



3 / GETTING THE BEST FROM A TEAM

SHACKLETON'S WAY

Leadership Lessons from the Great Antarctic Explorer



SHACKLETON'S GREAT SUCCESS — THE *NIMROD* EXPEDITION, 1907 - 1909

Shackleton assembled a talented team of scientists, explorers and staff for his self-funded expedition.

He insisted, “it was vitally important that we should have the best of everything, whether in food or gear,” and added, “the food must be wholesome and nourishing to the highest degree possible.”

Nimrod sailed from New Zealand on January 1, 1908 heavily loaded with 2,500 boxes of supplies.





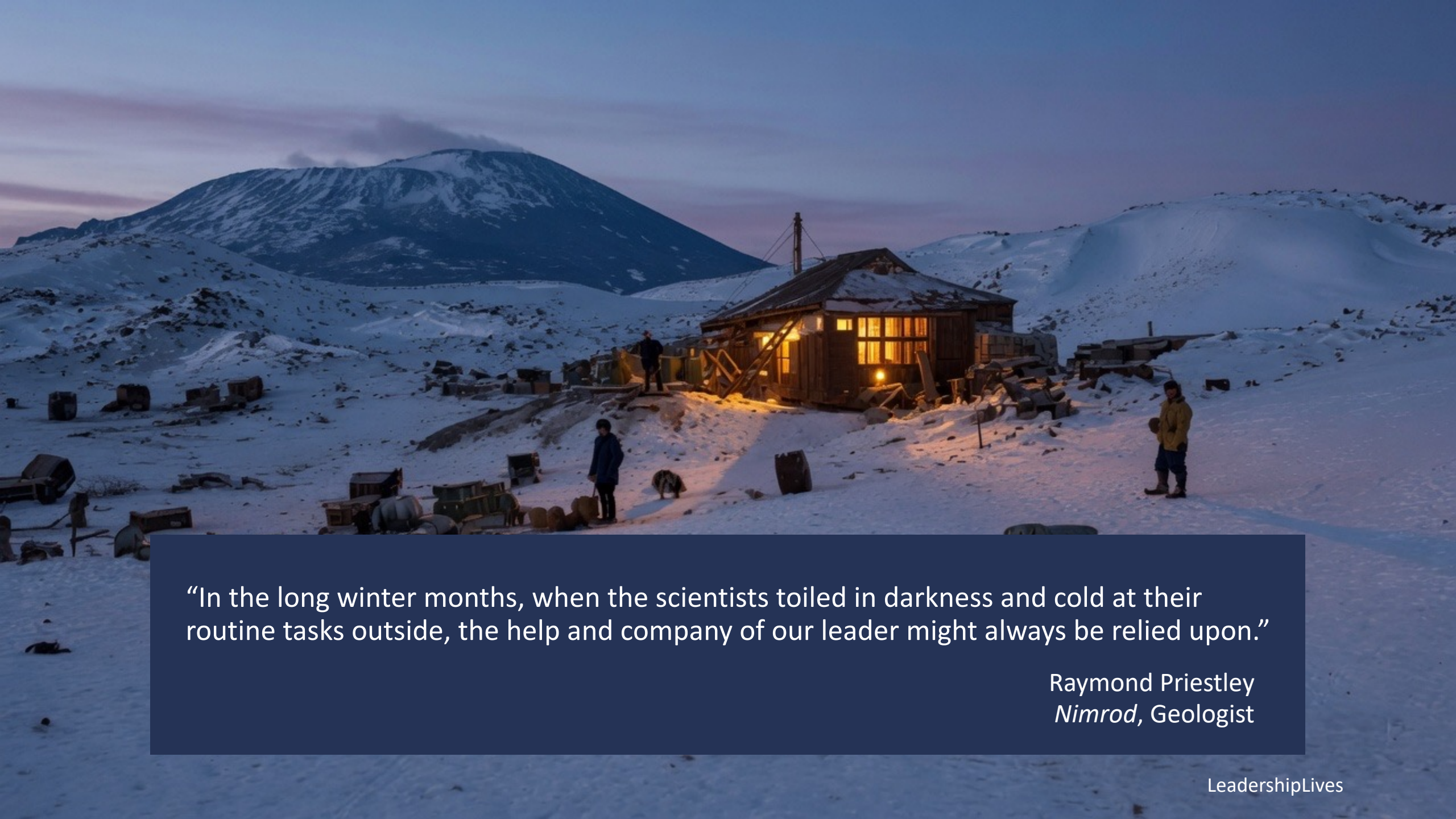
Landing at Cape Royds on McMurdo Sound, February 3, 1908, the team quickly assembled their 33' x 19' pre-fabricated hut. It was cramped and cluttered for the 15-member crew, but it was a cozy home during the long, dark months of winter.



- A team climbed 13,350' Mt. Erebus, Antarctica's second highest volcano.
- Located the Southern Magnetic Pole – an invaluable contribution to navigational charts.
- The “Southern Party” struggled to within 97 miles of the South Pole – the closest, by far, anyone had been to either pole at the time.
- Published a book – *Aurora Australis* . The 80 copies they printed and bound in plywood from packing crates became instant treasures.

A man with a beard and short dark hair, wearing a dark blue turtleneck sweater and dark trousers, stands in a vast, snowy landscape. He has his hands on his hips and is looking directly at the camera. In the background, there are snow-covered mountains under a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The ground is covered in a layer of snow and ice.

On the *Nimrod* expedition, the crew took to calling Shackleton, “the Boss.” The nickname stuck with him for the rest of his life.



