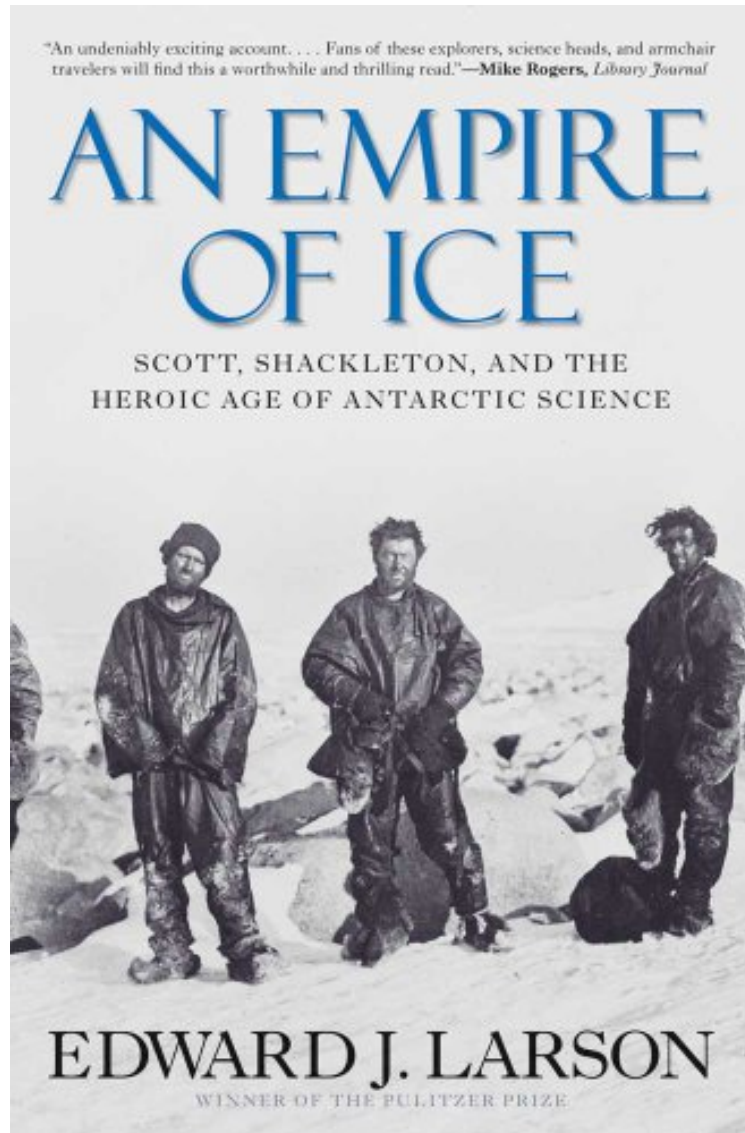


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# An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science

*Edward J. Larson*

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**Edward J. Larson : An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Not Quite What I ExpectedBy A reader from CaliforniaI have

always been fascinated by Antarctica, and was lucky enough to be able to visit there for three weeks some years ago, so I was looking forward to reading this book. When I first read the reviews and blurbs, I thought the book was going to be an exploration of the leadership skills and styles of men like Scott and Shackleton. There was some of that, but mostly the book is an account of the scientific discoveries, told in excruciating detail. Overall, their discoveries were interesting, but for me, reading 300 pages worth of the composition of icebergs vs. glaciers vs. ice caps vs. ice sheets, plus the difference between sandstone, basalt and other rocks, is a bit too much. My eyes started to glaze over. The other problem, and this is not really Larson's fault, is that all the expeditions started to run together in my mind. They all had a hard time sledging, faced horrible weather conditions and ran out of food. It was difficult to tell them apart. I did not get a good sense of what the leaders did or did not do to impact the success or failure of each trip. My recommendation is to read a book on Shackleton's Endurance mission, or his own book "South". Those will provide fascinating details about how the men survived, Shackleton's leadership style, etc., and are so much better than this book in invoking what these men endured from a personal standpoint. Unless you are a glaciologist or geologist, you will find this book very slow going, and in some cases, deadly dull. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Dense and poorly mapped By Tim1965 If you are looking for a work which depicts the great, tragic journeys of Scott, Shackleton, and Amundsen to find the South Pole -- look somewhere else. If you want a work which depicts, in minute detail, every single expedition made to the Antarctic by Scott, Shackleton, and others -- you will find it here. The problem is that the book contains exceptionally poor maps, and disturbingly few of those. Images, too, are almost lacking. Readers not intimately familiar with the Antarctic will find themselves quickly lost. While the writing is passable and the level of factual detail extremely good, Larson's primary failing is in his ability to craft an interesting narrative. The prose is so dry that even someone very excited about the subject matter will find him or herself struggling to get through it. It makes it difficult to tell tragedy from success, and tedium from excitement. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An amazing story by an amazing author! By Roger Dean An amazing story, made even more so by the talent of the author. I had the pleasure of meeting him on a recent cruise to Antarctica, and that was what persuaded me to download the book ( while on the ship). I am so glad that I did.

