

*"The Pole is hard to get, but we will, Please God get there."*

While the four men were struggling toward Hut Point, *Nimrod* had returned to McMurdo Sound. The captain had orders to wait for Shackleton and his men until March 1. After that, he should consider them lost and sail back to New Zealand. On February 28, as the ship waited, everyone on board believed that the men had died. Then, on March 1, they spotted two tiny figures waving a flag at Hut Point. It was Shackleton and Wild! They had struggled ahead to make it in time.

Once again Shackleton had failed to reach the Pole, but to Emily he wrote, "Though I may be disappointed I will come back to the loving arms . . . of you my

wife and in the joy of seeing you . . . and our children all will be forgotten." And once again, too, he had proved his leadership. All his men returned to England safely, and Shackleton was hailed as a hero. To honor him as a great adventurer of the age, King Edward VII knighted him Sir Ernest Shackleton.



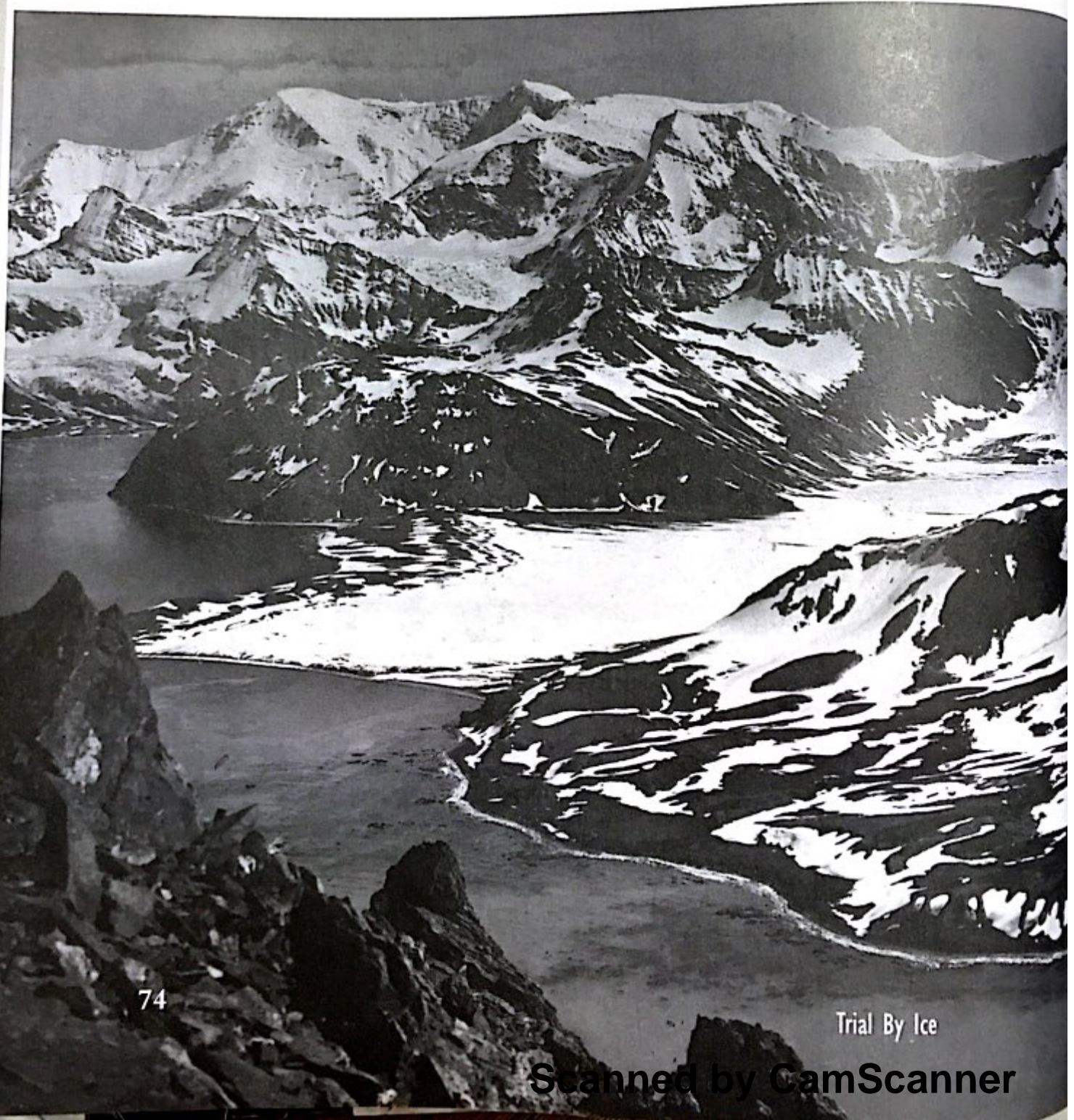
*Four men from Nimrod (left to right)—Frank Wild, Shackleton, Eric Marshall, and Jameson Adams—set a new "Furthest South" record, coming within 97 miles of the Pole.*