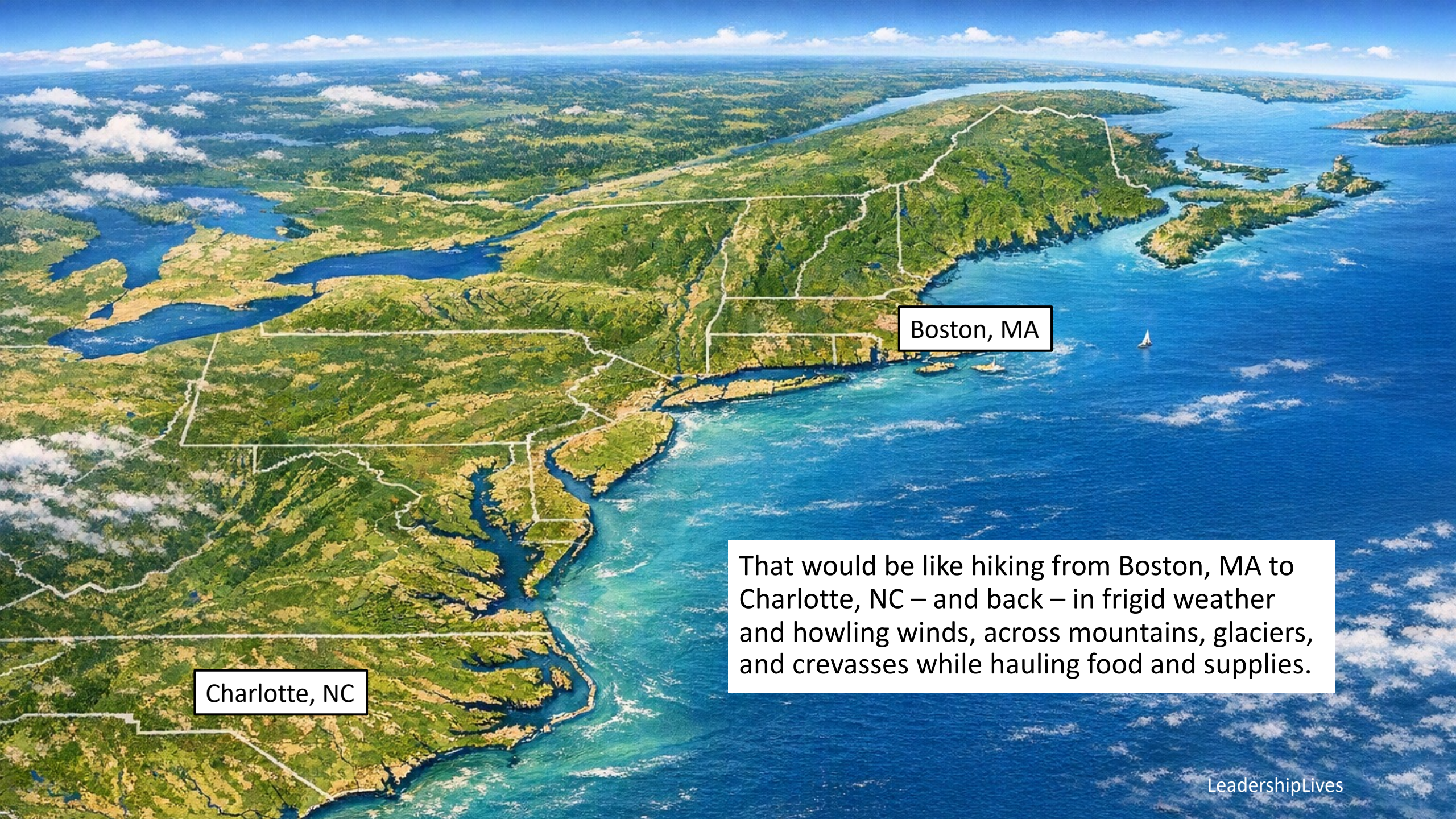
“In the long winter months, when the scientists toiled in darkness and cold at their routine tasks outside, the help and company of our leader might always be relied upon.”

Raymond Priestley
Nimrod, Geologist



On October 29, 1908, Shackleton, Frank Wild, Eric Marshall and J.B. Adams set out on a 1,700-mile trek to the South Pole and back. They had enough food for 91 days. To reduce their load, they placed depots of supplies and food along their route.

On November 26, they passed *Discovery's* "Farthest South."



Boston, MA

Charlotte, NC

That would be like hiking from Boston, MA to Charlotte, NC – and back – in frigid weather and howling winds, across mountains, glaciers, and crevasses while hauling food and supplies.



