

## THE ICE BOUND WHALERS ARE IN NEED OF HELP

### ONE SHIP BURNED, ANOTHER IS SUNK, BALANCE IN PERIL

#### Third Mate Tilton of the Belvedere Sent for Thousands of Miles Across Alaska to Seek Aid.

#### Meets Lieutenant Jarvis of the Bear Expedition and Brings the News That After July the Men in the Ice Will Be Without Food.

BY GEORGE F. TILTON.

PORTLAND, Or., April 8.—The whaling steamer Belvedere, M. B. V. Millard master, left San Francisco on the 7th day of March, 1897, and I was shipped on her in the capacity of third mate.

We had either stormy weather or gales all the way up, and during one gale a sea swept her decks, carrying away two of our whaleboats and the jibboom.

The same sea washed one of the men around the deck so violently that he died from the injuries he received, and we buried him in Unalaska, into which port we put in to make repairs.

After leaving Unalaska we had a

through which we would have to blow out a canal. The engine force of the three steamers was immediately put to work making cartridges, weighing five pounds each, of the blasting and gun powder on our ships, and the tonite powder was taken out of the darning and shoulder bombs and also made into cartridges. These cartridges were placed on the ends of long poles, shoved under the ice and exploded. Mr. Walker of the Orca and myself had charge of exploding the bombs.

The distance we had to blow out was about one mile and a half, and we used over a thousand pounds of powder and tonite in the work.

The balance of the crews were busy in sawing and poling the ice out of the way. Young ice was making all the time, and the steamers had all they

the Orca's crew we turned back, working through the ice, to save them. We finally succeeded in getting all the men on board our ship and steered toward clear water again, the Jessie H. Freeman being at this time about three miles to the northward.

We were forcing our way along, when, about two hours after rescuing the Orca's crew, we saw the Freeman in the same predicament as the Orca, and her crew jumping on the ice, so we turned back again to save these men.

The wind was now blowing heavily from the westward, forcing the old ice against the young ice and shelving it, making it impossible for us



TILTON'S DEPARTURE FROM THE POINT BARROW STATION.

now to get out, so we worked with the ice toward the main land and succeeded in getting into Pearl Bay, the heavy ice grounding outside.

Our crew at this time numbered forty-five men, and we had rescued fifty-three men from the Orca and forty-nine men from the Freeman. We knew that the best place to camp would be on the Sea Horse Islands, and if we could get the ship behind the islands we would have a chance to save her. On the twenty-third some of the men commenced sledging provisions over to the islands, a distance of three miles, others emptied water out of the casks to lighten the ship, the bulkheads were torn down for the purpose of making houses on shore, the blacksmith commenced making cookstoves from the coal oil drums, and others set to work cutting a canal.

Mr. Walker volunteered to go back to the Orca with a couple of natives and save all the provisions he could, and said he would signal to us his safe arrival.

That afternoon we saw smoke from the Freeman, and at night she lit up the sky. She burned to the water's edge.

We afterward learned that some natives had boarded her, got into her hold and had dropped a lighted lamp, setting fire to the ship.

On the 29th of September, not having seen any signals from the Orca, I volunteered to go to her, to save what provisions I could and learn the fate of Mr. Walker and his two natives. I took with me four natives. I was instructed to loose the gaff top-sails and set the main royal should we succeed in reaching her, and if Mr. Walker was safe to run the flying jib up and down a few times. They would answer by the same signals.

The Orca was lying fully twelve miles from us. The ice between the two ships was in a very poor condition. It was full of holes, and the pressure of the heavy ice would make large cracks in the new ice, sometimes right under our feet, causing us at times to move very lively. After six hours' hard work we reached the ship and boarded her. We found Mr. Walker and his two natives hard at work. We immediately signaled our ship, as agreed upon, receiving their signals in return, and then went to work to get the provisions Mr. Walker had saved on the ice. I found the ship nearly full of water, and to get the provisions we had to fish for them with long-handled bow hooks. We got thirty-two sacks of flour and twenty cases of canned meats, and some other material, on the ice. Both the ship and ice were drifting all the time, the ship having been kept up by the ice pressing against her sides.

I was coming to the rail with a case of meat, when I felt a peculiar motion. I threw the case on the ice as far as I could and jumped. The ship careened slowly over on her side and at the same time gradually slid under the ice floe until she completely disappeared.