*On December 14, 1911, a Norwegian party (top), led by famous polar explorer Roald Amundsen, won the race to the South Pole. At the same time, Robert Scott (below, center, standing), was leading his own polar expedition. All five men on it perished.*



The very next year a Norwegian party led by Roald Amundsen did what Shackleton had failed to do. On December 14, 1911, they reached the South Pole. Although Shackleton had lost the race to the Pole, he was still haunted by the Antarctic world. Now 39 years old, he began planning a third expedition to Antarctica. He had a new goal: to cross the entire continent, a journey of 1,500 miles. This would mean using two ships. One group would go with him to the Weddell Sea. Shackleton named this ship, a Norwegian polar ship, *Endurance*, after his family motto: "By endurance we conquer."



*On the way south to Antarctica in 1914, Endurance put in at the whaling station on South Georgia Island to buy provisions. Frank Hurley, the expedition's photographer, persuaded a few shipmates to help him lug his heavy camera gear up a mountaintop for a shot down on Endurance at anchor in the harbor. Little did the men know what role the island would eventually play in their fate.*



After landing, they would make the overland crossing in what Shackleton hoped would be a hundred days. This time he would use sled dogs. Meanwhile, a second ship, *Aurora*, would sail to the Ross Sea at the opposite side of the continent. A land party from the ship would lay supply depots a hundred miles into the interior so that Shackleton and his party would have food when they neared the far side of the continent. Once they reached the coast of the Ross Sea, *Aurora* would pick them up.

Just as the two ships sailed from Europe in 1914, fighting broke out between England and Germany. The First World War had begun. The men aboard *Endurance* had no idea how much this would change the world they were leaving behind.

As always, the two Antarctic-bound ships planned to arrive at their destinations during the austral summer so they would have time to establish bases before winter set in. But when *Endurance* neared the continent in mid-December, unseasonable pack ice forced her to push her way slowly through the Weddell Sea. On January 19 the sound of the battering suddenly stopped. *Endurance* was caught by the ice and held tight. Around her the sea was frozen in every direction as far as the eye could see. The ship was only a day's sail from the landing base Shackleton had been aiming for, but now he was helpless. He had no choice but to drift with the pack.

*Endurance used steam power to thread her way through the ice. Built for polar seas, the 144-foot-long ship could shove through loose ice, "shattering the floes in grand style."*





*“Pack-ice might be described as a gigantic and interminable jigsaw puzzle devised by nature.”*