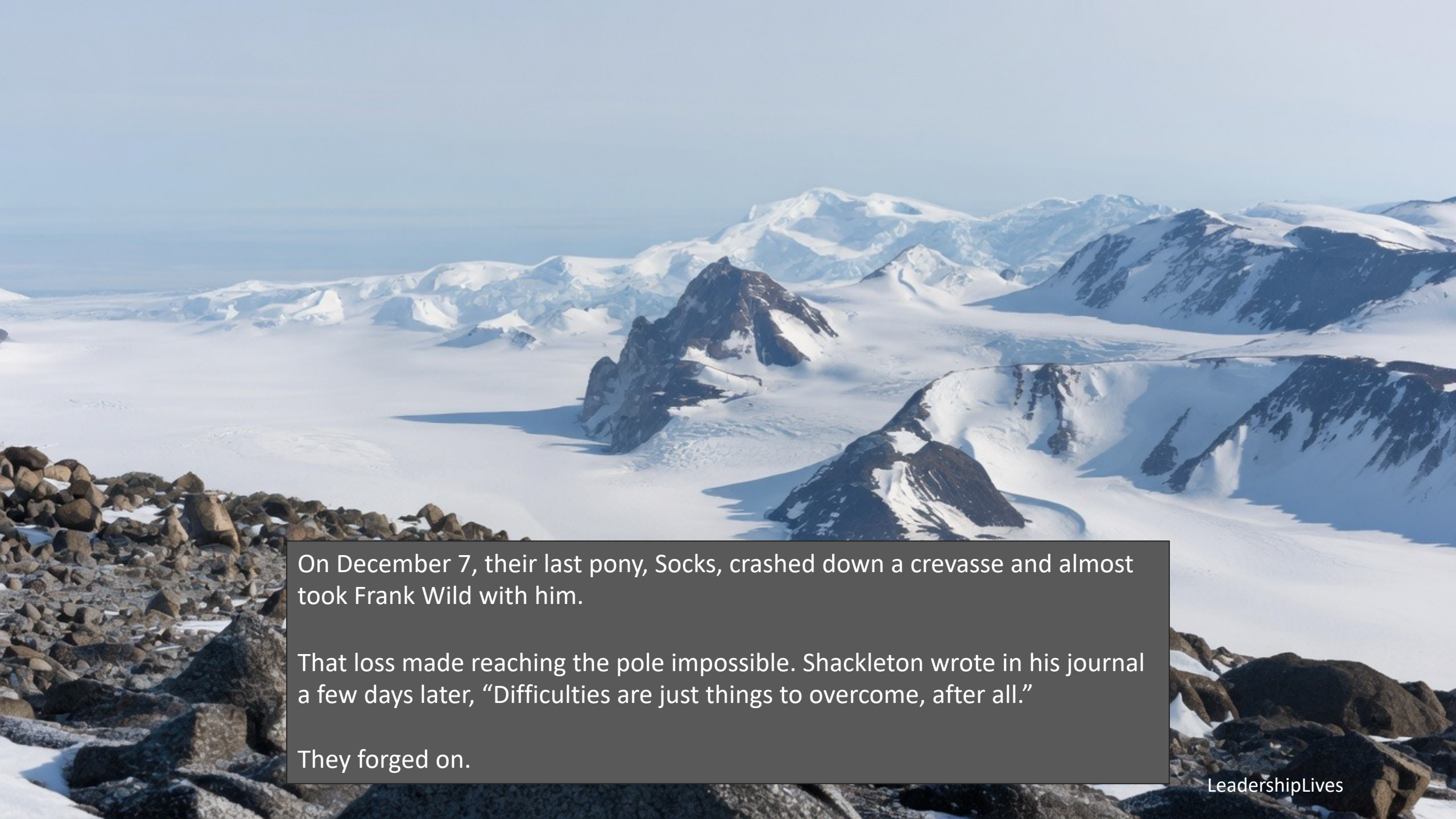
THE SOUTHERN PARTY

From left: 1. Frank Wild served on 4 expeditions with Shackleton – *Discovery*, *Nimrod*, *Endurance*, and *Quest*. Shackleton called Wild, “my second self.” 2. Shackleton. 3. Eric Marshall – surgeon and mapmaker. 4. Jameson Boyd Adams – like Shackleton, Adams left school early to join the Merchant Navy. He went on to serve in the Royal Navy and the Civil Service.



Soon, the *Nimrod* team was behind their goal of 13 miles a day.

Shackleton polled the crew and they agreed to cut back on their meals.



On December 7, their last pony, Socks, crashed down a crevasse and almost took Frank Wild with him.

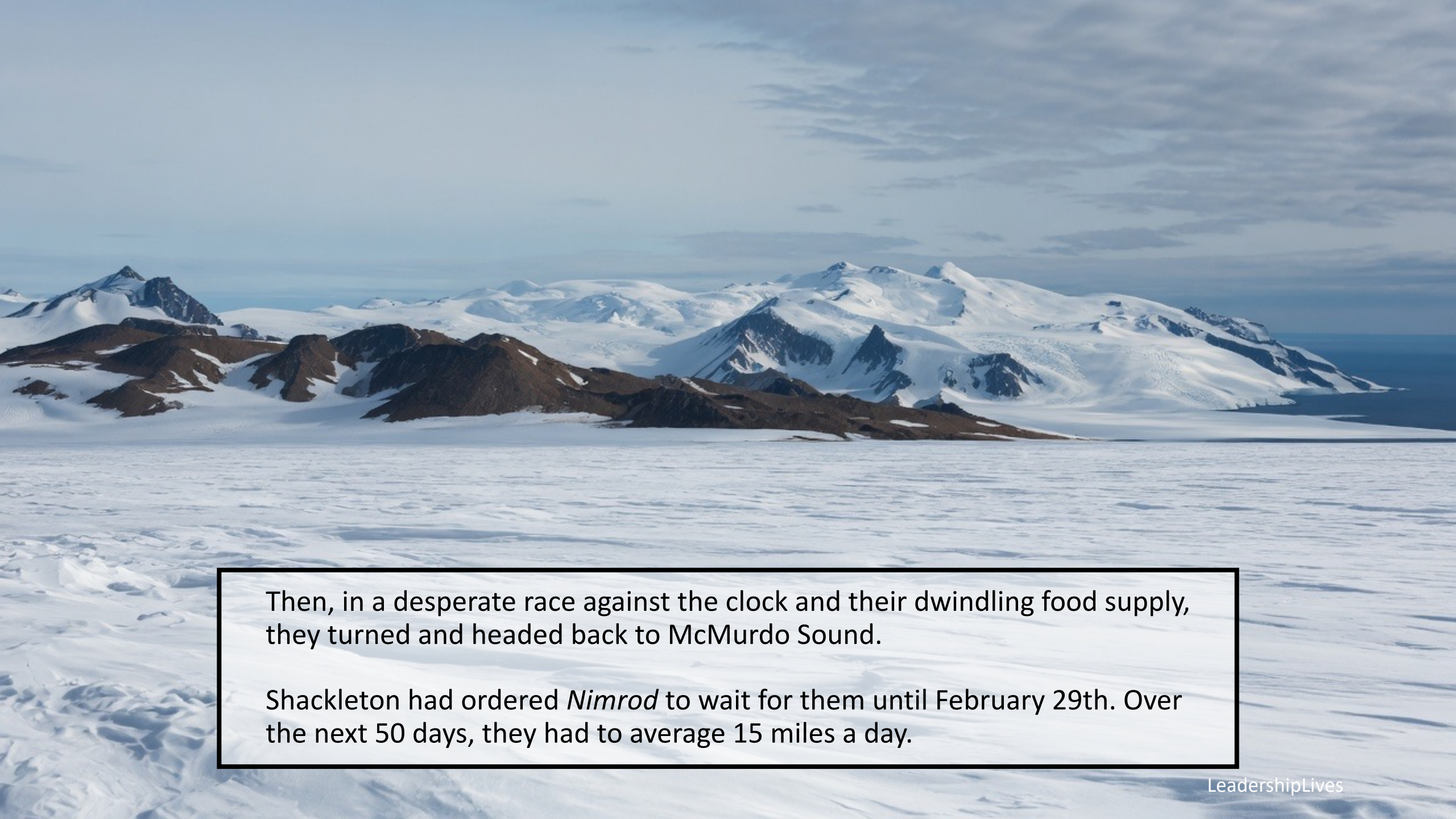
That loss made reaching the pole impossible. Shackleton wrote in his journal a few days later, "Difficulties are just things to overcome, after all."