We had not been on the ship three hours when she sank. We then commenced sledging the provisions we had saved to the south sandpit of the Sea Horse Islands, which was about three miles to the westward. We were two days in getting these provisions to the beach, making our camp on the beach, our tent being made of boat sails.

The water was cold, the thermometer registering from 4 to 8 degrees below zero. In the meantime the Belvedere had been worked through the ice and was placed in as good a place as could be found behind the Sea Horse Islands, and about fifteen miles from our camp. Some Indians who had been out hunting polar bear passed by our camp and told us that we could get dogs and sleds from Point Belcher to help take the material saved to our ship. We went with these natives and they brought over two teams of five and six dogs each, and on the sixth day all the food saved was put on the Belvedere, the sleds making one round trip each day with small loads.

The natives wanted provisions for their work, but we could not spare any, and paid them in drilling, needles, thread and similar articles. I was absent from the ship on this trip nine days.

On October 3 Captains Millard, Humphreys and Sherman had another consultation and called for volunteers to go to Point Barrow and inform Mr. Charles Brower, superintendent of the

Liebes whaling station, of our situation and ask him to help us if he possibly could. Stephen Cottle, our second mate, and the fourth and fifth mates of the Freeman volunteered. They had to go on foot. They made for the main land and then for the station. They traveled over sixty-five miles, the trip being made in three nights and two days. Mr. Brower received the officers in a most kindly manner, and went to work right away to engage all the dog teams and sleds he could find around Point Barrow and Cape Smith. He dispatched Alfred Hopson, his assistant, with the teams to the Belvedere, arriving there October 7. He had instructed Mr. Hopson to say that all of us were welcome at his station, and he was willing to divide the last crust with us. Mr. Brower has, by his kindness, saved the lives of over 300 men. He has over 100 natives engaged to work for him. He gave them rifles and cartridges and instructed them to bring in all the game they could find, but that they must at any rate get enough meat to support themselves.

Mr. Hopson had six teams with him and started back to the station, taking forty men and some provisions. Some of the men were so sick and feeble they had to ride back the entire distance, the trip being made in four days' time. Mr. Hopson started back for the Belvedere on October 13, making the trip in twenty-two hours. Mr. Brower sent by him a complete inventory of the provisions at the station and also the reports from the four ships that were in the ice to the eastward, together with the list of provisions each of these ships had on hand. An inventory of the provisions on the Belvedere was taken and we found that there was not enough on board to keep the entire crew, providing we did not get out until spring.

Mr. Hopson started back the same day he arrived, taking with him this time sixty-four men and sufficient provisions to last a few days. Captain Millard had fitted the Orca men with all the blankets and clothing possible, as they had to leave the vessel hurriedly. The Freeman men had had more time, and had saved all the clothing and blankets they could carry. I was successful in getting a dog team and left the ship October 15 to go to the station. I made the trip in three days.

Captain Millard was successful in securing a good dog team and he came to Point Barrow with Captains Sherman and Humphreys to discuss the situation with Mr. Brower and the officers of the ships.

At this meeting the inventories were all completed and the entire amount of provisions on hand from all sources ascertained. It was decided that by careful use an allowance of two scant meals per day could be made for the men of the eight ships, which would last up to the first day of July, but the allowance must be a scant one.

It was also decided at this meeting to call for a volunteer to go south not only to carry news, but also to ask help at the earliest possible opportunity.

I volunteered to make the trip and others were willing to go with me, but after considering the situation carefully we came to the conclusion that, providing I failed, one dead man would be enough.

Captains Millard, Sherman and Humphreys and Mr. Bowers were giving me all the encouragement they could, both by word and deed. Mr. Brower purchased the dogs. The Indians would gladly have given a dog for a sack of flour, but not an ounce of provisions could be spared. The dogs were purchased with trade and cost us over one hundred dollars each. A sled was made for me, harness made for the dogs, the native women made skin clothing and sleeping bags for myself and the two Indian runners. These runners would not accompany me any further than Point Hope. A mast and sail were also

included in the outfit and an American ensign added to float from the mast-head.

I loaded the sled with provisions to last us for fifteen days, in which time I expected to arrive at Point Hope, only allowing myself the same amount per day that all the men were getting—two scant meals a day and frozen fish for my dogs.

Everything being ready, my sail put up and the flag fluttering from the masthead, we shook hands all around, received lots of good wishes and encouragement, and started on my trip toward civilization, all hands giving hearty cheers until I was out of sight.

