Atheneum Society
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Mark Schweizer

(Play Example 1)

You've been listening to a recording of "A Musical Moment" by Franz Schubert. The rather intriguing thing about this particular piece is that it was written 137 years after Schuberts death.

Dowdy and worn, wearing a hang-dog face, Rosemary Brown shuffled along the shabby streets of her South London neighborhood, a middle aged woman struggling to support her two children on a widow's pension and a part-time job at a school cafeteria. It would have been a bleak life for Rosemary had it not been for her extraordinary circle of acquaintances. She was a personal friend of Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff, and Debussy; also of Brahms, Liszt, Chopin, Schumann, Beethoven, and Mozart; and Bach and Handel too.

Gentlemen of the Athenaeum Society. This evening I present to you a paper entitled "The Composer's Muse" or "Why Johann Can't Read".

That some of Rosemary Brown's associates had been dead for more than two centuries was no obstacle. She explained that she was clairaudient, able to project her hearing to distant worlds, just as clairvoyants can project their vision. With pen in hand, she took dictation of hundreds of works from a veritable Who's Who of great composers, compositions that were published, performed, and recorded during a brief vogue in the early 1970s. Rosemary had not always traveled in such good company. Born to poverty, she was the youngest child in a large and decidedly unmusical family. Only her mother's amateurish renditions of syrupy Romantic tunes, beaten out on a battered, broken-keyed upright piano, gave Rosemary an inkling of music's possibility. Yet somehow music became her obsession.

It was when she contracted a mild case of polio as a child that the ghost of Franz Liszt first approached her, explaining that she would have important work to do. Piano lessons began some years later, with Liszt manipulating her hands "like a pair of gloves." Then she began to write down the music that Liszt and others conveyed to her. Despite these extraordinary events, Rosemary led a quiet, unassuming life, making no effort to publicize her visitations. After all, who would believe her? It was only when an acquaintance from a spiritual healing group asked what she was playing that Rosemary blandly explained how she obtained mer music. That was the end of Rosemary's obscurity.

Rosemary's apparent psychic powers could be disconcerting. She would chat amiably with unoccupied chairs and would drop comments like "Mr. Bruckner is standing next to you now" or "Oh, I do like his lovely violin concerto" even though the composer had never written one. Her conversations with the dead always took place in English, even with composers who spoke no English during their lifetimes (but who may perhaps have had time for lessons since). Some were close friends, others so remote that Rosemary could not identify them. All, according to Rosemary, are still busy composing (except Debussy, who has switched to painting).

Rosemary began her dictation-taking in earnest in 1965. Lacking all training, she found the process difficult at first, and the early scores were often crude and lacking markings for dynamics and phrasing. She found orchestration prohibitive owing to the multitude of different staffs, so nearly everything she heard she transcribed for piano. But Liszt reassured her, "You have sufficient training for our purposes." Within three years she had jotted down some three hundred compositions. Later, with outside help, she managed to record Beethoven's Eleventh Symphony (the Tenth, which was left as sketches at his death, apparently has been abandoned).

Rosemary never learned to play the piano very well; her technique was constrained, her expression wooden. Yet by all accounts her fluency as a composer was astonishing.

One filmmaker from the BBC related to Rosemary's biographer:

I have watched the process many times and have often filmed it. You will know better than I do how normal composition happens: I had certainly never seen anything like the process Mrs. Brown uses. The music literally flows onto the paper in a continuous stream—sometimes both clefs together, sometimes one first and then the other. And all the time Mrs. Brown chats away: "Not so fast; did you say natural or flat? this G or the octave higher?" Dictation was taken as fast as she could write.

How much was Rosemary Brown's Beethoven like Beethoven, or her Liszt like Liszt? Musicologists

scoffed, finding the pieces only mildly characteristic of the composers and much more like each other. Most were short. Her Bach was without counterpoint, her Schumann without thick textures, her Liszt without flourishes. Throughout one finds amateurish harmonies, awkward progressions, poor balance, and naive accompaniments. Said one critic, "All in all the general impression is of transcriptions or improvisations by an innately musical, but rather untutored and certainly technically restricted pianist."

Not so, said her admirers, who ascribed the limitations of her works to an untrained mind unable to grapple with the daunting complexities of composition. These were not so much pieces by Beethoven or Liszt, but by Beethoven-Brown and Liszt-Brown.

In truth, Rosemary Brown's music was little better than the efforts of thousands of never-to-be-known composition students. Her notoriety arose not from her music but from the story behind it.

Yet Rosemary Brown's music remains almost as mysterious as if she actually had received it from beyond. Although she was familiar with the music of the composers she wrote music for, she was completely untrained and of unexceptional intelligence. She roundly flunked standard tests of musicianship and ear training, tests of the kind required of composition students. And she could hardly play piano pieces other than her own. But somehow her mind was flooded with original music, an apparent instance of large-scale subconscious composition.

Was Rosemary Brown living proof that there real]y is such a thing as a "muse"— an inner voice that dictates masterworks to composers? If so, why do only a few human beings hear original music in their heads?

These days there aren't many people around who adhere to the ancient Greek notion of a muse fluttering down from Mount Olympus to whisper in your ear. We're more likely to credit Rosemary Brown with near psychotic hallucinations. But a change in terminology does nothing to explain exactly how music abruptly springs into the mind's ear.

