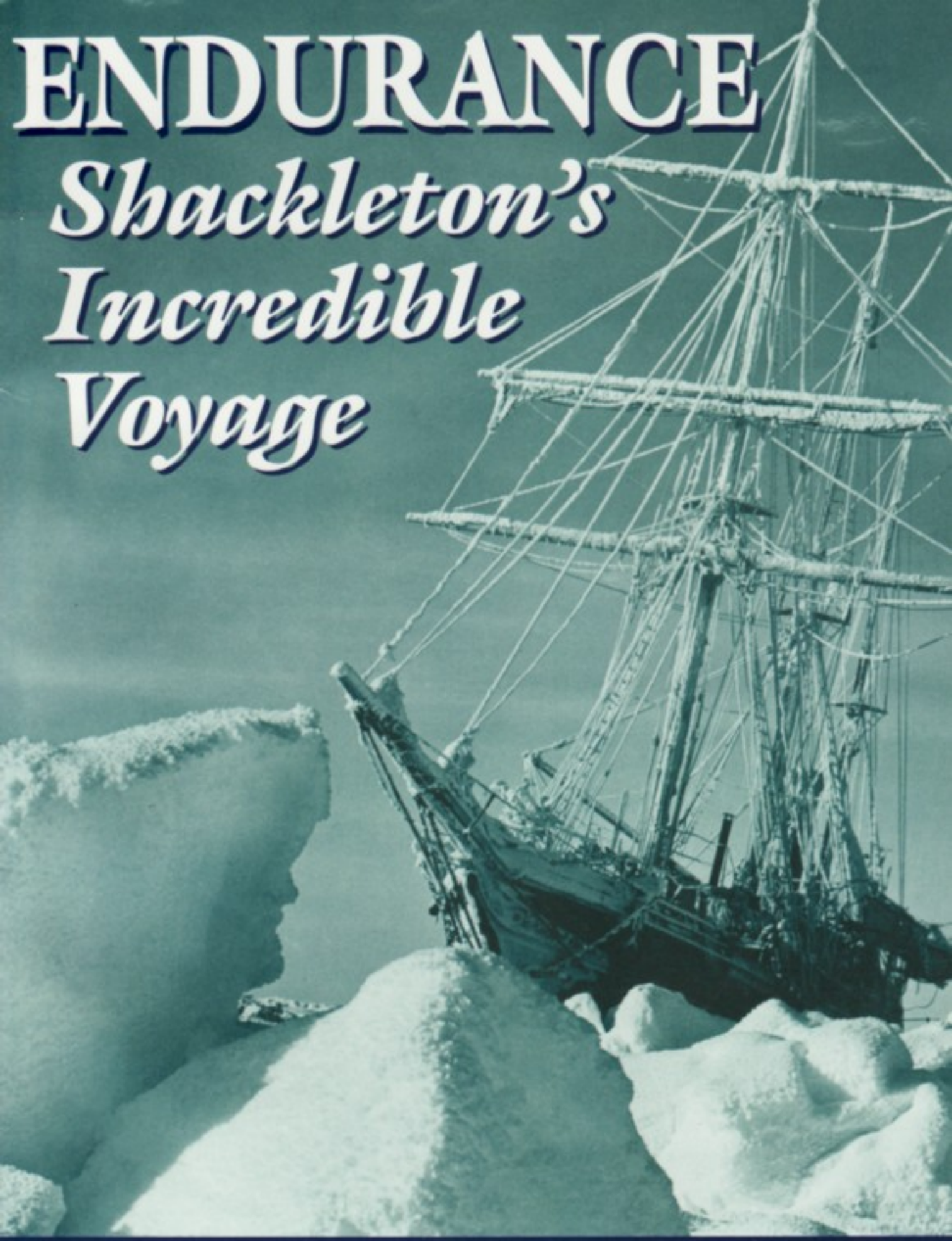
# ENDURANCE

## *Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*



**ALFRED LANSING**

"One of the great adventure stories of our time."
—*New York Times Book Review*

# *chapter* 1

The order to abandon ship was given at 5 P.M. For most of the men, however, no order was needed because by then everybody knew that the ship was done and that it was time to give up trying to save her. There was no show of fear or even apprehension. They had fought unceasingly for three days and they had lost. They accepted their defeat almost apathetically. They were simply too tired to care.

Frank Wild, the second-in-command, made his way forward along the buckling deck to the crew's quarters. There, two seamen, Walter How and William Bakewell, were lying in the lower bunks. Both were very nearly exhausted from almost three days at the pumps; yet they were unable to sleep because of the sounds the ship was making.

She was being crushed. Not all at once, but slowly, a little at a time. The pressure of ten million tons of ice was driving in against her sides. And dying as she was, she cried in agony. Her frames and planking, her immense timbers, many of them almost a foot thick, screamed as the killing pressure mounted. And when her timbers could no longer stand the strain, they broke with a report like artillery fire.

