The Love of the Thing

by
Scott Henderson
Introduction

The *Southern Cross* Antarctic Expedition 1898-1900 is a largely forgotten chapter in Antarctic history. It departed St. Katharine’s Dock, London in August 1898 amidst great public excitement and speculation, which was repeated when the ship left Hobart for Cape Adare in December.

A brief flurry of interest greeted them on their return in May 1900, but the public attention was now focused on the Boer War, the Boxer rebellion and the preparations for Scott’s Discovery expedition. Borchgrevink’s men had reached the farthest point south, but made no major discoveries, reached no pole, made no epic journeys, found no mineral wealth or lost tribe or polar bears. Their real achievements in the painstaking scientific accumulation of a wealth of meteorological and magnetic data, their charts, and biological collections were not ‘sexy’ enough to capture the public eye. Even the scientific community through the Royal Geographical Society, was prejudiced against this upstart venture that was funded by a publishing magnate and had beaten their own attempt to establish a national expedition.

Interest was rekindled in 1902, but not in the way Borchgrevink wanted. He was involved in an acrimonious debate in The Times with Professor Ray Lankester of the Natural History Museum over the loss of Hanson’s biological notebooks. But this dragged on for months without any resolution. Borchgrevink returned to Norway, a disappointed man, without the recognition he had craved.

Carsten Egeberg Borchgrevink was a part of Bull’s *Antarctic* expedition of 1895. They landed briefly at Cape Adare, an event which was to galvanise Borchgrevink into action. He was a charismatic figure, energetic and not backward about self-promotion (he claimed to be the first to set foot on the Antarctic continent). He travelled between Australia and England, lecturing in each country and trying to get backing for his own Antarctic expedition. His endeavours were finally and unexpectedly rewarded when Sir George Newnes, a newspaper and magazine baron, agreed to fund the entire venture, perhaps recognising a kindred entrepreneurial spirit in Borchgrevink.

Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society spluttered, but could do nothing but express tight-lipped public support. A British expedition led by
a Norwegian, with only a handful of Englishmen had been backed by English money that his own enterprise so desperately needed.

Borchgrevink left with a superbly equipped expedition, in a vessel refitted for polar conditions (she was the sister ship to the *Fram*). After the months of frenetic activity his dream was about to be realised. As the ship sailed away, an expedition member described him as 'an awfully jolly fellow.'

On the voyage out, signs of the problems that lay ahead surfaced. Borchgrevink ‘flew into a rage' and shouted at three staff members who were late back to the ship at St. Vincent; he talked of appropriating their diaries and refusing to let them send letters home with the ship, possibly out of concern for his contract with Newnes; and he talked of sending members back with the ship.

They landed at Cape Adare. The ship left and they were alone on the continent. Borchgrevink’s unsuitability as a leader soon became obvious. He was deeply insecure in the presence of his team of younger men with their greater scientific expertise. He made erratic decisions. His ill-conceived notions of discipline created confusion and division amongst his men, and his attempts at creating a good social atmosphere fell flat or were treated with scorn. He became isolated except perhaps from the dog handler Per Savio, whom the English regarded as Borchgrevink’s spy.

The long polar night descended, and with it, Borchgrevink’s visions became obsessions. He convinced himself that great wealth awaited them in all the mountains around the Robertson Bay; he dreamed of returning as the triumphant hero with tales of epic struggle and great scientific discovery. His decisions became more erratic. He dismissed and reinstated both Kløvstad and Colbeck. He clung to his identity by constant affirmations of Norwegian superiority over English as polar explorers. He also drank heavily, particularly on sledging expeditions. The young Englishmen, goaded as they were, did not help the situation.

The return of the sun enabled them to make a number of sledging trips to explore Robertson Bay. This relieved the hot-house atmosphere as by turns they were able to get away from their leader. Then Hanson died, which greatly affected them all.

The *Southern Cross* finally returned at the end of January 1900 just as the expeditioners were contemplating the unenviable prospect of another year in each other’s
company. For the next 3½ weeks they sailed down the coast of South Victoria Land to Ross Island and then across to the Bay of Whales where they travelled up onto the Ice Shelf and made their claim to the “Farthest South.” Then they left for home.

After returning, Borchgrevink received a number of honours and awards in Europe, but no the one that mattered most, the Patron’s Medal of the Royal Geographical Society. He had to wait nearly 30 years for this. By then Sir Clements Markham had died and many of the old wounds had healed. Bernacchi, himself one of the Englishmen who had endured that first winter at Cape Adare, supported the award. Whatever the flaws of the men involved the considerable achievements of the expedition were at last recognised. Apart from all else, they had shown it was possible to overwinter on the continent and laid the groundwork for others to follow.