They forged on.



The team pushed themselves to the limit. On January 9, 1909, they reached their Farthest South, 97-miles from the Pole and planted the flag Queen Alexandra had donated to the expedition.

Image: Adams, Wild, Shackleton.

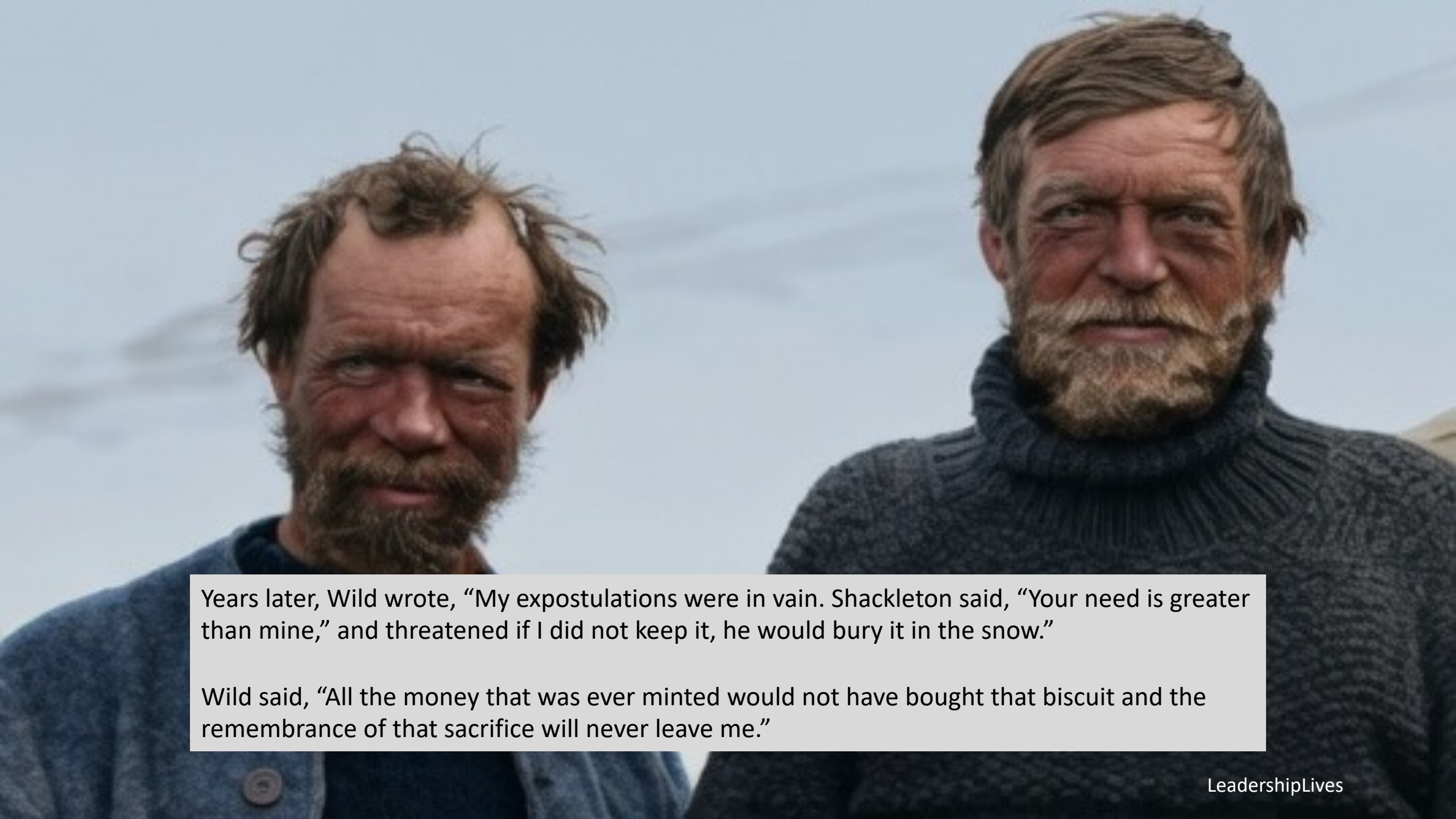


Then, in a desperate race against the clock and their dwindling food supply, they turned and headed back to McMurdo Sound.

