

[PDF] The Coldest March: Scott's Fatal Antarctic Expedition

Susan Solomon - pdf download free book



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Description:

The icy deaths of Robert Falcon Scott and his companions on their return from the South Pole in 1912 made them English icons of courage and sacrifice. Soon, however, Scott's judgments and decisions were questioned, and his reputation became one of inept bungler rather than heroic pioneer. Susan Solomon, senior scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Colorado, approaches Scott's story from a meteorologist's point of view. She shows that the three

weeks from February 27 to March 19, during which the explorers fell further and further behind the daily distances they had to cover in order to survive, were far colder than normal. Unusual blizzards of wet snow had already slowed the party and depleted their provisions and strength. Without these once-in-a-decade phenomena, Solomon believes the party would have returned to its base on the Ross Sea--second after Roald Amundsen in the race to the Pole, but safely. She opens each chapter with comments from a hypothetical modern visitor to Antarctica, presumably to give a wider context to the human drama of the last century, though this reviewer finds them inappropriate. She enriches her narratives of Scott's two Antarctic expeditions with vintage photographs and tables of meteorological data that highlight the explorers' achievements. Their determination was pitted against the worst weather in the world. Scott's story has been told many times before, but its weather information makes *The Coldest March* a useful addition to the literature. --John Stevenson -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly British explorer Robert Scott's legacy has been debated since his ill-fated 1911 expedition. Initially pegged a hero, he's subsequently been maligned as a bumbler who lost the race to the South Pole and died, with four companions, because of his mistakes. Solomon, a senior scientist at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, attempts to restore Scott's reputation, arguing that unnaturally cold weather (weeks of -35 F.), not poor judgment, caused the captain's demise. She traces the polar expedition (Scott's second) using modern scientific evidence and the explorers' diaries. In clear, well-paced prose, Solomon paints characters and landscape deftly and delivers well-conceived arguments. But the book is not without flaws. Each chapter has a forced, heavy-handed though sometimes amusing introduction featuring a fictional visitor to contemporary Antarctica. And while Solomon's arguments are plausible, they are not ironclad. To her contention that Scott's plans didn't work because of extreme weather, one might answer that he should have planned for any possible situation; his Norwegian rivals, for instance, took more than enough provisions. Still, whatever opinion readers have of Scott when they start the book, by the end he will have risen in their esteem. Solomon's exhaustive research provides readers with enough information to form their own opinion. B&w photos and illus. (Sept. 10)Forecast: This book should be popular among exploration buffs because of its new scientific information. The book could get lost among the many polar adventure tales, though Solomon's fluid, accessible writing, her five-city tour and events at the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian may distinguish it from the crowd.

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