Herbert Ponting And The First Documentary

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One evening in mid-winter of 1911, in the coldest, most isolated place on earth, some two dozen men of the British Expedition to the South Pole gathered for a slide show. They were hunkered down in a wooden building perched on the edge of Antarctica. For them winter ran from late April to late August. In these four months the sun disappeared entirely leaving them in increasing darkness, at the mercy of gales and blizzards. If you stepped outside in a blizzard, you could become disoriented within a few yards of the hut and no one would know you were lost or where to look for you. On this evening, they were enjoying themselves in the warmth of their well insulated hut. One of their number, who called himself a "camera artist," was showing them some of the 500 slides he had brought with him to help occupy the long winter hours.

The camera artist was Herbert Ponting, a well known professional photographer. In the language of his time he was classified as a "record photographer" rather than a "pictorialist."[i] One who was interested in the actual world, and not in an invented one. The son of a successful English banker, Ponting had forsworn his father's business at the age of eighteen to try his fortune in California. When fruit farming and gold mining failed him, he took up photography, turning in superb pictures of exotic people and places, which were displayed in the leading international magazines of the time. His coverage of the war between Russia and Japan in 1904-1905 made his name known worldwide. But the lure of travel in foreign parts led him to abandon his American wife and two children to live a restless, transient life, dedicated to photography. "[F]or my camera," he once wrote, "has always been, to me, one of the things which made life most worth living."[ii] His self-portraits show a man with a keen, if rather hard face marked by a full moustache and receding hair. Colleagues found him highly strung, an emotional man passionately dedicated to his craft.[iii] He was 40 when he joined the expedition, one of the oldest of the party and already something of a loner. The other expedition members, as they grew accustomed to his intruding on them with his camera, dubbed him Ponto or Ponko.

In the century after Cook's expedition of 1772-75, many sealers, whalers and explorers had ventured ever further southwards toward what proved to be a forbidding Antarctic continent. By the dawn of the twentieth century the outline of that continent had been mapped and its prominent features named. But little was known of its interior and as yet unattained was the South Pole itself. To reach this point in a frozen wilderness was the last great prize of geographical adventure. Expeditions from Japan, Norway and Britain competed to be the first to achieve this goal.

The leader of Britain's latest expedition was a naval Captain, Robert Falcon Scott. It was the third British attempt in the new century to reach the South Pole. Scott, then a Lieutenant, had himself led the first, in 1901-4, approaching Antarctica from New Zealand through the Ross Sea to McMurdo Sound. Here Scott established a toehold on Ross Island close to the Great Ice Barrier in the shadow of two imposing mountains, Mount Erebus and Mount Terror, which James Clark Ross had named after his two ships on his government-financed expedition of 1839 - 43. Ernest Shackleton, one of Scott's companions on the *Discovery* expedition, followed to the same area in 1909 with an

expedition of his own, coming within 100 miles of his goal. In 1910, Scott, now a Captain, drew on men already experienced in polar travel. Following the precedent set by Cook in the eighteenth century, Scott's party included scientists and artists as well as an assortment of adventurers and men from the navy. On the recommendation of a trusted follower, Scott chose Ponting to be the expedition's official photographer, suggesting that he should also equip himself with a motion picture camera. Quickly mastering the new technology, Ponting found himself a pioneer of the documentary form of filmmaking.

The expedition left London in June 1910 in an old Scottish whaling ship, the *Terra Nova*, bound for Lyttleton, the port of Christchurch, New Zealand. Here it was refitted and tightly reloaded with stores and equipment, which included motor tractors and fuel, dogs and horses from Siberia and their fodder, the prefabricated wooden building that was to be their living quarters and fuel for heating it and for cooking. In the cramped quarters of the *Terra Nova* Ponting had space for a photographic laboratory to house two motion picture cameras as well as still cameras, tripods, lenses, negative glass plates, reels of motion picture negatives, and chemicals for developing negatives and fixing positives, not to mention the 500 slides from his travels, many of them hand colored in Japan, and a lantern to project them.

Ponting boarded the *Terra Nova* in New Zealand. He began his still and motion picture work at once, recording scenes and activities on the two thousand mile voyage to the Antarctic. They arrived at the Ross Sea in November 1910 and Scott chose a site for his base on Ross Island, 25 miles from the site of his *Discovery* expedition base. Soon after their arrival, Scott learned that the Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen, had established a base some 400 miles away, with the Pole his obvious objective.

As soon as their new building was ready Ponting transferred his laboratory and equipment to it, shipping all the motion pictures he had taken to date in the *Terra Nova* for carriage back to London. These arrived in May 1911 and were shown privately to Mrs. Scott and a few others and in November to the public at the London Coliseum, a large variety theatre in central London.[iv]

To get to the Pole and back from Scott's base on Ross Island was a journey of some 1800 miles.[v] The route involved a relatively easy first section across 400 miles of glacial barrier ice, followed by a grueling climb up the Beardmore Glacier that rose over 120 miles to 7000 feet, a further 200 miles climb to the polar plateau at 10,000 feet and a final section of 150 miles to the Pole itself. Men making this journey had to carry with them everything they needed to keep themselves alive and they had to make it back again before the end of the summer, by April 1912 at the very latest.

Scott launched his assault at the end October 1911, assigning separate parties the task of establishing caches of supplies at strategic points along the route, each one returning to base when its job was done. Eleven men climbed the Beardmore Glacier with him and from these he chose four to accompany him over the final stretch to the Pole itself. On January 4, 1912, having reached their objective 150 miles from the Pole, the last supporting party turned back bringing with them photographs taken by Scott along

their route. Scott and his four companions were now alone on the polar plateau. They were a Marine officer, Lieutenant Bowers, Dr. E.O. Wilson, Scott's closest friend, Captain Oates, who had fought in the Boer War and was on leave of absence from his regiment, and Petty Officer Evans, a robust seaman. That was the last time they were seen alive.

What happened to them became known a year later. In April 1912, with winter approaching and no sign of Scott or his companions, the men at the expedition's base hunkered down again. At the end of October 1912 a search party set out to retrace their steps. In November they came upon the bodies of Scott, Wilson and Bowers in their tent. Wilson and Bowers were covered in their sleeping bags, as if asleep, Scott lay with his coat open. In a pocket the search party found his diaries; nearby was a small hand camera with two exposed rolls of negative film. The bodies of Oates and Evans were nowhere to be seen.