Shackleton had ordered *Nimrod* to wait for them until February 29th. Over the next 50 days, they had to average 15 miles a day.

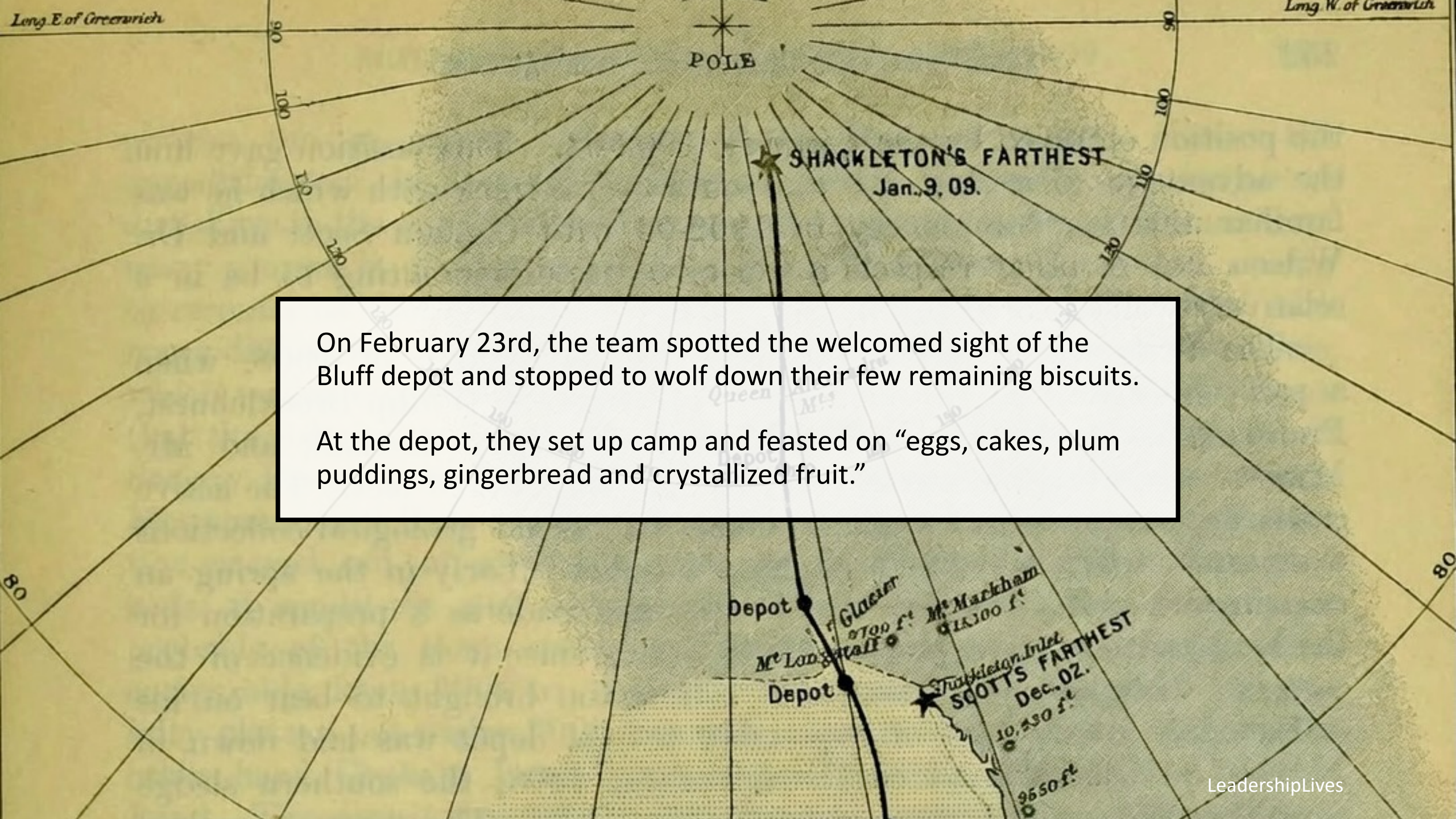


They were exhausted and near-starvation. On this journey Shackleton's greatness surfaced. One morning, Shackleton suddenly stuck his one and only breakfast biscuit into Frank Wild's pocket.



