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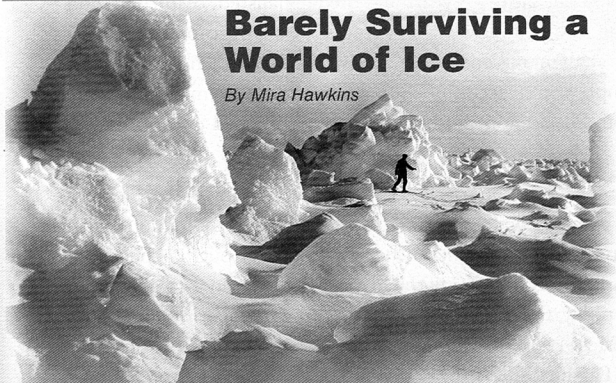
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Barely Surviving a World of Ice

By Mira Hawkins



Imagine a landscape that freezes the moisture in your eyes, that numbs your fingers in mere seconds, and that oftentimes goes days—weeks—with no sunshine. In this landscape, plant life is nearly nonexistent, and the animals that do survive have layers of fat that keeps them warm. A couple hundred years ago, mountains of ice and crevasses of darkness watched and waited as brave explorers traveled slowly across Antarctica. If the cold didn't kill the travelers, starvation or scurvy could have. If illness didn't kill them, frostbite or falls into chasms could have. Here, read about the illnesses and injuries that befell many Antarctic explorers in the 1800s and early 1900s.

FROSTBITE

In extreme cold, blood vessels close to the skin constrict as the body tries to keep its core temperature from falling. The areas



Frostbite

of the body farthest from the heart—fingers, toes, nose, and ears—are most prone. Frostbitten areas eventually become numb and turn black. Many times frostbite leads to amputation.

POISONING

In the 1800s, canned foods were a new way to keep food fresh on years-long sea voyages. However, these first canned foods used lead lids, which caused lead poisoning (confusion and muscle weakness). Further, sometimes the food inside the cans wasn't cooked long enough before the cans were sealed. This led to food poisoning or sometimes botulism (difficulty swallowing and eventually paralysis and death).



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HYPOTHERMIA

In the far-below-zero temperatures of Antarctica, explorers without proper clothing soon perished from hypothermia. When the body drops below 89 degrees Fahrenheit, shivering stops, skin turns blue, and extreme confusion sets in, followed by death.

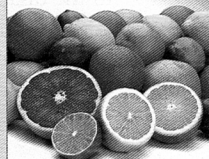
STARVATION

After eight to ten weeks with little or no food, the human body shuts down and eventually dies. Antarctic explorers often ran out of food or ate so little that their bodies gave out. Several explorers starved to death on their ships or before they could get back to camp.

SUFFOCATION

Some explorers fell asleep in their tents and suffocated during the night. How? Their tents became encased in falling snow or were smothered by an avalanche. Explorers often ran out of air only four or five feet below the surface.

SCURVY



Sailors at sea for extended periods of time sometimes ran out of fruits and vegetables, which contain vitamin C. When the body doesn't get enough vitamin C, scurvy sets in—and brings fatigue, bleeding gums, and a rash on the legs.