After raising a cairn of stones over the three bodies and taking photographs of the site, the search party returned to their base to await the arrival of the *Terra Nova*. The expedition left Antarctica for good in January 1913, reaching New Zealand, 2000 nautical miles distant, in February.

Scott's diaries told what had happened.

Scott and his four companions reached the Pole on January 17 1912 to find that a Norwegian party led by Roald Amundsen had beaten them to it by a month. "Great God!" wrote Scott in his diary, "this is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority." Next day they moved some three miles to a point they calculated was the true Pole, and there they found the Norwegians' tent and a message from Amundsen. They recorded their own arrival in a group portrait with a small hand camera that Ponting had trained them to use, operating a remote device to trigger the shutter.[vi] Disheartened, the British party faced a return journey of 900 miles. At first they made good progress, but then they found themselves struggling through fearful weather and difficult terrain, which gradually drained their strength. Evans, the Petty Officer from Wales and a veteran of the *Discovery* expedition, died after suffering a fall, which seemed to sap his energy; a little later Captain Oates became so weakened from frost bite he could go no further. To spare his comrades, he walked out of the tent one day into a blizzard and was seen no more. After several more days, unable to move because of the weather, their food gone and at the end of their endurance, Scott, Wilson and Bowers succumbed together. Their next cache of food was but eleven miles away.

Scott's last diary entry was for March 29 1912: "We shall stick it out to the end, but we are getting weaker, of course, and the end cannot be far. It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write any more." Then, as a final thought, "For God's sake look after our people."

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When Scott had set out for the Pole at the end of October 1911, Ponting, the expedition's official photographer, accompanied him for the first 25 miles of his journey. It was the furthest he ever ventured from his base on Ross Island. But he also captured motion picture sequences of the separate support parties as they set out. Having said farewell to his leader, he then took a final motion picture shot of Scott and Wilson moving away into the distance.

With two months of summer ahead of him before the *Terra Nova* could be expected back in McMurdo Sound, Ponting turned to photographing other subjects within his reach. Before parting, Scott and Ponting had agreed that the expedition's photographer should not stay on in Antarctica for another year, which Scott said he planned to do when he returned from the Pole. Ponting, therefore, prepared to leave on the *Terra Nova* when the boat made its next visit from New Zealand. It evidently was not important to either man that a motion picture record be made of what everyone anticipated would be a triumphal return of the polar party, an attitude incomprehensible to later generations. Scott agreed that still pictures taken by men trained by Ponting would take care of this historic occasion.

Accordingly, Ponting spent his remaining weeks photographing the birds and sea life of Antarctica in scenes that were a major attraction when shown in London. Audiences were astonished to see skua gulls stealing the eggs of penguins right under the protesting noses of the parent birds. Ornithologists had assumed gulls skewered the eggs on the end of their beaks. Ponting's motion pictures showed that they carried away the eggs unbroken in their beaks.

Ponting worked hard to capture these shots. It took hours of patient observation to accustom the birds to his presence and the movement of his hand as he turned the handle of his camera. He wrote later of this episode "I finally decided that the incident would have to be `produced' – just as any drama film is produced – and the various characters concerned would have to be *made* to play their parts." Ponting tied up a penguin, giving him a clear shot of the nest, and he kept up the motion of his hand turning until the gull became used to him and swooped in to seize the egg.[vii] How many nature documentaries have had to follow Ponting in intervening in some way to obtain their material!

The *Terra Nova* duly reappeared in McMurdo Sound in January 1912. At the first opportunity Ponting moved himself and his equipment on board. The ship was back in New Zealand in April. Here Ponting learned that Amundsen had reached the Pole first and had embarked on a whirlwind lecture tour of Australia, New Zealand and Brazil. The Norwegian was expected in England in the fall of 1912. Amundsen had also taken cameras with him to Antarctica. They included a motion picture camera as well as a large negative plate camera. But apparently the motion picture camera could not be made to work - and there was no professional photographer on the Norwegian expedition detailed to make it work - and the plate negatives were mostly found to be ruined. But one of the five Norwegians who reached the Pole had brought along a pocket Kodak camera, and with this Amundsen's triumph was successfully recorded.[viii]

Hurrying back to Britain, Ponting handed over his own motion pictures to the Gaumont Film Company, which had invested in the expedition.[ix] Released in London in August 1912 as *Epic of the South Pole*, they culminated in the scenes of Scott leaving his base for the last time, the public as yet unaware of his fate.[x] But Amundsen's prior visit, Ponting had to admit, had overshadowed interest in Scott's expedition. Ponting also took issue with other people who exploited his photographs to satisfy press demands for Antarctic material. The chief offender here was E.R.G.R. Evans, the expedition's second in command, now promoted to Commander. Ponting penned an angry letter to Scott in November, unaware that his leader was now dead. The public, wrote Ponting, had lost interest in the British expedition "and the film instead of being issued as the record of a great adventure … has had to be put out as a sort of glorified travel film." He told Scott of his "disappointment and chagrin" that he, a photographer with an international reputation, should find his work offered to cheap publications in Britain. "To come down from the best papers of the world to such as these, to which I have never before thought of contributing, is indeed a drop…" The Antarctic had turned sour on Scott's Camera Artist.[xi]

In February 1913 Ponting was in Switzerland, recovering, he said, from the strain of working on his Antarctic material, when he received a telegram telling him of the tragic outcome of Scott's bid for the Pole. The news was a worldwide sensation. When the surviving members of the expedition returned to Britain in July 1913, popular sentiment was overwhelming. King George V bestowed medals; the naval officers received promotions; the public quickly subscribed £75,000 to a fund for the dead men's families; and the Officers of the Fleet paid for a statue of Scott. It was erected in London's Waterloo Place, facing the one of Sir John Franklin, whose ships, Ross's *Erebus* and *Terror*, were lost with all hands in the Arctic in 1848 searching for the Northwest Passage. Scott's diaries, however, had survived and they went straight to the publishers.[xii] Overnight, it seemed, everybody in Britain knew how Captain Oates had walked out of the tent into a blizzard with the words "I am just going outside and may be some time."