Consider the popular conception of Mozart, recently reinforced by the movie Amadeus. There he was, penning symphonies at an age when most of us are struggling with our ABCs. When he played the harpsichord, original music flowed in torrents down his arms as he giggled in surprise. And when it came time to score a three-hour opera, well, he just assembled every note in his head, then jotted it all down. Clearly a case of a muse at work.

Make no mistake, Mozart's musical skills were as good as they get. He started playing the harpsichord at three and a year later was memorizing pieces in a fraction of an hour. At five he made his debut, and at six he began his famous tours across Europe, playing at sight, improvising at request in various styles, and generally showing off. These weren't mere gymnastics, for he would play with great feeling. Asked to improvise a "song of rage," the infant Mozart beat the harpsichord in a frenzy, rising from his chair like "a person possessed." Why should we be surprised, then, that so talented a prodigy would begin composing at five, would write his first symphony at nine, and would go on to become one of the greatest of all composers? After all, the boy was clearly brimming with music.

But so were hundreds of other prodigies who went on to produce nothing of value. In fact, history's greatest musical prodigy was not Mozart but the French composer Camille Saint-Saens. He outstripped Mozart at every turn, starting piano at two and a half and composing at three. At five he analyzed full operatic scores and at ten made his official concert debut, offering any of the thirty-two Beethoven sonatas from memory as an encore. And while Mozart shone only as a musical prodigy, Saint-Saens excelled in every kind of learning, reading and writing by three, fluent in Latin by seven, avidly studying natural history. It was said that from a single reading he would retain for life the contents of a book just as he could the contents of a symphony. Throughout his eighty-six years, he performed and conducted brilliantly, composed prolifically in every form, wrote criticism and poetry and plays, and even dabbled in astronomy and archaeology. He was a perfect 10 in every observable talent. He also was a failure.

Everyone had expected that Saint-Saens would go on to write music as great as Mozart's. But he didn't, despite a lifetime of trying. His music has largely fallen into obscurity, with occasional performances of his Organ Symphony and revivals of his opera Samson and Delila. Today, Saint-Saens is best remembered for the stately strains of "The Swan" from his Carnival of the Animals, a haunting swan song of prodigious talent that somehow went wrong.

How can this have happened? Apparently, all those muse-like qualities aren't enough— even an effortless comprehension of musical structures coupled with a brawny memory and a flare for new ideas. Perhaps the real muse lies in a more subtle trait, one that Saint-Saens (and many lesser prodigies) lacked.

This brings us to history's most puzzling example of great promise gone unfulfilled: Felix Mendelssohn. Like Mozart and Saint-Saens, he was a fantastic prodigy, performing and composing at an awesomely early age and excelling in academic skills. Most remarkable of all, two compositions dating from his adolescence — the Octet for Strings penned at sixteen, and the incidental music for A Midsummer Night's Dream written at seventeen— are today numbered among history's masterworks. Although there are a few other instances of great music emanating from a teenage mind, no one, not even the glittering Amadeus, wrote works of such scope and complexity at so tender an age. Here was a boy who clearly had the muse, whatever it may be. And then he lost it.

Mendelssohn went on to enjoy a fabulously successful career as a composer and conductor. In his day, many regarded him as a worthy successor to Mozart and Beethoven. But acclaim has long since dimmed. Today Mendelssohn is widely regarded as a second-tier romantic composer, always competent, but falling short of his youthful genius. Significantly, shortly before a haggard Mendelssohn succumbed to a stroke at the age of thirty-eight, he commented that his string octet and Midsummer Night's Dream music were his favorite efforts. By comparison, Mozart remarked shortly before his death that his favorite was The Magic Flute, an opera he had only just written. Both judgments were valid. Mozart had just gotten better and better; Mendelssohn had gotten better and then worse. How could the dazzling Felix Mendelssohn have gone so wrong? Unlike Saint-Saens, there can be no question that he possessed every talent necessary for great composition. Nor did he experience a crisis or illness that robbed him of his gift. Apparently the muse is not just rare, but fickle, too.

Composers are thinkers in sound, and their stock in trade is auditory imagery. They manipulate tones in their mind's ear as accurately as writers manipulate words. Composers steadfastly insist that they seldom resort to rules when writing music. There's little inner dialogue like "Now let me see . . . how about the second inversion of the subdominant chord here, and then a suspension back to the tonic?" The principles of composition can be taught this way, but they're only really useful when they become automatic. It's a bit like learning to drive by reading the driver's manuel; Once you know how to drive you don't keep referring to the book - its little use to you as you're driving the car. Still it helps to know the rules, even if its on a subconscious or reflexory level.

If imagery originates from within, then in some sense it must arise from memory. The ancient Greeks understood this well: the nine Muses were the daughters of Memory. Staring into empty space, a composer imagines music by summoning his knowledge of specific musical devices, whether ten seconds or ten years after he has last recalled them. This would seem to imply that ultimately it is memory that is the composer's workshop. But it is an idea that explains little, for "memory" is a complex and ambiguous concept.

Most of us conceive of memory as the brain's storeroom, an empty space crammed with facts and faces and phone numbers, some in easy reach just by the entrance, most buried beneath a lifetime's clutter. Someone who "has a good memory" appears to possess a particularly tidy storeroom.

