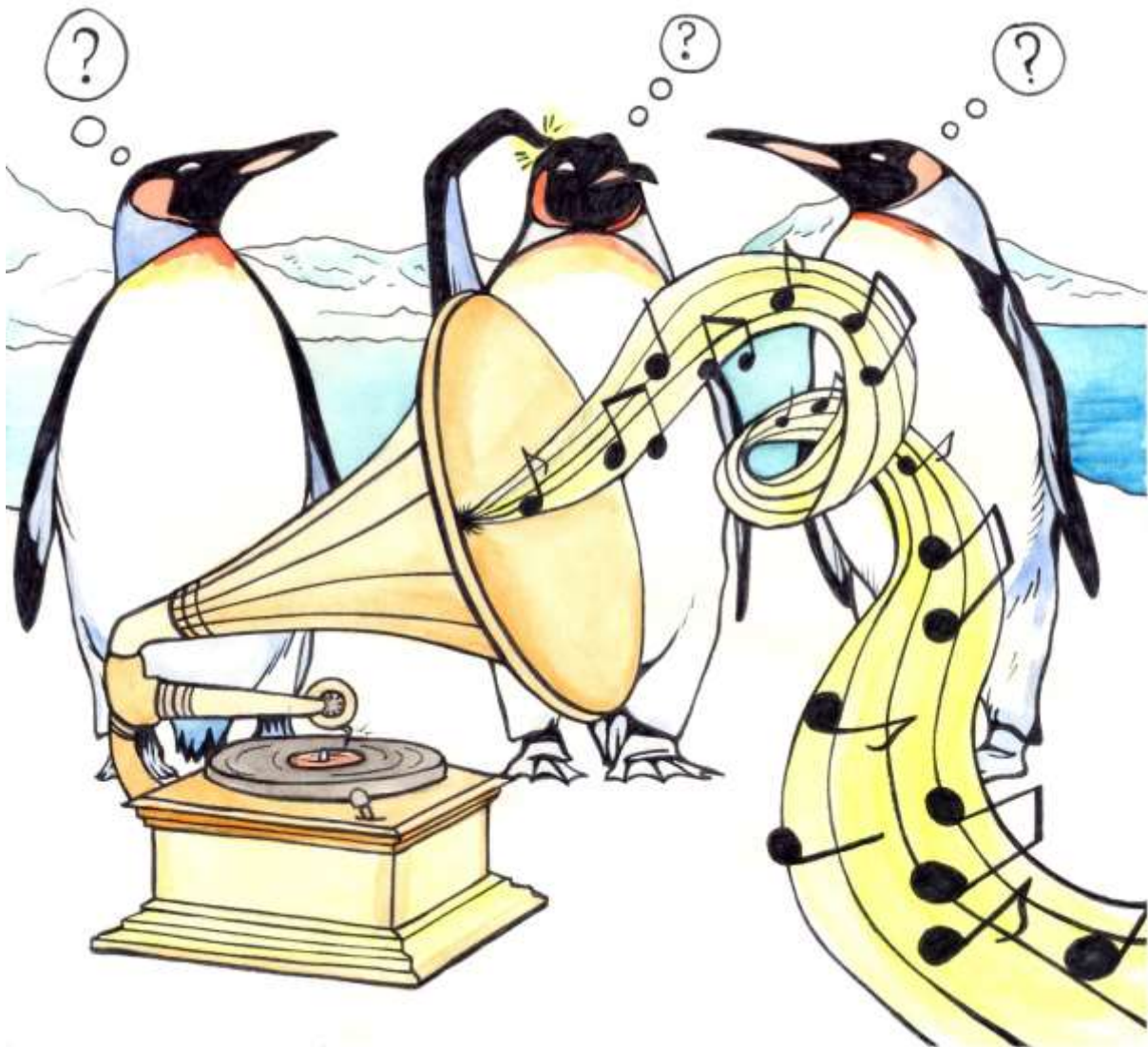


Arctic Adventures

The life of Jean-Baptiste Charcot



Compiled by Berglind Gréta Kristjánsdóttir

Illustrated by Eyþór Eyjólfsson

Translated by Einar Valgeir Einarsson

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Berglind Gréta Kristjánsdóttir is a literary scholar and a former employee at the Sudurnes Science and Learning Center. She now works for the University of Iceland.

Eyþór Eyjólfsson a.k.a. Ethorío is a talented, young artist from Reykjanesbaer. He is currently studying fine-art at the Arts University Bournemouth.

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In the year 1867 a boy was born. He was named Jean-Baptiste Charcot. We shall now follow him through his life, which was quite an adventure.

This is Jean-Baptiste Charcot. He is just a small boy at this time and has no idea that when he grows up he will be a respected doctor, scientist, and explorer, making many adventurous trips across the ocean blue.



Little Charcot lives with his Mom and Dad in France. His greatest joy is to play with his wooden toy boat and imagine that he is the captain of his own ship. He also likes drawing pictures of ships. On all his ships he writes “Pourquoi-Pas?” which means “Why Not?” and that is what he is going to name his ship when he becomes a captain.



The reason for this name is that when adults ask him whether he intends to be a captain when he grows up, he answers: “Why not?”



Charcot is constantly trying to make boats out of all kinds of stuff. Once he tried to sail in a box on the pond by his grandparents' house. But the box was too weak and flipped over, so Charcot got the nice clothes his mom had dressed him in that morning soaking wet. His parents were not at all happy about his little adventure!



Charcot's dad is a great lover of animals and teaches his son to treat all animals well. This Charcot does, and he can't stand ill treatment of animals.



Charcot has always loved animals, and his first playmates were a duck, Zibidi the monkey, Sigurður the dog, and Saladin the donkey. He hopes to get to know many species of animals later in life when he is sailing across the oceans.



