

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE UNFORTUNATE EXPEDITION OF THE JEANNETTE.

Lieutenant DeLong's Expedition sets out from San Francisco in the Jeannette—He reaches St. Lawrence Bay, East Siberia, where he learns that the Vega had gone South—Lieutenant Danenhower in Danger of losing the Sight of his left Eye—An Operation Performed—Two Winters in the Pack—The Jeannette Crushed by the Ice—Retreat Southward—Discovery of Henrietta and Bennett Island—Melville and his Party Saved—DeLong and his Men die of Starvation, and Chipp's Boat Swamped by the Sea—DeLong's Last Records—How Noros and Nindemann were Saved—Search for DeLong and Chipp—Return of the Survivors.

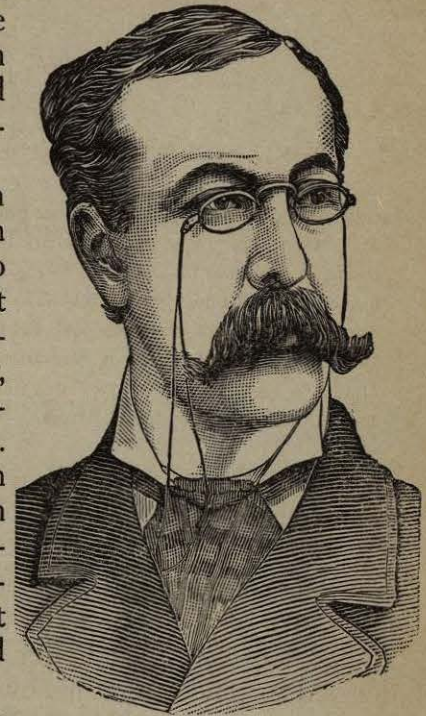
THE American Arctic Expedition, commanded by Lieutenant George W. DeLong, of the United States Navy, which left San Francisco July 8th, 1879, was projected by James Gordon Bennett, proprietor of the New York *Herald*. After the return of the last of the two successful expeditions which he had sent to Africa under Henry M. Stanley, Mr. Bennett decided to send out, at his own expense, an expedition to attempt to reach the North Pole by way of Behring Straits. Lieutenant DeLong became interested in the undertaking, and the Pandora, owned by Captain Allan Young, was selected and bought as a suitable vessel to convey the explorers.

The Pandora was built in England in 1862. She was a bark-rigged steam yacht of 420 tons burden, with an engine of 200 horse-power, and a wide spread of canvas. She was strongly constructed, and had seen considerable service in the northern seas. In 1873 she conveyed her owner to the Arctic regions for the purpose of searching for records of Sir John Franklin's expedition; and in 1876 Captain Young cruised in her about the northern part of Baffin Bay—having been deputed by the English Admiralty to search for Captain Nare's expedition.

By special act of Congress the vessel was allowed to sail under American colors, to assume a new name—the Jeannette—and to be navigated by officers of the United States Navy,

with all the rights and privileges of a government vessel. The Secretary of the Navy was authorized to accept and take charge of the ship for the use of the proposed expedition, and to use any material on hand in fitting her for the voyage; but upon condition that the department should not be subjected to any expense on account thereof.

The Jeannette was taken from Havre, in France, through the Straits of Magellan to San Francisco, by Lieutenant DeLong, with Lieutenant Danenhower as navigating officer, and there delivered to the naval authorities at Mare Island. After a thorough examination it was deemed advisable, on account of the hazardous nature of the contemplated voyage, that her capacity to resist the pressure of the ice should be increased.



LIEUTENANT GEO. W. DELONG.

The officers and crew of the Jeannette were as follows:

Lieutenant George W. DeLong, U. S. N., Commander.
Lieutenant Charles W. Chipp, U. S. N., Executive officer.
Lieutenant John W. Danenhower, U. S. N., Navigator.
Jerome J. Collins, Meteorologist. Raymond L. Newcomb, Naturalist.

William M. Dunbar, Ice Pilot. James H. Bartlett, First-class Fireman. John Cole, Boatswain. Walter Lee, Machinist. Alfred Sweetman, Carpenter. George Lauderback, Walter Sharvell, Firemen.