Composers can navigate categories of memories, plucking ideas and combining them into musical figures and phrases, cadences and whole compositions. This is no different from the way a storyteller scans his knowledge about the world for ideas. The composers hierarchy of memories is built up from musical experience. The storyteller's from worldly experience. In either case, countless experience of many years have been categorized so they can be remembered. The result is a flexible hierarchy of concepts that can generate not only memories of actual experiences, but also novel combination of concepts.

A vast hierarchy of musical concepts is required equipment for composers, yet it is not enough. There are many musicians who possess a robust hierarchy but who are destitute of musical ideas. Only a lucky few can throw the system in reverse to create something new. Somehow their minds secrete music. Wagner likened it to a cow producing milk; Saint-Saens to an apple tree producing fruit; Mozart (never wanting for a coarse remark) to a sow pissing.

Schumann once wrote,
"People compose for many reasons, to become immortal or perhaps because the piano happens to be

open..." yet the phenomenon of musical ideas arriving full-blown in the composer's mind is called inspiration. We usually use this word to mean motivation, as in "Betty's alluring glances inspired Jim to write a song." There are many tales of sudden inspiration. The common thread is that inspiration cannot be willed, that it just happens. Mozart reported that ideas flowed best when he was alone, "say, traveling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or during the night when I cannot sleep." Sometimes ideas would flood his mind like an electrical storm. His barber complained that he would chase Mozart around the room, hair-ribbons in hand, as Mozart ran between keyboard and writing desk. Yet when asked the source of his ideas, Mozart could only reply, "Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them."

When inspiration is thrown into high gear, the experience becomes religious. Witness Handel, found in tears by his servant while writing the Halleluia Chorus: "I thought I saw all of heaven before me, and the Great God himself."

Or Puccini: "The music of this opera was dictated to me by God. I was merely instrumental in putting it on paper and communicating it to the public." Or Brahms: "I felt that I was in tune with the Infinite, and there is no thrill like it."

Many of the best ideas appear to arise when the composer is off guard, strolling about town or through the woods. Occasionally ideas arise while on the edge of sleep, or even during dreams. It appears that habits of leisure are important to a composer's success. Non-stop workaholics tend to stifle the muse. Among them were our two wilted prodigies, Mendelssohn and Saint-Saens.

The muse sometimes exacts a terrible price for its visitations - psychosis. Most severe mental illness, particularly schizophrenia, confers visions upon its victims but cruelly robs them of the personal organization needed to mold visions into art. But manic-depressive syndrome sometimes bestows both ideas and order. It is characterized by long bouts of depression interspersed with weeks of exhilaration and limitless energy. The "Hallelujah Chorus" embodies the spirit of a manic period; it was written during one. In fact, the entire oratorio “Messiah” was written in just 24 days. 50 individual pieces - arias, recitatives, choruses - and all brilliant. But mania is a precarious state characterized by irritability and even paranoia.

Manic depressives score high on creativity tests, so it's no surprise that many have become celebrated creators. Surveys show that about a third of all great writers and artists, and half of poets, showed symptoms of manic depression. It is less common among composers, perhaps because the discipline of composition is too arduous to withstand its caprices. Still, psychologists have divined symptoms of manic-depressive illness in Berlioz, Bruckner, Dowland, Elgar, Gesualdo, Glinka, Handel, Holst, Ives, de Lassus, Mahler, Mussorgsky, Rachmaninoff, Rossini, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, and Wolf.

Extreme manic-depression can produce hallucinations, which may take the form of musical hallucinations in minds trained for musical imagery. Robert Schumann provided a stunning example. His wife's diaries tell how he heard "music that is so glorious, and with instruments sounding more wonderful than one ever hears on earth. It is the inner hearing of wonderfully beautiful pieces, fully formed and complete. The sound is like distant brasses, underscored by the most magnificent harmonies. But Schumann’s ecstasy was accompanied by equal parts of torture. And just as the angels came to him at night, the devils came to him by day singing horrible music and telling him they were going to drag him down to hell. On more than one occasion, it took doctors to control him.

As Schumann gradually disintegrated toward suicide, he sometimes was plagued by a single tone that refused to go away and prevented him from composing. If Schumann’s angels were genuine muses we cannot know the quality of the music they sang for he was too disorganized to effectively write it down. His ecstasy and horror may well have arisen from an enhanced responsiveness to sound rather than to the sublimity of the music he heard. Schumann’s most highly regarded works were largely written early in life before the onset of hallucinations.

Although composers have repeatedly expressed amazement at the suddenness of some ideas, most inspiration occurs far less spectacularly in the course of a day's labor. Often ideas come as fragments that can be melded with others. Listeners tend to assume that finished ideas spring whole into the composer's mind yet most of the composer's work is done on paper. The scores of countless composers demonstrate that the written manuscript is much more than a memory aid. It helps organize the entire process of composition, subdividing problems into manageable tasks and providing an overview of the process. Just as an architect might design a house, so a composer designs a piece of music relying on the hierarchy of musical ideas at his disposal.

The musical example which you've been provided with gives you some idea of this process at work. Rather than relying on inspiration and genius, both of which I rarely use - this choral work is a rather carefully designed anthem relying on form and function while incorporating original musical ideas.

I have numbered the measures for easy following and for those of you with little musical training to follow the process.