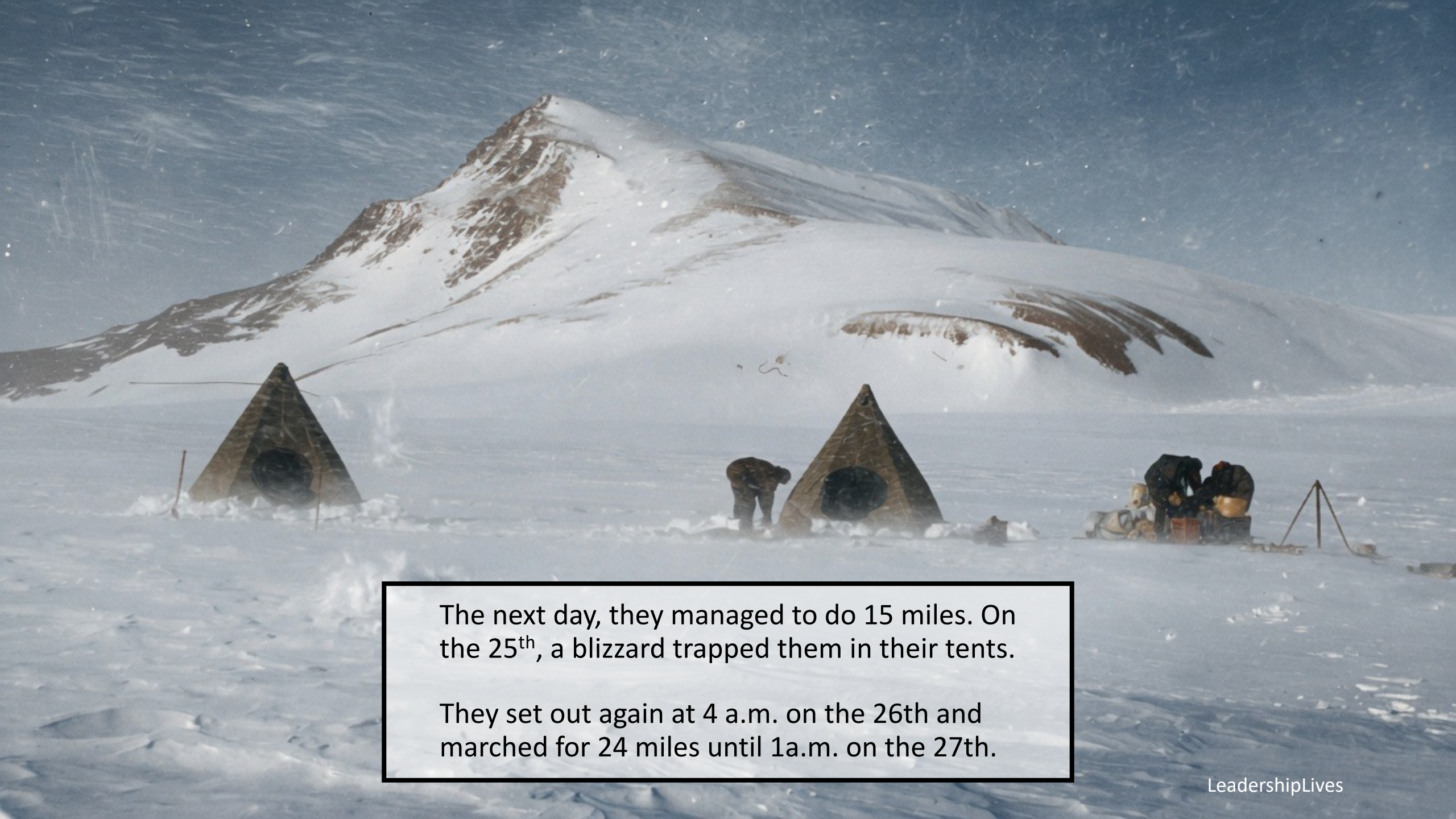
Years later, Wild wrote, “My expostulations were in vain. Shackleton said, “Your need is greater than mine,” and threatened if I did not keep it, he would bury it in the snow.”

Wild said, “All the money that was ever minted would not have bought that biscuit and the remembrance of that sacrifice will never leave me.”



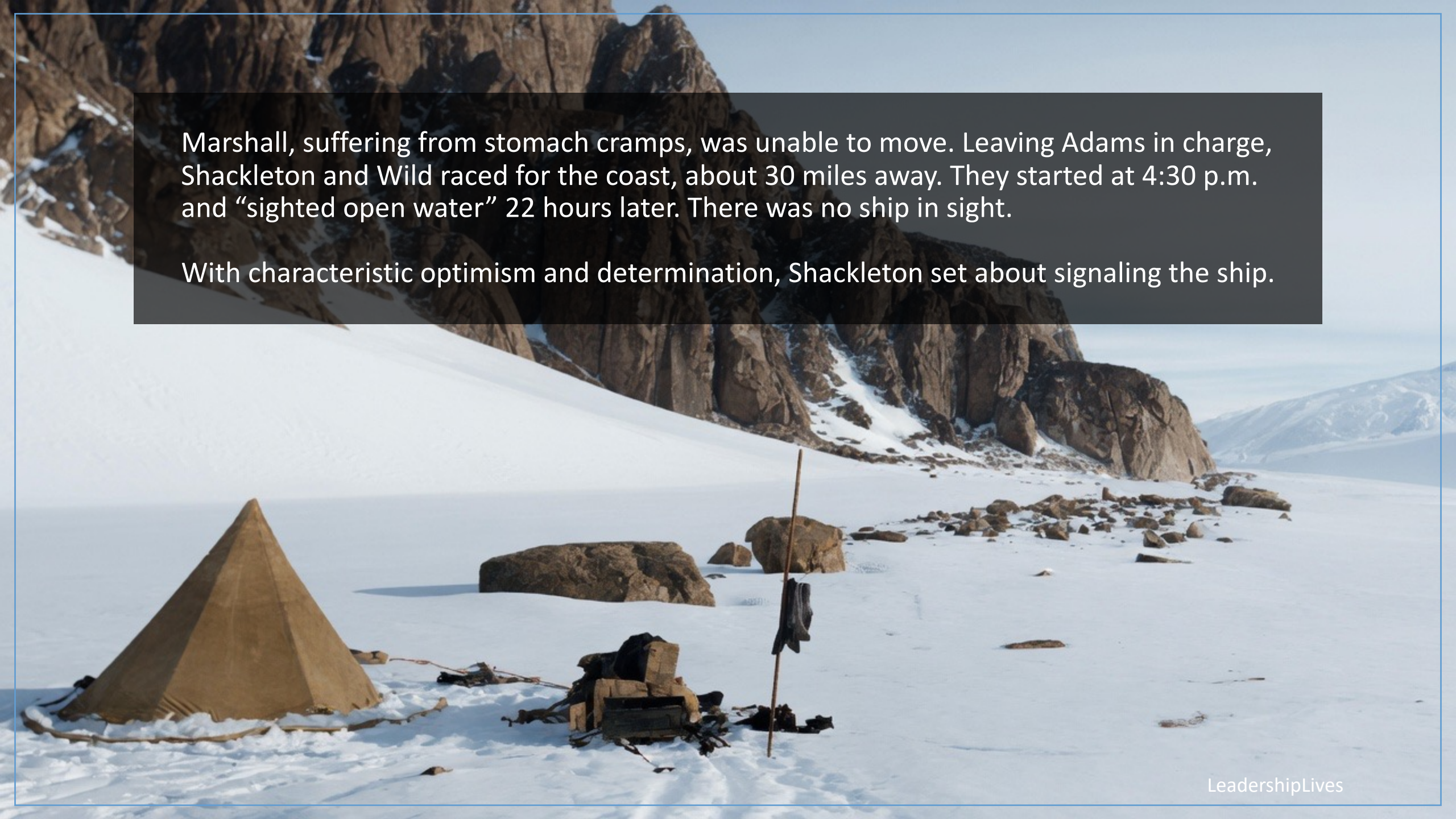
On February 23rd, the team spotted the welcomed sight of the Bluff depot and stopped to wolf down their few remaining biscuits.

