



## ERNEST SHACKLETON

KILKEA, IRELAND, 1874 - SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND, UNITED KINGDOM, 1922

Sir Ernest Shackleton was a restless and bookish kid who, like many other polar explorers, counted Verne among his favourite authors. He dropped out of school to sign up as a cabin boy when he was sixteen. This was the beginning of a bond with the sea that led him to travel several times to Antarctica: between 1901 and 1904, as the third mate of Scott's *Discovery* expedition; and in 1907, on board of the *Nimrod*, when he became the man who got closer to the South Pole at the time. However, he went down in the history of exploration because of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914-1917), which had the objective of crossing Antarctica from coast to coast and through the South Pole for the first time. This expedition was doomed from the start, when its ship, the *Endurance*, got trapped and destroyed by sea ice. Against all odds, Shackleton used his leadership skills to get all men back to England, safe and sound, after two years of harrowing ordeal. Like Captain Hatteras, Shackleton was obsessed with getting to the South, and he made a last attempt in 1921, but he died upon reaching South Georgia, where his remains are buried.



## HERNÁN PUJATO

DIAMANTE, ARGENTINA, 1904 - BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, 2003

A ski trooper with an extensive experience in mountain operations, Argentinian general Hernán Pujato became obsessed for life with the conquest and colonization of Antarctica. In 1948 he set out before President Juan Domingo Perón a detailed plan that included creating an Argentine Antarctic Institute devoted to scientific research, establishing operational bases south of the Antarctic Circle, purchasing an icebreaker to venture into polar seas, attempting to reach the South Pole by land and building a colony where the first Antarctic-Argentinian children would be born. In 1951, after visiting Alaska and Greenland to get the know-how required to survive in extreme latitudes, Pujato led the First Scientific Expedition to Continental Antarctica. After a dangerous voyage, the expedition arrived to Marguerite Bay and established Base San Martín, the southernmost outpost up to that date. The attraction that the South Pole exerted on Hernán Pujato reminds of *An Antarctic Mystery*, the polar novel that Verne wrote as a tribute to Edgar Allan Poe.

## ROBERT PEARY

CRESSON, UNITED STATES, 1856 - WASHINGTON, D. C., UNITED STATES, 1920



In his time, Admiral Robert Peary was acknowledged as the first man to reach the North Pole. Today, we know that he never reached it, but also that it wasn't a deliberate deception (unlike that of his contemporary Frederick Cook); in fact, he got closer than anyone before him. And that wasn't the only controversy around him: in the 1960s, hushed rumours about him and his African-American companion Matthew Henson fathering children with Inuit women in Greenland were confirmed. Peary's wife was also an explorer, and she travelled with him in several voyages. Scandals aside, Peary went down in history thanks to discovering new lands in the North, to his in-depth research on Inuit means of transport and to the creation of logistics and supply systems that would allow the following expeditions to conquer the undiscovered regions of the North and South Poles. His extreme and magnetic personality is a perfect example of the unique character of polar explorers.

## ARNOLD SPENCER-SMITH

STREATHAM, UNITED KINGDOM, 1883 - ROSS ICE SHELF, ANTARCTICA, 1916



The priest and amateur photographer Arnold Spencer-Smith decided to join the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition launched in 1914 by Sir Ernest Shackleton. Despite his lack of experience, he became a member of the Ross Sea Team, a support expedition tasked to establish supply depots in the Beardmore Glacier route to ensure the survival of the main team in the last stretch of their voyage. The support group arrived at Ross Island on 16 January 1915 and set up their base in Cape Evans, at the same spot where Captain Scott did a few years before. The expedition suffered a series of misfortunes, including the loss of its ship and the death of Spencer-Smith and two other members, but accomplished its mission. However, that epic effort ended up being futile, because Shackleton would never cross the continent. On December 2013, the Antarctic Heritage Trust of New Zealand found at the Cape Evans base a box containing several nitrate negatives with pictures that had never been seen before and were probably taken by Spencer-Smith a hundred years ago. The protagonists of those pictures are the sea, eternal ice and desolation, and constitute a memento of the so-called "Shackleton's Forgotten Men".

## SALOMON AUGUST ANDRÉE

GRÄNNA, SWEDEN, 1854 - KVITØYA ISLAND, ARCTIC NORWAY, 1897



A patent registrar, S. A. Andrée was fascinated by ballooning and considered, like most adventurers of his time, that he could prove his bravery and manliness joining an epic polar expedition. His plan entailed travelling to Russia or Canada in a hot-air balloon from the Svalbard archipelago and crossing the Arctic Ocean over the North Pole. Sweden was behind in the polar race, so his ludicrous project was received enthusiastically. Although his very own trailing cable control system wasn't working properly and all signs pointed to disaster, Andrée and his two companions took flight on 11 July 1897. They carried wooden sledges, provisions, homing pigeons and a tuxedo that Andrée intended to wear at the end of his voyage. The balloon crashed shortly thereafter on the ice cap and the explorers faced a deadly three-month walk south. Thirty-three years later, a group of seal hunters found their bodies and belongings, among them a camera and film containing images full of beauty and madness.