I have deliberately not specified particular dates for the events, although it would be easy to do so. This is because many of the scenes are composites of material e.g. the letter to The Times, the dockside press gathering and the speech on the King of Norway’s birthday. These in turn crystallize the argument in The Times over many months, the press interviews over a number of days before the ship left and the many speeches Borchgrevink gave to mark important events at Cape Adare.

The destruction of Hanson’s notebooks is a matter of conjecture. Everything else, as strange as some of it may seem, can be supported by material from the expedition.

Technical Notes

The staging, lighting and sound directions are indications only and are not intended to substitute for set, lighting or sound designs which are beyond the scope of this project.

Costume designs can be developed from the many photographs of the expedition. Borchgrevink can be seen in white yachting apparel at the dock, woolen pants and jersey in the hut, and in heavy fur-lined coat and cap outside. However because of the rapid scene changes, costume changes may be limited to outer wear, e.g. coats, hats, gloves.
The main room of the hut in which most action takes place was only 15 feet by 15 feet. The 'interview' scenes which take place in a small room set up for Borchgrevink next to the main one can be suggested by a tight spot on Borchgrevink.

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The Love of the Thing

Staging:
Stage Right: Suggestion of a study, either at Lindfield, Sussex or Christiania, Norway. Table, shelves, books.
Centre: Partial interior of hut, Camp Ridley, Cape Adare. Two sets of bunks are visible at the back at an angle to each other. They are enclosed except for a gap at the end and an airspace running along the top of the enclosing board. In some scenes candlelight can be seen inside them. A table and chairs are in the centre of the room.
Stage Left: Exterior. Covered scaffolding or rostra represent the ship, shoreline of Robertson Bay or area near the Duke of York Island. Some ropes hang down across the scenery suggesting either the ship or climbing ropes.

Scene 1
Study Lindfield, Sussex. July, 1902
Borchgrevink seated at desk, reading as he writes.

Borchgrevink:

To the editor of The Times

Sir,

Having just returned from Martinique, I find that the Natural History Museum has published the report on the collection of my Antarctic Expedition of 1898-1900.

The tendency of the volume; as diverted by Dr. Bowdler-Sharpe is disloyal and spiteful towards myself, and a reference is made to some notes lost, insinuating that I should have kept them away purposely.

I may here state that, had it not been because of myself all the collection would have been sold. I feel that an ignoble attempt has been made to use the death of my late taxidermist as a lever against myself, and the great public must needs become prejudiced against myself by reading the volume recently published.

No notebooks of Mr. Hanson, have been lost. Neither have I kept any of them for myself. All I received at the time of Mr. Hanson’s death were given
to Mr. Bowdler-Sharpe on my own initiative, except for some few notes written on sanitary paper which were lost in Hobart.

The crime of my expedition is its success; the object of the spite, to open a scope for the new expeditions in my wake. The Museum has already made arrangements for obtaining the collections of the Discovery expedition, if it returns. It has also secured the support of some of my staff in this scheme to belittle the result of the Southern Cross expedition.

It is so unlike the English spirit to be discourteous, and I feel sure that you will see your way to publish this letter of mine in your esteemed paper in justice to the initiator, organiser and commander of the British Antarctic Expedition 1898-1900, under the flag of the Duke of York, who used all his influence and time to secure the Southern Cross Collection for the Natural History Museum of South Kensington, which institution was in no way whatever connect with my expedition before I brought my collections here.

I have the honour to be, Sir, faithfully yours,
C.E.Borchgrevink Knight 1st Class St. Olaf, Commander Southern Cross Expedition. July 1902.

(He pauses and puts down the letter. Puts his head in his hands.)

Nicolai, Nicolai, why?

(Fade.)

Scene 2


Borchgrevink:

Please, please gentlemen, one at a time.
What first turned my attention to Antarctica? Well, ever since I went out with the whaler *Antarctic* and first set foot on South Victoria land in 1895, it has been my desire to lead an expedition to this vast unexplored continent. I first propounded a scheme to the International Geographical Congress in 1896 which would enable an expedition to get to the South Magnetic Pole.

Of course we hope for more than correct magnetic calculations. Organic life of types hitherto unknown will be found in South Victoria Land. The flora and fauna must be rich with undiscovered gems. It is unwise to say what we might find.

Yes, seals...polar bears...Men?—Who knows?

What is certain is our food supplies will be greatly augmented by penguins—there are millions of them and so fat that, upon my word, if you dropped a wick down one of their throats and lighted it you would have a living lamp! (*Pauses then laughs loudly*).