At the depot, they set up camp and feasted on “eggs, cakes, plum puddings, gingerbread and crystallized fruit.”



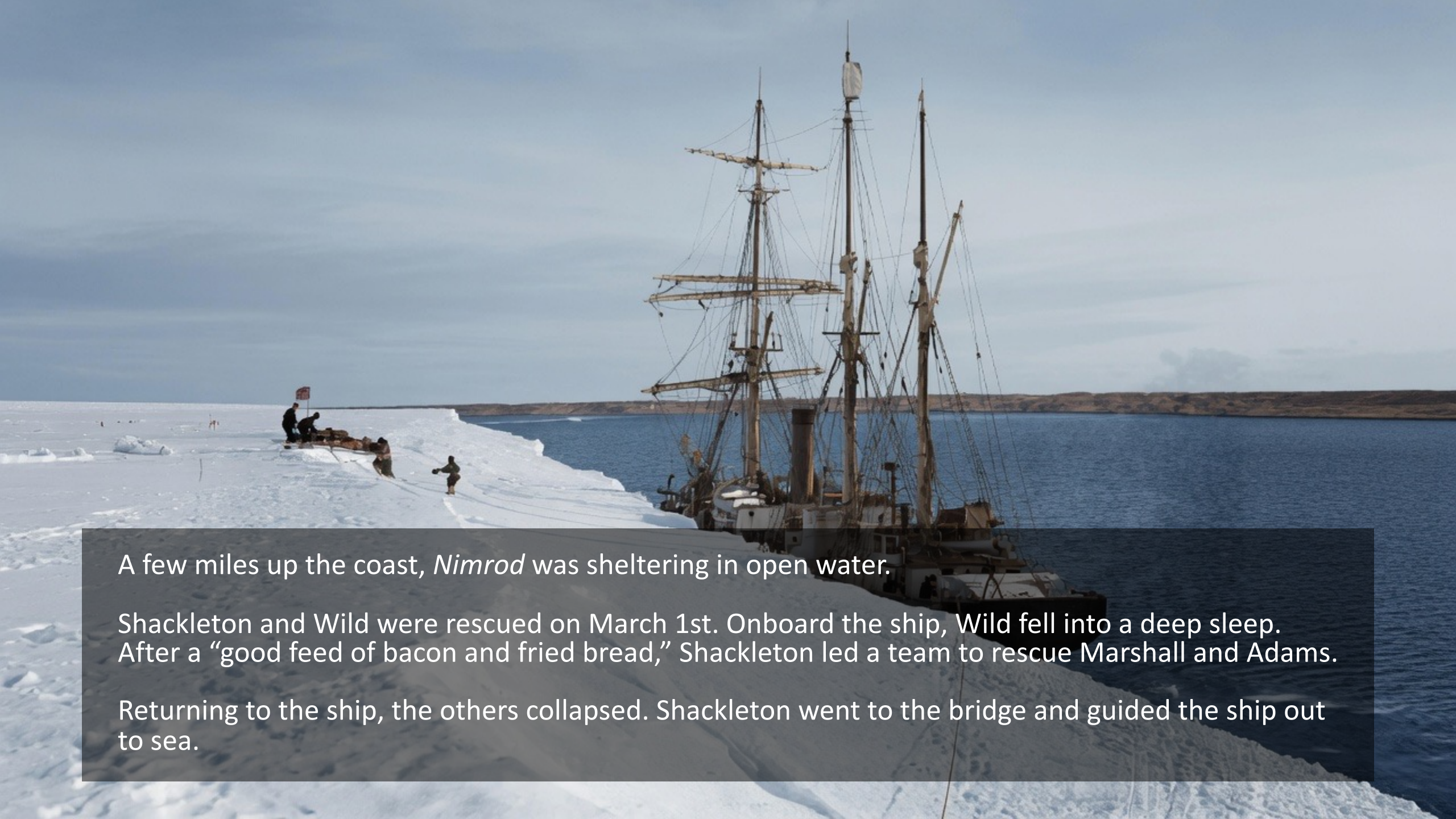
The next day, they managed to do 15 miles. On the 25th, a blizzard trapped them in their tents.

They set out again at 4 a.m. on the 26th and marched for 24 miles until 1a.m. on the 27th.

A photograph of a snowy mountain landscape. In the foreground, a brown, conical tent is pitched on the snow. To its right, there is a pile of gear and a wooden pole with a dark cloth or flag attached. The background features a steep, rocky mountain slope with patches of snow. The sky is clear and blue.

Marshall, suffering from stomach cramps, was unable to move. Leaving Adams in charge, Shackleton and Wild raced for the coast, about 30 miles away. They started at 4:30 p.m. and “sighted open water” 22 hours later. There was no ship in sight.