This piece contains two musical ideas or "themes". One is original and one is not. The original tune and the first one heard in this composition is set to the words "Brightest and best are the stars of the morning", a 19th century poem. This text is an Epiphany text incorporating the image of the manger, the star in the east, and the three kings bearing gifts. The tune can be found beginning in measure 3 and ending at measure 12.

(Play example 1)

The second theme is a hymn written in the late 16th century and later harmonized by Johann Sebastian Bach entitled "Wie Shoen leuchtet" or "How brightly shines the morning star." Like the first text, the hymn also uses the "star" imagery — the Morning Star which is the Christ. The second tune (the hymn) is as follows.

(Play example 2)

Structure in a piece of music is something that is not noticable on first hearing unless there is a practiced listener. Conversly, lack of structure is noticed immediately. But by using the score as a blueprint, the structure of any piece is observable.

The first two measures of the piece (or the introduction) contain a variation of the first two measures of Theme One. Then in measure 3, Theme One is introduced in its entirety in unison in the women's voices. In measure 13, Theme One repeats with a different text and in the men's voices. Variation and repetition, being two of the most common compositional devices, are used here. Theme One presented with slightly different harmonies and in two parts.

In measure 22, Theme 2 (the hymn) is introduced in the women's voices in harmony and in measue 23, Theme One is re-echoed again in the men's voices. They overlap slightly but neither one takes over the primary position. Then in measure 29, both tunes are presented simultaneosly against a fairly lush harmonic background. In measure 33, the hymn tune takes over and all four voices sing the Bach chorale.

Measure 38 presents the introductory material once more followed by a re-presenting of Theme One with the original first stanza text, this time, in unison, all the voices adding strength to the text. In measure 46, the voices break into parts as the composition winds to a close. In measures 48 through 50 we hear the closing strains of the Theme One with the notes at half the duration of the previous hearings. Repitition and variation. The final three measures are the introductory material concluding with a final cadence.

So now that you have a road-map of the composition, let's wrap this up by hearing the entire piece. This is a recording of the Austin-Peay Concert Choir from one of their Christmas concerts.

(Play example 3)

Oct. 1, 1998
PETER C. MACDONALD

The Last Place on Earth

At the September Athenaeum meeting Dr. Robert Sivley, in his comment, stated that the Society was, in his words, going downhill and perhaps future presenters needed some inspiration from the Muses in the choice of subjects for papers. The Muses were nine goddesses of the arts and sciences in Greek mythology. They were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, an area in which all of us could stand improvement. Each muse ruled over a certain art or science, and I am sure that most of you might think that the muse for this paper might be Melpomene, the muse of tragedy, because after all, my life seems consumed at this point by domestic violence, which is no doubt a tragedy in today's society. The thought of domestic violence as a topic for this paper is partially true, in that my inspiration came indirectly from domestic violence. I had to forgo my open meeting presentation last May because I was in London attending a domestic violence program sponsored by the British Society of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. While there I was visited by Clio, the muse of history, who called on me instead of my calling on her for inspiration for this paper. While Margaret and I were in London we did have the opportunity to see quite a few things that we had both seen some thirty years before, and also things that neither of us had seen before. We spent a morning in the British Museum, having entered through a side entrance and not the main entrance. By entering this way we walked through cavernous rooms the size of huge airplane hangers. These rooms were once the location of the British Library, which had recently been moved to a new location near King's Cross Station in the last several years. Something inspired us to go to the new library, perhaps the fact that Margaret has been a librarian for a number of years, retiring just this last year. The new library was not that easy to find because most Londoners did not know where it was located, and our map had a wrong placement for it. Nonetheless, we found it - an immense building of modern architecture - and "an abomination" according to Prince Charles. I found it quite pleasing to the eye, but what do I know, I am only a commoner and not subject to thousands of years of tradition. We discovered that the

entire library is not accessible to everyone, and that one needs to secure reading rights to enter the library itself. We were disappointed, but saw a sign announcing "The John Riblatt Gallery: Treasures of the British Library." We entered a room about the size of the small meeting room in the convention center, where we usually meet. As soon as I entered I was overwhelmed. The collection contained a permanent exhibition of the greatest treasures from the British Library's unparalleled collection of books, manuscripts, maps, music and other forms of recorded knowledge. The collection spans almost three millennia and comes from most of the continents of the world. The treasures on display include books and documents that have shaped history, such as Magna Carta, the letters patent of the East India Company, King George's declaration of war upon the American colonies, and Horatio Nelson's handwritten plan for the Battle of Trafalger. The diverse religious traditions of the world, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are represented by rare and beautiful copies of their sacred texts. There you can view the Gutenberg Bible, the Gospels of Ivan Alexander and the Tyndale New Testament. The Diamond Sutra is there, printed in 868, the world's oldest written document, discovered at Dunhuang, China, in 1907. In this same room you will find the world's first printed hymnal, Leonardo da Vinci's notebook, the Mercator Atlas, which is the first modern world map, printed in 1569. William Shakespeare's First Folio and the manuscript of Alice's Adventures Under Ground, handwritten by Lewis Carroll between the years 1862 and 1864 for Alice Liddell, the original Alice, handwritten copies of Kubla Khan, Jane Eyre, and works by Chaucer are there to feast upon. Handwritten works by Mozart, Handel, which includes his copy of "The Messiah," and the Beatles demonstrate the breadth of the music collections.