Of course we are not reliant on the native fauna. Look about you gentlemen. This is a modern expedition, well provisioned and equipped to provide all needs for three years. We have large quantities of tabloid food—meat, vegetables, soups, coffee, compressed into squares that make pemmican obsolete; we have the revolutionary Primus Stove, collapsible boats, the latest photographic equipment, even fur boots for the dogs.

Scurrilous rumours put out by my detractors. I assure you the *Southern Cross* is totally suited to our endeavour. The bows are 11foot thick to break through ice, and her hull is 3ft thick elsewhere, covered in greenheart. She is powered by a new 370hp triple expansion engine and new boilers have been fitted.
Yes, we are pioneering the use of dogs and sledges in the Antarctic. We have ninety Samoyed and Greenland dogs, the finest collection ever assembled and have enlisted two Lapps as specialist dog handlers.

My scientific staff is a strong one. Lieutenant William Colbeck will be my cartographer and first magnetic observer, the second being Mr. Louis Bernacchi who is also an expert photographer. The medical officer will be Herr Herlof Klövstad of Christiania University, a gentleman of considerable scientific attainments. The zoologists are Mr. Nicolai Hanson, a famous hunter well known in this country, and Mr. Hugh Evans. Mr. Anton Fougner who holds a mate’s certificate will assist generally.

Gentlemen, you jest. This is very much a British expedition. Granted we only have three Britishers on the staff, but the Duke of York is our patron, that is the Union Jack he donated – the flag of the Royal Thames yacht Club flies at our mizzen. And as many of you gentlemen know, for you are in his employ – our venture has been totally funded to the sum of £40,000 by Sir George Newnes.

I am proud to be continuing the work of that illustrious Briton Sir James Clark Ross, and am no less proud that whatever will be done, will be achieved under the glorious British flag.

I am half an Englishman myself – my mother was an Englishwoman, a Ridley, whose ancestor Bishop Ridley was burnt at the stake.

I don’t know what you mean. Sir Clements Markham was most cordial at the recent farewell given me by the Geographical Society. This is a scientific expedition. Apart from the geographical interests there are opportunities for scientific research of incalculable value.

Well, you may be sure that I will keep my eyes open for whatever commercial possibilities there may be in that region. I will not be in such a
hurry as would prevent me from picking up a nugget of gold if I should come across one. And now gentlemen, I must leave you. There is much to do. We hope to sail for Tasmania within the week and then proceed due South for Cape Adare.

Scene 3

Crow's nest of the Southern Cross. Feb 1899. The ship is stuck in pack ice off the Balleny Islands 600km north of Cape Adare. Some sound of the wind in the rigging, creaking of the ship.

Borchgrevink:

Damn Colbeck! Damn Bernacchi! English whiners! (Draws breath) That's quite a climb; mittens kept sticking to the ropes. At the end I had to push the trapdoor open with my head to get into the cask and then the rope to pull myself inside was frozen.

So here I am, like some minor god, lifted above the pettiness and difficulties of that miserable little world below. At least here things are clearer; the safety of the ship depends on me. I telegraph my signals, the ship surges forward and shivers like an animal as she strikes the ice. The shock is tremendous up here; great green blocks of ice rear on end overturn and rub down her sides with a deafening noise.

Jensen and I have been up here 10 hours at a time of late. We've been stuck here for four weeks only managing to move in one damn circle off the Ballenys. All the time Colbeck and Bernacchi whining about how Ross entered the pack much farther east.

These English are so correct, so proper, but they scheme behind my back. Colbeck needs to be watched. He has challenged my authority ever since St Vincent. I was right to reprimand them - they were late back to the ship - "delayed by the hospitality of the English residents" - fornicating with the girls from the well, more likely. I'll not have it!
The English are so unsuited to polar exploration – not like the Norwegians. Let me tell you about my fine Mr. Colbeck. A few weeks ago, we were stuck fast in the pack. Captain Colbeck was out on the ice attempting to shoot a white petrel on the wing. He followed the bird on the wing and fired just as it passed in front of the vessel. Shot struck the deck near me and peppered poor Mr Hanson in the back.

Then a few days later I lent him my little pea-rifle, a special gift from a friend in Norway, to shoot a penguin on the ice. This is the first penguin he has seen and he got excited. The penguins waddled up to him, raising and lowering their flippers in a most comical fashion. Colbeck first tried to catch a bird alive, but it took fright and propelled itself away on its stomach. The mighty hunter caught the rifle by the barrel and swung at the penguin. He missed completely but the gun struck a block of ice and smashed to pieces. I later discovered it was loaded and at full cock.