George W. Boyd, Adolf Dressler, Hans H. Erickson, Carl A. Gortz, Nelse Iverson, Peter E. Johnson, George H. Kuehne, Henry H. Kaack, Herbert W. Leach, Frank Mansen, Wm. F. C. Nindemann, Louis J. Noros, Edward Star, Henry D. Warren, Henry Wilson, Seamen.

Ah Sam and Charles Tong Sing (Chinese), Cook and Cabin Stewards.

Lieutenants DeLong and Chipp were officers of the United States steamer Juniata on her northern cruise in search of the crew of the lost *Polaris*. Mr. Melville was engineer of the steamer *Tigress* when she went north on the same errand. All of the crew were volunteers, selected with great care from many applicants. Nindemann was a member of the *Polaris* ice-drift party.

The *Jeannette* proceeded direct to Ounalaska, one of the Aleutian Islands, and anchored in the harbor of Illioulouk, August 2d. Additional stores and supplies of coal and fur from the storehouses of the company were taken on board.

On the 6th of August the *Jeannette* resumed her course, and on the 12th of August anchored opposite the little settlement and blockhouse known by Americans as St. Michael's, Alaska, and by Russians as Michaelovski. A drove of about forty trained dogs, three dog-sleds, and fur clothing were taken on board ship, and two native Alaskans, named Anequin and Alexei, were hired to accompany the expedition as dog drivers and hunters. Alexei was a married man, and both could speak a little English.

On the 18th of August the schooner *Fanny A. Hyde*, conveying coal and extra stores for the expedition, arrived from San Francisco, and on the evening of the 21st both vessels resumed the voyage northward.

On the 25th the *Jeannette* arrived at the St. Lawrence Bay, East Siberia, some thirty miles south of East Cape, where DeLong learned from the natives that a steamer, supposed to be the *Vega*, had gone south.

After rounding East Cape, Lieutenant DeLong touched at Cape Serdze, on the northeast coast of Siberia, and left his last letter home. It was dated August 29th, and reached Mrs. DeLong over a year afterward.

On the 29th DeLong attempted to land at the Cape, lat. $67^{\circ} 12'$ north, but found so much ice moving about as to make this impossible. On the 30th Lieutenant Chipp, accompanied by Dunbar, Collins and the native Alexei, landed and learned through Alexei from an old squaw, that the steamer had wintered on the east of Koliutchin Bay; and on the 31st the same party, together with Master Danenhower, at last made sure by a landing on the bay that the *Vega* had certainly

wintered there and gone south. Swedish, Danish and Russian buttons found in the hut on shore, and traded for by Chipp for his vest buttons as cash, were proofs enough of the *Vega's* visit, as no other ship had been in that part of the world with Swedish, Danish and Russian officers on board. Papers were also found written in Swedish and having on them the word Stockholm.

On the sixth following day the ship was beginning to be closed off by the pack-ice; her position was established by observation to be lat. $71^{\circ} 35'$ N. and long. $175^{\circ} 5' 48''$ W.

September 13th, at 8 A. M., Lieutenant Chipp and Engineer Melville, Ice-pilot Dunbar and the native Alexei started out on the floe with a sled and eight dogs, to attempt a landing on Herald Island; but the party returned without having met with any success; no place could be seen offering any protection for a ship, nor any driftwood. Alexei shot a seal and brought it back in the boat, and on the second day following DeLong, with Melville, Chipp and Dunbar, shot two bears, after their escape of some miles from the traps.

But at the close of the month the *Jeannette's* position was far from being such, as she was still held between the floes as in a vice and drifting with the pack.