Most of the forecastle beams had already gone earlier in the

day, and the deck was heaved upward and working slowly up and down as the pressure came and went.

Wild put his head inside the crew's quarters. He spoke quietly. "She's going, boys. I think it's time to get off." How and Bakewell rose from their bunks, picked up two pillowcases in which they had stowed some personal gear, and followed Wild back up on deck.

Wild next went down into the ship's tiny engine room. Kerr, the second engineer, was standing at the foot of the ladder, waiting. With him was Rickenson, the chief engineer. They had been below for almost seventy-two hours maintaining steam in the boilers to operate the engine-room pumps. During that time, though they couldn't actually see the ice in motion, they were altogether aware of what it was doing to the ship. Periodically her sides—though they were 2 feet thick in most places—bowed inward 6 inches under the pressure. Simultaneously, the steel floor plates jammed together, screeching where their edges met, then buckling up and suddenly overriding one another with a sharp metallic report.

Wild did not pause long. "Let down your fires," he said. "She's going." Kerr looked relieved.

Wild turned aft to the propeller shaftway. There McNeish, the old ship's carpenter, and McLeod, a seaman, were busy with torn pieces of blankets calking a cofferdam built by McNeish the day before. It had been thrown up in an attempt to stem the flow of water coming into the ship where the rudder and the sternpost had been torn out by the ice. But the water now was almost up to the floor plates, and it was gaining faster than the cofferdam could hold it back and faster than the pumps could carry it away. Whenever the pressure ceased for a moment, there was the sound of the water running forward and filling up the hold.

Wild signaled to the two men to give up. Then he climbed the ladder to the main deck.

Clark, Hussey, James, and Wordie had been at the pumps but they had quit on their own, realizing the futility of what they were doing. Now they sat on cases of stores or on the deck it-

self, and leaned against the bulwarks. Their faces showed the unspeakable toil of the past three days at the pumps.

Farther forward, the dog-team drivers had attached a large piece of canvas to the port rail and made it into a sort of chute down to the ice alongside the ship. They took the forty-nine huskies from their kennels and slid each one down to other men waiting below. Ordinarily, any activity of this sort would have driven the dogs mad with excitement, but somehow they seemed to sense that something very extraordinary was going on. Not one fight broke out among them, and not a single dog attempted to break away.

It was, perhaps, the attitude of the men. They worked with a deliberate urgency, hardly speaking to one another. There was no display of alarm, however. In fact, apart from the movement of the ice and the sounds from the ship, the scene was one of relative calm. The temperature was 8½ degrees below zero, and a light southerly wind was blowing. Overhead, the twilight sky was clear.

But somewhere, far away to the south, a gale was blowing toward them. Though it probably wouldn't reach their position for at least two days, its approach was suggested by the movement of the ice, which stretched as far as the eye could see, and for hundreds of miles beyond that. So immense was the pack, and so tight, that though the gale had not yet reached them, the distant pressure of its winds was already crushing the floes together.

The whole surface of the ice was a chaos of movement. It looked like an enormous jigsaw puzzle, the pieces stretching away to infinity and being shoved and crunched together by some invisible but irresistible force. The impression of its titanic power was heightened by the unhurried deliberateness of the motion. Wherever two thick floes came together, their edges butted and ground against one another for a time. Then, when neither of them showed signs of yielding, they rose, slowly and often quiveringly, driven by the implacable power behind them. Sometimes they would stop abruptly as the unseen force affecting the ice appeared mysteriously to lose interest. More frequently, though,

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## Alfred Lansing

**"One of the most gripping, suspenseful, intense stories anyone will ever read."—*Chicago Tribune***

Bound for Antarctica, where polar explorer Ernest Shackleton planned to cross on foot the last uncharted continent, the *Endurance* set sail from England, in August 1914. In January 1915, after battling its way for six weeks through a thousand miles of pack ice and now only a day's sail short of its destination, the *Endurance* became locked inside an island of ice. For ten months the ice-moored *Endurance* drifted northwest before it was finally crushed. But for Shackleton and his crew of twenty-seven men the ordeal had barely begun. It would end only after a near-miraculous journey by Shackleton and a skeleton crew through over 850 miles of the South Atlantic's heaviest seas to the closest outpost of civilization.

This astonishing tale of survival by Shackleton and all twenty-seven of his men for over a year on the ice-bound Antarctic seas, as *Time* magazine put it, "defined heroism." Alfred Lansing's brilliantly narrated book has long been acknowledged as the definitive account of the *Endurance*'s fateful trip. This new edition of the all-time bestseller has been augmented with maps and illustrations.

**"Without a doubt this painstakingly written authentic adventure story will rank as one of the classic tales of the heroic age of exploration."—*Christian Science Monitor***

**"Grit in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversity."**
**—*Wall Street Journal***

Alfred Lansing was a veteran journalist, who wrote for *Collier's* among other magazines. *Endurance* is his best-known work.