Compare this with the resourcefulness of a Norwegian. Soon after we entered the pack we spotted an unusual silvery white seal out on the ice and Mr Hanson went out to shoot it. He aimed and fired but the cartridges were bad and did not explode. The quick thinking Nicolai grabbed an ice-pick and drove it into the seal’s head. The seal thrashed about with Hanson clinging to the pick. It then rolled on top of him and there was a furious fight with Hanson only inches from those powerful jaws. At last he dispatched it with a swift blow from a hunting knife.

On another occasion he fell in the icy sea when hunting two seals, but this did not deter him and he returned triumphant. And all this from the man who suffered most from illness after St. Vincent. (Pause.)

I shall have to watch Mr. Colbeck. I should send him back with the ship – a winter with him at Cape Adare could be insufferable. (Pause)

Look at those icebergs – pink and crimson halos around them. (Pause calls out)

Jensen! Captain Jensen! Open water to the east

(Sounds of engine telegraph, water thrashing and ice cracking.)
Scene 4
Inside the hut, Cape Adare. March 1898.

Candlelight can be seen in some bunks. A dog howls outside.

Borchgrevink looking at himself in a mirror, combing his moustache. Satisfied, he picks up a bottle of brandy and a glass, walks to the table and sits. Pours himself a drink, looks around, then pulls two rocks out of his pocket and studies them closely on the table before him. Continues to drink through the scene.

Borchgrevink:

I knew I would find some; this continent will make millionaires of us all.

(Puts the rocks back in his pocket)

Well, the first sledge journey aborted, but no matter. It was a good test of men and equipment. Who could be expected to hold out in such a gale? Nearly 90mph! Down here at the camp, our large boat was blown out onto the ice and smashed to firewood, dog kennels were sent flying like cards.

I know now it won’t be possible to travel south along the top of Cape Adare with the sledges. We’ll have to wait till the summer before making any major journeys. The days are getting shorter. The penguins are leaving. But we’re fine. The huts are secure, our stores are well stowed. Mr Bernacchi and Mr Colbeck have the magnetic work well in hand. Nicolai has already started a fine collection – he was quite magnificent during the landing – nothing too much trouble. My god he’s a fine shot! Killed 82 skuas with 91 shots, all on the wing, to keep them away from the dog meat. And the Lapps have proven their worth with the dogs. (Pause) Klövstad’s too melancholy for his own good. (Pause)

I shall talk to Colbeck tomorrow. I think I’ll appoint him second in command of the expedition. That will improve the lot of the Britishers. Of course he’ll need to refrain from joining in the jokes with the others as befits his new station. He writes a lot, always scribbling. I’ll ask him for his notes on the voyage down to Cape Adare. That will add to my book.
(Pause - Looks around at the bunks. Stands and moves to one and peers in through the opening. Calls out through the opening.)

Bernacchi.....Mr Bernacchi! Who's the lovely lady you have there in your bunk?...There, the photograph, man. (Turns away. Repeats the name several times, in different ways, obviously slightly drunk!)

Chelsea...Chelsea...Chelsea...(Calls out) I tell you I like her face, but I don't think much of her handwriting. I think you should advise her to take lessons on your return.

(Aside) I could give her lessons in something else.

(Laughs loudly. Dogs bark suddenly)

Shut up! Quiet! Savio! Must! Go and shut up the damn dogs.

Scene 5

Inside the Hut, Borchgrevink's room. April 1899.

Tight spot on Borchgrevink

Borchgrevink:

Come in, come in. Now, I am taking the trouble to have a chat with each of you in turn, because I want things to be clear.

I want to remind you about your contract. Please remember all journals, sketches, photography and collections are the property of the expedition and of Sir George Newnes. Now it has come to my knowledge that some of you write copious private notes, books in fact! Such things are not just a few private thoughts and I must tell you that as leader of the expedition I shall consider them my property. Sir George has funded our expedition; he has the right to publish all the findings and first news of it. As his representative and leader of the expedition I must make sure all material is returned to him. In my position as leader I am also writing the account of our adventure here.
I understand you may find this difficult, but we must maintain order and discipline if we are to survive in this hostile land. Abiding by our contracts is a part of that.

As leader it is my duty to see this happens. Look on me as a necessary evil now, but I think you’ll get to like me better as time goes on. By the way the Doctor and I have resolved our differences. Now I’m planning to explore south inside the bay along the sea ice. I believe it is thick enough. Mr. Bernacchi, Mr. Fougner and Per Savio will accompany me.

Scene 6

On a rock ledge above the shore line. Robertson Bay April 1899. A furious storm is blowing. Sounds of wind, crashing waves and ice breaking. Only Borchgrevink can be seen holding onto a rope that falls below him. They are trying to drag the sledges and boats up the slope. Borchgrevink is plainly frightened.