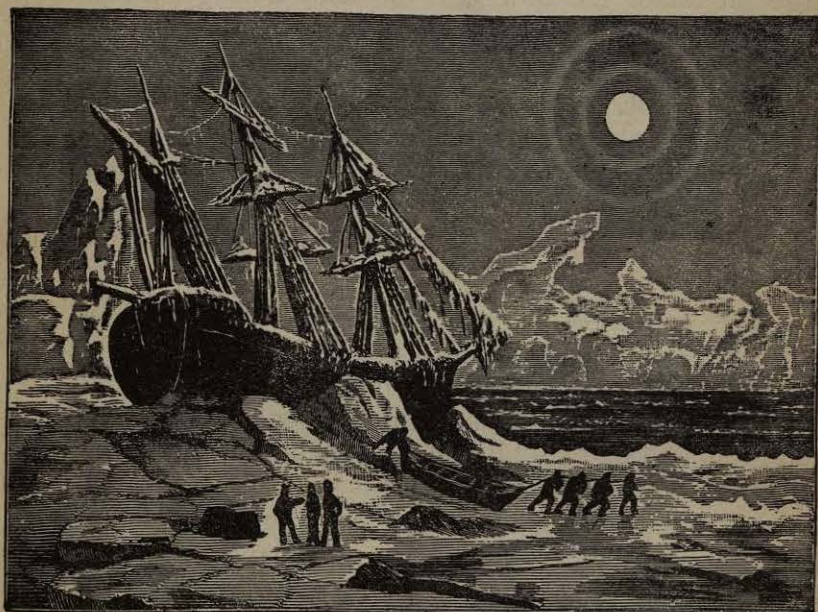
Christmas day was the dreariest day ever experienced. The crew came aft to wish the officers a merry day, and made music for them in the deck-house. The ship's bells at midnight of the 31st called all hands together to give three cheers on the quarter-deck for the new year, and for the *Jeannette*.

Lieutenant Danenhower was now unfortunately placed on the sick-list, being in danger of losing the sight of his left eye. Surgeon Ambler found it necessary that he should remain in total darkness in his room. DeLong was very much distressed at the news, as the Lieutenant's efforts had kept off the moping for many an hour, and he feared the effect of such confinement on the mind. The sick man did not improve during the month of January.

On the 15th the floe was found to have cracked and opened about twenty feet from the starboard side, the crack rounding the bow and running in one direction in the prolongation of the stem, and in another across the stern. On the 19th there was a loud noise as of the cracking of the ship's frame, and at 7.45 A. M. the wind suddenly shifted from north to north-

west, the ice began to move, and the ship evidently received tremendous pressure amid the groaning and grinding floes. The ice moving to the eastward, piled up large masses of the floe under the stem, *breaking the fore-foot*.

To add to the anxieties of the ship's company two streams of water an inch in diameter then began to flow through the filling which had been put in below the berth deck, and the water soon stood eighteen inches deep in the fore-peak and thirty-six inches in the fore-hold, while in the fire-room it was over the floor-plates on the starboard side. The deck pumps were at once rigged and manned. At last the leak was



ALONE IN THE ICE.

diminished, although the steam-pump had to be continually kept to work, pumping out 250 gallons an hour.

March 1st Lieutenant Danenhower had the sixth operation on his eye performed, with the surgeon's statement that others would probably be necessary at short intervals; he still kept his health and spirits. The ship had again drifted northwest, her position being determined by Chipp on the 6th to be lat. $72^{\circ} 12' N.$, long. $175^{\circ} 30' W.$; by the 13th the drift was again thirty-three miles north and $55^{\circ} W.$, and by the 27th fourteen miles farther to north and $63^{\circ} W.$

DeLong thought that he was extremely fortunate in lying

so long without serious disturbance. The upper part of the propeller frame had been uncovered by digging away the ice under the stern, and no sign of any damage was apparent there. The ice also had been dug away under the bows to a point on the stem where the draught would be six and one-half feet, at which depth diligent search could detect no injury to the bow, and DeLong came more than ever to the correct opinion that the ship's fore-foot was the seat of the damage. Unhappily at midnight, after the digging, the pressure of the water underneath was too much for the thin layer of remaining ice, and holes were broken through sufficient to flood the large pit under the bow. At the same time great confused masses were piled up thirty and forty feet in height, and Sharvell, one of the crew, reported that he saw, about five miles northwest of the ship, ice piled up as high as the mast-head; he thought the destruction of the ship by its reaching that mountain of ice, or by that mountain of ice reaching her, merely a question of time. On the 24th and 25th eight times as much water as before had come into the fire-room; no greater amount seemed to come in forward, but it was necessary to keep the steam-cutter's engine going nearly all the time aft. It was impossible to discover what could have gone under the ship to affect the leak in this way.