Published to coincide with the centenary of the first expeditions to reach the South Pole, *An Empire of Ice* presents a fascinating new take on Antarctic exploration. Retold with added information, it's the first book to place the famed voyages of Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, his British rivals Robert Scott and Ernest Shackleton, and others in a larger scientific, social, and geopolitical context. Efficient, well prepared, and focused solely on the goal of getting to his destination and back, Amundsen has earned his place in history as the first to reach the South Pole. Scott, meanwhile, has been reduced in the public mind to a dashing incompetent who stands for little more than relentless perseverance in the face of inevitable defeat. *An Empire of Ice* offers a new perspective on the Antarctic expeditions of the early twentieth century by looking at the British efforts for what they actually were: massive scientific enterprises in which reaching the South Pole was but a spectacular sideshow. By focusing on the larger purpose, Edward Larson deepens our appreciation of the explorers' achievements, shares little-known stories, and shows what the Heroic Age of Antarctic discovery was really about.

"A far more interesting and richer account than we have had thus far. . . . Larson has written a fascinating book, one sure to force a rethinking of the Scott-Amundsen race as well as reconsiderations that will include science as a driving force in Antarctic and indeed polar exploration." --Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis, "Science" Magazine--Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis "Science Magazine" ""An Empire of Ice" reflects exhaustive digging and reaches well beyond the standard source materials. . . . Larson provides enough fresh perspective that even devotees of polar literature will learn things."--Jennifer Kingson, "New York Times Book" "--Jennifer Kingson "New York Times Book" ""The author provides an undeniably exciting account without overpowering the reader with too much detail. Fans of these explorers, science heads, and armchair travelers will find this a worthwhile and thrilling read."--Mike Rogers, "Library Journal"--Mike Rogers "Library Journal" ""Larson's beautifully written narrative takes in the triumph and tragedy of the polar expeditions, and sheds new light on the scientific culture of the age. Entertaining, informative, and based on impeccable research, this book is a wonderful achievement."--Peter Harrison, author of "The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science"--Peter Harrison (09/17/2010)"A fascinating account of the extensive and varied scientific research conducted by daring explorers racing to be the first to reach the South Pole. Whether he is discussing the first observations of the life cycle of the Emperor Penguin, the mapping of the ocean floor, or experiments in terrestrial magnetism, Larson's book sparkles."--Bernard Lightman, author of "Popularizers of Victorian Science"--Bernard Lightman (08/16/2010)"A riveting account of science, courage, and endurance, revealing that along with dreams of glory the quest for knowledge of Antarctica drove the explorations of the icy, forbidding continent." --Daniel Kevles, Stanley Woodward Professor of History, Yale University--Daniel Kevles (09/17/2010)"Larson is a brilliant researcher, going far beyond the standard source materials, so even devotees of polar literature will learn things"--Jennifer Kingson, "The Scotsman"--Jennifer Kingson "The Scotsman" (07/09/2011)"In this fascinating book.....Larson's intriguing accounts begin to reveal the bigger picture of early scientific research in Antarctica and its place in

European geopolitics of the time."--Michael Bravo, "New Scientist"--Michael Bravo "New Scientist" (07/02/2011)"Science is sometimes dull, but never in "An Empire of Ice". Here the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Edward J. Larson tells the gripping story of the scientific exploration of Antarctica, where intrepid naturalists, often risking their lives, struggled to learn about emperor penguins, massive glaciers, and frozen fossils." --Ronald L. Numbers, Hildale Professor of the History of Science and Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison--Ronald L. Numbers (08/16/2010)"Edward Larson reveals that British exploration of the Antarctic was no mere 'dash to the pole', but an extended effort to conquer the last great wilderness for science."--Peter Bowler, author of "The Earth Encompassed" and "Evolution: The History of an Idea"--Peter Bowler (08/20/2010)About the AuthorEdward J. Larson is University Professor of History and holds the Hugh Hazel Darling Chair in Law at Pepperdine University. His numerous books include Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion, for which he received a Pulitzer Prize in History. Larson splits his time between Georgia and California.