Needless to say, this room, containing all of these treasures in beautiful, lighted display cases was breathtaking. Margaret and I were constantly saying, "come over here, you won't believe this." But it was not until I glanced to the right of Horatio Nelson's plan for Trafalger that my breath was taken away. There, in a small notebook were written the words: "Thursday. March 29 Since the 21st we have had a continuous gale from W.S.W. and S.W. We had fuel to make two cups of tea apiece and bare food for two days on the 20th. Every day we have been ready to start

for our depot only 11 miles away, but outside the door of the tent it remains a scene of whirling drift. I do not think we can hope for any better things now. 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 more. R. Scott Last entry. For God's sake look after our people." Tears came to my eyes - I was looking at the actual journal, in his own hand, of Robert Falcon Scott, whose ill-fated expedition to the south pole has been an interest of mine for some thirteen years when I first saw a dramatization of this expedition on PBS. It was called "The Last Place on Earth," which referred to the fact that Antarctica was the last place on earth that had not been explored by man, and the pole had not been reached by anyone at that time. Three years ago, while visiting my parents in East Hampton, New York, I visited my favorite book store there and saw Scott's Last Expedition, a book of Scott's journal entries, giving a day-to-day diary of this ill fated journey. This inspired me to read The Worst Journey in the World, by Apsley Cherry-Garrard, who accompanied Scott to the Antarctic on the doomed quest to be the first to the South Pole, and who recounts the unforgettable trek across the world's most forbidding and inhospitable terrain. He was also a member of the search party that ultimately discovered Scott's body along with his personal journals.

Robert Falcon Scott was born on June 6, 1868, the parish of Stoke Damerl, Deveonport, England. He was the first son and third child of John Scott, member of the middle classes and a brewer by profession. Scott's father was a morose man who believed that he was a failure in life. Scott inherited his father's small frame and his frail nature; as for his temperament, all of his life he was to suffer from bouts of moodiness and self-doubt.

A the age of thirteen Robert Scott passed the examination for a cadetship in the Royal Navy and joined the training ship *Britannia.* Two years later he became a midshipman. In 1887 he was transferred to the *Rover*, one of the ships of the navy's training squadron exercising in the waters of the West Indies. It was there that he encountered the geologist Clements Markham, who, at the age of twenty, had been a member of the search party sent to look for the missing ships of Sir John Franklin, lost while trying to find a north-west passage to India. It was a meeting that

was to shape Scott's destiny.

Nine years later the two met again, in Vigo, Spain. Popular with his fellow officers, generous hearted, often absent minded and sometimes hot tempered, Scott was now serving as a torpedo officer. Markham, recently knighted, had become president of the prestigious Royal Geographical Society, and what was more important, he was obsessed with the idea of a British expedition to explore the unknown continent of Antarctica.

There was to be a third chance meeting between the two, three years later, when, home on leave in London and walking down Buckingham Palace Road, a road that I had traversed in its entirety, Scott caught sight of Markham on the opposite side. They had tea together, during which Markham told him that an expedition to Antarctica was now in the planning stages. Two days later, backed by Markham, Scott applied to lead it; in due course he was given command, though it was not until July 10, 1901, that he boarded the *Discovery* and set sail down the Thames on the first leg of his first journey to the Antarctic. On deck, acknowledging the cheers of the mob of onlookers, stood two men who would perish with him on his last and fatal journey - Edward Wilson, whom Scott considered a saint, and the hard drinking Edgar Evans, who was to hit his head on a rock while descending the Beardmore Glacier and who died ranting and raving. "I fear Evans is becoming stupid," reads the original entry in Scott's journal, but was changed out of respect for Evans' family into "I fear he is becoming dull." This change tells a great deal about Scott's compassion for the members of the expedition. Also among the ship's company was Ernest Shackleton, a junior officer in the merchant service.

By most accounts, and Markham's in particular, that first expedition was judged a success, though later detractors declared the so called "scientific" discoveries to be minimal, badly written up and lacking in serious intent. No one, however, doubted the hardships endured or the courage needed to meet such extremes of cold and physical exertion.

In the years following his return, Scott was determined to set out once again for Antarctica and, in 1907, again backed by Markham, an appeal was launched for funds to underwrite a second expedition. It was then that Shackleton announced his intention of making his own bid for the Pole. Historians have since claimed that Scott was incensed at Shackleton's

poaching of territory he considered his, and his alone. Certainly in his diaries he expresses dismay when his daily marches compare unfavorably with those of Shackleton's party. In 1909 Shackleton got within 100 miles of the Pole and turned back because three of his companions were unable to continue farther.

That same year, dining with James Barrie, the playwright who wrote "Peter Pan," Scott met his future wife. It probably says a lot about Scott's complex character in that he was able to attract and marry a very talented and vivacious sculptress like Kathleen Bruce. It says even more that she would immediately single him out as her destined husband that very first time that they met. In her own words he was "not very young, not very good looking, but he looked very healthy and alert, and I glowed rather foolishly. I had to leave immediately to catch a train...he strode behind me...he would have swooned with embarrassment at that time could he have foreseen how soon he would be wheeling the perambulator of this tiresomely independent young woman's baby." Kathleen had always wanted a son and had instinctively marked out Scott to be its father. They were married the following year and their son Peter was born ten months later. Peter later became a naturalist, no doubt influenced by his father's expeditions.