The hopes of release for the ship from her icy cradle seemed well grounded by the thermometer reading 37° , with a fall of rain on the first day of June. Fires were discontinued in the cabin and berth-deck, and the record could be made that there was a gradual resuming of ship-shape proportions to be ready for a start northward and eastward, or northward and westward, whichever the ice and winds would permit; and DeLong had been again hoping strongly day after day for some indication of a coming liberation. The decks were rapidly clearing, and he thought he was surely approaching the time when nothing would remain but to hang the rudder and make sail for some satisfactory result of the cruise. From the first day of the month to the longest of the year, fogs, snows and gales were almost the daily log entry. The drift, contrary to all expectation, had been generally to the southeast. For more than nine months the ship had been driven here and there at the will of the winds. On the 30th her position was $72^{\circ} 19' 41'' N.$, $178^{\circ} 27' 30'' E.$, fifty miles south, $9^{\circ} E.$ of her place on the first. She was heeling 4° to star-

board (3° all winter), and her doubling on that side was about four inches above the water. From the crow's nest it could be seen that she was in the centre of an ice-island, a lane of water in some places a quarter of a mile wide surrounding her at the distance of about a mile. Much effort had been made to liberate the screw without success. The drift on that day was only one mile.

The journal of July 8th makes special reference to the thickness of the floes around and underneath the Jeannette. It recites the facts, that "in September, 1879, after ramming



ARCTIC BIRDS—GULLS.

the ship through forty miles of leads, she was pushed into a crevice between two heavy floes subsequently found to be thirteen feet thick; a depth caused by the overriding and uniting of one floe with another by regelation under pressure. When she was pushed out into open water November following she was afloat, but the next day iced in." By January 17th, 1880, the ice had a thickness of four feet around the vessel, later measurements being rendered impossible by the confused massing which took place two days afterward. As the leak had now almost subsided more firmly and correctly, DeLong believed that he was buoyed up by a floe extending

down and under the keel. "Let us hope," he wrote, "that one of these days the mass will break up and let us down to our bearings." How sad these bearings were to prove! The forefoot was irretrievably wrenched. The ship must sink immediately on the "breaking up."

During the remainder of the month of July and throughout August the monotonous record of the previous months of routine duty on board ship, and of drift with no release from the ice, remained with scarcely a variation from day to day.

September 1st the ship at last was on an even keel, and this had occurred very quietly and without shock; one or two large chunks of ice rose to the surface and then all was still. The ship was yet immovable, her keel and forefoot being held in the cradles. After sawing under the forefoot five or six feet, in the hope of getting once more properly afloat, it was found that more water came in, and the sawing must be arrested. Before the close of the month the idea of open water was abandoned, and preparations made for a second winter in the pack.

The first break of the monotony came in May, 1881. On the 16th, Ice-Master Dunbar called Chipp to look at *Land*, clearly enough an island, bearing, by DeLong's quickly made observations, S. $78^{\circ} 45'$ (magnetic), N. $83^{\circ} 15'$ W. true—the first land to greet the eye since March 24th, 1880, fourteen months before. What it had to do in the economy of nature standing desolate among the icy wastes was not the question; it might be the spot to which the ducks and geese had been flying, and if the ship could get some of them for a change, what a treat! "Fourteen months without anything to look at but ice and sky, and twenty months drifting in the pack will make a little mass of volcanic rock like *our island* as pleasing to the eye as an oasis in the desert." On the following day observations placed the ship in lat. $76^{\circ} 43' 38''$, long. E. $161^{\circ} 42' 30''$; the rocky cliffs of the island appeared with a snow-covered slope, the highest and farther corner seeming to be a volcano top. The temperature noted was maximum $11^{\circ} 5'$, minimum $5^{\circ} 5'$. The Jeannette drifted past on the north side; the ice was so broken, and the pack running so rapidly that DeLong did not think it prudent to make an attempt to land.