Borchgrevink: (screaming)

    Per, Per, save the food! Blast you! Throw me some biscuits! Per!
(He struggles with the rope) Leave the dogs! Leave them! (Pulls on the rope, then suddenly lets it go, plunging his hands into gloves slung around his neck. Screams at someone down below) I can’t hold it! Frostbite! I’m getting frostbite damn you! (Black out)

Scene 7

Inside the Hut. May 1899
Tight spot on Borchgrevink at the head of the table

Borchgrevink:

    Gallant boys of this pioneer expedition, we are gathered to celebrate the Independence Day of our beloved Norway, which with Great Britain is at the forefront of polar endeavour.
I give you the King of Norway. *Toasts*

We have achieved much since our landing these few short months ago. Mr Bernacchi and Mr Colbeck have established their meteorological and magnetic recording with great precision; Mr Hanson and Mr Evans have collected many marine species hitherto unknown to science.

Our two sledging expeditions were defeated by the weather but let me tell you gentlemen they were successes. We needed to test our men and equipment for longer journeys. This terrain is new to us. I am pleased to say that our equipment has proven itself admirably. And I have much exciting material for my book. With such knowledge we may even attempt a midwinter expedition to Possession Island. What say you boys – the colder the better! The more risk the greater the glory!

Our snug little haven is well set to withstand whatever blows the winter may bring.

I give you Camp Ridley! *Toasts*

Now boys I’m pleased with your conduct in general, but I am disappointed in the way my discipline has been received by some members of staff. Some departments have been reluctant to let me enter into or share in their work. I do not think this the appropriate way to receive a man of my age and abilities especially as I have taught many of you your duties. As leader and organiser of this expedition I have a right to know what is going on. From now on I expect respect not only for me personally but as leader of a British expedition and for the glorious flag which we sail under.

Gentlemen I give you Queen Victoria! *Toasts*

Now boys some fun, some celebration. Let me begin. I have a poem. Listen, listen...tell me what you think.

‘We are ten at Cape Adare
And heavy clothes we do wear
The doctor to ill temper yields
Colbeck schemes and navigates

15
B'nacchi goes with angled knees
Hanson goes out with his gun
Jumbo follows him for fun.
The Chief he walks around as boss
And thinks himself a little Ross.'

Scene 8

*Hut, Borchgrevink's room Cape Adare. June 1899.*

*Tight spot on Borchgrevink*

**Borchgrevink:**

Colbeck, Colbeck come in my good man.

Look, no beating about the bushes as you English say. I don't think I can

...go ahead with your appointment as second in command. In fact I am not

going to appoint anyone second in command. Might create division amongst

the staff, you understand.

However what I do want you to do is take command of the *Southern Cross*
on her return. Jensen is not reliable or deserving enough to lead the voyage

south to Erebus and Terror. You on the other hand are worthy of my

confidence, your conduct is all that could be desired. I have misunderstood

you, but now I admire the line of conduct you have taken.

I intend to start south for the magnetic Pole with the return of the sun.

...When the ship returns Jensen and one of others will follow me and you

shall take the ship and try to reach a point farthest South. After that go and

rescue Gerlache and return for me in another 12 months. This will be

disappointing for my wife, but that is a detail! I will go home man of the

century! *(Laughs)*
Now I would like you to sign this to say I have offered you this position and that I am still the scientific leader and chief of the expedition.  
(Pause)  
Why? Well, you know you might publish a book against me when you return and I must defend myself! (Laughs)  
You know Colbeck, I am a theosophist. Do you know what that means? I can read your mind! Oh yes!

Scene 9

Inside the Hut, Cape Adare. June 1899

Borchgrevink looking in mirror, combing moustache and hair.

Borchgrevink:

How ugly I am getting. They would not know me if I went up Piccadilly in this style.  
(Pause)  
My wife would have much to say to you chaps for worrying me so much and spoiling my beauty.  
(Turns and walks downstage)  
Oh I am serious, gentlemen – I have placed you all in honourable positions in good faith. I have selected you over hundreds of others, dragged you out of the mud, out of obscurity for the great venture. I have acted straightforwardly towards you and not received similar treatment. I have tested you and you will not stand by me.  

Mr Bernacchi has openly shown me contempt. He slighted my scientific ability in London and has even insulted me since. (Mimics Bernacchi) ‘For an egoist when he leaves this world I would make him sit down for all time and repeat “I, my, mine!” ’ Of all people Mr Bernacchi should feel gratitude – he came from Australia on the off chance and he is here because of my good will.
Gentlemen this state of affairs cannot continue. We have great work ahead of us and we must proceed in a disciplined manner. I have a letter here I want you all to know about. It is in Norwegian, but signed by Sir George Newnes and three London barristers. I will translate the important parts.