Returning at once to London, Ponting suddenly faced a new and entirely unexpected situation. Two sets of his motion pictures of Antarctica, to which Gaumont had the rights, had already been shown in London. Gaumont now released them again as "The Undying Story of Captain Scott."[xiii] "Some thousands of pounds," Ponting wrote later, "were added [to the public appeal for funds] from the proceeds of the exhibition of kinematograph films."[xiv] He made a quick trip to New York in a bid to sell the films to American audiences.[xv]

Ponting did not have a signed contract with Scott detailing his rights to his own still photographs. They had agreed "on a man-to-man" basis that at the end of the expedition lecture rights involving the use of his photographs would be restricted to Scott and Wilson for two years, after which they would be exclusively Ponting's. With Scott and Wilson dead, Ponting assumed the rights were now his alone.

When the rolls of negative film that were found with Scott's body were developed, they showed that the small hand camera Scott had carried with him was the key to telling the story of the expedition visually. A string attached to the shutter enabled all five men to be pictured together at the South Pole, the Union Jack planted in the background. Bowers took a photograph showing the other four standing around Amundsen's tent with the Norwegian flag still attached to it. In another, also taken by Bowers, the four were on their skis dragging their sledge across an ice plateau. Scott took one of their camp on the Beardmore Glacier. These may not have been the work of a "camera artist," but they were authentic visual documents. Ponting took credit for training Scott and Bowers to take the images. The photographs – snapshots, really, they were not in his style – did not belong to Ponting but to the Expedition, and so to the nation. But to anyone wanting to tell the story of the expedition, they gave it a powerful climax.

Ponting now made it his mission to be that storyteller. For £5000 he bought the rights to all his motion pictures from Gaumont. Adding to them slides of his own photographs and those poignant last pictures taken by Scott himself and his companions, he had a full visual record of the expedition, most of it exclusively his own. The photograph taken by the search party of the cairn they erected over the bodies of Scott, Wilson and Bowers provided a fitting ending. He was ready to weave into one presentation these various, somewhat fragmentary, visual records.

On January 23, 1914, in the Philharmonic Hall on Great Portland Street in the heart of London, Ponting first offered his full documentary account of the Scott Expedition to the public. He called it *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic*. At the same time the Fine Art Society put 200 of his photographs on display in New Bond Street. The response was tremendous.[xvi]

With Captain Scott in the Antarctic ran at the Philharmonic Hall twice daily for ten straight months in that year of 1914. Ponting once said his expenses, which included the rental of the hall and a musician with a piano, were £800 per week, but Ponting was a hopeless businessman and he may have been exaggerating.[xvii] Even if his costs were half that figure, he seems to have had no shortage of audiences to maintain his schedule of performances for forty weeks. We do not have a record of the total number, though it is known that many people returned several times to hear him. Sir Ernest Waterlow, President of the Royal Watercolour Society, came fourteen times. His wife often brought parties of blind soldiers.[xviii] Ex-President Roosevelt was an enthusiastic visitor, writing to Ponting afterwards "I do not know when I have seen any exhibition which impressed me more than yours did."[xix] Shackleton and Mawson, both seasoned Antarctic explorers, were frequent visitors, Shackleton calling the films "unsurpassed."[xx] Captain Noel, who went on to film the British expeditions to conquer Mt. Everest in the 1920s, "haunted" Philharmonic Hall in 1914, learning much from Ponting personally.[xxi] Probably the greatest moment for Ponting came when he was asked to give his presentation at Buckingham Palace before King George V, Queen Mary and their four hundred guests, among whom were George V's grandparents, the King and Queen of Denmark. Queen

Mary told Ponting that her children had already been to the Philharmonic Hall and greatly enjoyed his performance. The King gave him a diamond pin.[xxii]

According to one surviving notice, *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic* could also be seen outside London. For three days in October 1914 it was shown twice daily in a hall in Nottingham. An advertisement describes the event as "Mr. Herbert Ponting's Moving Picture Lecture," but it is being delivered by Mr. C.H. Meares. Cecil Meares was Ponting's friend and the one who first recommended him to Scott. Ponting himself, the flyer informs us, "is now lecturing at the Philharmonic Hall, London." For the performance to be given simultaneously in two different cities suggests that Ponting had duplicated his material, perhaps putting it all into motion picture form. But whatever were the projection arrangements, they must have proceeded smoothly. All Meares needed to do was read Ponting's script.[xxiii]

The outbreak of war in August 1914 immediately enhanced the uplifting message audiences took away from Ponting's presentation. In the early months of the fighting, men found inspiration in the ordeal of five polar explorers dying in the frozen wilderness "for the honor of their country." In 1915 Ponting was asked for copies of his film to be sent to France where they were seen by some 100,000 officers and men at the front. The senior chaplain to the forces wrote: "The splendid story of Captain Scott is just the thing to cheer and encourage out here. … The thrilling story of Oates' self-sacrifice, to try and give his friends a chance of `getting through,' is one that appeals so at the present time. The intensity of its appeal is realised by the subdued hush and quiet that pervades the massed audience of troops while it is being told."[xxiv]

In late 1916 –17 Ponting brought *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic* back to the Philharmonic Hall for a second run. It was not a success. The public's taste had changed. Too shocked by the terrible losses of men killed in the trenches across the Channel the nation no longer found inspiration in Scott's fate. There were nights when Ponting had to close for lack of an audience. His own financial losses mounting he brought his second run to an early end.[xxv]

Refusing, however, to give up on Scott's memory, he set about reworking his material in other forms. His first move was to publish a book about the expedition, *The Great White South*, which appeared in 1921. Profusely illustrated with his photographs, the book is structured like an illustrated lecture, with photographs and text linked, page by page. The narrative sequence mirrored the Philharmonic Hall program, with its mix of expedition activities and observations on nature. He describes the technical challenges he faced in both his large plate photography and motion picture work, and gives dramatic accounts of his narrow escape from killer whales, for which he had an artist make a drawing, and a fearsome blow to his head from a skua gull that made him fear he had lost an eye.

The Great White South was an instant success. It went through eleven printings in Ponting's lifetime.[xxvi] In 1924 under the title *The Great White Silence* Ponting "reissued" his film material in seven reels. It was now "titled throughout," as a journal of the day

wrote, "so that it may be shown in any theatre without a lecture."[xxvii] Finally, in 1933 Ponting released a sound version of the film, *90° South*. The sound consists of music and Ponting's own voice as narrator. Before the film proper starts, Ponting and E.R.G.R. (Teddy) Evans, now an admiral, appear together on camera, Evans to introduce Ponting and Ponting to introduce the film. Both wear tuxedos.

