknown and unquantifiable challenge, but a few had accompanied Scott to Antarctica nine years earlier - the present expedition's Chief of Scientific Staff, Dr Edward Wilson, Petty Officers Evans, Crean, Williamson and Heald, Chief Stoker Lashly, and Lieutenant Edward Evans, who had been second-in-command of *Morning*. The bo'sun Alf Cheetham and the motor engineer Bernard Day were old 'Shackleton men', members of the 1907-09 *Nimrod* expedition, and Cheetham was unique in having served both with Scott aboard *Discovery* and with Shackleton.

The peripatetic nature of naval and scientific life - the twin poaching grounds for British polar expeditions of the period - meant that men were arbitrarily thrown together, then as cavalierly split up. Although some remained fast friends (Scott and Wilson, for example), most philosophically shed the companions with whom they had shared hilarious, horrendous, tedious and embarrassing experiences for months and years, and prepared to go through the same thing again with a fresh set.

Raymond Priestley had been studying geology at Bristol University College when he was picked for Shackleton's *Nimrod* team, and had noted then one of the draws (or drawbacks in the case of a man as introverted as Scott²) of being an explorer on a high-profile expedition: 'Before they

had had a chance to justify themselves the men were fêted, wined and dined, exposed to flattery and special attention, listened to with respect as authorities on subjects of which they often knew little enough ... It requires the nerves and temperament of a test match cricketer of the better sort to withstand the strain.’³

For many months Lieutenant Edward (‘Teddy’) Evans and the acting First Mate, Lieutenant Victor Campbell, had been in the forefront of the action at the West India Docks. Evans had been given the job of supervising the refitting, refurbishing and customising of the ship in her painful transition from whaler to polar explorer. This included fitting bunks for the officers and some of the men (the rest slept in hammocks), an ice house, rooms to house instruments and chronometers, laboratories and clothing stores. Campbell and the two other senior officers, Harry Pennell and Henry Rennick, plus Henry Bowers as stores officer, had joined six weeks before the sailing date of 1 June. In order to achieve the impossible, Evans used cajolery, Campbell intimidation. They made a powerful duo. Scott, who had been pressurised by Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society, into accepting Evans as his second-in-command, was mollified.⁴ He was also impressed by Campbell’s quiet efficiency and Bowers’ infinite capacity for hard work.

Amazingly, the ship was ready on time. The razzmatazz started up as she cast off and slipped slowly down to the mouth of the Thames - attended by the travellers’ families and friends, assorted bigwigs and ‘gold lace and cocked hats and dignitaries enough to run a Navy’, according to one American guest. Almost every craft on the river was dressed overall for the occasion, and *Terra Nova* herself sported both the White Ensign of the British Navy and the esteemed burgee of the Royal Yacht Squadron.⁵ Dockers, seamen and East Enders in their thousands cheered from

the banks, accompanied by a chorus of shrill blasts and mournful hoots from the assembled shipping.

In what had become a polar tradition, this populist and patriotic send-off was repeated on a grand scale as *Terra Nova* steamed through the lines of battleships and cruisers of the Home Fleet massed in Portland Bay.⁶ 'They clapped us heartily as we passed each ship, the good old British cheer not being allowed', wrote one of the Petty Officers, George Abbott, in his diary. Letting themselves out through the 'hole in the wall' (a gap in the man-made breakwater), they rounded Portland Bill at sunset and worked their way westward past Land's End and along the coasts of Cornwall and north Devon to Wales, where they were greeted with genuine enthusiasm by the people and dignitaries of the City of Cardiff, a notably generous donor to the expedition's depleted coffers.⁷ Visitors were given guided tours of the ship at 2s. 6d. a head, with proceeds going to the Cardiff Infirmary; the Lord Mayor hosted a party at City Hall, complete with all-male choir, and PO 'Taff' Evans disgraced his Welsh patrimony by a drunken binge in front of his home crowd. After a fortnight's junketing - a long fortnight for Scott, who instinctively shrank from the national limelight - the ship at last made it down the Bristol Channel and out into the Atlantic on 15 June.

