

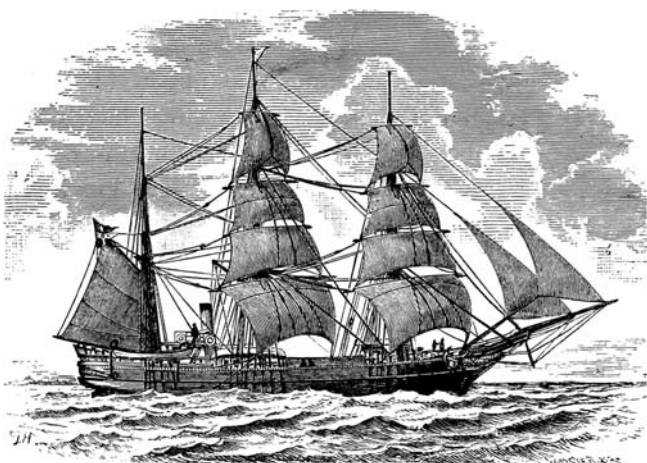
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

[More information](#)



## INTRODUCTION.

THE voyage, which it is my purpose to sketch in this book, owed its origin to two preceding expeditions from Sweden to the western part of the Siberian Polar Sea, in the course of which I reached the mouth of the Yenisej, the first time in 1875 in a walrus-hunting sloop, the *Proeven*, and the second time in 1876 in a steamer, the *Ymer*.

After my return from the latter voyage, I came to the conclusion, that, on the ground of the experience thereby gained, and of the knowledge which, under the light of that experience, it was possible to obtain from old, especially from Russian, explorations of the north coast of Asia, I was warranted in asserting that the open navigable water, which two years in succession had carried me across the Kara Sea, formerly of so bad repute, to the mouth of the Yenisej, extended in all probability as far as Behring's Straits, and that a circumnavigation of the old world was thus within the bounds of possibility.

B

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

[More information](#)

It was natural that I should endeavour to take advantage of the opportunity for making new and important discoveries which thus presented itself. An opportunity had arisen for solving a geographical problem—the forcing a north-east passage to China and Japan—which for more than three hundred years had been a subject of competition between the world's foremost commercial states and most daring navigators, and which, if we view it in the light of a circumnavigation of the old world, had, for thousands of years back, been an object of desire for geographers. I determined, therefore, at first to make use, for this purpose, of the funds which Mr. A. SIBIRIAKOFF, after my return from the expedition of 1876, placed at my disposal for the continuation of researches in the Siberian Polar Sea. For a voyage of the extent now contemplated, this sum, however, was quite insufficient. On this account I turned to His Majesty the King of Sweden and Norway, with the inquiry whether any assistance in making preparations for the projected expedition might be reckoned upon from the public funds. King OSCAR, who, already as Crown Prince, had given a large contribution to the Torell expedition of 1861, immediately received my proposal with special warmth, and promised within a short time to invite the Swedish members of the Yenisej expeditions and others interested in our voyages of exploration in the north, to meet him for the purpose of consultation, asking me at the same time to be prepared against the meeting with a complete exposition of the reasons on which I grounded my views—differing so widely from the ideas commonly entertained—of the state of the ice in the sea off the north coast of Siberia.

This assembly took place at the palace in Stockholm, on the 26th January, 1877, which may be considered the birthday of the *Vega* Expedition, and was ushered in by a dinner, to which a large number of persons were invited, among whom were the members of the Swedish royal house that happened to be then in Stockholm; Prince JOHN OF GLÜCKSBURG; Dr. OSCAR

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## INTRODUCTION.

3

DICKSON, the Gothenburg merchant; Baron F. W. VON OTTER, Councillor of State and Minister of Marine, well known for his voyages in the Arctic waters in 1868 and 1871; Docent F. R. KJELLMAN, Dr. A. STUXBERG, the former a member of the expedition which wintered at Mussel Bay in 1872-73, and of that which reached the Yenisej in 1875, the latter, of the Yenisej Expeditions of 1875 and 1876; and Docents HJALMAR THEEL and A. N. LUNDSTRÖM, both members of the Yenisej Expedition of 1875.