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This is the best way for us to meet Ponting. He is almost twenty years older, of course, but the same animated speaker who stood in front of the audience in the Philharmonic Hall in January 1914. The program synopsis of *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic* gives us the order in which he arranged his material, sequence by sequence, in a seamless blend of still and motion pictures, which the program bills as a "Complete Cinematographic Diary … of the Greatest Adventure of Modern Times." We can recapture Ponting's narrative voice by comparing the synopsis with the other forms in which he presented the same material – in his book, in the silent film of 1924, above all in *90° South* itself. Let us then join that audience at the Philharmonic Hall on some evening during its ten-month run in London for a screening of *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic*.[xxviii]

To signal the opening of the performance we can imagine that the house lights are lowered and the introductory piano music rises to a crescendo. Ponting walks onto the stage, picked out by a spotlight. He wears a tuxedo and he faces the audience confidently. He is experienced at this sort of thing. His voice, a pleasant baritone, is strong and clear. He talks briefly about how Scott chose him to be the official photographer of the expedition and the arrangements he had to make before joining the *Terra Nova* in New Zealand. Perhaps he first uses here the words he would later use in introducing *90º South*:

> "The Antarctic continent is the home of nature in her wildest and most relentless moods, and it is there that the hurricane and the blizzard are born. … It is utterly devoid of vegetation and no land animals of any kind exist there. The only living creatures are those that come out of the sea, and the heart of that ice-bound wilderness has been trodden by only ten men since creation. It is the uttermost end of the earth, ninety degrees south."

Then he gives a nod to his assistant. The lights in the hall are dimmed and the film starts:

Captain Scott is on the bridge of the *Terra Nova* as the ship draws away from the quay at Lyttleton, the port of Christchurch, New Zealand. Well-wishers in their best clothes crowd the quayside waving goodbye, the men of the *Terra Nova* replying with three cheers. Some boats filled with sightseers accompany the *Terra Nova* as she moves out to sea. Ponting has boarded one of these boats with his camera to give us a shot of the *Terra Nova*. She's a three masted, barque-rigged ship with a squat funnel rising aft of her main mast indicating she has auxiliary steam and screw power.[xxix] Back on the *Terra Nova* men put on a show for the camera, the chief engineer and his mate spar with boxing gloves, two stokers pretend to do likewise, the Russian Anton performs a Russian dance

to music from a gramophone placed on deck. Hair cutting is next. Lieutenant Rennick, of the *Terra Nova*, cuts Wilson's hair; Meares, the expert on dogs, joins in with a sheath knife; Oates, the expert on horses, shaves Meares's head. A still photograph pictures him standing with some of his horses.

Ponting speaks, the *Times* says, "in an easy conversational style." We get to know individual members of the expedition as they go about their business while the *Terra Nova* steams into the South Pacific Ocean and a full force gale. Somehow Ponting manages to stay upright, turning the handle of his camera, though he is fearfully seasick. Icebergs now come into view, one 100 feet high "and the waves were dashing with a thunderous roar against its crystal cliffs." We are in a new and wondrous world of ice forms "of an indescribable beauty." But for three weeks the *Terra Nova* has to fight her way through pack ice. Ponting has the sailors fix up a couple of planks stretching out over the side of the boat. Lying flat on these in the riskiest of positions, he points his camera at the ship's prow as it forces its way like a battering ram through the ice. This was one of the most talked-about images when Ponting's first consignment of film reached the London audience in August 1911. Ponting had a still photograph taken of his precarious position and it in turn has become one of the most published photographs of his Antarctic adventure.

The *Terra Nova* is now in the Ross Sea and nearing her destination. Scott has been here before on his *Discovery* expedition in 1902. The same landmarks appear, the Great Ice Barrier, McMurdo Sound and Mount Terror, whose "towering ice-cliffs … are a magnificent sight as the Midnight Sun shines on the snowy slopes." Ponting now tells a story about killer whales, a menacing presence in these waters. Patrolling the ice floes for unwary seals, their dorsal fins churn the surface of the sea. Ponting points out a small shape on the ice in the distance. It is a mother seal desperately trying to coax her baby onto the ice shelf and safety. The baby can't make it, the mother dives in to distract the killer whales, leaping out again just ahead of them. The baby still struggles in the water and the killer whales close in. But men on the *Terra Nova* fire a harpoon and the whales disappear beneath the ice shelf. We can allow ourselves to suppose that after showing this sequence Ponting went on to tell how he himself had a fright when killer whales – "these Huns of the ocean" - attacked him as he was taking still pictures on another ice flow, thinking he was a seal or a penguin. Jumping from floe to floe he reached safety a few yards ahead of the whales. "My God!" said a "deathly pale" Scott, who was standing close by, "that was about the nearest squeak I ever saw!" Ponting has also asked an artist to create a picture illustrating this incident.[xxx]

Scott has chosen a site for his base on Ross Island, at a point which he calls Cape Evans, after his second in command, Lieutenant Teddy Evans. Stores are unloaded from the *Terra Nova*. The small white Siberian ponies roll delightedly in the snow. Dog teams are busy dragging supplies to the place where a prefabricated wooden hut is quickly erected, in which Ponting has his darkroom. A ton of fodder must be secured for horses and dogs, and food and supplies for thirty men, enough for two years. Men harness themselves to sledges to press forward with this work. A depot is set up on the coast further south with all that will be needed on the polar journey. It is midsummer in the

Antarctic, the best time for photography. The audience in the Philharmonic Hall can gaze in wonder at spectacular forms of ice and snow, of an iceberg breaking away from its parent glacier and another in a state of decay.

The film now turns to nature in a sequence on Weddell Seals. Dragging his sled loaded with 400 lbs of photographic and camping equipment, Ponting has been able to get close to these amiable looking creatures. They bask in the sun and frolic in the surf, but move awkwardly among the rocks on the seashore. A big male is clumsily struggling to get out. He goes this way and then that way. "Then he caught sight of me and the camera and didn't seem to like us and when he made a spurt in our direction, as he was bigger than I, I gave him the right of way." A mother and her cub lie peaceably on the ice. "Baby seals are the prettiest little creatures." They have "big dark eyes with which they regarded us intently." Placing his camera to obtain a straight on view, Ponting shows how these seals use their teeth in a kind of sideways sawing movement to smooth their passage in and out of the ocean.