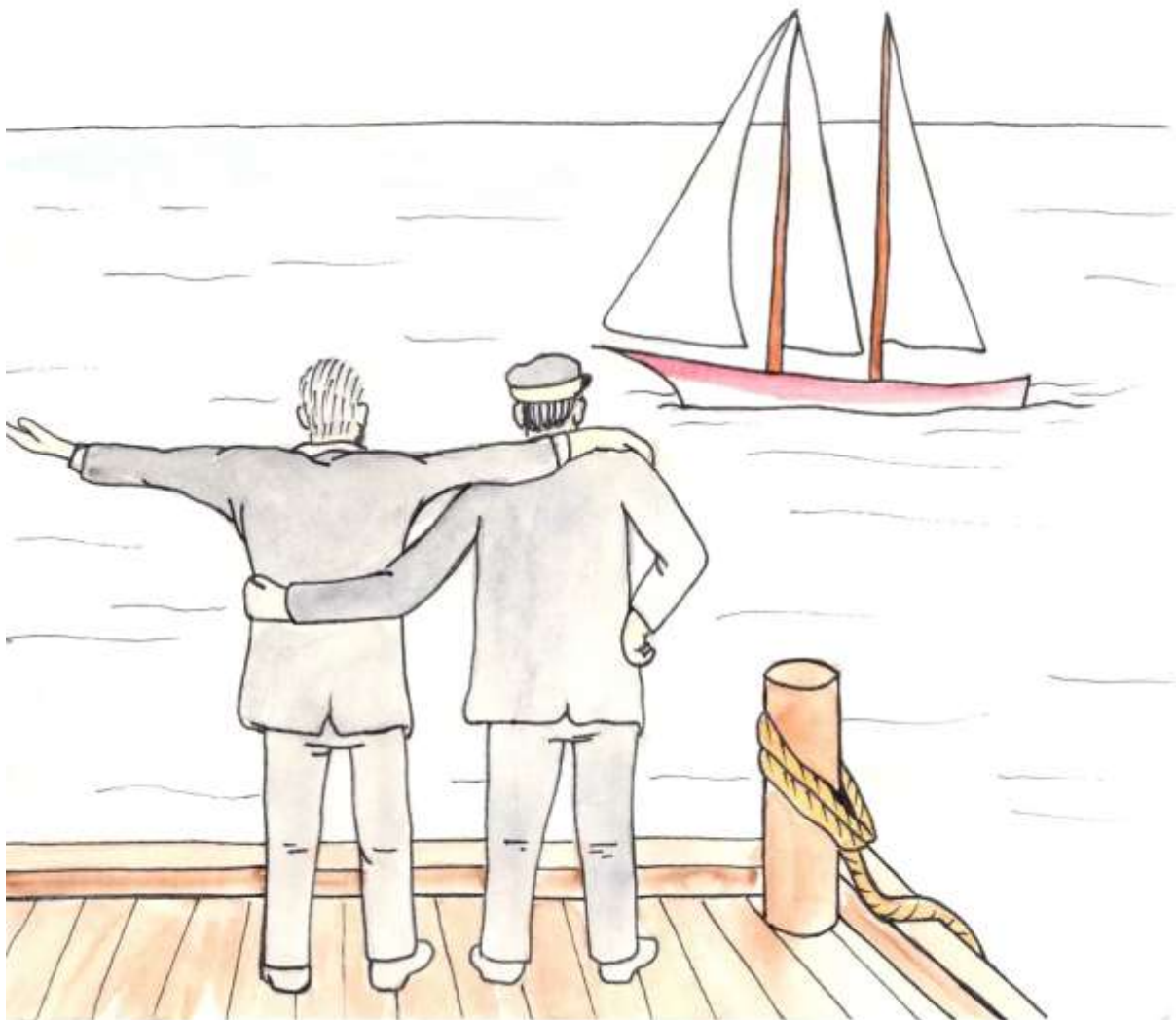
Charcot has one problem related to his future dreams. The problem is that his father, a famous neurosurgeon, wants Charcot also to become a doctor. How is he to become a seaman and captain if his dad wants him to become a doctor? They reach an agreement: Charcot will become a doctor and his dad will later buy a proper boat for his son to sail on.



Here, Charcot is an adult and has become a doctor. He has yet to work as a doctor for a few years before he decides to fulfil his childhood dreams and go to sea.



When Charcot is 25 years old, his dad gives him a sailboat. One year later he sells the boat and has a ship called **Pourquoi-Pas?** built for him. That is what he named his toy boats when he was a small boy.



