SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE AND WORK IN COLD REGIONS.

MISSION work in Greenland and Labrador will form the subject of the present and following articles. It is a topic of absorbing interest and one which cannot fail to excite our admiration and gratitude. The introduction of Christianity into Labrador will claim our earliest attention.* In the year 1752, three Moravian missionaries from Greenland landed on the coast of Labrador. The Greenland Mission of the Unitas Fratrum had been established just fifteen years before, in 1733. Almost immediately after their arrival in this latter country, the Brethren seem to have entertained the opinion that, the Eskimo living upon the opposite coast of Davis's Straits, were a branch of the same people as those amongst whom they worked in Greenland. This opinion was subsequently confirmed by the report of Ellis, an early navigator in Arctic seas, who testified that the Eskimo whom he met with in his voyage to Hudson's Bay resembled the Greenlanders in nearly every particular. He noted only one word of their language, which on being compared with that of the Greenland Eskimo, was found to correspond exactly with the term used by them to denote the same object; hence the Greenland missionaries concluded that the two people used a common tongue. "There seemed but little connection," writes an unknown author in 1831, "between a voyage to Hudson's Bay, undertaken for a secular object, and the sending of missionaries to preach the Gospel to the savages on the coast ef Labrador, yet it was so ordered in providence that the information derived from Ellis, concerning the Eskimo should stimulate the Moravian missionaries in Greenland to make some exertion for sending the Gospel to that people." The venerable and lion-hearted Matthew Stach, of whom we shall hear more hereafter in connection with Greenland missions, took a very prominent part in pioneer mission work amongst the Labrador Eskimo. In 1752 he sought permission of the Hudson's Bay Company to preach the Gospel to the Indians belonging to their factories; but, for some unknown reason, this could not be obtained. Determined, however, to accomplish his purpose, thus early and somewhat rudely thwarted, he succeeded in his endeavor to induce some of the Brethren resident in London to visit the coast of Labrador. A vessel was fitted out by some English merchants favorably disposed to their Mission, for the purpose of making a trading voyage on the coast of Labra-

dor, and in this vessel the expedition set sail in May, 1752. After a quick passage, the ship cast anchor in a large bay on the coast of Labrador in July. This bay was afterwards known as Nisbet's Haven* in honor of one of the owners of the pioneer vessel. The missionaries resolved to make this portion of the coast their headquarters for the present; they therefore lost no time in erecting a house with timber which they had taken from England ready framed.

But here, again, they were beset with a most severe trial which effectually put a period to their present efforts. The Brethren, of whom there were four, before leaving England secured the valuable services of Christian Erhard, a Dutchman, as their interpreter, who had acquired an extensive knowledge of the Eskimo tongue when whale fishing in Disco Bay. The four missionaries, being landed in Nisbet's Haven, were left there busily constructing their future dwelling, while Erhard proceeded with the ship farther north in order to traffic with the natives. He found that he could make himself understood by them, but, being afraid of the guns they persistently refused to go on board the ship. Erhard, therefore, with five of the crew, all of whom were unarmed and defenceless, landed in a bay between the islands: but they never returned. The captain of the ship looked and waited in vain for the return of his brave seamen, many days. Having no boat he was unable to go in search of them. At last, when he despaired of gaining any information as to their fate, he sailed back to Nisbet's Haven, and, calling the missionaries on board, he represented to them that after the loss of so large a portion of his crew, he was unable to navigate his ship across the Atlantic without their assistance. This, of course, under the sad circumstances, these brave, but greatly disappointed missionaries, could not well refuse to give; but they looked forward to returning to their present abode in the following year. The English Brethren, on being informed of the sad fate which had so unexpectedly overtaken Erhard and his companions, considered it imprudent to renew their efforts to establish missionary stations in Labrador until intelligence should be received of Erhard. With the object of ascertaining their fate a ship was despatched from England to Labrador in the year following. She first landed at Nisbet's Haven, where the Mission house, erected in the previous year, was found in ruins. Proceeding north, the bodies of the brave Erhard and his companions were discovered in a horribly mutilated condition, which proved beyond doubt that they had been murdered by the savage Eskimo. The Brethren received the intelligence thus obtained with silent sadness, and all missionary effort concerning Labrador was for the present abandoned.

In 1764 a second, and an eminently successful attempt was made to establish a permanent mis-

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*There is a tradition, traceable, I understand, to the Icelandic sagas, that a Bishop of Iceland in the middle ages deputed a band of missionaries to visit the coast of Labrador and Newfoundland with a view to establishing missions amongst the natives. Nothing, however, seems to be known of the result of these laudable efforts; but it is pretty well certain that neither amongst the Newfoundland Beoths, nor the various tribes of Labrador, were any evidences subsequently found of former Evangelistic work. The Beoths as we have shown above, died as they had lived alas! without a knowledge of the true God, and the first to evangelize the Montagnais and Eskimo were the Jesuits and Moravians respectively.

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*Now Hopedale, a flourishing Mission station.