After dinner the programme of the contemplated voyage was laid before the meeting, almost in the form in which it afterwards appeared in print in several languages. There then arose a lively discussion, in the course of which reasons were advanced for, and against the practicability of the plan. In particular the question concerning the state of the ice and the marine currents at Cape Chelyuskin gave occasion to an exhaustive discussion. It ended by His Majesty first of all declaring himself convinced of the practicability of the plan of the voyage, and prepared not only as king, but also as a private individual, to give substantial support to the enterprise. Dr. Oscar Dickson shared His Majesty's views, and promised to contribute to the not inconsiderable expenditure, which the new voyage of exploration would render necessary. This is the sixth expedition to the high north, the expenses of which have been defrayed to a greater or less extent by Dr. O. Dickson.<sup>1</sup> He became the banker of the *Vega* Expedition, inasmuch as to a considerable extent he advanced the necessary funds, but after our return the expenses were equally divided between His Majesty the King of Sweden and Norway, Dr. Dickson, and Mr. Sibiriakoff.

I very soon had the satisfaction of appointing, as superintendents of the botanical and zoological work of the expedition in this new Polar voyage, my old and tried friends from previous

<sup>1</sup> The expeditions to Spitzbergen in 1868, to Greenland in 1870, to Spitzbergen in 1872-73, and to the Yenisej in 1875 and 1876.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

[More information](#)

expeditions, Docents Dr. Kjellman and Dr. Stuxberg, observers so well known in Arctic literature. At a later period, another member of the expedition that wintered on Spitzbergen in 1872-73, Lieutenant (now Captain in the Swedish Navy) L. PALANDER, offered to accompany the new expedition as commander of the vessel—an offer which I gladly accepted, well knowing, as I did from previous voyages, Captain Palander's distinguished ability both as a seaman and an Arctic explorer. Further there joined the expedition Lieutenant GIACOMO BOVE, of the Italian Navy; Lieutenant A. HOVGAARD, of the Danish Navy; Medical candidate E. ALMQUIST, as medical officer; Lieutenant O. NORDQUIST, of the Russian Guards; Lieutenant E. BRUSEWITZ, of the Swedish Navy; together with twenty-one men—petty officers and crew, according to a list which will be found further on.

An expedition of such extent as that now projected, intended possibly to last two years, with a vessel of its own, a numerous well-paid *personnel*, and a considerable scientific staff, must of course be very costly. In order somewhat to diminish the expenses, I gave in, on the 25th August, 1877, a memorial to the Swedish Government with the prayer that the steamer *Vega*, which in the meantime had been purchased for the expedition, should be thoroughly overhauled and made completely seaworthy at the naval dockyard at Karlskrona; and that, as had been done in the case of the Arctic Expeditions of 1868 and 1872-73, certain grants of public money should be given to the officers and men of the Royal Swedish Navy, who might take part as volunteers in the projected expedition. With reference to this petition the Swedish Government was pleased, in terms of a letter of the Minister of Marine, dated the 31st December, 1877, both to grant sea-pay, &c., to the officer and eighteen men of the Royal Navy, who might take part in the expedition in question, and at the same time to resolve on making a proposal to the Diet in which additional grants were to be asked for it.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## INTRODUCTION.

5

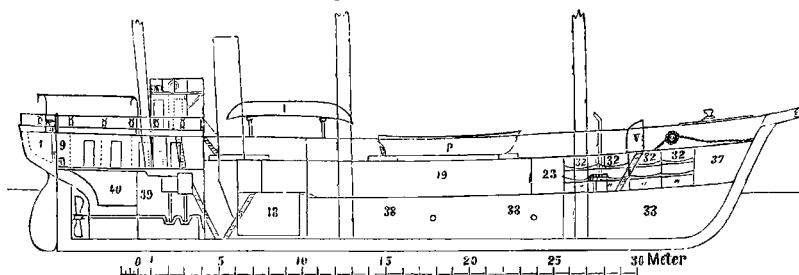
The proposal to the Diet of 1878 was agreed to with that liberality which has always distinguished the representatives of the Swedish people when grants for scientific purposes have been asked for; which was also the case with a private motion made in the same Diet by the President, C. F. WÆRN, member of the Academy of Sciences, whereby it was proposed to confer some further privileges on the undertaking.