May 24th, the pleasing sight was renewed, more land was ahead, and the ice very slack, with many large lanes of water

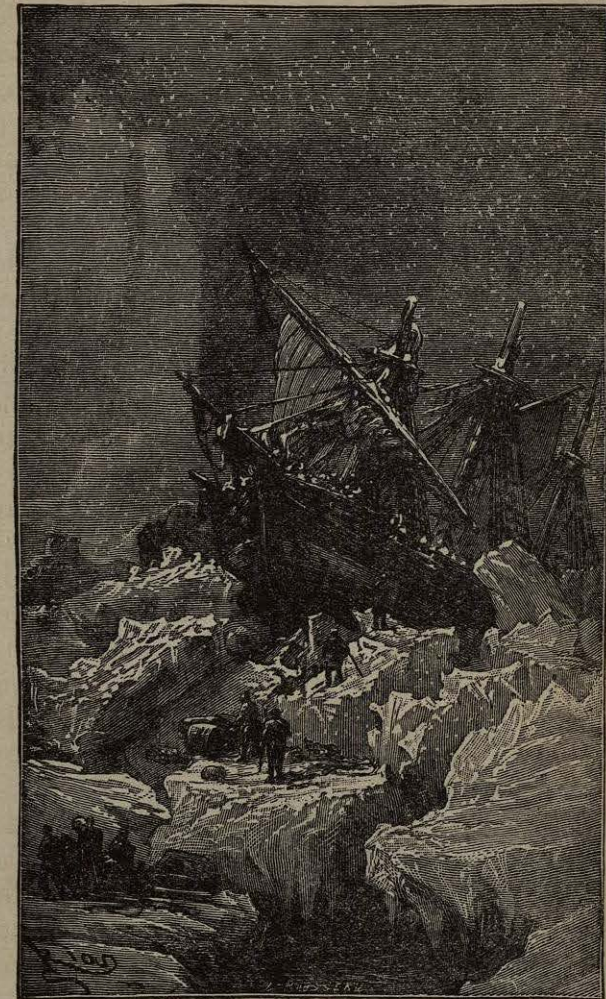
varying in length from an eighth of a mile to three miles, and in width from twenty to one hundred feet. The lanes were very tantalizing; they seemed to be within a radius of five miles, but the islands were from thirty to forty miles off, and from that five miles radius to them, the ice was as close and compact as ever. On the 31st, estimating the distance to be but fifteen or twenty miles, Engineer Melville, in company with Dunbar and Nindemann, and three other seamen, set out from the ship with a fifteen-dog team to visit this second island. They landed on it June 3d, and took possession for the United States, naming it Henrietta—the name of a sister of Mr. Bennett; a cairn was built and a record was placed within it, and a limited examination made of twelve hours. It was found to be a desolate rock, surrounded by a snow cap which feeds several glaciers on its east face. Within the inaccessible cliffs, nesting dovekeys were the only signs of life. To reach the land, the party left their boat and supplies, and carrying only one day's provisions and their instruments went through the frightful ice mass at the risk of life, dragging the dogs, which, through fear, refused to follow their human leaders. Mr. Dunbar returned badly affected by snow-blindness; Chipp, Newcomb, Dunbar, and Alexei were now on the sick-list, on which Surgeon Ambler had kept DeLong also for several days, in consequence of a severe wound in his head received incidentally from a fan of the windmill. A general order was made out giving the names and positions of the two islands, Jeannette Island, lat. $76^{\circ} 47'$, long. E. $158^{\circ} 56'$, approximate; Henrietta Island, lat. $77^{\circ} 8'$, long. E. $157^{\circ} 43'$.

On the very day last named, the ice around the ship was broken down in immense masses, the whole pack being alive, and had the ship been within one of the fast-closing leads she would have been ground to powder. Embedded in a small island of ice, she was as yet protected from the direct crushing on her sides, but felt a continual hammering and thumping of the ice under her bottom.

On the 12th of June, at midnight, in a few moments' time, she was set free by the split of the floe on a line with her keel, and suddenly righting, started all hands from their beds to the deck. By 9 A. M. the ice had commenced coming in on her side; a heavy floe was hauled ahead into a hole where it was supposed the ice coming together would impinge on

itself instead of on the ship. The pressure was very heavy, and gave forth a hissing, crunching sound, and at 3.40 P. M. the ice was reported coming through the starboard coal bunkers. At four o'clock she was lying perfectly quiet, but her bows were thrown up so high in the air, that looking

down through the water the injury to her forefoot made January 19th, 1880, could be seen and they went on the floe to take her photograph, but on returning to the ship heard the order to prepare to leave the vessel by getting out the chronometers, rifles, ammunition, and other articles to the floe. Lieutenant Chipp was quite sick in bed, but was notified; Captain DeLong "was everywhere, seeing that all things went on



ABANDONING THE JEANNETTE.

smoothly and quietly, without the least haste or consternation among the crew; he came about the deck in the same manner as though we were in no danger whatever, and tried to have the officers and men feel as collected as he was." There was ample time for all persons to get out their personal effects, but to get a barrel of lime-juice, so

necessary to prevent scurvy on their march, Seaman Starr waded into the forward store-room at the risk of his life.