Ponting displays images of himself dragging his heavily loaded sledge across the ice and at work with his camera. He has much to say about the challenge of operating a camera in sub-zero temperatures and the lengths he has to go to capture the rare beauty of the strange snow and ice formations that surround him. A distant Mt. Erebus belches black smoke. A figure stands on top of an iceberg that Ponting calls The Matterhorn because of its distinctive shape. It belongs to Clissold, both a cook and a mechanic, who has a role in Scott's plans but who minutes later suffers a severe fall that keeps him out of action when he's most needed. Two scientists, Taylor and Wright, join in an expedition to a berg that is the scene of Ponting's most famous image, an ice "grotto of wondrous beauty" that frames a view of the *Terra Nova*.[xxxi]

And then it's back to nature again with Ponting's spectacular scenes of Skua Gulls. They are the noisy scavengers of the frozen wilderness, wheeling and screaming at each other, stealing penguins' eggs, harassing the much bigger petrels into disgorging their prey for the gulls to fight over and feed off. We see their nests, chicks emerging from their eggs and adults rearing the young birds. There's plenty of swirling action in these scenes, enough for Ponting to describe how Skuas attacked him, delivering violent blows with their wings to his head and shoulders.

Now it is winter, four months when motion picture photography is impossible. During the months of darkness Ponting has busied himself with flashlight studies of expedition members as they go about their scientific work and prepare for the assault on the Pole. Scott writes in his journal; Wilson applies color to his landscapes; Meares, a lover of dogs, and Oates, a lover of horses, chat in the stables, lit by a fire. Ponting includes one of himself in his darkroom. It gives him the opportunity to say that he developed all his photographic plates and kinematograph negatives himself in the hut, melting ice for water, a job, he tells us in his book that took hours at a time. A sequence of these photographs brings the first part of his presentation to a close. It has lasted perhaps thirty-five minutes, perhaps longer.[xxxii]

For the intermission Ponting has hired a musician with a piano. Their programs inform patrons that enlargements of Ponting's photographs, "in carbon, the most beautiful process known," may be bought at the Fine Art Society in New Bond Street. Tea and refreshments are served by Pagani's, the well known restaurant down the street.

The lights are dimmed again and part two of the film opens with a sequence on the expedition's dogs. They are huskies, brought from Siberia by Ponting's friend, Meares, the man who first introduced him to Scott. They only understand Russian commands. Ponting has wonderful portraits of these dogs. He never tires of telling how Osman, the leader of the pack, was swept overboard in a gale on the *Terra Nova*'s outward voyage only to be swept back on the next wave when a sailor grabbed him. The dogs are barking with excitement at the prospect of action. They can't keep still. They are being made up into three teams in a tangle of leashes, legs and bodies, Ponting explaining how the teams work. "The Russian, Dimitri, is harnessing Lappy and you might think things were the other way about." The dogs, like the ponies, play an important part in Scott's plan to transport supplies across the Ice Barrier to the point where men will have to go forward on foot alone. The three heavily loaded teams fly away across the ice, Scott and Wilson riding with the third team.

Now it's the turn of Adélie Penguins, then as today a favorite with audiences. Ponting spent a month camping on the other side of Ross Island to obtain this material, and he makes the most of it. He covers the life cycle of the birds from their mating rituals, through their nesting and egg bearing behavior, to the hatching of chicks when there's snow on the ground, to shots of young penguins taking their first dive into the ocean. Of particular interest to ornithologists in the audience, though surely fascinating to everyone, are the scenes of skua gulls stealing eggs from the penguins' nests. At one point in the film Ponting repeats a shot, freezing a frame of it on the screen to show a close-up of a gull carrying an egg in its beak and not impaling it as the experts had thought. The sequence ends on a light note. Ponting has asked some of the men to herd a flock of penguins toward his camera. All the participants are acting here, the penguins in a group dodging about the ice like quicksilver, the men waving their arms and tumbling on the ice after them. Like today's filmmakers Ponting gives the penguins human characteristics.

The time has come for Ponting to focus on the polar journey. One by one the different sections of the expedition leave on their allotted tasks, one with motor sledges, another with horses in which Wilson, Bowers and Petty Officer Evans are identified individually.[xxxiii] A sledging party comes into view. They've been away three months and covered twelve hundred miles. For the last part of their journey, they have rigged their tent as a sail to help speed them over the ice. Ponting takes the opportunity, in a close up of their faces and a badly frost bitten hand, to demonstrate the physical toll long exposure to the elements takes on the human body.[xxxiv]

Knowing that he would not be on this journey himself, Ponting has taken scenes showing how the men who were to make the final dash for the Pole would be traveling. There are, in fact, only four of them to be seen in the film because when the scenes were

shot Scott's plans were for four-man parties and he had not decided on their final make-up. While Captain Oates was among those chosen, the addition of Bowers as a fifth man was a last minute decision by Scott. The four men in Ponting's motion picture scenes, Scott, Wilson, Bowers and Petty Officer Evans, demonstrate their method of drawing their sledge behind them. They tramp through some dangerous terrain, pass beneath a huge iceberg and find themselves in deep snow where they move more easily on skis. We can't make out their faces as they are heavily covered against the cold. The four figures lean forward to take the weight of the sledge, moving together in unison in a kind of swinging lock step. It is one of the most expressive images of Antarctic exploration. At the end of the day's sledging, the four men stop to erect a tent. Scott steadies the center pole; Evans and Wilson put the covering over it. They place large blocks of ice at its base to hold the tent down and then three of them enter it one by one.

Inside the tent, in what must be a special set-up to admit light enough for the shot, four men, now clearly recognizable, take off their socks to dry them out over night. One man, Evans, is cook for the day; he heats their dinner over a primus stove. They prepare for the night, wrapping themselves into their sleeping bags and drawing hoods over their heads to avoid the risk of frostbite. It hardly seems possible that a fifth man could fit in here. As if it were next morning, they emerge from the tent, pack up their sledge and move on.

As a prelude to the tragedy that is to befall them, the scenes of these four men are intensely moving. "I recall a remark which Captain Scott made at the time," Ponting says as they appear on screen. "He turned to the others and said `What fun it will be when we're home again and can see this at the cinema.' "[xxxv]

Ponting has one more motion picture shot, "the final scene recorded by the cinematograph." Ponting here explains that he had to say farewell to Scott "on the Great Ice Barrier, at midnight on November 2nd, 1911. Beyond this point no heavy apparatus could be carried as everything had to give way to food." Three men, each leading a horse tethered to a sledge, walk briskly away across the ice. Wilson, the last of the three, known to everyone as Uncle Bill, turns and waves. "I stood on the Great Ice Barrier," says Ponting, "gazing at them, until they disappeared in the distance, wondering when I should see them again."

