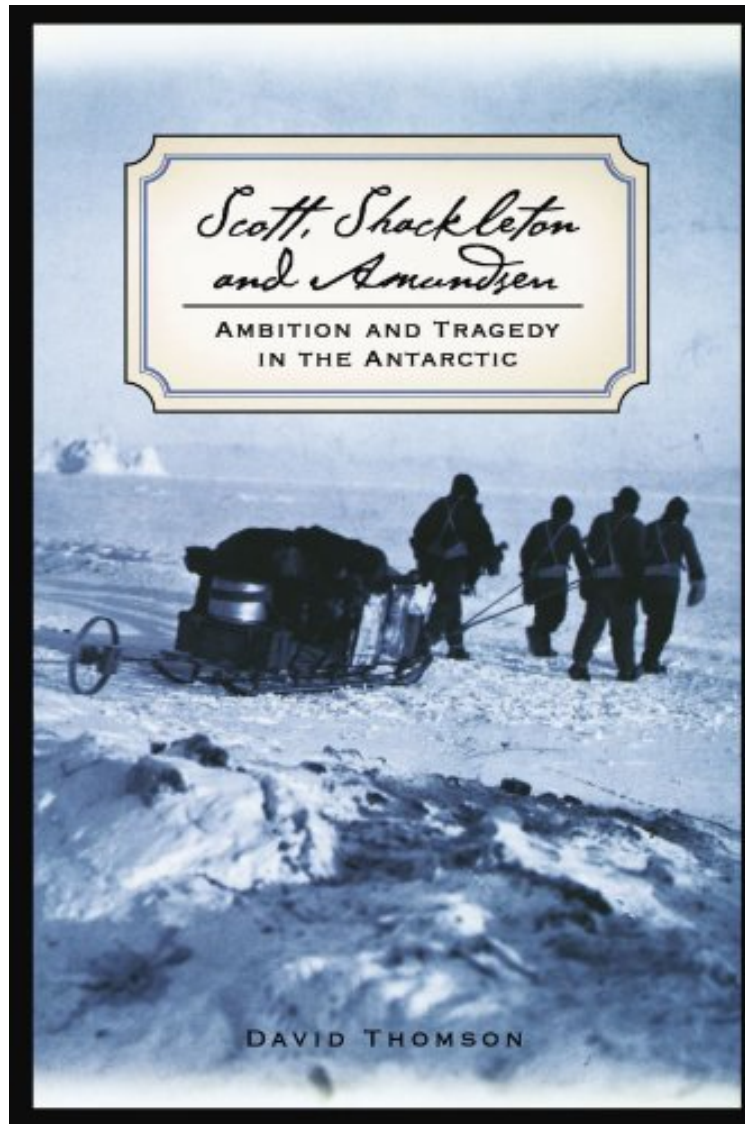


[E-BOOK] Scott, Shackleton, and Amundsen: Ambition and Tragedy in the Antarctic (Adrenaline Classics)

Scott, Shackleton, and Amundsen: Ambition and Tragedy in the Antarctic (Adrenaline Classics)

David Thomson

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David Thomson : Scott, Shackleton, and Amundsen: Ambition and Tragedy in the Antarctic (Adrenaline Classics) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Scott, Shackleton, and Amundsen: Ambition and Tragedy in the Antarctic (Adrenaline Classics):

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. "...the only appalling possibility the sight of the Norwegian flag forestalling ours"---Robert Falcon Scott

By mwreview

There are many books on the race to the South Pole. Thomson's book is one of the good ones. It is not a super quick read, but very manageable when compared to Roland Huntford's massive work "Scott and Amundsen." Although the title of Thomson's book includes the names of all three of the chief South Pole competing explorers, he covers Scott and his crew much more extensively than the other two (the original 1977 release of the book was entitled "Scott's Men," so Scott was the main focus of his study at one time). Thomson admits that Scott was a childhood hero of his (pg. x). His coverage of Scott's background is at times deeply analytical, jumps around a bit and is rather flowery, even ending with a lengthy poem Scott penciled in his address book (pg. 24). His examination of Scott's marriage to a woman of means seemed overly analytical as well: "So long a history of family making-do had numbed Scott permanently, and the rift of self-doubt in his character has every debilitating trace of fallen gentry. Is there another lure in the south here? That it was a world free from the cost of living?" (huh?) (pg. 88). Thomson's research had him abating Scott's heroic image by finding flaws in his judgment and character (i.e. not being open to the advice of others or learning from the past experiences of fellow explorers). Still, Thomson's book, although a little controversial in England when it was first published, doesn't go quite as far as Huntford's sometimes vicious account. Due to the title of the book and the more thorough examination of Scott, it comes to reason that a reader may see the other two main players in ways they compare (usually favorably) to Scott. That is what this reader took from this book, anyway. Amundsen was the racer, Scott was the journeyer (pg. 111); Amundsen's aim was to be the first to reach the Pole, Scott's publicized goal--although privately it was probably the same as Amundsen's--was scientific research and not competition. Amundsen immersed himself in Arctic culture and was keen to learn survival techniques from the natives when he successfully ventured to find the Northwest passage. Scott often did not heed the advice or the example of others whether it be the eating of seal and penguin meat or the use of dogs (the squeamishness of working dogs was also due to British culture abhorring the practice--pg. 61). Shackleton and Amundsen regarded their crew on equal standing while Scott continued the cast system. Shackleton was more drawn to the South than Scott (pg. 95). The former returned to the Pole even after it was discovered, Thomson questions whether Scott would have done the same (pg. 102). In 1908, when Shackleton penetrated the South further than anyone, he turned back to save his men. Scott "pressed on because it was the plan" (pg. 110). One interesting point that keeps surfacing in the book is that, despite all his research on the subject, Thomson finds the whole race to the South Pole (as well as to the moon and other such endeavors) as "marginal," "pointless" (pp. 2-3), "a futile and fatal pursuit" (pg. 170), "purposelessness" and "senseless" (pp. 281-2). Certainly, the efforts of Scott's men to collect emperor penguin eggs at Cape Crozier was an example of "the measurable achievement [being] less than the momentous endurance," of course the team did not know the meager results of their efforts at the time (pp. 215-21). However meaningless the race to the Pole was in the scheme of life, it still makes for an intriguing story that is the subject of many nice books, including this one. For a contemporary account of Scott's failed pursuit to be the first to reach the South Pole that includes a new line of research, I highly recommend "The Coldest March" by Susan Solomon.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen