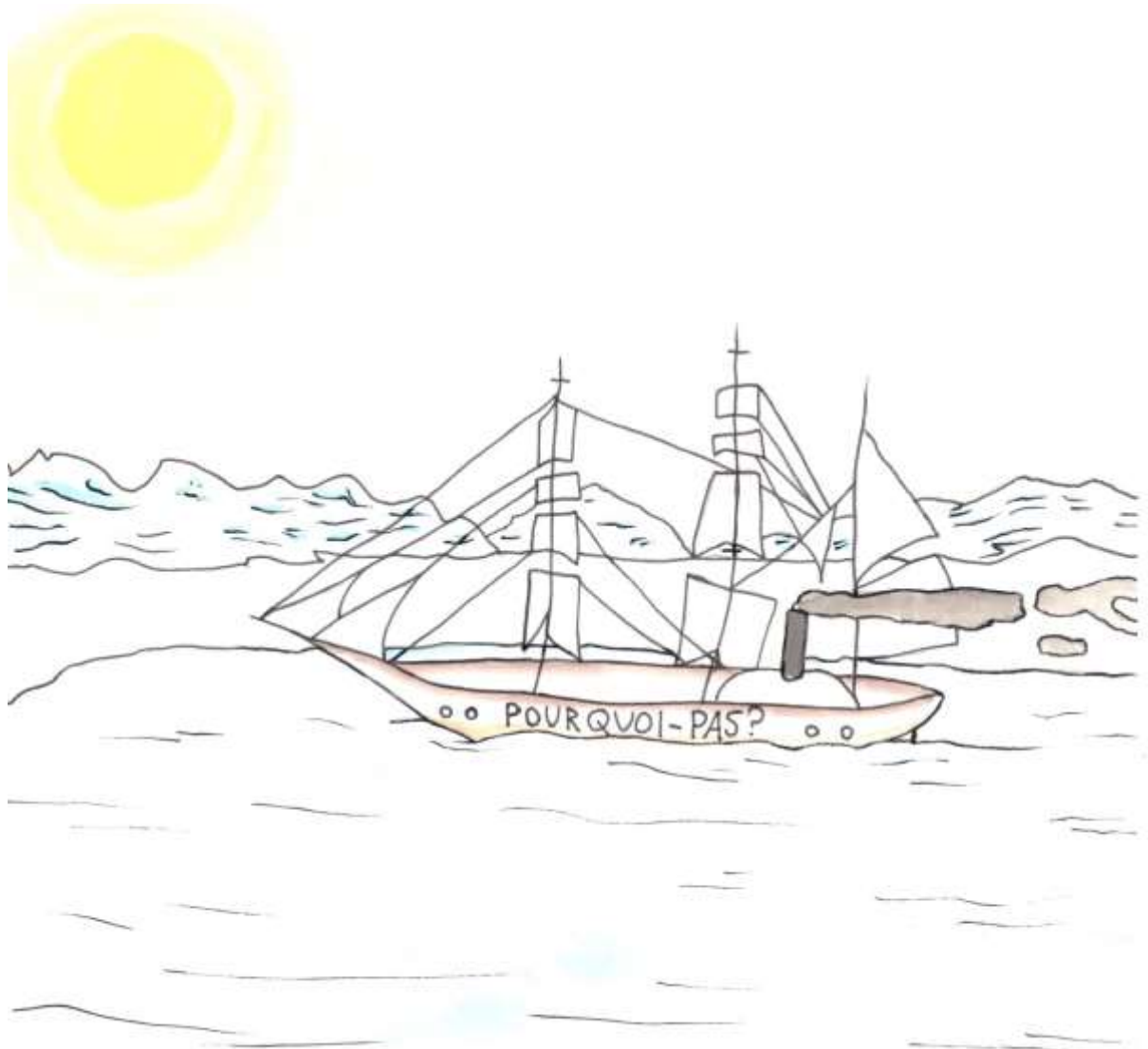
Charcot thinks the French know way too little about life in the oceans. He wants to study the sea so he can teach people more about life there, and to learn more himself.



Charcot decides to gather around him many scientists from different disciplines and study the poles, that is the North Pole and the South Pole, the white spots we see at the top and the bottom of the globe. Never before have so many different kinds of scientists gone on an expedition together.



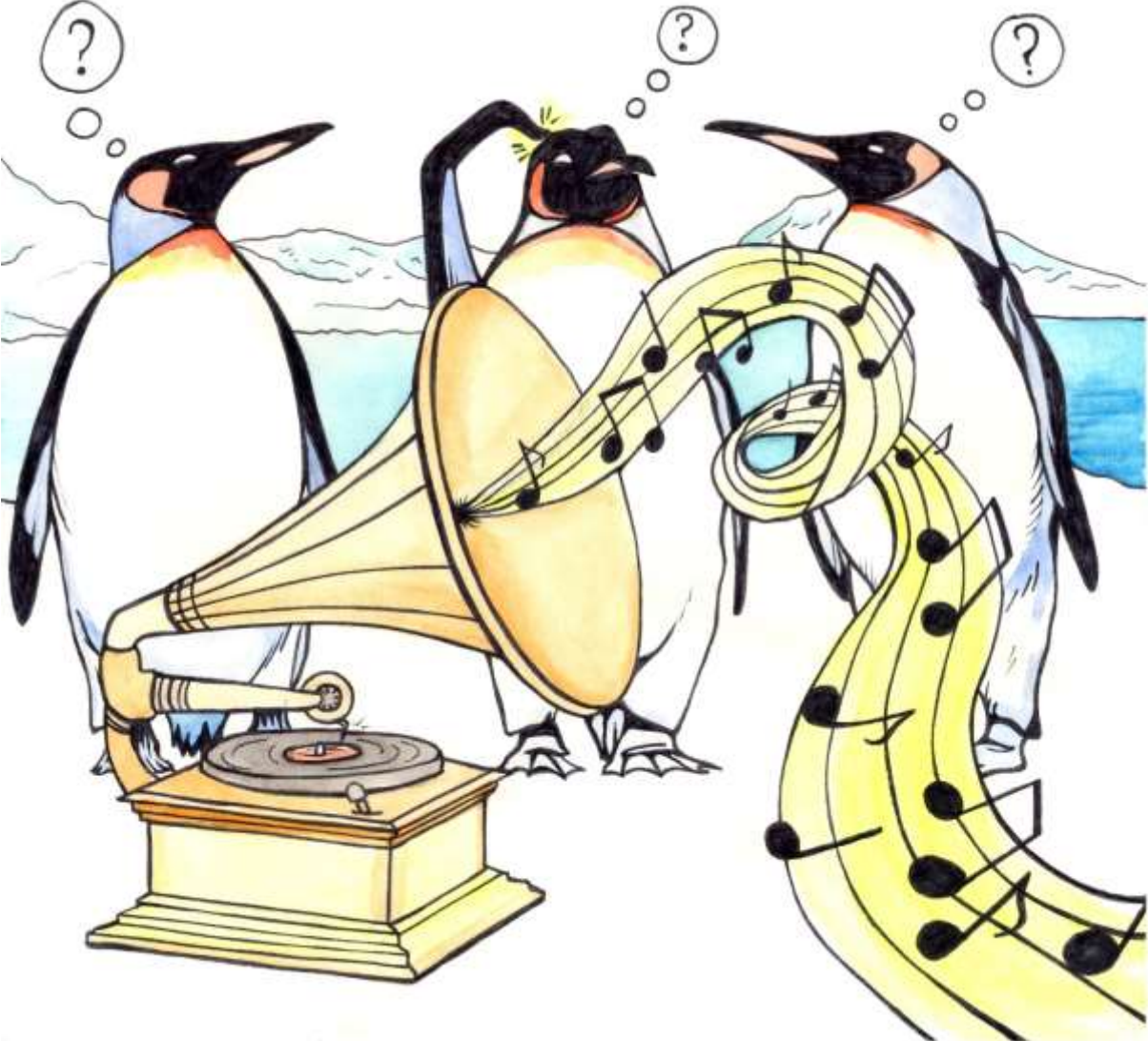
In 1903, Charcot and his scientists leave for the South Pole. This is a dangerous journey which very few have made before them. The journey to the South Pole is quite an adventure because they sail in areas they don't know.