For the final section of the drama, Ponting has to rely on the still photographs Scott, Wilson and Bowers took on their last journey. They were, as his program notes put it, "beyond doubt, the most tragically interesting photographs in the world." He mixes these with shots taken on the Beardmore Glacier and his own portraits taken earlier of the five men, together with maps and diagrams of their route. Scott's diaries are the main source for his script, notably Oates's famous last words and Scott's own final entry, which appears on screen in his own handwriting. The still shot of the cairn that the search party erected over their bodies "concludes the pictorial record of what must always be one of he finest stories of devotion to purpose, ideals and duty, in the annals of the British race."

Part two has also lasted between thirty-five and forty-five minutes.

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Ponting's obituary notice in the *Times* of London in 1935 claimed that he screened *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic* over 1000 times at the Philharmonic Hall. Even with the addition of his failed 1916-17 season, it is hard to credit this number of performances, and the *Times* gives no source for it.[xxxvi] But from the response of the public to his ten months run in 1914 it is clear that Ponting pulled off something new in the field of public entertainment. Other photographers like Cherry Kearton, who specialized in natural history, had also adopted motion picture cameras, following a genre of travel films that belong to the same early period in the history of the cinema. But Ponting's presentation was special, unique even, a gripping and informative pictorial account of a national drama that was more than a slide show, more than an illustrated lecture, more than an item in a program of short film clips. His was among the first, perhaps the very first, full length documentary and he screened it to large audiences day after day, month after month, for the best part of a year. It was a "landmark" achievement.[xxxvii]

English newspapers of the time, quoted in H.J.P. Arnold's biography of Ponting, bring out this point forcibly. Thus the *Sunday Times*: "There is nothing in the Theatres of London to approach this drama … this tale in pictures;" *The Times*: "One of the greatest achievements of the Kinematograph to-date has been to make Captain Scott's Expedition imperishable... it is wonderful to think also that 100 or 500 years hence future generations will be able to see this pictorial record;" *Daily Telegraph*: "No history of the Expedition, however brilliantly written, could possibly enable us to realize what Polar exploration means as do these living pictures;" the *Daily Mail*: "Critics of the `film' can be certain that there is one film at present being shown which can have only a good effect on the British boy: Mr. Herbert G. Ponting's *With Scott in the Antarctic*;" and the *Daily Mail* again: "There is nothing like this film in the world. They are not pictures, but LIFE." Decades later the film historian Rachel Low was likewise unstinting in her praise for Ponting's cinematic achievement, writing that his motion picture material "conveys as impressive a record of the vast stillness of the polar regions as any more developed documentary technique has since done."[xxxviii]

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In accepting Scott's invitation to become the expedition's official photographer, Ponting turned down a two year contract to tour the British Empire for the Northcliffe Press. In his angry letter to Scott, he called this "the best offer of my life." On the eve of his departure to join the expedition he received another reminder of his achievements as a photographer, the first dozen copies of his newly published book *In Lotus-Land Japan*, the fruit of three years of travel in that country with his camera. It is a bland product that mixes the scenic with cultural customs, not unlike the lifestyle documentaries to be found

today on cable stations all over the world. Many of the photographs are of Japanese women, geishas mostly, whom he admits to being charmed by.[xxxix] Japanese artists delicately colored some of these photographs. No doubt it was these studies of Japanese females that aroused the enthusiasm of his Antarctic colleagues when he gave them his slideshow. But despite this attraction to Japan and its women-folk, and his devotion to his profession, Ponting remained a loner, giving up foreign travel and never returning to fulltime photography.[xl]

But neither did he fashion a new career for himself as a maker of documentaries. The various business ventures he attempted were failures and his commitment to Scott's memory kept him bound to his Antarctic material and disconnected from a public that had seen the devastation of the Great War and the collapse of the old civilization of Europe. Furthermore the industry he had entered was changing. The film medium, still so new when he joined Scott's expedition that he called it kinematographing, had advanced from short films to longer features. Movie theatres took over from lecture halls; sound took over from silent projection. In 1914 he narrated his documentary live; by 1924, he had to provide title cards, which robbed the film of its dynamic engagement with audiences.[xli] Ponting's appearance on camera at the opening of *90° South* was an anomaly, though a fortunate one for posterity.[xlii]

Ponting was not alone in using motion pictures to record adventures in distant parts of the world. In the year that he was lecturing in the Philharmonic Hall, Ernest Shackleton embarked on an attempt to cross the Antarctic landmass via the Pole, an adventure that foundered when his ship was crushed in the ice before it reached his point of departure. By extraordinary powers of leadership along with good luck and superhuman exertions by his men, Shackleton eventually extricated his party. With him throughout the ordeal was the Australian photographer, Francis Hurley, who salvaged from the wreck some astonishing still and motion picture images of the ice-bound drama. Shackleton, with Hurley's surviving photographs and film clips, came to the Philharmonic Hall in 1917 to find, as Ponting had done, that British audiences were no longer interested in exotic adventures unrelated to the war. But Hurley himself was deeply impressed by Ponting's achievement. He came four times to study Ponting's 1916 performances in the Philharmonic Hall. Adopting the older man's techniques and style Hurley produced a successful "multi-media circus" of his own in Australia using material from the Scott, Shackleton and Mawson Antarctic expeditions.[xliii] After the armistice that brought World War I to an end war films were briefly popular in Britain, the American Lowell Thomas enjoying a sensational run in London with scenes of General Allenby and Lawrence of Arabia fighting the Turks in Palestine. Lowell filled Covent Garden for a season, moving then to the Albert Hall and finally to the Philharmonic Hall in what was the apogee of "synchronized lecture entertainments." [xliv]

When he introduced Ponting at the opening of *90° South*, Admiral Evans, as he had become, said "not a single scene was rehearsed. Everything was filmed just as it occurred." Evans probably believed this was literally true, not understanding how motion pictures were made. But of course many of Ponting's motion picture scenes required collaboration between the expedition members and their photographer. Nothing makes

this clearer than the shots he took of Scott, Wilson, Bowers (Crean) and Petty Officer Evans hauling their sledge, putting up their tent, changing their socks, eating and getting into their sleeping bags, simulating how they would make their final dash to the Pole. Ponting did not pretend that he took this sequence of shots on the actual tramp to the Pole; they are enacted earlier for the benefit of the camera as he himself acknowledged. But in having the forethought to take them Ponting initiated a documentary practice that has become fundamental to the form, despite the changes in technology, distribution outlets and audience tastes that have taken place in the intervening hundred years.