It is impossible here to give at length the decision of the Diet, and the correspondence which was exchanged with the authorities with reference to it. But I am under an obligation of gratitude to refer to the exceedingly pleasant reception I met with everywhere, in the course of these negotiations, from officials of all ranks, and to give a brief account of the privileges which the expedition finally came to enjoy, mainly owing to the letter of the Government to the Marine Department, dated the 14th June, 1878.

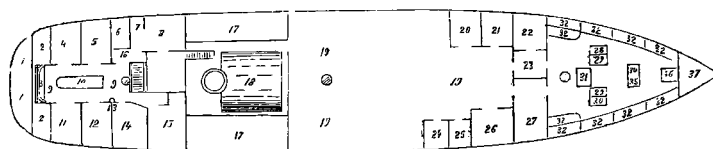
Two officers and seventeen men of the Royal Swedish Navy having obtained permission to take part in the expedition as volunteers, I was authorised to receive on account of the expedition from the treasury of the Navy, at Karlskrona—with the obligation of returning that portion of the funds which might not be required, and on giving approved security—full sea pay for two years for the officers, petty officers, and men taking part in the expedition; pay for the medical officer, at the rate of 3,500 Swedish crowns a year, for the same time; and subsistence money for the men belonging to the Navy, at the rate of one and a half Swedish crowns per man per day. The sum, by which the cost of provisions exceeded the amount calculated at this rate, was defrayed by the expedition, which likewise gave a considerable addition to the pay of the sailors belonging to the Navy. I further obtained permission to receive, on account of the expedition, from the Navy stores at Karlskrona, provisions, medicines, coal, oil, and other necessary equipment, under obligation to

**THE VEGA.**

Longitudinal section.

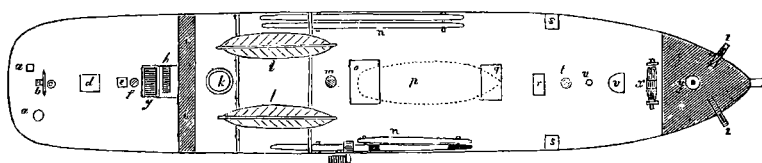


Plan of arrangement under deck.



- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Powder magazine.                             | 15. Cabin for Prof. Nordenskiöld.                     | 29. Hatch to the cable-tier.                          |
| 2. Instrument room.                             | 16. Corridor (descent to gunroom).                    | 30. Hatch to room set apart for scientific purposes.  |
| 3. Sofa in gunroom.                             | 17. Coal bunkers.                                     | 31. Galley.   |
| 4. Cabin for Lieut. Brusewitz.                  | 18. Boiler.   | 32. Bunks for the crew — double rows.                 |
| 5. Cabin for Lieuts. Bove and Hovgaard.         | 19. Storeroom 'tween decks.                           | 33. Cable-tier and provision store.                   |
| 6. Pantry during winter.                        | 20. Pilot's cabin. (built in                          | 34. Hatch to store-room.                              |
| 7. Corridor.                                    | 21. Cabin for Lieut. Bove/Japan.                      | 35. Hatch to room for daily giving out of provisions. |
| 8. Cabin for Dr. Stuxberg and Lieut. Nordquist. | 22. Cabin for two petty officers.                     | 36. Hatch to rope-room.                               |
| 9. Gunroom.                                     | 23. Petty officers' mess.                             | 37. Sail-room.  |
| 10. Table in gunroom.                           | 24. Cabin for carpenter's } built effects. } in Japan | 38. Storeroom for water and coal.                     |
| 11. Cabin for Dr. Almqvist.                     | 25. Cabin for collections. }                          | 39. Engine-room.                                      |
| 12. Cabin for Dr. Kjellman.                     | 26. Cabin for library.                                | 40. Cellar.   |
| 13. Stove.                                      | 27. Gunroom pantry.                                   |   |
| 14. Cabin for Capt. Palander.                   | 28. Hatch to provision room.                          |   |