For the next two years Scott devoted all of his energies to raising funds for the expedition. It was hard work. Patriotism was appealed to in order to sway potential contributors - England had to be the first to the South Pole! Though the exploration was primarily to be of a scientific and geological nature, it was, he urged, a matter of pride that the Union Jack should be the first flag to fly at the Pole. "If we don't get there soon," Scott warned, "the Americans will." But it was not the Americans who would become his rival, but rather the Norwegians. Roald Amundsen was a seasoned Arctic explorer whose dream of being the first to reach the North Pole was thwarted by Americans Frederick Cook and Robert Peary. He had for years been building a reliable team of experienced polar campaigners. Amundsen was not a military type. Though he commanded undeniable respect from his men, he was not given to military pretensions of the era. He thus created a comraderie between him and his men, which could only be to their benefit in the hazardous exploration of the most

unforgiving frontier then known to man.

Finally, on June 10th, 1910, an old, patched-up whaling ship named the *Terra Nova* left West India Dock, London, on the start of her voyage to Antarctica. Scott paid out *L*100 to have her registered as a yacht, which enabled the ship to dodge the attentions of the Board of Trade officials who would most certainly have pronounced her unseaworthy. By November she was berthed at Lyttelton, New Zealand. While there Scott received a telegram from Amundsen's brother that simply stated "Am heading south. Amundsen." Until then the entire world thought that Amundsen was heading to the Arctic for exploration, even though the North Pole had already been reached. Amundsen had led his countrymen, including his sponsor, to believe that his intentions were to go north. It was not until Amundsen had embarked on his ship for the long journey south and was out of reach of wireless communication that his brother released his true intentions. Thus Scott's long-planned expedition to the Pole in 1911-1912 became a race. Both men were determined to reach the Pole first in the name of their country, though Scott always maintained his expedition was scientific first, glory seeking second, and Scott's expedition was composed largely of scientists, military and civilian, while Amundsen's had no scientific component.

When the *Terra Nova* sailed from New Zealand she sailed away with almost sixty men crowded aboard, among them Captain Titus Oates, seconded from the Fifth Royal Inniskilling Dragoons, and Lieutenant "Birdie" Bowers, temporarily released from the Royal India Marine. Both men had paid a thousand pounds to join the expedition. Scott had said goodby to his wife and son in New Zealand, for they, along with several other family members of the crew, had accompanied the men to New Zealand.

The party spent its first winter in Antarctica at Cape Evans in a hut built on one of the dark spurs of the volcanic Mount Erebus. This hut had been prefabricated according to Scott's instructions before leaving England and was set up with ease because of his elaborate planning. Even before this hut was put together, Scott set off to visit the old hut he had made his home on the earlier expedition in 1902. He was disgusted to find the windows had been left open, turning the interior into a block of ice, and

blamed Shackleton and his expedition party of 1909. When he returned the new hut was ready for occupation. There was a room for Herbert Ponting, the photographer, space for the scientific instruments and stables to house the ponies that Scott believed absolutely essential for the success of the trip. He planned to use them to carry the enormous amounts of equipment and food as far as they could, then to shoot them and use them for food when they were no longer able to continue. Scott had little faith in the ability of sled dog teams to assist in this immense journey. Though he brought dogs on his expedition, he only intended for them to be used, in addition to the Siberian ponies and motorized sledges, to transport supplies to depots on the Great Ice Barrier. Scott did not believe either the dogs or the ponies would be able to endure the ascent of the Beardmore Glacier or travel on the plateau to the Pole. The ponies would be shot and used as a source of food for the men and the dogs, and the dogs would be returned to base, then used to undertake an additional trip southward to replenish the depots on the Barrier for the men returning from the Pole. Scott instructed that a partition be built down the middle of the living quarters to separate the men's space from that of the officers'. Today it is easy to draw the wrong inference, it was not that he considered the men inferior, but rather that he felt both groups would be more comfortable with such an arrangement. As stated earlier, Amundsen felt no such need because of his non-military background.

As Antarctica was the coldest, most inhospitable place on earth in the early 1900's, the continent was accessible only during the Antarctic summer, and even then, the interior was snowbound under sub-zero temperatures and ravaged by frequent blizzards. An expedition hoping to reach the South Pole had to travel by ship to the coast of the Ross Sea in Antarctic summer, build a base, and depot food and fuel supplies by sledge teams as far south as possible and return to base before the Antarctic summer ended. This is exactly what Scott and Amundsen were doing during this period, with Scott and his men also conducting extensive scientific experiments that to this day are valid, concerning the very origins of the polar ice cap. The expedition teams would then have to wait out the six month long Antarctic winter in their base camps before making a start for the Pole as soon as summer began. It would take the entire Antarctic

summer to reach the Pole and return to the base, and even this would require a substantial amount of favorable weather. All supplies of food and fuel would have to be placed in the depots on the outward journey to supply the returning teams, which meant a great deal of agonizing pulling. Also to be pulled were the rock samples taken, depot marker flags, diaries, food for the dogs and ponies, and other endless supplies.