That he knew he had pulled off what some might call a trick, however, is evident in a section of his letter to Scott of November 1912, written before he learned he was dead, complaining about his rights. He mentions the public's response to these particular scenes, particularly the shot of them getting into their sleeping bags: "that one always brings down the house. That film has puzzled even the trade to know how it was done."[xlv] Nor did Ponting hesitate to resort to paintings and technical effects in the dark room to achieve his narrative or aesthetic purpose. One of the most beautiful of Ponting's photographs, the one in which the Terra Nova is seen from inside an ice grotto, was in all likelihood a composite image, as was one of him lecturing to the expedition members, in which we observe a slide of a Japanese geisha projected on the screen while Ponting himself stands by his projector. In this respect also he anticipated the vastly expanded repertoire of visual effects now deployed by documentary makers.[xlvi]

The lecture hall setting in which Ponting screened *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic* has tended to obscure its standing in the history of the documentary. No way of recording it was possible at the time and while film historians pay tribute to Ponting's photography, they tend to ignore his pioneering role in creating a feature-length documentary narrative. The lecture hall setting, which Kevin Brownlow calls "an alternative cinema," is thought by some critics to be uncinema-like.[xlvii] In the Hollywood commercial system that came to dominate the industry after World War I any association of a film with a lecture was anathema to studio chiefs. But in fact Ponting's narrative approach to his documentary material, set though his was in a lecture hall, did not disappear. Transferred for the final decade of the silent period into intertitles, and then with the sound film into unseen spoken commentary, it returned in full vigor with the advent of television after World War II. News correspondents and celebrities from the world of art and science now appeared on camera in some of the most popular documentaries of their day facing audiences of millions sitting in their homes. One only has to think of the documentaries produced weekly by the three American networks throughout the 1960s and 1970s featuring well-known news correspondents like Ed Murrow and Chet Huntley and the blockbuster series produced by public broadcasting networks in Britain and the U.S. such as the art historian Kenneth Clark's ground breaking BBC series *Civilisation* (1969), and Cornell University's Carl Sagan's *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage* (1980), a world triumph for the American PBS.

Ponting did not long survive the appearance of *90° South*. For some time he had been having trouble with his heart. He died in February1935 at the age of 64 in his bachelor apartment close to Oxford Circus in central London, not far from the scene of his great triumph at the Philharmonic Hall. But he died in debt and bitterly resenting the

practices of the commercial film industry. We must be grateful, therefore, that he stuck by his Scott material and reworked it as a sound film enabling us to imagine so vividly the original screening of his documentary in 1914.

Ponting went to the Antarctic dedicated to the profession of still photography; he returned after twelve months thinking that his unique collection of still photographs would bring him professional acclaim as well as financial reward. Scott's death changed everything. Overnight he realized that his motion pictures would attract greater attention than his still photographs and he moved quickly to acquire the rights to them. He did not tell the whole story of the 1910-1913 Polar Expedition, leaving much for others to work out in books and, long after his death, on television. He had high, if naïve, hopes for the educational value of motion pictures, what in effect became the documentary tradition. It was Scott who gave Ponting the opportunity of appearing on a national stage, but it was Ponting who ensured that Scott became a national hero. In this year of 2012, the centenary of Scott's death, no doubt Scott's name will appear again in public, but it is Ponting's film that deserves to be celebrated.[xlviii]

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[i] "Romance of the Camera: The Life-Story of Herbert G. Ponting, F.R.G.S., F.R.P.S., F.Z.S." in *The Camera*, January 1925

[ii] Preface to *In Lotus-Land Japan*, by Herbert G. Ponting F.R.G.S., Macmillan and Co., Ltd 1910

[iii] Ponting's obituary by Apsley Cherry-Garrard in *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 85, No. 5, April 1935

[iv] *The History of the British Film*, *1906-1914*, by Rachel Low, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London 1949; "Herbert Ponting As A Cinematographer," by H.J.P Arnold in *Cinema Studies*, Vol. 2 Number 3 March 1967; Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, UK (SPRI), Coliseum program, November 16, 1911. The Coliseum was built in 1904 for the impresario Oswald Stoll.

[v] Ponting's figure given in *90° South*

[vi] *The Great White South*, by Herbert G. Ponting F.R.G.S., Duckworth, Tenth Impression July 1932, 168

[vii] *The Great White South*, 247

[viii] *The Amundsen Photographs*, edited and introduced by Roland Huntford, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1987; *Scott and Amundsen*, by Roland Huntford, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1979, 488. Amundsen used slides in his lectures made from the snapshots taken by the pocket Kodak. Some of them were tinted to bring out the Norwegian colors on the flag planted at the Pole.

[ix] The British branch of the French company, one of the world leaders at the time.

[x] Low, 156. The British Film Institute's shot list for Ponting's 1924 version of his film, *The Great White Silence*, carries a note that the film was "first released in parts during 1911-12 under the titles *With Captain Scott To The South Pole*; *Epic of the South Pole*; *The Undying Story of Captain Scott*."