I left Point Barrow at 12 m. on October 22, my first objective point being to get to the Belvedere and get from her a boat compass, a rifle for the natives, a rifle and shotgun for my own use, a parallel ruler, a pair of dividers, and chart, and a portable stove, which the blacksmith of the Orca was making for me.

The first stop was made at the refuge station, now in charge of Michael Heeneey, who is making an Arctic collection of curios for the Smithsonian Institution. A number of shipwrecked officers are being sheltered and cared for by Mr. Heeneey. He insisted on my having a lunch with him, photographed the outfit and off we started. About a mile farther south we met Dr. Driggs and his wife.

Our outfit was photographed again, and the doctor prepared a lot of liniment and medicines in case it would be necessary to use them. They wished me goodspeed on my journey, and that night we camped at a native village called Simroe. Left the next morning at 5 o'clock, and reported the ship in time for supper, the actual traveling time from the point being seventeen and a half hours.

The morning I left Point Barrow Mr. Brower had received news from the ships to the eastward and had succeeded in getting six dog teams, and it was his intention to get Dr. Driggs to accompany him to this fleet, as there were several that needed the doctor's attention. He was also taking back with him all the men necessary to watch the ships.

The steamers Fearless, Captain James McKenna, and the steamer Newport, Captain G. B. Leavett, were about sixty miles to the eastward of the point, five miles off shore and in heavy ice. The tender Jeannie, Captain P. H. Mason, was about fifteen miles still further to the east and about the same distance from shore. The bark Wanderer was about ninety miles west of Herschel Islands, but did not learn her exact position.

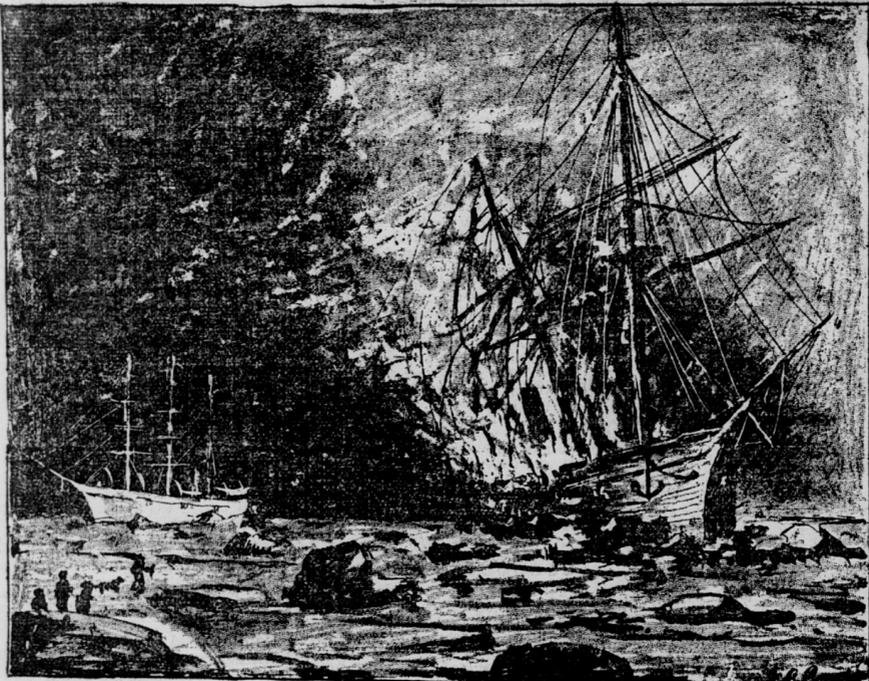
The general opinion was that the entire fleet would be either ground to pieces or else carried away by the ice, but no lives would be lost.

Our tent having been made and everything finished, I left the Belvedere on the morning of October 26, being cheered by my shipmates as far as I could hear them, and that night camped at Point Belcher.

We made an early start the next day and that night camped at Wainwright Inlet, and on the night of the 28th camped at Icy Cape. As the wind was blowing a hurricane from the southeast we remained in camp all day, but managed to get an early start on the morning of the 30th.

The heavy wind had blown all the snow from the shore, and soon after starting came to water along the shore, so we were compelled to go out on the ice. At one time we were eight miles from the beach. It was hard traveling that day, as the ice was rough and we had to go over considerable young ice.