Scott himself was not on board. He stayed behind to drum up additional funds before making all speed to South Africa for the same purpose. He was finding money-grubbing as distasteful as ever. On the eve of *Terra Nova's* departure, Teddy Evans wrote lightheartedly: 'While we go on a yachting cruise, visiting various parts of the Empire, Captain Scott has the unpleasant duty of going round with the hat in his hand, beseeching people for money to pay his staff.' It was uphill work, partly due to 'expedition fatigue' generated by his own and Shackleton's earlier journeys, and compounded by competition from Shackleton's own projected trans-Antarctic venture. It did not help that

Edward VII had died on 6 May, and that the country was limping between inconclusive elections.

Scott was determined, however, that the naval contingent, and as many scientists as possible, would sail together to the Antarctic, so that they would arrive physically hardened and psychologically bonded. Only nine men would join the ship at her last country of call, New Zealand - the three geologists, the four animal handlers and the motor expert, none of whose services were required at that stage. (Lawrence 'Titus' Oates, the horse expert, had also been due to join in New Zealand, but Scott had been so taken with him that he had enrolled him as a midshipman for the journey out.) The final absentee was the photographer, Herbert Ponting, who had failed to assemble all his equipment in time to sail from London.

In Scott's absence, life on board *Terra Nova* was regulated by a triumvirate of very different characters. In temporary command was the affable and gregarious Teddy Evans. He was to prove a popular leader (although Scott's brother-in-law Wilfrid Bruce, a member of the ship's crew who had been sent to Russia to help collect the dogs and ponies, later described him disparagingly as 'a sort of Peter Pan'). He had already revealed himself an inspired fundraiser (far better than Scott), and now showed talent as an emollient, smoothing over differences and welding together the rag-bag of civilians, officers, ratings, navy and merchant navy men. Although the way he had insinuated himself into the expedition had raised a question mark in some minds, and others came later to regard him as slippery and self-serving, at this stage his tact and bonhomie were invaluable. He fostered a holiday atmosphere, and the voyage out remained, for those who survived, a memorably enjoyable part of the expedition.

Having played a key role in bringing the ship up to scratch, Victor Campbell turned his attention to her human cargo. He was one of the 'hungry hundred' - officers of the

merchant marine who were allowed to cross over to the Royal Navy during a period of expansion at the turn of the twentieth century. Although he had retired in 1907 at the early age of thirty-four, marital problems had prompted him to return to sea; he was now on the navy's Emergency List. He set a high standard of routine and discipline and maintained it rigorously throughout the seven-month voyage. Generally mild of manner and soft-spoken, his voice could rise to a penetrating rasp, 'audible', according to one of the geologists, Frank Debenham, in a *Polar Record* article, 'in a gale of wind from the poop all over the ship's deck' - and woe betide anyone who 'dropped some tar on his lily white decks, or failed to recognize the correct halliard'.

Although 'The Wicked Mate', as Campbell was soon known, joined in the horseplay which became an integral part of shipboard life and could take a joke against himself with the best, he was apt to lose his temper with awesome speed - according to Debenham, 'on deck you learned to jump to his bidding as if he had a rope's end in his hand'. 'I was very frightened of Campbell', wrote Apsley Cherry-Garrard, a junior member of the expedition. But one less easily cowed, 'Uncle Bill' Wilson, felt this was a bit of a front: 'Campbell as the "President of the Purity Brigade" wears a halo, but it has been broken so often that it hardly holds together and has a permanent cant.' Charles Wright, the expedition's physicist, observed that he was 'supposed to be a martinet and tries to live up to it'.