Plan of upper deck



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. Thermometer case.                         | n. Booms (for reserve masts, yards, &c.). |
| b. The rudder.                               | o. Main hatch.                            |
| c. Binnacle with compass.                    | p. Steam launch.                          |
| d. } Skylights to the gunroom.               | q. Fore hatch.                            |
| e. }   | r. Hencoops.                              |
| f. Mizzenmast.                               | s. Water closet.                          |
| g. Descent to the gunroom } companion common | t. Foremast.                              |
| h. Descent to the engine } to both.          | u. Smoke-cowl.                            |
| i. Bridge.                                   | v. Descent to lower deck (companion).     |
| k. Funnel.                                   | x. Windlass.                              |
| l. Boats lying on gallows.                   | y. Capstan on the forecastle.             |
| m. Mainmast.                                 | z. Catheads.                              |

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

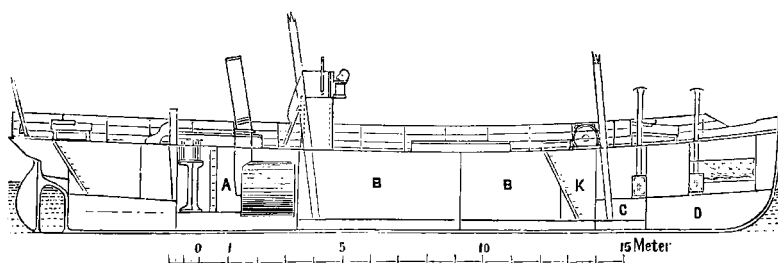
[More information](#)

## INTRODUCTION.

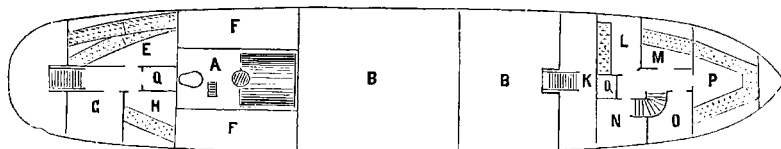
7

*THE LENA.*

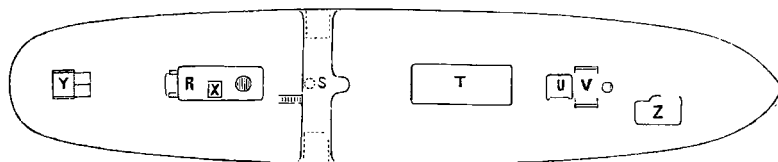
Longitudinal section.



Plan of arrangement under deck.



Plan of upper deck.



- A. Engine-room.
- B. B. Hold.
- C. Cable.
- D. Water ballast tank.
- E. Forecastle.
- F. F. Coal bunkers.
- G. Fireman's cabin.
- H. Engineer's cabin.
- K. Provision-room.
- L. Captain's cabin.
- M. Mate's cabin.
- N. Kitchen.
- O. Pantry.
- P. Saloon.
- Q. Q. Presses.
- R. Engine-room companion.
- S. Bridge.
- T. Hatch to hold.
- U. Descent to provision-room.
- V. Winch.
- X. Descent to engine-room.
- Y. Descent to fore-castle and engineer's cabin.
- Z. Descent to captain's cabin, saloon, &c.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

[More information](#)

pay for any excess of value over 10,000 Swedish crowns (about 550*l.*); and finally the vessel of the expedition was permitted to be equipped and made completely seaworthy at the naval dockyard at Karlskrona, on condition, however, that the excess of expenditure on repairs over 25,000 crowns (about 1,375*l.*) should be defrayed by the expedition.

On the other hand my request that the *Vega*, the steamer purchased for the voyage, might be permitted to carry the man-of-war flag, was refused by the Minister of Marine in a letter of the 2nd February 1878. The *Vega* was therefore inscribed in the following month of March in the Swedish Yacht Club. It was thus under its flag, *the Swedish man-of-war flag with a crowned O in the middle*, that the first circumnavigation of Asia and Europe was carried into effect.

The *Vega*, as will be seen from the description quoted farther on, is a pretty large vessel, which during the first part of the voyage was to be heavily laden with provisions and coal. It would therefore be a work of some difficulty to get it afloat, if, in sailing forward along the coast in new, unsurveyed waters, it should run upon a bank of clay or sand. I therefore gladly availed myself of Mr. Sibiriakoff's offer to provide for the greater safety of the expedition, by placing at my disposal funds for building another steamer of a smaller size, the *Lena*, which should have the river Lena as its main destination, but, during the first part of the expedition, should act as tender to the *Vega*, being sent before to examine the state of the ice and the navigable waters, when such service might be useful. I had the *Lena* built at Motala, of Swedish Bessemer steel, mainly after a drawing of Engineer R. Runeberg of Finland. The steamer answered the purpose for which it was intended particularly well.