‘Any member of the staff ridiculeing the leader or his work commits an act of mutiny...any member opposing the leader or inducing others to oppose the leader commits and act of mutiny...any member who tries to induce the leader to alter the terms of his contract commits an act of mutiny. Mutiny is a crime punishable by 15 years in jail.’

So you see, you must think of yourself and your family for this means 15 years imprisonment.

(Pause)

It is a full moon today. Perhaps the moon is affecting us.

(Pause)

Gentlemen, I am going to my bunk to write. I will not have time to help with the weather observations.

Scene 10

_Hut Cape Adare. June 1899_

_Borchgrevink is seated at the table reading what he has written._

**Borchgrevink:**

Lieutenant William Colbeck RNR

Dear Sir,

I regret that I have to dismiss you from my service. In the time remaining you will be my guest in this camp as well as on the _Southern Cross_. You are welcome to partake of those few comforts which I have at my disposal, but I urgently request you not to interfere in any way with the arrangements in camp. In case you should like to acknowledge your mistakes and ingratitude
to myself in writing, I am willing to call on Almighty God as a witness to let you yourself tear your acknowledgement into pieces as soon as the Southern Cross has arrived in port; also not to acquaint any of the members with the contents thereof, you remaining in your position. However as I hardly think you will acknowledge your mistakes as suggested, I beg you to take this as your final dismissal.

(writes) I am sir,
faithfully yours,
C. E. Borchgrevink.
Further intercourse I prefer in writing.

Scene II

Hut. Late June 1899

Borchgrevink standing, reading a letter

Borchgrevink:

… "I wish to draw your attention to the fact that you have given no reasons for your present actions your allusion to mistakes and ingratitude are quite unintelligible.

I have fulfilled my duties willingly and to the best of my ability…"

…Colbeck

(Screws up the letter. Then sits and writes, reading the last lines on another sheet)

"I would hope you have the moral courage of a man and openly declare before the others that you recognize your mistakes. Knowing human nature as I do you would grow in the eyes of your fellow men."
Scene 12

_Hut. Late June 1899_

_Borchgrevink, sitting at the table, looking intently at an aneroid barometer in front of him._

_Borchgrevink:_

Bernacchì, Mr Bernacchi. Would you like one of the pups? There's a pure white one in this new litter.

You know Bernacchì, I can't understand why Colbeck won't write me an apology. Perhaps if you could have a word. If you could change his mind, get him to see his error, you would be my greatest friend.

Of course you realize he must not participate in the observations. It would also be proper if we maintain a more formal relationship with Mr Colbeck under the present circumstances, don't you think?

Bernacchi, perhaps you could show me how to read this.

Scene 13

_Hut. Early July 1899_

_Candle light in some of the bunks. Borchgrevink standing reading out of a prayerbook._

_Borchgrevink:_

‘If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.’

_(Borchgrevink writes on a slip of paper)_
Dear Sir,

If you care, take my hand through this.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.Borchgrevink

(He places the slip inside the prayer book and walks up and puts it inside one of the bunks)

Scene 14

_Hut, Borchgrevink's room. Early July 1899_

Tight spot on Borchgrevink, fiddling with the wax on a burning candle.

**Borchgrevink:**

Pleased to see you Colbeck, very pleased. Look...I'm willing to let the whole thing slide and turn the page down for good if you will agree.

There is no question of any neglect of duty on your part. It is in a number of small matters that I have been very much put out and I acted under impulse. I beg you to overlook the whole thing.

At the outset I allowed myself to be prejudiced against the staff by Jensen, and that was a great mistake. I see that now. I suspected everyone of working against me.

You must understand me. Put yourself in my place. It is very difficult to deal with so many intellects. You would not believe it but my brain is like that all day (squashes wax back and forwards in his fingers). My whole future depends on this expedition, every hope of success is bound up in it. Indeed all our reputations depend on it.

You know Colbeck I am not an ordinary man. I know it. I feel it. I am not an ordinary man. Look what I've done already. This expedition will be a great mark on world history as the new century dawns.
I thought I knew a lot about human nature and it is hard for me to admit that I was wrong. I hope you can overlook the matter and start afresh. *(Borchgrevink holds out his hand. It is obviously not taken and he withdraws it).*

Yes, yes I understand; no promises, no assurance as to your position on our return to England, but you agree to continue with your duties as before. Good...good.

You know Colbeck I can do much for you when we get back. I have considerable influence...I am well connected in the worlds of science and commerce should you wish to move away from a naval career...Well, ah...