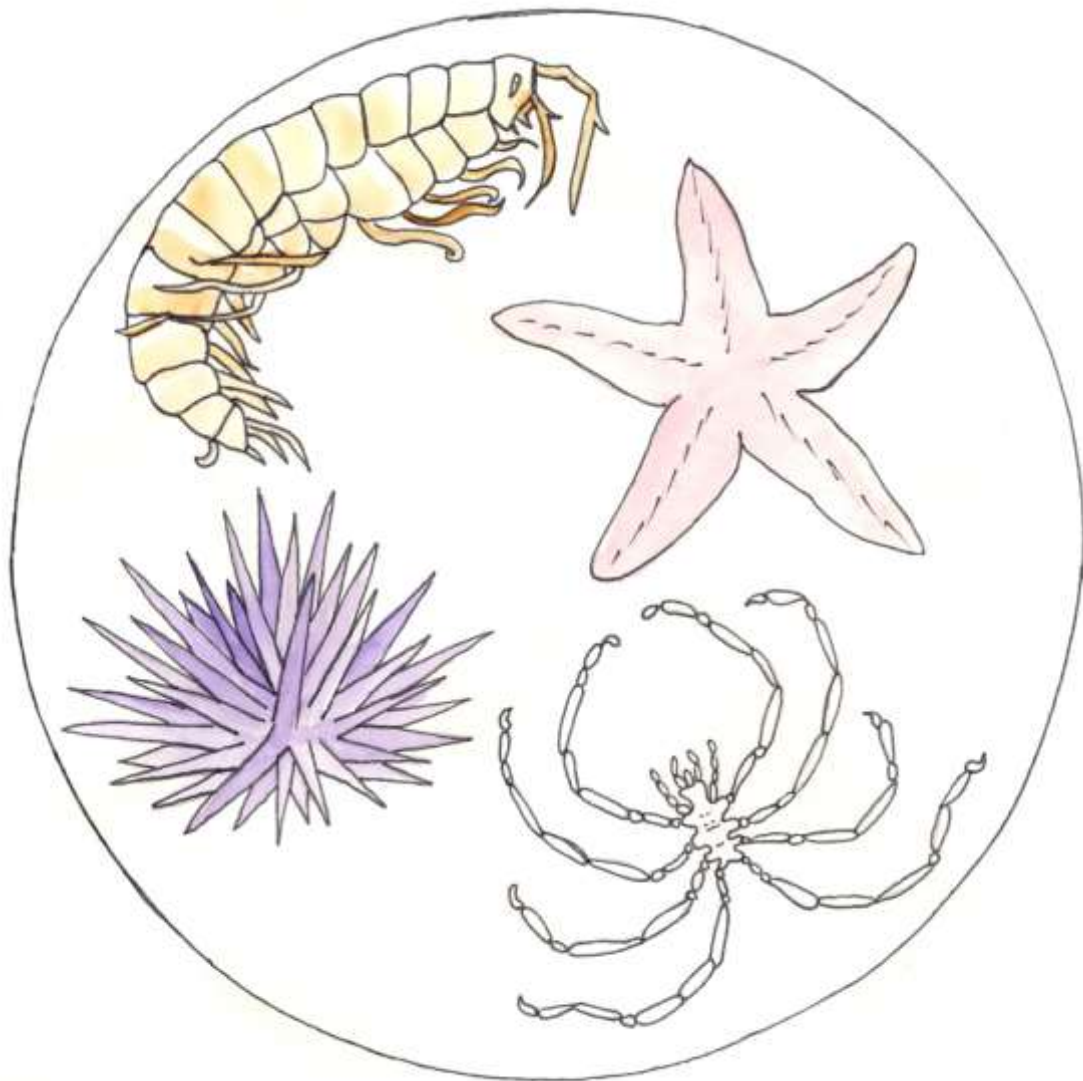
They spend nine months on the South Pole. It is hard to stay away from family and friends for such a long time, so they have to find something to entertain themselves with while they are not working. Charcot often has fun chatting with the penguins which live on the South Pole. They come right up to his face and answer him in a language which he unfortunately doesn't understand. Charcot thinks these animals are very beautiful and interesting.



