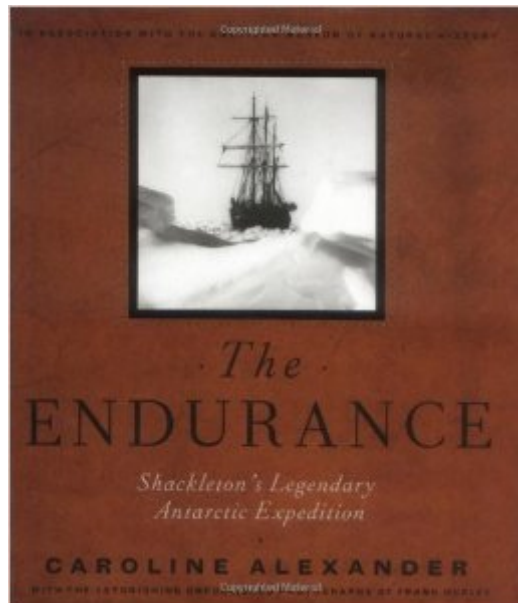


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The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition



Synopsis

In August 1914, days before the outbreak of the First World War, the renowned explorer Ernest Shackleton and a crew of twenty-seven set sail for the South Atlantic in pursuit of the last unclaimed prize in the history of exploration: the first crossing on foot of the Antarctic continent. Weaving a treacherous path through the freezing Weddell Sea, they had come within eighty-five miles of their destination when their ship, *Endurance*, was trapped fast in the ice pack. Soon the ship was crushed like matchwood, leaving the crew stranded on the floes. Their ordeal would last for twenty months, and they would make two near-fatal attempts to escape by open boat before their final rescue. Drawing upon previously unavailable sources, Caroline Alexander gives us a riveting account of Shackleton's expedition--one of history's greatest epics of survival. And she presents the astonishing work of Frank Hurley, the Australian photographer whose visual record of the adventure has never before been published comprehensively. Together, text and image re-create the terrible beauty of Antarctica, the awful destruction of the ship, and the crew's heroic daily struggle to stay alive, a miracle achieved largely through Shackleton's inspiring leadership. The survival of Hurley's remarkable images is scarcely less miraculous: The original glass plate negatives, from which most of the book's illustrations are superbly reproduced, were stored in hermetically sealed cannisters that survived months on the ice floes, a week in an open boat on the polar seas, and several more months buried in the snows of a rocky outcrop called Elephant Island. Finally Hurley was forced to abandon his professional equipment; he captured some of the most unforgettable images of the struggle with a pocket camera and three rolls of Kodak film. Published in conjunction with the American Museum of Natural History's landmark exhibition on Shackleton's journey, *The Endurance* thrillingly recounts one of the last great adventures in the Heroic Age of exploration--perhaps the greatest of them all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a truly gripping and beautiful book. The story of the voyage and survival of the Endurance, Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1914 expedition to traverse the Antarctic continent on foot, is truly awe-inspiring. The photographs of Frank Hurley, the expedition's photographer, are sublime and powerful. I can't recapture the magnitude or beauty of the book in a few words, but two things struck me as particularly moving. At one point, Shackleton and five men sailed 800 miles in a 22-foot boat through the tempestuous South Atlantic Ocean to reach help. I doubt that even Alexander's account of the voyage does justice to the courage, skill and fortitude exhibited by these men. Two comments put this one piece of the survival struggle into perspective. Alexander comments, "They would later learn that a 500-ton steamer had foundered with all hands in the same hurricane they had just weathered." And upon reaching civilization for the first time, the captain of the Endurance, Frank Worsley records the reaction of some of the hardest seamen in the world: Three or four white-haired veterans of the sea came forward. One spoke in Norse, and the Manager translated. He said he had been at sea over 40 years; that he knew this stormy Southern Ocean intimately, from South Georgia to Cape Horn, from Elephant Island to the South Orkneys, and that never had he heard of such a wonderful feat of daring seamanship as bringing the 22-foot open boat from Elephant Island to South Georgia.... All the seamen present then came forward and solemnly shook hands with us in turn. Coming from brother seamen, men of our own cloth and members of a great seafaring race like the Norwegians, this was a wonderful tribute. (The Endurance, pages 166-167).

Several days after purchasing Caroline Alexander's, "The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition" from .com, I read a few customer reviews that recommended Alfred Lansing's 1959 classic: "Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Journey." These reviews extolled Lansing's book, and pointed-out how Alexander's was essentially a rewrite of this earlier work. Consequently, I also purchased his book, and thoroughly enjoyed reading the two of them while on vacation a few weeks ago. (I had already begun Alexander's book -- so, completed it before beginning Lansing's.) Alexander's book has one (and only one) distinct and obvious advantage over Lansing's -- the inclusion of scores of the original expedition photographs taken by Frank Hurley (the ship's photographer). These photos are incredible and make Alexander's book indispensable to anyone

interested in Shackleton's Endurance expedition. That said -- here's why I gave her book only ONE STAR. In the Acknowledgements" section of her book, Alexander makes only a one sentence reference to Lansing's earlier work -- something to the effect of, "An exciting sea adventure." (although more elaborately stated). Yet, Lansing's "Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Journey" is a far better account of the Endurance expedition than is Alexander's -- better written, longer (maybe 50% more narrative), far more detailed in its entirety, much more interesting and exciting to read, PLUS: IT WAS FIRST..!! It surprises me that Alexander paid no real tribute to Lansing's earlier work -- which in many respects seems to have been simply reworded by Alexander.

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