The route to the Pole from the Ross Sea begins with the Great Ice Barrier, essentially an extremely thick ice sheet atop the Ross Sea, 400 miles to cross. Cutting across the route after the Barrier are the Transantarctic Mountains, thousands of feet high. An earlier expedition had discovered a means of traversing the mountains through the Beardmore Glacier, which is intimidating in itself, involving climbing some 120 miles. Atop the Beardmore Glacier is the polar plateau, 350 miles of which must be crossed to reach the Pole. Add that up and you come up with some 800 miles of frozen wasteland to cross one way to reach the South Pole. And this had to be traversed by foot. The conditions on the polar plateau are worsened both by the altitude and by the proximity to the Pole. The identical route had to be taken to return to the Ross Sea base camp, so that these depots mentioned earlier that had to be laid on the outward journey could be accessed for vital food and fuel. The Scott party was confident about the Beardmore Glacier, the only known way of reaching the polar plateau through the mountains, being their knowledge only, thanks to Shackleton.

In addition to the scientific experiments and the stocking of depots that could be reached within several weeks trek from the base camp, the men had relatively little to do. Scott made many entries of the boredom of the men and he did everything in his power to keep them busy. Even when the temperature was 20 - 30 below zero he had the men outside for brief periods of time, even playing soccer.

On midwinter's day, which fell on June 22, the men celebrated Christmas and had what Bowers innocently termed an orgy - they drank champagne, ate roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, anchovy pie, crystallized fruits and plum pudding flaming with brandy. Oates, who usually spent his time in the ice block stables with the ponies he had learned to love and to get to respond to him with extraordinary feats of strength, drank a little too much, danced the Lancers with the Russian stable groom and ran about

shooting at everybody with a toy pop gun. Finally Scott, rather in the manner of a head prefect of an English public school, told him to call it a day. Scott's entry simply stated: "Thus, except for a few bad heads in the morning, ended the High Festival of Midwinter."

At this point the entries in the journal are somewhat despondent. Scott had found inactivity irksome and he was greatly depressed at the poor performance of the motorized sledges, upon which he staked the success of the expedition. One had fallen through the ice during the unloading from the *Terra Nova*, and the other three had proven unreliable in the extreme cold. Added to that he had little faith in either the ponies or the dogs, the ponies being in terrible physical shape from the storm ridden voyage south, and even in spite of Oates' care for the animals of which he had grown so fond. Worse still was the brooding over the fact that Amundsen was also trying to reach the Pole first, a fact that he had shared only with his good friend Wilson and which was a constant worry.

On November 11, 1911, the British expedition started out on its ill fated 800 mile journey. On January 4, 1912, Scott made his final decision and selection of the men who would accompany him on the final stage - Evans, Bowers, Wilson and Oates - and turned back the rest of the supporting party. The description of the labors that these men endured during the final stages of reaching their goal is almost indescribable. The best way may be to say it is something like dragging a several hundred pound sledge up a steadily inclining path that is covered with broken ice the size of boulders for hundreds of miles with the temperature somewhere between 20 to 30 below zero and the wind blowing at about 40 to 50 miles an hour and you are at an altitude of approximately 10,000 feet.

On the 16 of January, some ten miles from their goal, Bowers detected a black speck on the horizon, for at this point the terrain had leveled out and was almost smooth like. Soon after they came upon sledge and ski tracks and the imprints of dogs' paws. Amundsen had beaten them, and was already retracing his steps. It was a cruel blow to the five men who had struggled so hard and sacrificed so much to be first. Scott's journal entry that day reflected his despair:

"Tuesday, January 16 Camp 68 Height 9,760 T. -23.5. The worst has happened, or nearly the worst. We marched well in the morning and

covered 7and one half miles. Noon sight showed us in Lat. 89 42`S. And we started off in high spirits in the afternoon, feeling that tomorrow would see us at our destination. About the second hour of the march Bowers' sharp eyes detected what he thought was a cairn; he was uneasy about it, but argued that it must be a sastrugus (an irregularity formed by the wind on a snowplain. 'Snow wave' is not completely descriptive, as the sastrugus often has a fantastic shape unlike the ordinary conception of a wave). Half and hour later he detected a black speck ahead. Soon we knew that this could not be a natural snow feature. We marched on, found that it was a black flag tied to a sledge bearer; near by the remains of a camp; sledge tracks and ski tracks going and coming and the clear trace of dogs' paws - many dogs. This told us the whole story. The Norwegians have forestalled us and are first at the Pole. It is a terrible disappointment, and I am very sorry for my loyal companions. Many thoughts come and much discussion have we had. Tomorrow we must march on to the Pole and then hasten home with all the speed we can compass. All the day-dreams must go; it will be a wearisome return. Certainly we are descending in altitude - certainly also the Norwegians found an easy way up." Unlike Scott, Amundsen relied solely on dogs - more than 100 of them on his attempt at the Pole, and although he was crossing previously unknown territory, unlike Scott, he had found another means of ascending the polar mountains and used dogs on his entire journey to and from the Pole, thereby easing the physical burdens of his men, unlike Scott's, who had to pull their own supplies.

The next day Scott and his men reached the Pole. His entries reflect his terrible disappointment. "THE POLE. Yes, but under very different circumstances from those expected. We have had a horrible day - add to our disappointment a head wind four to five, with a temperature of -22.... We started at 7:30, none of us having slept much after the shock of our discovery. We followed the Norwegian sledge tracks for some way; as far as we make out there are only two men.....Great God! This is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority.....Now for the run home and a desperate struggle. I wonder if we can do it."