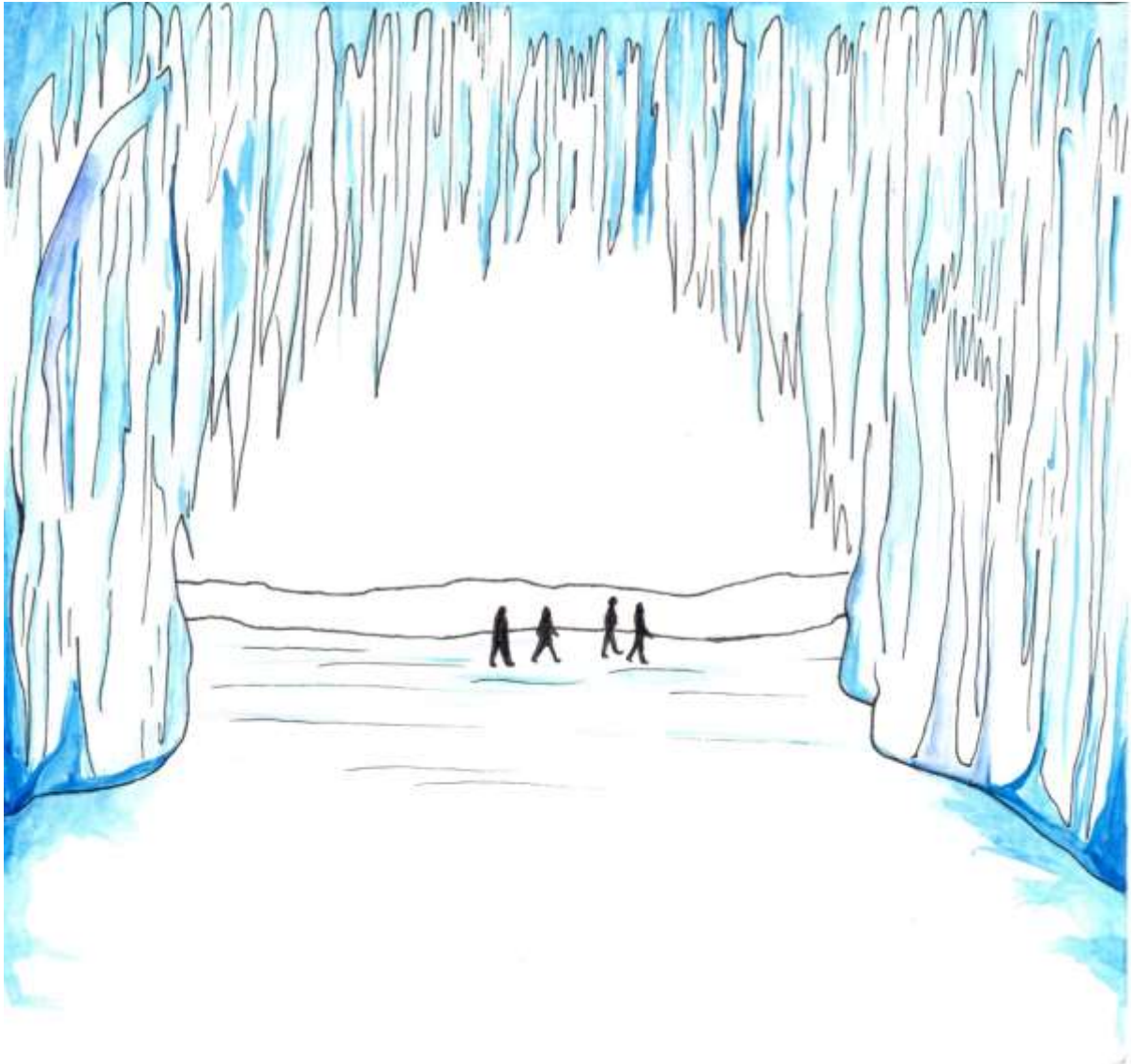
Sometimes his companions play music on a record player they took along. The penguins think this is strange as they have never heard music before. When they hear the music they come closer to see what the men are doing and where these strange sounds come from.



The men must also work a lot on the South Pole and cannot only have fun all the time. They discover many unknown species of animals. They find, among others, 27 new species of amphipods, 14 new species of star fish, 4 new species of urchins, and in all 28 new species of sea spiders, which are very strange animals with many long and narrow legs.



They study more than living creatures on the South Pole, as the purpose of the trip is also to study the land itself, but Charcot is very interested in exploration. While travelling over the pole, they discover many places nobody has visited before.



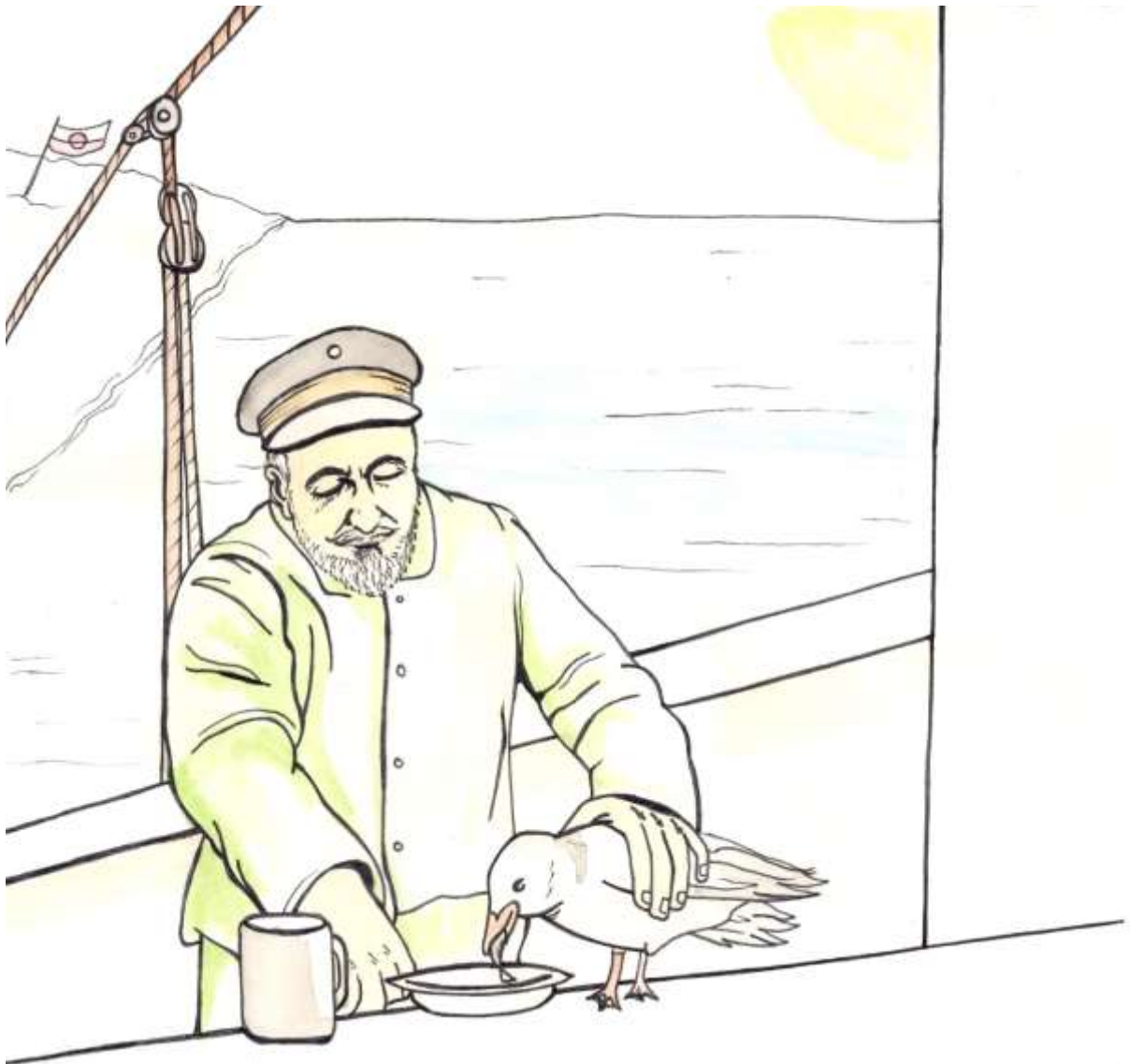
Charcot and his companions went on two expeditions to the South Pole before they said goodbye to the penguins and turned to the northern regions where they would have still more adventures.



