

The ice was all around,
It cracked and growled, and roared and
howled.
Like noises in a sward

When a storm arises amid these icy
solitudes the scene is grand and awful
beyond all powers of description.

Considering all the perils, it is sur-
prising how few fatal disasters occur.
During the seal hunt of 1872 one hun-
dred men perished, fifty of these having
gone down in a single vessel called the
Huntman, on the coast of Labrador.
In the same year, two steamers, the
Bloodhound and Retriever, were crushed
by the ice and sank, but their crews,
numbering nearly four hundred men,
managed to reach Battle Harbour, in
Labrador, over the ice, after enduring
great hardships.

Happily these terrible storms are not
frequent. For the most part the sea is
at rest, and then the ice-fields present
a strange beauty of their own, which has
a wonderful fascination. When the sun
is shining brightly it is too dazzling, and
its monotony is wearisome. The moon,
the stars, and the flickering Aurora are
needed to reveal all its beauty.
We shall now look into the equipment
of

A SEALING STEAMER,

and then in imagination accompany her
to the ice-fields, in order to form some
idea of the hunt.

In the last week of February the roads
leading from the various outposts of St.
John's begin to be calkified by the ap-
pearance of the sealers, or, as they are
called in the vernacular, "swilers," their
enterprise being designated "swile hunt-
in." Each of them carries a bundle
of spare clothing over his shoulder,
swinging at the extremity of a pole six
or seven feet in length, which is called
a "gaff," and which serves as a bat
or club to strike the seal on the nose,
which it is most vulnerable. The same
weapon serves as an ice-pole in leaping
from "pan" to "pan," and is also used
for dragging the skin and fat of the seal
over the fields and hummocks of ice to
the side of the vessel. To answer these
various purposes the "gaff" is armed
with an iron hook at one end and bound
with iron. Some of the men, in addi-
tion, carry a long sealing-gun on their
shoulders. These are the "bow" or
"after gunners," who are marksmen to
shoot old seals or others that cannot be
reached by the "gaff." The outfit of
the sealers is of the simplest description.
Sealskin boots reaching to the knee,
having a thick leather sole well nailed,
to enable them to walk over the ice, pro-
tect the feet; coarse canvas jackets, often
showing the industry of a wife or
mother in the number of patches which
adorn them, are worn over warm woollen
shirts and other inner clothing; sealskin
caps and tweed or moleskin trousers,
with thick woollen mits, complete the
costume, which is more picturesque than
handsome.

IN THE FORECASTLE,

or other parts of each ship, rough berths
are constructed. The sealers have to
furnish themselves with a straw mattress
and blanket. The men are packed
like herrings in a barrel, and as a rule
they never undress during the voyage.
In the rare event of putting on a clean
shirt, it goes over its predecessor, with-
out removing the latter—a method which
saves time and trouble, and is, besides,
conducive to warmth.

The food of the men is none of the
daintiest, and no one who is at all
squeamish about what he "eats, drinks,
and avoids need attempt to go "swile
huntin." The diet consists of biscuit,
pork, butter, and tea sweetened with
molasses. On three days of the week
dinner consists of pork and "duff," the
latter item consisting of flour and water,
with a little fatty substance intermixed
"to lighten it." When boiled it is al-
most as hard as a cannon ball. On the
other four days of the week all the meals
consist of tea, sweetened with molasses,
and biscuit. Such is the rough fare on
which these hardy fellows go through
their trying and laborious work. When,
however, they fall in with seals, their
diet is improved. They cook the heart,
liver, flippers, and other parts, and feast
on them ad libitum, and generally come
ashore in excellent condition, though the
odour that attends them does not suggest
the spicy breezes which blow soft from
Ceylon's isle.

Very little sickness occurs among the
men while leading this rough life. They
are often out for eight or ten weeks
without seeing land, and enduring the
hardest toils. When seals are taken in
large quantities, the hold of the vessel is
first filled, and then the men willingly
surrender their berths, which are packed
full of "white-coats." In fact, every

nook and corner is crammed with the
precious fat, and the sealers sleep where
they can in barrels on deck, on a layer
of seals, or in the coal bunks. It is
marvellous to see men, after eight or ten
weeks of such life, leap ashore hearty
and vigorous. Their outer garments are
polished with seal fat, and it is ad-
visable to keep to windward of them till
they have procured a change of clothing.

ADVENTURES

At times, in endeavouring to push her
way through, the vessel is caught in the
heavy ice, and then the ice-saws are
called into requisition to cut an opening
to the nearest lead of clear water,
that she may work her way north. But
the heavy Arctic ice may close in under
the pressure of a nor-easter, and then
no amount of steam-power can drive her
through. Howling night closes in, bergs
and floes are crashing all around, and
momentarily threatening her with de-
struction, the wind roars through the
shrouds, driving on its wings the arrowy
sleet and snow, sharp as needles, which
only men of iron can stand. Thus,
locked in the embrace of the floe, the
luckless vessel is drifted helplessly hun-
dreds of miles, till a favourable wind
loosens the icy prison walls. It is no
uncommon occurrence for a hundred
vessels to be thus beset by heavy ice,
through which no passage can be forced.
Some are "nipped," some crushed to
atoms, and the men have to escape for
their lives over the ice. Others are
carried into the great northern bays, or
borne in the heavy "pack" up and
down on the ocean for weeks, returning
to port "clean"—that is, without a
single seal. There are seasons when
the boldest and most skilful captains
fall. At other times, by a turn of good
fortune, a vessel "strikes the seals" a
day or two after leaving port, and finds
herself in the middle of a "seal patch"
sufficient to load the Great Eastern.
The whole ice for miles around is cov-
ered thick with the young "white-coats,"
and in a fortnight from the time of the
departure, she returns to port loaded to
the gunwale, her very decks being piled
with the skins and fat of seals.