With characteristic optimism and determination, Shackleton set about signaling the ship.



A few miles up the coast, *Nimrod* was sheltering in open water.

Shackleton and Wild were rescued on March 1st. Onboard the ship, Wild fell into a deep sleep. After a “good feed of bacon and fried bread,” Shackleton led a team to rescue Marshall and Adams.

Returning to the ship, the others collapsed. Shackleton went to the bridge and guided the ship out to sea.

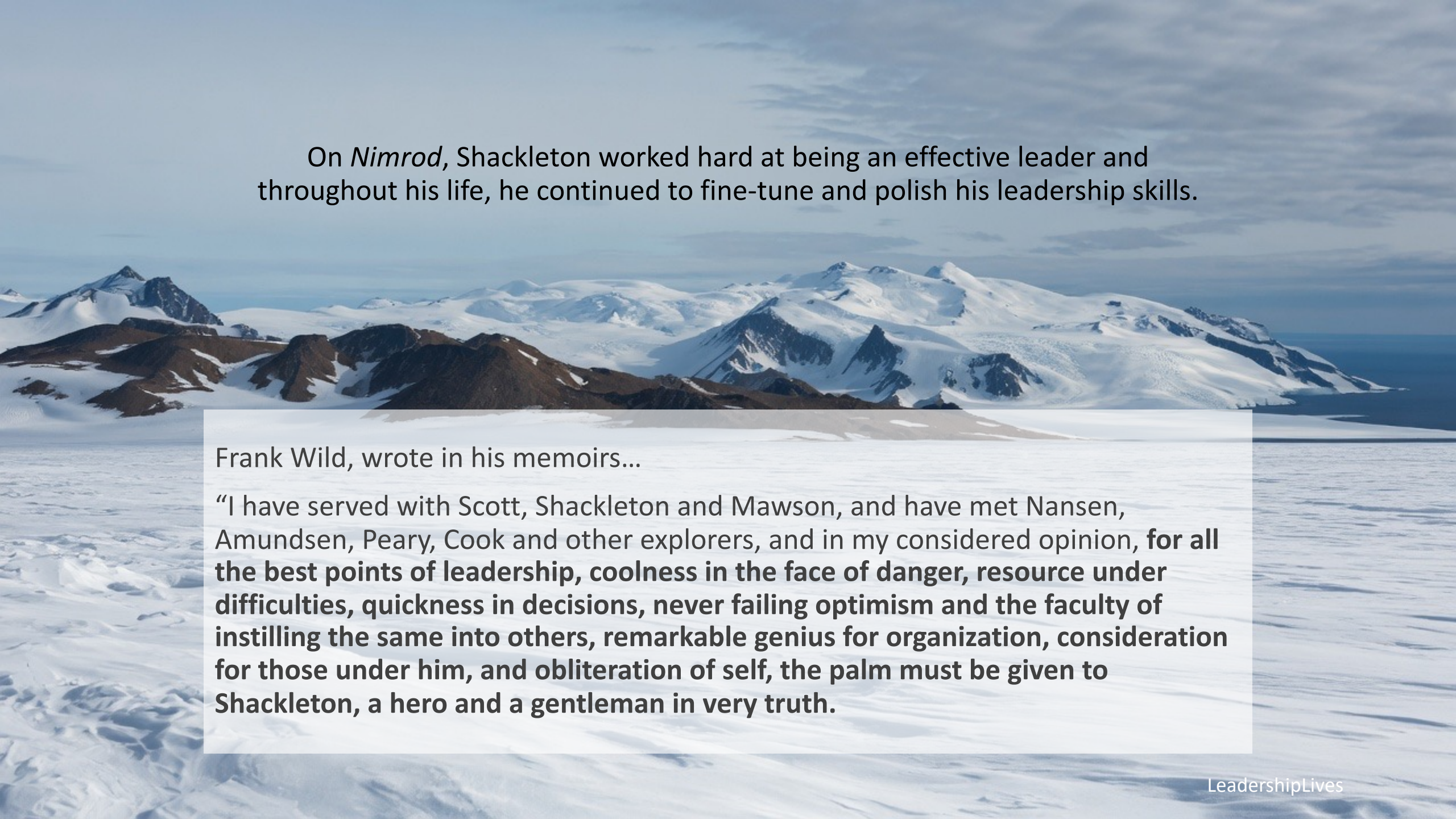
Wild later wrote, "All through this journey Shackleton strained every muscle and nerve to the limit, as he always did in the twenty-years I knew him when strenuous action was called for."





Shackleton was knighted and celebrated all over the world for the achievements of the *Nimrod* expedition.

Captain Roald Amundsen, 1st to the South Pole, Sir Ernest Shackleton, Rear Admiral E. Peary, 1st to the North Pole, Philadelphia, 1913.

A wide-angle photograph of a snowy mountain range. The foreground is a flat, snow-covered expanse. In the middle ground, there are several dark, rocky peaks partially covered in snow. The background shows more distant, snow-covered mountain ranges under a pale blue sky with soft, white clouds.

On *Nimrod*, Shackleton worked hard at being an effective leader and throughout his life, he continued to fine-tune and polish his leadership skills.

Frank Wild, wrote in his memoirs...

“I have served with Scott, Shackleton and Mawson, and have met Nansen, Amundsen, Peary, Cook and other explorers, and in my considered opinion, **for all the best points of leadership, coolness in the face of danger, resource under difficulties, quickness in decisions, never failing optimism and the faculty of instilling the same into others, remarkable genius for organization, consideration for those under him, and obliteration of self, the palm must be given to Shackleton, a hero and a gentleman in very truth.**

Due to the *Nimrod* expedition's success,
Shackleton was acclaimed as a great leader.

The crew on his next expedition took notes.