The third of the ship's officers, Lieutenant Harry Pennell, had no need of such tactics. Wilson considered him 'by far the most capable man on the whole expedition', and Scott and Evans had nothing but praise for his attitude and his seamanship. He slept, or rather cat-napped, under the chart table, and spent any spare moment pursuing magnetic and ornithological studies. He also found time to watch over the men on the messdeck, listening to their

complaints, settling quarrels and keeping an eye on their alcohol intake. Although on the voyage out he was merely the navigator, he would take over command of *Terra Nova* once the shore party, including Evans and Campbell, had been disembarked. Pennell's job was as onerous as any. Not only did he act as chauffeur, retrieving or depositing various members of the party at preordained points, but in all he made three arduous journeys from and to New Zealand in order to prevent the ship being frozen into the pack. The zig-zag trail of *Terra Nova's* journeys mapped in *Scott's Last Expedition*⁸ testifies to his industry. Pennell carried another burden of responsibility. Because it had been decided after the bruising *Discovery* experience not to overwinter the ship in Antarctica, no relief ship had been laid on. If *Terra Nova* were to be lost, the whole shore party would be in limbo, their fate uncertain.

Cherry-Garrard, who apart from being one of the youngest of the group had signed on as a complete neophyte,⁹ described the routine on board with a rather charming assumption of seafaring knowledge: 'Watches were of course consigned immediately to the executive officers. The crew was divided into a port and starboard watch, and the ordinary routine of a sailing ship with auxiliary steam was followed.' Officers and scientists alike pitched in to help the lower ranks, and much of the heavy-duty work, such as heaving coal, shifting cargo or pumping (from the start the ship had leaked persistently), was done by calling for volunteers. This may have made these sweaty and exhausting chores seem less like drudgery but placed an unfair burden on life's suckers, of whom Cherry-Garrard, good-natured to a fault and anxious to prove himself, was a prime example. If Abbott were a typical seaman, however, pumping out the bilges was not unenjoyable: 'this is rather fine exercise & is done in the fresh air ... Many an hour we spent pumping'.

Despite this convivial team atmosphere, traditional naval barriers were not dismantled. On 15 July the ceremony of 'crossing the line', during which the polar novices of all ranks were treated to a good ducking, was to bring the usual reversal of roles: PO Evans was cast as Father Neptune and PO Browning as his queen, 'the spotted Amphitrite', while Captain Oates and Lieutenant Atkinson were given walk-on parts as bears. Taff Evans seized the opportunity to make sly digs at his superiors, much enjoyed by the messdeck: 'Is your good ship towing a sea anchor, or is it those ariel [sic] observation wires that so often bring the Officer of the Watch up with a jerk; or else perhaps your rudder is athwartships with carrying too much weather helm which checks your way, as your ship seems remarkably slow; but I presume that she will go a long way in a long time. I think also that a few more steadies from your worthy Navigator would be beneficial to you.' Neptune's speech and the aquatics which followed were recorded *verbatim* by several of the ratings (here by Abbott).

But there was little relaxation of service etiquette. Officers continued to address ratings by their surnames, and to be addressed in their turn as 'Sir' or 'Mr'.¹⁰ Naval routines were rigorously observed. The Sunday service was followed by 'rounds', on which the captain, the two senior doctors, Wilson and Levick, and the other officers filed solemnly round inspecting the ship, including the men's quarters and the engine room, for hygiene and orderliness. When the ship's carpenter left a lamp alight in the hold, setting off a small fire, he was immediately 'logged' and fined, *pour encourager les autres*.¹¹

Gerard Fiennes wrote in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1912: 'We expect our bluejackets to take part of their wages in the coin of flattery.' They took the other part in the coin of maltreatment. Basic rates of pay had changed little since the 1850s, and it was almost impossible for ratings to cross

over from messdeck to wardroom. When *Terra Nova* set sail, a naval commander could still mete out the following punishments without trial: reduction to the ranks, solitary confinement for up to two weeks, imprisonment for up to three months, dismissal with disgrace. Crimes included swearing, gambling, drunkenness and negligence.