By the way how is Mr Hanson? The Doctor told me he had neuralgia again last night.

Scene 15

_Hut late at night. Late July 1899._

_A light is still burning in one of the bunks. Suddenly it flares up and gets brighter having caught the bedding and wall alight._

_Furious beating and banging is heard from inside and smoke enters the room._

*Borchgrevink emerges from the bunk opposite. Scrambles out as he speaks.*

*Borchgrevink:_

What? What is it? Fire! Fire! Colbeck you fool! You idiot! Man what are you doing? You’ll kill us all.

God damn you! How could you be so careless? This place would go up in minutes. Then we’d be dead anyway if we weren’t burnt alive. No food, no shelter!

Damn the man!

It’s all right everyone! Go back to sleep. Rest easy. Colbeck’s just tried to roast us alive, that’s all.
(Reaches into his bunk and pulls out a bottle of whisky, walks to the front of stage and sits. Takes a drink from time to time)

The English...the English...ha! So unsuited to polar exploration. So damn superior!

I'll show them, I'll show them all. They all tried so hard to stop me. The Admiralty, the Royal Geographical Society, Sir Vesey Hamilton, Sir Clements Markham.

Sir Clements Markham! Ha! Every English pound I got must have choked in his English throat.

(Mimics Sir Clements) "I venture, however, to think that it would be wiser, and much more conducive to success, if generous minded individuals who resolve to make a large outlay on exploring work, would take experts into their confidence, consult the best authorities, and work in concert with the Council of our Society or some other competent body of advisors."

Here's to you, George Newnes, you recognized Norwegian passion, Norwegian enterprise, Norwegian expertise.

Look at Nansen, another fine son of Christiania. Who but a Norwegian could have survived 5 months and 300 miles on the ice. And even he had to put up with people spying and scheming behind his back.

Well I shall just have to do all the valuable work myself. But the greatest achievements will be mine anyway. It will matter little to the public at home whether I sit on my backside all day or not, all the credit will come to me.

Now our expedition south to the bottom of the bay. The sun's about to return, a good time for a new venture. I'll take the Lapps of course, Hanson is too sick, Evans...yes Evans would be good. I need his strength to help haul the sledges.
Scene 16

Outside in the snow near the Duke of York Island at the head of Robertson Bay. Sept 1899.

Low sound of wind blowing.
Borchgrevink has a flask in one hand and a letter in the other, calls out to one of the Lapps.

Borchgrevink:

Ole, when did you leave the Camp?....

What happened?... The stove not burning properly?... They nearly suffocated from the fumes? (*He looks back at the letter*)

Klövstad said Hanson’s health was set back. His digestion is not so good, but he is responding well to the battery treatment of his legs.

Ole, we need to collect some more rocks from the other side of the slope! Up further.

(*Takes a swig*) Ah that’s good. Better warmed up though. Bernacchi pulled half the skin off his lips last time he drank straight out of a flask. (*laughs at the memory and mimics Bernacchi trying to pull the flask off his lips*) Like the dog that got stuck to the jam tin! This is a great reviver; brandy’s much better than whisky. We poured whisky into a saucer for one the dogs and it froze solid!—You could eat it!

Ole, hurry up! We need to get back to the stone hut, I’m getting cold. Per shot a seal this morning so we should have a good fire by now.

(*Puts the letter away and pulls a rock out of a bag around his neck).*

Look at that! This will be another Klondike. What we have found so far must be worth £50,000. Of course it had to be here; Australia, New Zealand, South Africa. Why not Antarctica?
Sir George will be able to float a company – we’ll all have a share. He can send 5 or 6 mining vessels down here straight away and there will be enough to fund 20 scientific expeditions.

(Puts the rock back and calls out)
Ole, come on!
(Feels the letter and pulls it out. Pauses.)
Ole, I am going back to Camp Ridley tomorrow. I’ll send some of the others out.

Scene 17
Inside the hut, Cape Adare. October 1899.

Borchgrevink is beside one of the bunks near the back. He stands and moves downstage.

Borchgrevink:

I think we should all move outside. We can set up tents in the lee of the huts and cook outside. Hanson has an infection. It is dangerous to breathe the air in here.

Klövstad’s a fool. Tried to tell me it’s diet – rubbish! The rest of us are healthy enough. We planned our food well. This is a modern expedition, not some weekend camping trip. Tried to tell me I demanded too much of Hanson when he was ill, killing seals, landing the stores.. Hanson is a hunter, he is a Norwegian who knows how to work in snow and ice.

This is something new. Something that could infect us all. We’ll move everyone out and set up some burners outside.

Perhaps I should get Bernacchi to take a photograph of Hanson. You never can tell. I have to think of myself in these matters.
Scene 18

Outside the hut. October 1899.