We kept trying this ice all the way with an ax to see if it was strong enough to sustain our weight. We tried this once too often and lost the ax, and I was compelled to cut fuel with my



THAT NIGHT THE FREEMAN BURNED TO THE WATER'S EDGE.

succession of gales and were in the same storm that wrecked the ship Samaria and the schooner General Sliglon.

We succeeded in catching one bow-head whale, the bone of which we shipped to San Francisco on the schooner Sailor Boy, which was receiving freight from the whale ships at Port Clarence.

In July we returned to Unalaska to get sufficient coal to last the balance of the voyage, and then went back to the Arctic Ocean. We had fair weather up to the 8th of September last. On that date we were in young ice, about three miles to the eastward of Point Barrow. Close to us lay the steam whaler Orca, Captain A. C. Sherman; the steamer Jessie H. Freeman, Captain Humphreys, and the schooner Rosario, Captain Edwin Coffin. Previous to this date the schooner Rosario lay in such a dangerous position that the steamer Orca steamed over to her and towed her to safer anchorage, thereby saving the officers, crew and vessel.

On the evening of September 8 a native boarded us, bringing with him a message from the whalerships over to the eastward, and requesting us to cache on the shore all the provisions we could spare and then work south as quickly as possible to a place of safety, where they could join us and go with us to San Francisco.

Early on the morning of the 9th the masters of the four ships held a consultation as to the best method of working our way out. The young ice was making fast, and there was also a heavy ridge of ice along the coast,

could do with both steam and sail to work their way through the canal. The schooner Rosario did not attempt to come through the canal, as Captain Coffin hoped the ice would open enough to permit him to get into the lagoon near Point Barrow, where she would be safe. We afterward learned that she had failed to get into the lagoon.

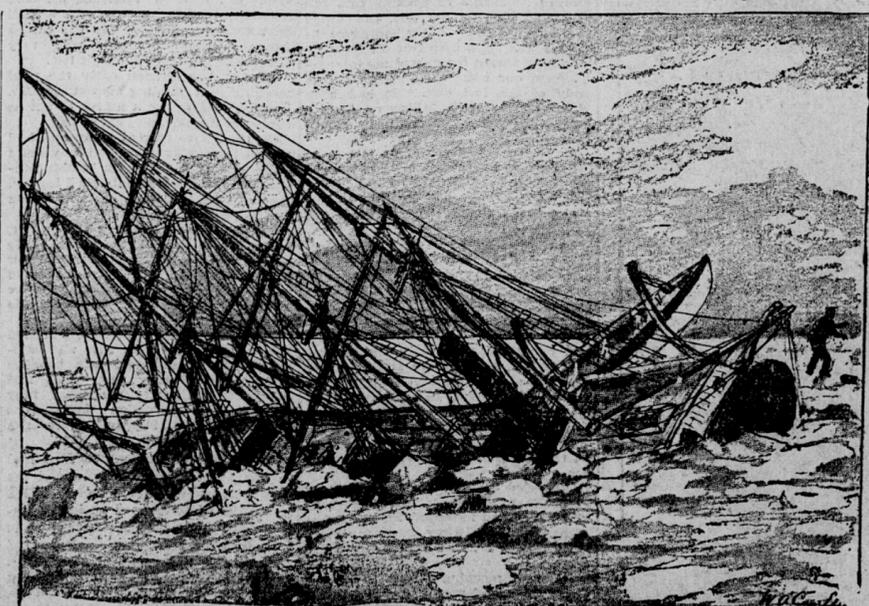
In forcing through the ice the Orca broke the three rudder pintles, making her unmanageable, so she was taken in tow by the Freeman and towed through the balance of the distance.

To make this canal took all hands three days and nights, stopping only for meals. The ships got out of the canal on September 14.

The Jessie H. Freeman and the Belvedere lay by the Orca until she had repaired her rudder, and when that was finished all steamed toward the south, the ice getting heavier all the time. We arrived off the Sea Horse Islands on the 22d day of September, a distance of forty-five miles from Point Barrow.

On this date the Orca, while following us, was caught between two immense ice floes and crushed with such force as to take the stern post and steering gear completely out of her and hurl the wheel through the pilot house. Her officers and crew jumped for the ice immediately.

At this time our ship was near clear water, but seeing the predicament of



THE ORCA GRADUALLY SLID UNDER THE ICE FLOE UNTIL SHE DISAPPEARED.