

## DOCTOR JEAN-BAPTISTE CHARCOT

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A disaster and a great misfortune have happened to French oceanography. The Oceanographic Research Vessel *Pourquoi-Pas ?* went to the bottom in a violent storm off the west coast of Iceland on 16th September, taking to their death all hands except one man. A group of French scientists, headed by Dr. J. B. CHARCOT, was onboard on its way to Greenland to continue oceanographic and geophysical researches. Thus, at the same time, we have to mourn the loss of Dr. Maurice PARAT, Senior Lecturer at the Sorbonne, Section of Bacteriology; Prof. JACQUIERT, of the Sorbonne, Naturalist; Messrs. J. DEVAUX, Physicist at the Institut de Physique du Globe du Pic du Midi; NEMOURS LARRONDE, Librarian of the Société de Géographie, Georges BA-DEUIL, Painter and Cinematographer.

Dr. J. B. CHARCOT was the son of the distinguished Prof. Jean-Martin CHARCOT, the reviver of Neuropathology. He was born on 15th July 1867 at Neuilly-sur-Seine, and studied medicine becoming house-physician at hospitals and Chef de Clinique of the Faculty of Paris. But he was a maritime enthusiast and it is as an oceanographer and polar explorer that he distinguished himself.

In 1902 in his S. Y. *Rose-Marine* he explored the small volcanic island of Jan Mayen (1). Being anxious to make some French contribution to Antarctic research, he then decided to follow in the wake of the Swede, Dr. Otto NORDENSKJOLD in the *Antarctic*, of the Briton, Captain R. P. SCOTT, in the *Discovery* (who later referred to CHARCOT as «The polar gentleman») and particularly of the courageous Belgian explorer de Gerlache (2) in the *Belgica*. It is to the same parts, viz: in Graham Land and in the Bellingshausen Sea (since called the Belgica Sea), as those in which de Gerlache worked, that he went in his yacht *Français* in 1903-05, and carried out numerous scientific observations. He became passionately fond of this region and, no sooner had he returned therefrom, than he sought to organise a second expedition. Thanks to a nation-wide subscription and subsidies from all parts, he was able to commission a vessel specially built and fitted for polar seas on plans which he drew up; this was the *Pourquoi-Pas ?*. In 1908 he sailed again for the Antarctic in this vessel and made many observations in the Palmer Archipelago; wintering there, he made charts of it and discovered, in Lat. 70° South in the Belgica Sea, a new land which is called after him. On his return he published the results of his observations and wrote extremely vivid and lively accounts of his voyages: *Expédition du «Français»* (1903-05), *Le «Français» au Pôle Sud*, *Expédition du «Pourquoi-Pas ?»* (1908-10), *Le «Pourquoi-Pas ?» dans l'Antarctique*, *Autour du Pôle Sud* (1912), *Résumé des Missions du «Pourquoi-Pas ?»* (1919).

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(1) *Annales Hydrographiques* 1903, page 5.

(2) *Hydrographic Review*, Vol. XII, N° 1, page 7.



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“ POURQUOI-PAS ? ”