Downstage. A drum with burning coals is slightly to one side. Borchgrevink has four small notebooks in his hand. The sound of Adelie penguins can be heard in the background.

Borchgrevink:

Evans caught the first penguin and brought it to him just before he died. He’d been waiting for them to return. He examined it and pronounced it fully grown. Determined to continue his duties. I must put away his notebooks. Ah, what spirit!

“What would you say, boys if I were to get up and walk outside?”

Then he said, quite calmly,

“It is not so hard to die in a strange land; it is only like saying goodbye to one’s friends when starting on a long journey.”

And then that true-hearted Viking breathed his last.

He wanted to be buried at the top of Cape Adare. Bernacchi can take the Lapps up there and dig the grave tomorrow. We must remove the body as soon as possible. Klövstad has now decided he has died of occlusion of the intestines. Why can’t he see the obvious?

(sound of penguins increases)

Look at the penguins. Must be hundreds, thousands of them coming in.

Black lines out across the ice as far as you can see, like regiments of soldiers. Marching, or sliding in single file. Then one calls a halt and they all stop and dig in the snow with their beaks. Nicolai would have liked that.

(A dog barks. Borchgrevink turns suddenly and drops the books. He calls out.)

Savio! Savio! Tie up those dogs!

(He stoops to pick up the notebooks and a number of loose sheets that have fallen out. He starts to read one of them, then quickly scans another)

Nicolai...Nicolai...no... you can’t say this...no!...No!
(He suddenly throws all of the notebooks and sheets into the fire. The penguin noise increases. He realises too late what he has done and tries to retrieve the books, but cannot. The penguin noise is deafening. He covers his ears)

Scene 19

Borchgrevink is seated at his desk in his study, Christiania. April 1903.

Borchgrevink:

The Editor Aftenposten 3rd April 1903

Dear Sir

In this instance it is joyful that Norwegians have shown the way to the new English expedition just as Erik Rode showed Columbus the way to America. In any case Captain Scott and his comrades have certainly done good work and I believe the two men I procured for him have known how to go to the fore in the work as they did with me.

I am glad that my friend Captain Scott has come to the same conclusion about the great Ice Barrier as I did, namely that it is nothing but the northern extremity of a great ice glacier. It is a matter for pleasure that Sir Clements Markham in the evening of his life’s work will have his nephew home covered with laurels.

I consider it a great loss that all the dogs should be dead and I cannot make out the reason, as I brought 60 dogs back to civilisation. We did not find it difficult to keep them alive.

However I am glad to see that Captain Scott has followed my advice which I have given him personally and which is contained in my book.

(Borchgrevink continues to write. Light fades.)

27
(Voice over. Louis Bernacchi March 1930)

My dear Mill

I will most warmly support the recommendation to give Borchgrevink one of the medals. The Southern Cross expedition was thoroughly well organised as regard to equipment, dogs, provisions and indeed in almost every polar detail, and although at the time, we were of the opinion more might have been done we now realise in the light of subsequent experiences, how very restricted we were in Robertson Bay...

Viewing all the circumstances at a distance, we did some good pioneering work, being the first to get Meteorological, Magnetic, Zoological and Biological observations scientifically taken, all due to Mr Borchgrevink’s persisting over a period of years in organising his expedition. Had we not had the misfortune to enter the pack so far west and lose six precious weeks, we should have wintered much farther south and at least made some of the discoveries which were left for Scott and Shackleton.

Unhappily Borchgrevink did not know how to handle his people, but he was young and a Norwegian with mixed nationalities on board.

Sincerely yours,

Louis.

(Light increases. Borchgrevink stands and picks up a medal off the desk. He is an old man. It is now 1930.)

I have my gold at last. (He reads off the back of the medal) ‘The Patron’s Medal, Royal Geographical Society 1930.’ A little late. (He smiles) I met Bernacchi at Colbeck’s funeral the other day; I think he might have had something to do with this. And my wife. But it’s good to get it. For all of us. Not that there are many of us left now. Perhaps, one by one, we’ll make a last
journey back, sit with Hanson awhile and watch the penguins come in. (pauses) Young men's dreams...the gold's there somewhere, just not for me to find... all gone ...Colbeck, Klövstad, poor Per and Ole, and Nicolai. Now Fougner's not well. Scott, of course and Amundsen, flying an aeroplane! Amundsen, I could have told them a Norwegian would get there first. It's the love of the thing that drives us - our inborn desire to become acquainted with the unknown. It's in our blood you see, all this snow and ice.

END
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Photographs. *Cover* C.E. Borchgrevink, Bernacchi Collection 15722
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