From the start of the return journey, Evans was weakening. He was

the largest of the group in size and was existing on the same meager rations. Unknown to the others he had cut his hand some weeks before on one of the sledge runners and it had become gangrenous and the size of a melon. Evans died on the Beardmore Glacier. In early March, Scott and his three remaining companions' progress on the Great Ice Barrier was slowed by lowering temperatures, blustery weather, continually deficient depot rations, scurvy, and Titus Oates' deteriorating leg, the result of severe frostbite. Oates, at end of his strength, sacrificed himself on March 17 by crawling out of their tent and into a lethal blizzard, hoping that his death will enable the others to complete their return journey. Scott's journal entry:

".....Tragedy all along the line. At lunch, the day before yesterday, poor Titus Oates said he couldn't go on; he proposed we should leave him in his sleeping bag. That we could not do, and we induced him to come on, on the afternoon march. In spite of its awful nature from him he struggled on and we made a few miles. At night he was worse and we knew the end had come. Should this be found I want these facts recorded. Oates' last thoughts were of his mother, but immediately before he took pride in thinking that his regiment would be pleased with the bold way in which he met his death. We can testify to his bravery. He has borne intense suffering for weeks without complaint, and to the very last was able and willing to discuss outside subjects. He did not - would not- give up hope till the very end. He was a brave soul. This was the end. He slept through the night before last, hoping not to wake; but he woke in the morning - yesterday. It was blowing a blizzard. He said, 'I am just going outside and may be some time.' He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since.

I take this opportunity of saying that we have stuck to our sick companions to the last. In the case of Edgar Evans, when absolutely out of food and he lay insensible, the safety of the remainder seemed to demand his abandonment, but Providence mercifully removed him at this critical moment. He died a natural death, and we did not leave him till two hours after his death. We knew that poor Oates was walking to his death, but though we tried to dissuade him, we knew it was the act of a brave man and an English gentleman. We all hope to meet the end with a similar spirit,

and assuredly the end is not far."

The end came some twelve days later, the result of disease and the unbelievable bad weather that plagued the expedition during their entire return. Amundsen reached the Pole some month before Scott and did not face the deadly storms that Scott encountered.

By the beginning of April, the remaining expedition members knew that the Pole Party could not have survived. The Antarctic winter then prevented their sending out a search party until November, when on the 12th of that month they discovered the Pole Party's last camp. Wilson and Bowers were found in the attitude of sleep, their sleeping bags closed over their heads as they would naturally close them. Scott died later. He had thrown open the flaps of his sleeping bag and opened his coat. The little wallet containing the three journals was under his shoulders and his arm was resting across Wilson, his best friend.

Some years ago the BBC interviewed Tryggv Gran, then in his eighties. Some sixty years earlier he had been a sublieutenant in the Norwegian navy and an expert on skis, and had been chosen as a member of Scott's expedition. Speaking in a heavily accented and quavering voice, he recounted his memories of that day in 1912 when the Polar search party stumbled upon the tent in which lay the bodies of Scott and his two companions Wilson and Bowers. He said, "We saw a mound of snow...we knew it was Scott's tent. I stayed outside...as a Norwegian it was not my place. The others undid the tent flaps and went inside. Wilson was lying quite peacefully, his feet towards the entrance...Bowers, the other direction. Wilson had died peacefully...Scott was between them, half sitting up, one hand reached out to Wilson. Then I heard a noise...like a pistol shot...I was told this was Scott's arm breaking as they raised it to take away the journals strapped under his arm. Scott had died dreadfully...his face contorted with frostbite. We covered up the tent with snow and made a cairn on top. I shall never forget...we stood and sang Scott's favorite hymn, 'Onward Christian Soldiers.'"

The principal goal of Scott was the advancement of knowledge. There can be few events in history to be compared, for grandeur and pathos, with the last closing scene in that silent wilderness of snow. The great leader, with the bodies of his dearest friends beside him, wrote and wrote until the

pencil dropped from his dying hand. There was no thought of himself, only the desire to give comfort and consolation to others in their sorrow. He wrote letters to the families of each of the members of the party who would not return, to his wife and to some of his closest friends. He wrote a message to the public that gave an explanation for the disaster, which is probably the saddest thing I have ever read. In part it said:

"We arrived within 11 miles of our old One Ton Camp with fuel for one hot meal and food for two days. For four days we have been unable to leave the tent - the gale howling about us. We are weak, writing is difficult, but for my own sake I do not regret this journey, which has shown that Englishmen can endure hardships, help one another, and meet death with as great a fortitude as ever in the past. We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best to the last. But if we have been willing to give our lives to this enterprise, which is for the honour of our country, I appeal to our countrymen to see that those who depend on us are properly cared for.

Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale, but surely, surely, a great rich country like ours will see that those who are dependent on us are properly provided for. R. Scott"

Amundsen returned alive to face the scorn or disinterest of nearly everyone, while the story of Scott's tragic demise gained the lurid attention and admiration of aristocrats and working class alike. Amundsen won the race, but Scott emerged the posthumous hero, a legend, prompting Amundsen to comment, "Never underestimate the British habit of dying. The glory of self-sacrifice, the blessing of failure."