An unexpected opportunity of providing the steamers with coal during the course of the voyage besides arose by my receiving a commission, while preparations were making for



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## INTRODUCTION.

9

the expedition of the *Vega*, to fit out, also on Mr. Sibiriakoff's account, two other vessels, the steamer *Fraser*, and the sailing vessel *Express*, in order to bring to Europe from the mouth of the Yenisej a cargo of grain, and to carry thither a quantity of European goods. This was so much the more advantageous, as, according to the plan of the expedition, the *Vega* and the *Lena* were first to separate from the *Fraser* and the *Express* at the mouth of the Yenisej. The first-named vessels had thus an opportunity of taking on board at that place as much coal as there was room for.

I intend further on to give an account of the voyages of the other three vessels, each of which deserves a place in the history of navigation. To avoid details I shall only mention here that, at the beginning of the voyage which is to be described here, the following four vessels were at my disposal:—

1. The *Vega*, commanded by Lieutenant L. Palander, of the Swedish Navy; circumnavigated Asia and Europe.
2. The *Lena*, commanded by the walrus-hunting captain, Christian Johannesen; the first vessel that reached the river Lena from the Atlantic.
3. The *Fraser*, commanded by the merchant captain, Emil Nilsson.
4. The *Express*, commanded by the merchant captain, Gundersen; the first which brought cargoes of grain from the Yenisej to Europe.<sup>1</sup>

When the *Vega* was bought for the expedition it was described by the sellers as follows:—

“The steamer *Vega* was built at Bremerhaven in 1872-73, of the best oak, for the share-company ‘Ishafvet,’ and under special inspection. It has twelve years’ first class  $\frac{3}{8}$  I.I. Veritas,

<sup>1</sup> The first cargo of goods from Europe to the Yenisej was taken thither by me in the *Ymer* in 1876. The first vessel that sailed from the Yenisej to the Atlantic was a sloop, *The Dawn*, built at Yeniseisk, commanded by the Russian merchant captain, Schwanenberg, in 1877.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04983-2 - The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe: With a Historical Review of Previous Journeys Along the North Coast of the Old World: Volume 1

A.E. Nordenskiöld

Excerpt

[More information](#)

measures 357 register tons gross, or 299 net. It was built and used for whale-fishing in the North Polar Sea, and strengthened in every way necessary and commonly used for that purpose. Besides the usual timbering of oak, the vessel has an ice-skin of greenheart, wherever the ice may be expected to come at the vessel. The ice-skin extends from the neighbourhood of the under chain bolts to within from 1·2 to 1·5 metres of the keel. The dimensions are :—

Length of keel	...	...	...	37 6 metres.
Do. over deck	...	...	...	43·4 „
Beam extreme	...	...	...	8·4 „
Depth of hold	...	...	...	4·6 „

“The engine, of sixty horse-power, is on Wolff’s plan, with excellent surface condensers. It requires about ten cubic feet of coal per hour. The vessel is fully rigged as a barque, and has pitch pine masts, iron wire rigging, and patent reefing topsails. It sails and manœuvres uncommonly well, and under sail alone attains a speed of nine to ten knots. During the trial trip the steamer made seven and a half knots, but six to seven knots per hour may be considered the speed under steam. Further, there are on the vessel a powerful steam-winch, a reserve rudder, and a reserve propeller. The vessel is besides provided in the whole of the under hold with iron tanks, so built that they lie close to the vessel’s bottom and sides, the tanks thus being capable of offering a powerful resistance in case of ice pressure. They are also serviceable for holding provisions, water, and coal.”<sup>1</sup>

We had no reason to take exception to this description,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In order to obtain sufficient room for coal and provisions most of these tanks were taken out at Karlskrona.

<sup>2</sup> The consumption of coal, however, was reckoned by Captain Palander at twelve cubic feet or 0·3 cubic metre an hour, with a speed of seven knots.