Charcot visits Iceland several times on his ship *Pourquoi-Pas?* as it is so close to Greenland, where he is now on an expedition. In Iceland he acquires food, water, and coal to take with him to Greenland. Charcot has made many Icelandic friends on his visits here and he enjoys these visits.



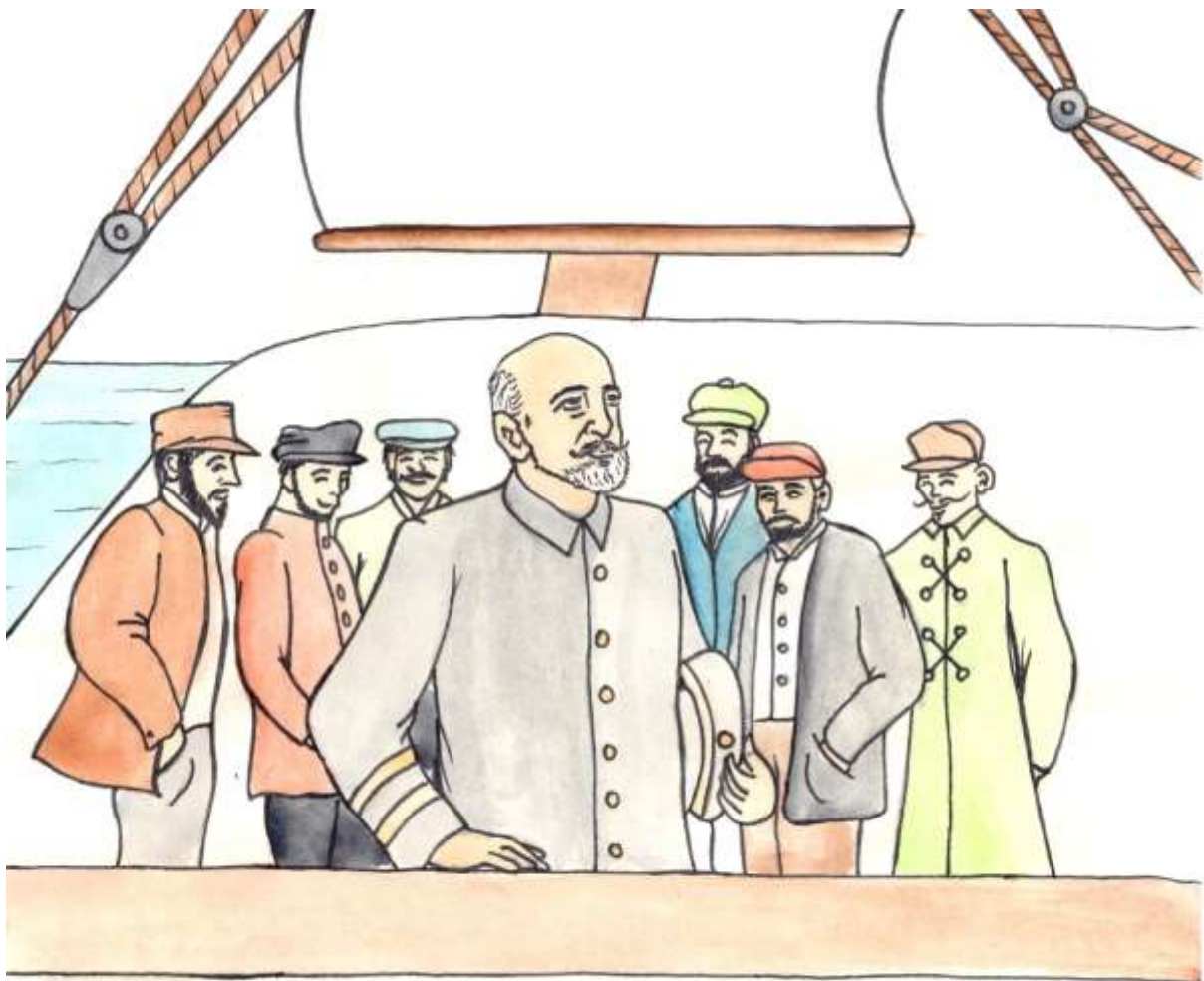
Charcot has made more friends on his visit to Greenland. His newest friend is the seagull Rita which was found hurt on the ship's deck. Charcot decided to heal the bird and allow it to live on the ship until it was well again. But when Rita was healed, she didn't want to leave the ship. Charcot and Rita the seagull have now become best friends.