When the order was given for all hands to leave the ship at about eleven at night, her water-ways had been broken in, the iron-work around the smoke-pipe buckled up, the rivets sheared off, and the smoke-stack left supported only by the guys. Three boats were lowered, the first and the second cutter, and the first whale-boat; and the ship's party of thirty-three made their camp on the floe in six tents, but within an hour were compelled to move still farther from its edge by the breaking up of the floe in their camp.

At 4 A. M., June 13th, the cry of the watch was heard, "There she goes; hurry up and look, the last sight you will have of the old Jeannette!" While the ice had held together, it had held her broken timbers. When it opened—with her colors flying at the masthead—she sank in thirty-eight fathoms of water, stripping her yards upwards as she passed through the floe. At 3 A. M. her smoke-pipe top was nearly awash; the main topmast first fell by the board to starboard, then the fore topmast, and last of all the mainmast. The ship before sinking had heeled to starboard about 30°, and the entire starboard side of the spar deck was submerged, the rail being under water, and the water-line reached to the hatch-coamings before the ship had been abandoned. The next morning, a visit to the place where she was last seen showed nothing more than a signal chest and a cabin-chair with some smaller articles afloat. This happened in lat. 77° 14' 57" N.; long. 154° 58' 45" E.

Daylight found the party encamped on the ice, about four hundred yards from where the ship went down. The day was spent in arranging the effects and in gaining rest, which was very much needed. Many of the crew were incapacitated for active work by reason of severe cramps, caused by tin-poisoning from tomato cans. Among the sick were Lieutenant Chipp, Kuehne, the Indian Alexei, Lauderback, and the cabin steward.

The doctor recommended delay until the sick party should have recovered; but the time was not wasted, and the rest of the crew began the work of dividing the clothing, and stowing the sleds and boats. There were as provisions 3,500 pounds of pemmican in tinned canisters of 45 pounds weight each; about 1,500 pounds of hard bread, and more

tea than was needed; also some canned turkey and canned chicken, but these were disposed of in the first camp. Besides these there was a large quantity of Liebig's extract, a most important element in the diet of the crew; a large quantity of alcohol, which was intended to serve as fuel for cooking during the retreat; plenty of ammunition, and a good equipment of rifles. The provisions were stowed on five sleds, each having a tier of alcohol in the middle, and on either side a tier of pemmican canisters. Another sled was loaded with bread and a limited quantity of sugar and coffee.

There were three boats mounted upon ship-made sleds, each of which consisted of two oak runners, shod with whale-bone. The grand total weight of boats, sleds, and provisions was about 15,500 pounds. To draw these, the party had a working force, when the retreat commenced, of twenty-two men; and the dogs were employed, with two light sleds, to drag a large amount of stores, that the party had in excess to those permanently stowed upon the larger sleds. Each man had a knapsack stowed away in the boats; each knapsack contained one change of underclothing, one package of matches, one plug of tobacco, one spare pair of snow-goggles, and one spare pair of moccasins.

On the 17th day of June, at 6 P. M., the order was given to break camp. The order was obeyed with enthusiasm, and the drag-rope of the first cutter was immediately manned. At the end of the first week the captain found by observation that the drift of the ice had more than neutralized the way covered by his advance, and that in fact he had lost twenty-seven miles by the drift to the northwest in excess to his march to the south. The progress of the party toward the land was very slow, but finally glaciers and water-courses became visible. On the 24th of July the party reached a point not more than two miles distant from the land, but the men were so exhausted that they had to camp. Next morning it was found that they had drifted at least three miles to the southward, and along the east side of the island. On the 27th day of July an island was reached composed of trap-rock and a lava-like soil, and on the 28th a landing was made on the new discovery. Captain DeLong mustered everybody on the island, unfurled a silk flag, took possession of the island in the name of the President of the United States, and called it Bennett Island. The south cape was named