[xi] SPRI archive; the major part of the letter is published in *Herbert Ponting: Another World, Photographs in the United States, Asia, Europe & Antarctica 1900-1912*, by H.J.P. Arnold, Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd, London 1975, 32-33.
[xii] They were published in November 1913.
[xiii] See note 10.
[xiv] Ponting, 296. Ponting must be referring here to Gaumont's screening of his material. Once he acquired the rights from Gaumont, he kept for himself the profits from his own screenings of *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic*.
[xv] *Photographer of the World: The Biography of Herbert Ponting*, by H.J.P. Arnold, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969. First U.S. edition 1971, 86.
[xvi] *The Times*, January 24 1914; "Romance of the Camera".
[xvii] Arnold 1971, 88.
[xviii] "Romance of the Camera".
[xix] Copy of letter to Ponting from Ex-President Roosevelt in archives of the SPRI.
[xx] Shackleton letter reproduced in flyer for the screening of *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic* at Mechanics' Large Hall, Nottingham, October 1914. SPRI archive.
[xxi] *The War, The West, and The Wilderness*, by Kevin Brownlow, Secker & Warburg, London 1979, 454.
[xxii] *The Times*, May 13 1914; "Romance of the Camera".
[xxiii] SPRI archive.
[xxiv] *The Great White South*, 297.
[xxv] *The History of the British Film 1914-1918*, by Rachel Low, Allen & Unwin, London 1950, 20. Low writes that Ponting "delivered" *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic* "for over a year at the Philharmonic Hall … and then took on tour." A footnote states "The show returned to the Philharmonic Hall in 1916," citing *Bioscope* of September 1916; Arnold 1971, 88.
[xxvi] And fourteen in all, the last being in 1950. Arnold 1971, 90.
[xxvii] "Romance of the Camera". The BFI shot list uses the word "reissued." In *The History of the British Film 1918-1929*, published by Allen & Unwin in 1971, 288, Rachel Low notes that the form of the silent 1924 film "failed to involve the spectator in any way."
[xxviii] In the SPRI archive is a ten page program for Ponting's Philharmonic Hall appearance. It is illustrated with seven of his photographs, one of Scott in his polar gear, one of the *Terra Nova*, and one of " 'Osman,' the Leader of the Dogs." Three photographs are of Adélie penguins. The final photograph is a formal portrait of Ponting himself. The choice of these photographs demonstrates Ponting's shrewd understanding of what would help entertain as well as inform his audience. The centerfold of the program is a synopsis of the documentary, divided into two parts, one on each page. My reconstruction of Ponting's narration follows precisely the scenes itemized in these two parts, borrowing in some cases the words he speaks over the same scenes in *90° South*. A short summary is also given in *The Times* of January 24 1914, "when Mr. Herbert G. Ponting's pictorial record of Captain Scott's expedition to the South Pole was shown for the first time."
[xxix] *The Great White South* 9.
[xxx] *The Great White South* 65; the painting of the incident is reproduced facing p. 63
[xxxi] In *The Great White South* Ponting describes taking the photograph of the *Terra Nova* framed by the grotto. But by the time he could get the scientists out to look at it the

current had shifted the berg's position and the Terra Nova could no longer be seen from within (67-68). Some think the famous image was a composite.

[xxxii] According to *The Times* of May 13, 1914, Ponting's presentation of *With Captain Scott in the Antarctic* at Buckingham palace was an after dinner affair lasting two hours. *90° South* runs for about seventy minutes, which includes several introductory titles explaining the background to the film, one of which states that converting the original footage to the 24 frames per second necessary for sound film "means some of the original scenes run a little faster than actuality." It is likely that live narration for the silent film screening would have taken longer than the sound version with its synchronized musical score.

[xxxiii] Ponting doesn't mention the fiascos that took place with the motor tractors on which Scott had placed great hopes, though pictures were taken of them. They must have been the oddest sight of all in that desolate landscape, and surely, also, a stimulus to Georges Méliès whose *Conquest of the Pole* appeared in 1912.

[xxxiv] It was the hand of another member of the team, the naval surgeon Atkinson, taken earlier in the year after he had suffered a mishap in a blizzard. *The Great White South*, 147.

[xxxv] *90° South*. In his journal on October 30, 1911 Scott wrote of these scenes staged "for the benefit of Ponting and his cinematograph … I imagine nothing will take so well as these scenes of camp life." *Journals: Captain Scott's Last Expedition, Robert Falcon Scott*, edited by Max Jones, Oxford World Classics pbk, 2008, 310. The identities of the four men seen pulling a sledge though the icebound landscape in this section of Ponting's film cannot be clearly made out. It is possible Ponting needed more than one day to take the different shots that make up the sequence. In the same entry of October 30, 1911 Scott names Crean instead of Bowers as one of the four participants in the sequence. The British National Film Archive catalogue's "rough cut" of *The Great White Silence*, where these scenes appear, follows Scott as far as those pulling the sledge in the exterior shots are concerned, with Bowers replacing Crean as one of the four depicted inside the tent, where their faces are clearly visible. It was especially fortunate for Ponting that Scott added Bowers at the last minute to the three men he had chosen to accompany him on the final stage of the journey. Huntford 1979, 472.

[xxxvi] *The Times,* February 8 1935. The source was probably Ponting himself. The figure of 1000 performances first appears in the article "Romance of the Cinema," which was based on an interview Ponting gave *The Camera* in 1925.

[xxxvii] "Travelling Mass-Media Circus: Frank Hurley's Synchronized Lecture Entertainments," by Robert Dixon in *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, Manchester University Press, Vol. 33, No. 1, Summer, 65.

[xxxviii] Arnold 1971, 89; Low 1949, 156.

[xxxix] Ponting often hired geishas to pose for him.

[xl] Ponting was briefly involved with an outing to Spitzbergen in 1918, either because he was an investor in Spitzbergen mines or because Shackleton invited him to join him in a murky quasi-undercover venture to establish a British presence in the archipelago to counter German moves in the same direction. But it seems to have left no trace in Ponting's photographic record beyond one photograph of Ponting himself on board a vessel that appeared in the 1925 *"*Romance of the Camera*"* article on him. Because of ill health Shackleton never made it to Spitzbergen, but later arrived in Murmansk as part of

a ramshackle group of adventurers combating the Bolsheviks. Ponting does not seem to have taken part in any this.

[xli] Low 1971, 288.

[xlii] Chief Yellow Robe's introduction to the fictionalized story of his caribou hunting tribe of Ojibwa Indians *The Silent Enemy* (1930) and General Mark Clark's introduction to the release version of *St Pietro* (1945) are other examples.

[xliii] See note 37. Dixon's paper is a fine study of an admirer of Ponting who took the non-fiction form in a different and highly successful direction, one that is still very much with us.

[xliv] Dixon, 78.

[xlv] Arnold, 1975, 33. From this letter it would seem that Ponting attended Gaumont's 1912 screenings of his motion pictures at the London Coliseum.

[xlvi] As Ponting acknowledges in *The Great White South*, 135. The image of the geisha is featured in *In Lotus-Land Japan*, where it is titled "The Indispensable Geisha."

[xlvii] Brownlow, 418.

[xlviii] After long drawn out discussions Ponting left his motion picture material to the British Film Institute. In anticipation of the centenary, BFI experts in 2010 produced a restored version of *The Great White Silence*. It runs for 106 minutes. http://www.bfi.org.uk/nationalarchive/news/greatwhitesilence.html (accessed February 2011).