Times were changing, however. Although Scott had used his powers on the *Discovery* expedition briefly to clap the lazy and insubordinate cook in irons, the crew of *Terra Nova* did not expect - or receive - draconian treatment. Ratings volunteered for such expeditions in order to improve their career prospects and to escape from the mindless and arbitrary discipline of ordinary naval life. From men such as Lashly and Evans, Scott would have acquired a reputation for treating the messdeck reasonably and rewarding loyal service. Elspeth Huxley, in her perceptive book *Scott of the Antarctic*, analysed the polar *status quo* thus:

In outward forms, there was no equality. Wardroom, warrant officers' mess, messdeck; officers to order, men to obey. But in essentials there was an equality seldom realised, at that time, in British society, and never in the Royal Navy. When men trudge together in their harness, share a sleeping bag, starve together, fall down the same crevasse ... when every man's life depends on the fidelity of his companions; then class distinctions vanish, not by a conscious effort but in the natural order of things. That they could reappear, without objection on either side, in the more normal conditions of shipboard life, was a phenomenon that nobody questioned; that, too, was in the natural order of things.

The trudging, starving and dying were yet to come, but already aboard *Terra Nova* the polarisation of wardroom and messdeck was noticeably less distinct.

Still, some of the scientists found the system difficult to adjust to. The physicist Charles Wright commented in an interview, apropos of Scott: 'I'd never had any experience with British naval captains, how much they were alone, how much like God almighty they had to be. He lived in his own quarters and got in touch with his sailors through his officers - he'd give an order and it'd be done at once, no questions at all. How different from the scientific approach where you're *expected* to argue!'¹²

Scott was not one to discuss his plans with all and sundry, so few were aware of the way his strategy for the expedition was maturing and refining itself in his mind. The Polar Party was not yet finalised, but a few individuals were already beginning to surface as dominant personalities. It seemed certain to their comrades that four at least would shape the course - perhaps even the outcome - of the expedition. Ponting voiced the opinion of many on board: 'the party selected by Captain Scott to accompany him on the last stage of the Pole journey were the four men who possessed the most striking personalities in our community'.

Of these four, Taff Evans was already a big man in the messdeck. During the epic 725-mile, 59-day trek that he, Lashly and Scott had made to the Ferrar Glacier in *Discovery* days, he had displayed commendable coolness when he and Scott had fallen into a seemingly bottomless crevasse. Evans was now PO First Class and had capitalised on his good fortune by specialising as a naval gunnery instructor. Impressively muscled, he was also adept with saw and needle, giving new life to sails, sleeping bags and sledges. Unfortunately, as had been revealed at Cardiff, he was also something of a boozier.

Lieutenant 'Birdie' Bowers of the Royal Indian Marine was physically decidedly unimpressive, being small and squat (5 feet, 4 inches and 12 stone), red-haired and beaky-nosed. At their first meeting Scott had more or less written

him off, saying to Wilson, 'Well, we're landed with him now and must make the best of it.' But his Quasimodo exterior concealed awesome physical strength and endurance, a fierce will and an engaging personality. He was also a fine seaman and a first-rate stores manager. His social superiors freely acknowledged his power and charisma, while the messdeck, unsentimental judges of those set above them, were equally captivated.

Captain 'Titus' Oates (described after his death by Lord Curzon as 'the Eton boy, the cavalry officer, the South African hero, the English gentleman') also possessed the common touch which made him popular with the 'men'. He stood out among the crowd of young recruits, isolated by a detachment bordering on misanthropy. Although he and his cabin-mate, Dr Edward ('Atch') Atkinson, struck up an almost wordless alliance, to the amusement of their more voluble companions, he much preferred animals to men (let alone, God forbid, women¹³). When he joined in shipboard pranks it was with gusto, but otherwise he pored silently over Napier's *History of the Peninsular War*, and his substitute for conversation was a series of muttered asides - waspish, acute and often amusing. Complicated, difficult and occasionally truculent, 'Soldier' came to be regarded with affectionate respect by his peers, and with admiration by the lower ranks. He treated both alike, often inviting favoured ratings to lunch or dine with him during interludes on shore.