By Margaret Mason

This is a comprehensive and detailed book. It was wonderful to find all of this information in one book. I am glad I own it. Will teach my kids and grand kids.

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. The Race to the South Pole

By HMS Warspite

David Thomson's "Scott, Shackleton, and Amundsen" is sub-titled "Ambition and Tragedy in the Antarctic", which nicely captures the thrust of the book. At the heart of the narrative is the race by a handful of competing explorers ambitious for the glory of being first to the South Pole. First off is Shackleton's 1907-1908 expedition, which walked to a remarkable 88 degrees South latitude, literally within a few days march of the Pole. Shackleton made the hard decision to turn back because he correctly realized how desperately narrow his team's margin of survival had become. From Shackleton's attempt should have come hard lessons in just how strenuous and tenuous life would be in the extreme conditions of Antarctica. Scott and Amundsen launched expeditions in 1911-1912. Amundsen, a Norwegian with considerable experience in the Arctic, learned from previous expeditions and traveled by the proven means of skis and dog sleds. His team made a remarkably fast and ultimately uneventful run, achieving the South Pole first. Scott's expedition experimented with primitive motor vehicles and ponies, both badly unsuited to the conditions, and ended up dragging a sledge over the ice and snow. Scott's team persisted through a variety of challenges all the way to the South Pole and the crushing discovery that they had missed being first by a month. The struggle back from the Pole ends in tragedy, as insufficient supplies and cold weather sap the team into extinction just eleven miles from a vital depot of supplies. Ironically, Scott was at the time more famous than either of his competitors, thanks to the heroic cast given his failure by his journal, which was recovered and published by a rescue team. In retrospect, as Thomson brings out, Scott must take the responsibility for the tragedy, for failing to learn from the experiences of others, and very likely for letting pride and ambition overrun common sense. Thomson's book is well-researched and highly readable, sown with the kind of excellent biographical detail that brings to life the men who participated in the expeditions. This book is highly recommended to those interested in polar exploration.

Between the middle of January and the end of March 1912 five men died in the attempt to return from the South Pole

to their base on the edge of Antarctica. Their leader, the last to die and the man whose diary described their agonies was Robert Falcon Scott. The expedition had been beaten to the Pole by a band of racing Norwegians, led by Roald Amundsen. The bodies of the last three to die were found seven months later and, ever since, Scott's men have been British heroes. It is that legend, as much as their ordeal that is the subject of this book. Scott's men and the supporting characters, Amundsen and Shackleton, his rivals; Clement Markham, his discoverer; his wife Kathleen give a fascinating picture of English society before the First World War. The story of the drama becomes also an illustration of human and social character. And, to the extent that Scott is legendary in England, the book tells something about the English and their attitude to duty.

From Booklist Twenty-five years after its first publication, Thomson's myth-shattering chronicle of the Antarctic expeditions of Robert Falcon Scott is republished with a new title (it was originally called *Scott's Men*). The bibliography has been beefed up, and the author has incorporated a few references to discoveries made in the intervening years, but basically it's the same book. That's not a bad thing in this case. The long out-of-print original is just as eye-opening a book now as it was a quarter century ago. Thomson, a noted film critic and historian, reveals that Scott, who emerged from his disastrous 1901-04 expedition to the South Pole as an international hero, was not quite as heroic as he was made out to be. Similarly, Thomson looks behind the myth of Scott's rival Roald Amundsen and finds an explorer whose "lust for popular glory" led him to take unwarranted risks. Finally, Thomson reveals that friction between Scott and Ernest Shackleton led to Shackleton's own ill-fated (and recently much chronicled) polar adventures. Buy this if you don't have, or need to replace, *Scott's Men*. David Pitt Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Booklist "When Thomson writes a book, it is time for celebration." Steven Bach "Thomson is an expert: an expert storyteller, critic, thinker, investigator and observer of the all-too-human landscape."