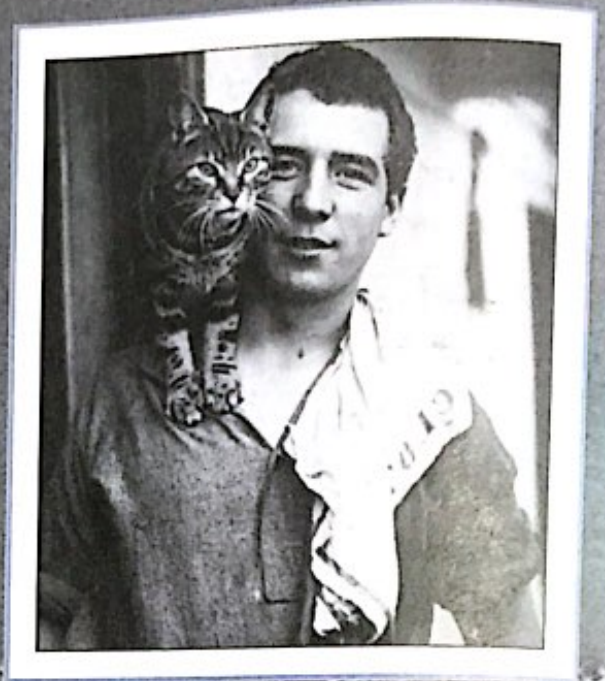
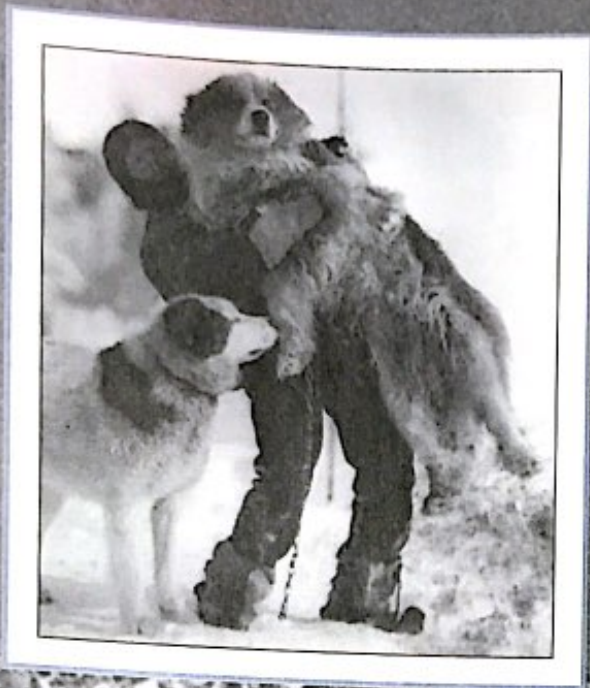
After almost a month of being helplessly frozen in, the men saw a gash of open water just a few hundred yards from the ship. Shackleton sent a group out with saws to try to hack a channel in the ice from the ship to the open water. They sawed away, but in places the ice was 18 feet thick. The job was impossible. Although open water was close, they could not get *Endurance* to it. They would have to wait for the ice to break up on its own.

By March, winter was setting in. The currents and winds changed back and forth, sometimes pushing them south toward Antarctica, and sometimes pushing them away from the continent and into unknown seas. Through it all, Shackleton remained the calm, cheerful leader who was affectionately called “Boss” by his men.