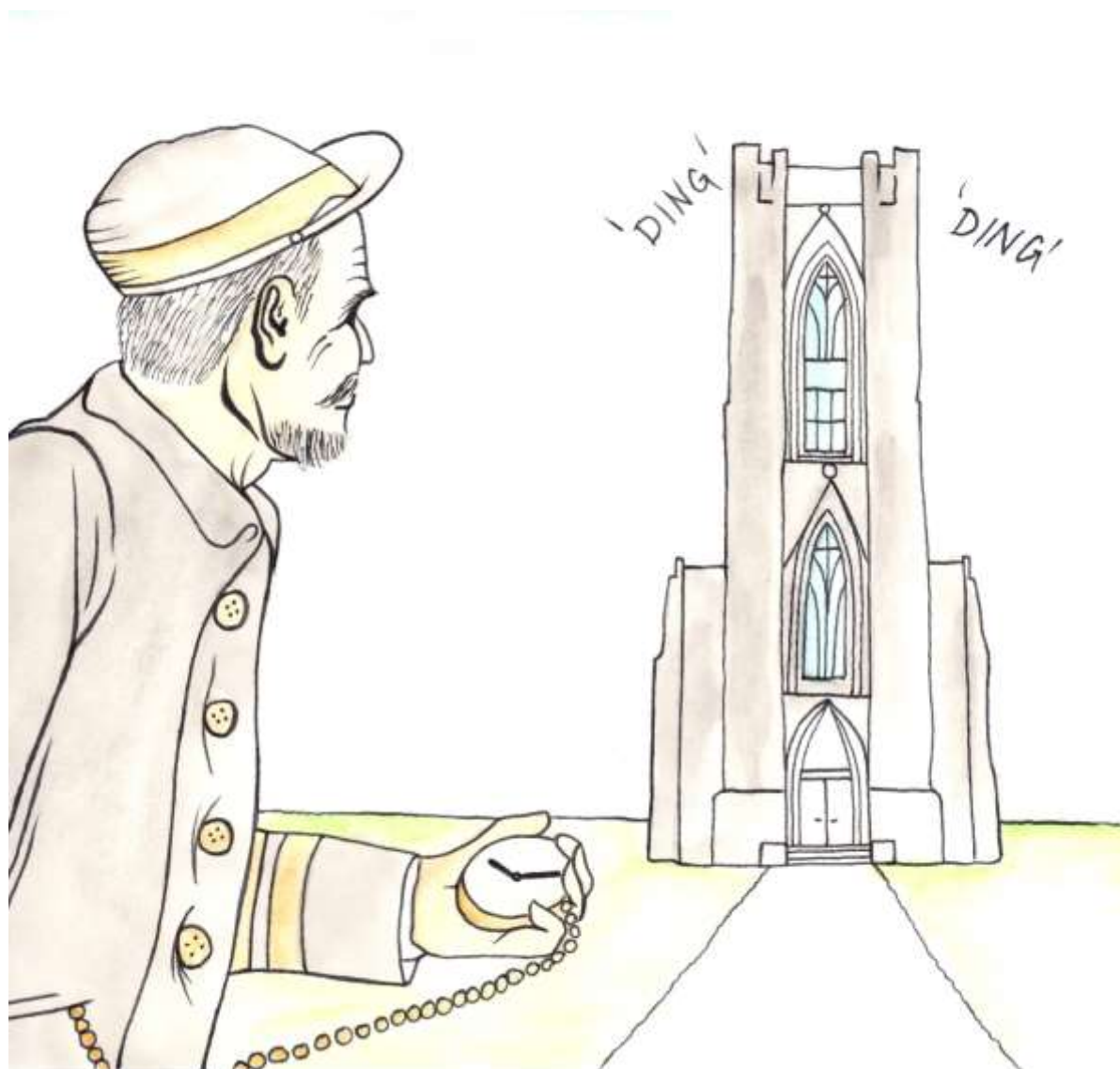
On board Pourquoi-Pas? are also Chatacajou the cat, and Bobeete the dog. Those two are best friends and always together.



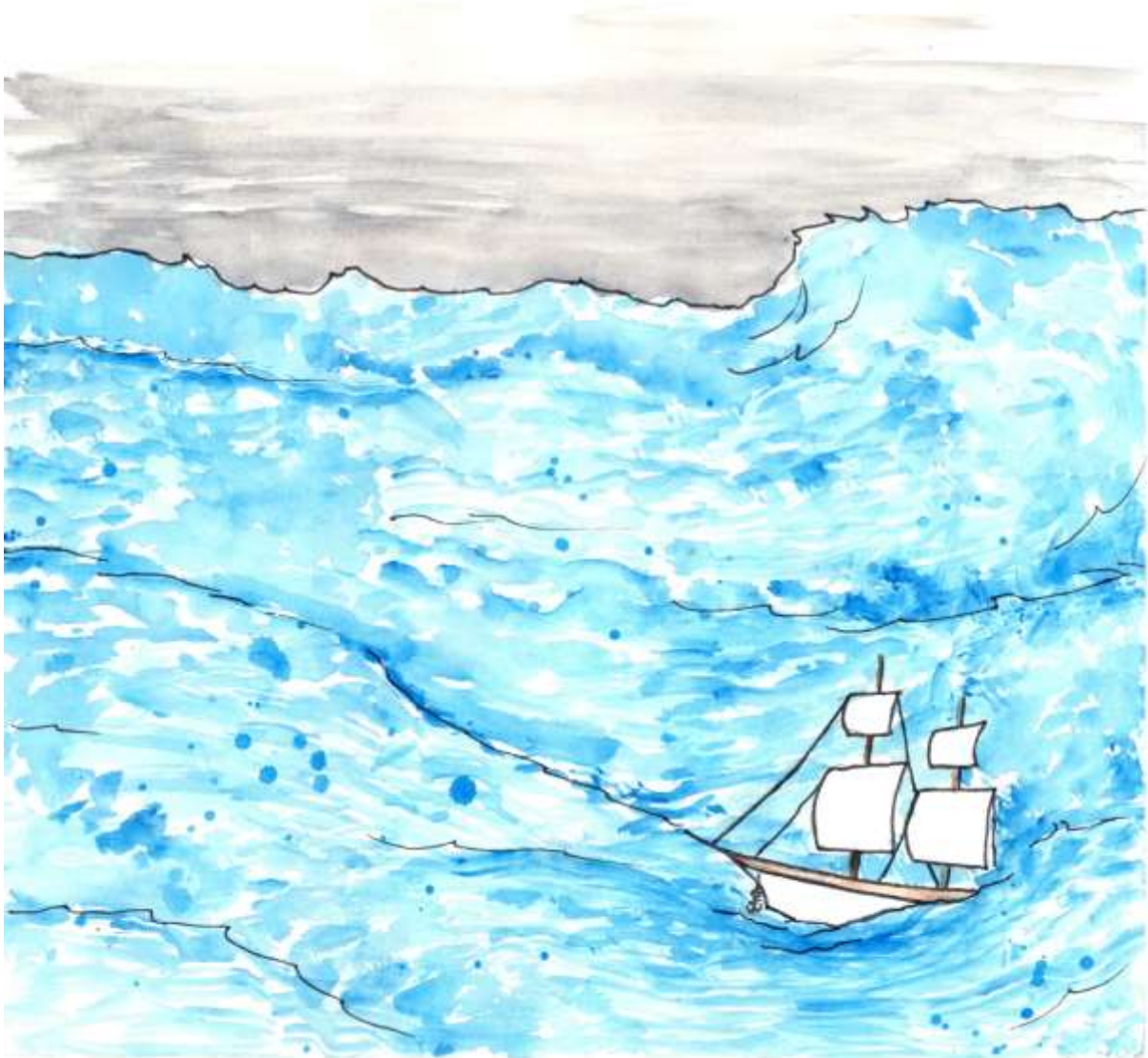
This is the year 1936 and Charcot is 69 years old. He and his crew are on the way to Copenhagen after doing research in Greenland. They decide to stop by Iceland as they did so often before. On September 3rd they finally reach Reykjavik after a difficult journey from Greenland. They can't stop long but the ship has to have some repairs done before they continue. On September 14th the ship is ready but the weather is too bad to leave harbor.