It is impossible to find a single person with anything negative to say about Dr Edward Wilson. In Bowers' view, 'There is no qualifying *but* about "our Bill". He is without any *buts* - from any point of view.' Although godly through and through, no nauseating aura of sanctity clung to him. He more than held his own in the quips, arguments and wardroom tussles, and on one memorable occasion the unlikely trio of 'Uncle Bill', 'Cherry' and 'the Wicked Mate' were busily engaged in holding the largest cabin against all

comers: 'It has lasted an hour or so, and half of us were nearly naked towards the finish, having had our clothes torn off our backs - all is excellent fun and splendid exercise.' Everyone sought Wilson's advice. Bowers described him as 'always the balancing point in the mess', and Scott relied on him utterly, as adviser, channel of communication, morale-booster and confidante. Only Kathleen, Scott's free-thinking wife, seems to have found his unshakeable integrity hard to take. For the rest: 'we all loved him', one of the young scientists stated simply.

The question of who would make up the party for the final assault on the Pole was at the back of everyone's mind, but the subsidiary scientific and exploration teams were now actively being lined up. None was more important to Scott than the so-called Eastern Party, the group Victor Campbell was chosen early on to lead. The six men were expected to play an important scientific role as well as undertaking the only pioneering piece of exploration of the entire expedition.

The Eastern Party's destination was King Edward VII Land, one of the outer edges of a wedge of Antarctica regarded by the British at that time as their particular fiefdom, the other side of the wedge being Victoria Land. As the skua flies, it is some 400 miles east of Cape Evans, at the other end of the Ross Ice Shelf, along which in 1841 James Clark Ross had been the first to sail, and which he had named the Great Ice Barrier. Ross had also glimpsed King Edward VII Land, as had Scott in 1902, and Shackleton had made desperate attempts to land there in 1908. In the words of Roland Huntford, author of the thought-provoking *Scott and Amundsen*, 'Terra Nova was not carrying one expedition, but two; Scott's main party for McMurdo Sound, and Campbell's group for King Edward VII Land.' Teddy Evans recorded that they were envied by many on board.

Apart from Campbell, five other men had to be chosen, and Raymond Priestley seemed a likely bet as scientist. Still only twenty-four years old, he had won his polar spurs on the *Nimrod* expedition, where he had served under T. Edgeworth David, the eminent Professor of Geology at Sydney University; after the expedition's dissolution, Priestley had continued to study under David and to write up the geological findings. He would now be the only scientist in an important group, an enviable position.

For such an extensive journey - nearly a year in the field - a doctor was required. Murray Levick was a practising naval surgeon and therefore qualified to deal with any medical crises that might arise. He had served under Scott in HMS *Essex*; like Dr Atkinson, he had been released by the Admiralty for his present assignment at Scott's own request. The Director-General of the Admiralty's Medical Department had endorsed both transfers on the grounds that they were two outstanding officers who would add lustre to a (then-ailing) branch of the service. In pecking order Levick stood above Atkinson. While Atkinson's special interests were bacteriology and parasitology, Levick had begun to make a name for himself in the spheres of diet and physical fitness. These were subjects that would require all his knowledge and ingenuity in the time to come.

Levick shared the cabin opposite Scott's with Atkinson and Oates, but this propinquity does not seem initially to have done him much good. Scott may have remembered Levick's name from *Essex* days, but not the man himself, writing in his unpublished diary: 'I am told that he has some knowledge of his profession, but there it ends. He seems quite incapable of learning anything fresh. Left alone, I verily believe he would do nothing from sheer lack of initiative.' Scott's snap judgements of Levick and Bowers were thus equally negative - and equally wrong. He dismissed Levick in a sentence - 'I am afraid there is little