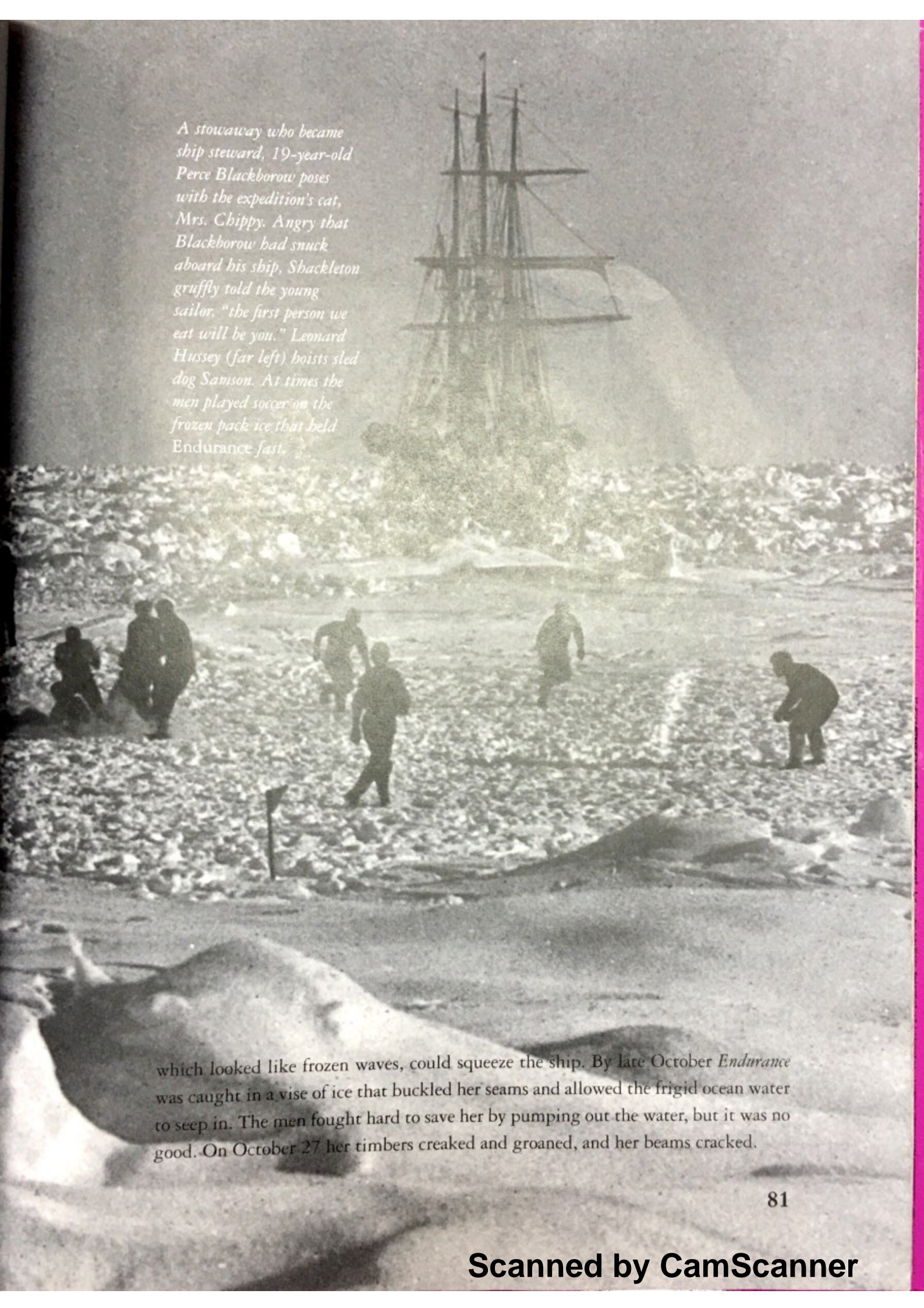
*Working frantically, the men tried to cut a lead through the ice for Endurance (left). Warmed by the ship's stove, shipmates keep the night watchman company.*





To pass the long, boring days, the 29 men aboard *Endurance* played parlor games like animal, vegetable, mineral, or they impersonated one another or sang songs.

In early August the pack ice at last began to break up. But Shackleton and a few others realized that, far from escape, this might mean the death of *Endurance*. Frozen in place the ship was safe, but now the grinding, unstable pressure ridges of ice,



*A stowaway who became ship steward, 19-year-old Perce Blackborow poses with the expedition's cat, Mrs. Chippy. Angry that Blackborow had snuck aboard his ship, Shackleton gruffly told the young sailor, "the first person we eat will be you." Leonard Hussey (far left) hoists sled dog Samson. At times the men played soccer on the frozen pack ice that held Endurance fast.*

which looked like frozen waves, could squeeze the ship. By late October *Endurance* was caught in a vise of ice that buckled her seams and allowed the frigid ocean water to seep in. The men fought hard to save her by pumping out the water, but it was no good. On October 27 her timbers creaked and groaned, and her beams cracked.