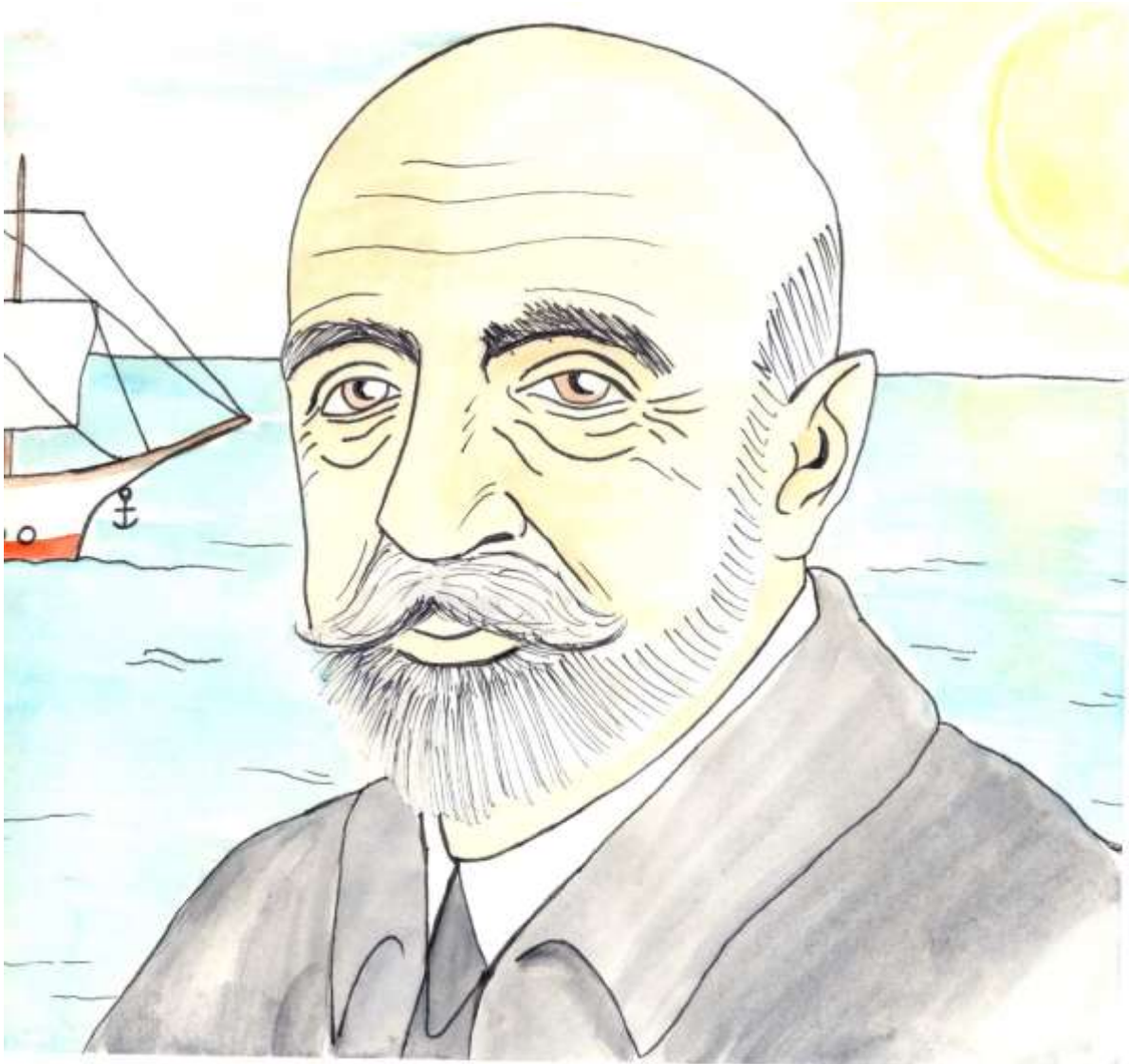
Next day, the weather is fine. Charcot listens to the weather forecast and decides to leave for Copenhagen at noon. Many of Charcot's friends come to the pier to bid him and his crew farewell. It could be a long time until Charcot sees his friends in Iceland again, but he doesn't know that he will actually never see them again.



Pourquoi-Pas? never made it to Copenhagen. She ran aground by Borgarfjordur, about 1,5 miles from land (2.500 meters). Only one of the crew survived and got to land. The other 40, among them Charcot, didn't survive this terrible accident.



Jean-Baptiste Charcot enjoyed an adventurous and unusual life. He is a good example to everybody and tried to show kindness to both men and animals. He was always ready to learn something new and take on new challenges. We should all try to do that.



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