When approaching such an

ARCTIC EL DORADO

as this, the excitement on board may be
imagined as the welcome whimpering of
the young harp seals is heard. Their
cry has a remarkable resemblance to
the sobbing or whining of an infant in
pain, which is redoubled as the destroy-
ers approach. Young hunters, who now
apply their gaffs for the first time, are
often almost overcome by their baby
lamentations. Compassion, however, is
soon gulped down. The vessel is "laid
to," the men eagerly bound on the ice,
and the work of destruction begins. A
blow on the nose from the gaff stuns
or kills the young seal. Instantly the
sculpting-knife is at work, the skin is
detached with amazing rapidity, the fat
and skin alone are carried off. This
process is called "sculpting"—a corrup-
tion, no doubt, of scalping. The skin
or pelt is generally about three feet long
and two and a half feet wide, and weighs
from thirty-five to fifty pounds. Five
or six pelts are reckoned a heavy load
to drag over rough or broken ice some-
times for one or two miles. If the ice
is loose and open the hunter has to leap
from pan to pan.

Fancy two or three hundred men on a
field of ice carrying on this work. Then
what a picture the vessel presents as
the pelts are being piled on deck to cool
previous to stowage below! One after
another the hunters arrive with their
loads, and snatch a hasty moment to
drink a bowl of tea and eat a piece of
biscuit and butter. The poor mother
seals, now cubless, are seen popping
their heads up in the small lakes of
water and holes among the ice, anxiously
looking for their young.

ON SHORE.

So soon as the sailing vessel reaches
port with her fat cargo, the skimmers go
to work and separate skin and fat. The
former are at once salted and stored for
export to England, to be converted into
boots and shoes, harness, portmanteaus,
etc. The old method of manufacturing
the fat was to throw it into huge wooden
vats, in which the pressure of its own
weight and the heat of the sun extracted
the oil, which was drawn off and bar-
relled for exportation. This was a
tedious process. Lately steam has
been employed to quicken the extraction
of the oil. By means of steam-driven
machinery, the fat is now rapidly cut
up by revolving knives into minute
pieces, then ground finer into a sort of
gigantic sausage-machine; afterwards
steamed in a tank, which rapidly extracts
the oil, and finally, before being bar-
relled, it is exposed for a time in glass-

covered tanks to the action of the sun's
rays. By this process the work of
manufacturing, which formerly occupied
two months, is completed in two weeks.
Not only so, but by the steam process
the disagreeable smell of the oil is re-
moved, the quality improved, and the
quantity increased.

The refuse is sold to the farmers, who
mix it with bog and earth, which con-
verts it into a highly fertilizing compost.
The average value of a tun of seal-oil is
about a hundred and forty dollars. The
skin of a young harp seal is worth from
ninety to one hundred cents. The
greater part of the oil is sent to Britain,
where it is largely used in lighthouses
and mines, and for lubricating ma-
chinery. It is also used in the manu-
facture of the finer kinds of soap.

THE HARP SEAL.

—par excellence the seal of commerce—
is so called from having a broad curved
line of connected spots proceeding from
each shoulder and meeting on the back
above the tail, and forming a figure
something like an ancient harp. The
old harp seals alone have this figuring,
and not till their second year.

The hood seal is much larger than the
harp. The male, called by the hunters
"the dog-hood," is distinguished from
the female by a singular hood or bag of
flesh on his nose. When attacked or
alarmed he inflates this hood so as to
cover the face and eyes, and it is strong
enough to resist seal shot. It is im-
possible to kill one of these creatures
when his sensitive nose is thus pro-
tected, even with a sealing-gun, so long
as his head or his tail is toward you.

Seals are very intelligent, and may be
tamed and taught many tricks, as shown
in the picture on first page.

At a time when all other northern
countries are idle and locked in icy fet-
ters, here is an industry that can be
plied by the fishermen of Newfoundland,
and by which in a couple of months a
million (and at times a million and a
half) of dollars are won. It is over-
early in May, so that it does not in-
terfere with the summer cod-fishery nor
with the cultivation of the soil. This,
of course, greatly enhances its value.

The seal-fishery, writes the Rev. Mr.
Percival, furnishes us with not a few
illustrations of that firm adhesion

TO CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE

which it is impossible for even the
worldly to gaze upon without rapt ad-
miration. Many of these stalwart and
grim-looking "swilers" have in our
churches sat at the blessed feet of the
"Master," and learnt lessons from him.
These Christian principles are often
severely tested. For instance, I knew
of a case when a Christian captain was
out at the ice after seals. On a bright
and beautiful Sabbath morning he struck
one of these El Dorados; hundreds of
thousands of seals surrounded his ship.
Other crews about him were busily en-
gaged in taking them and his men were
impatient also to begin the work of
death. Before the close of the day he
might have loaded his ship with some
\$50,000 worth of seals, but he was firm
to his Christian principles, and not one
seal was taken by him or any of his
crew on the Sabbath day. During the
following night a strong breeze sprang
up, and when Monday morning dawned
there was not a seal to be seen any-
where. That same captain returned to
port with eighty seals, and yet, the brave
man said, "I would do the same thing
again next year, sir!" Such illustra-
tions of moral heroism the ice-fields off
present, and every one of them is a ser-
mon of greater eloquence and power
than ever came from the lips of John
the golden-mouthed.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Dear reader, have you ever thought
how much is contained in the Lord's
Prayer? It is indeed beautiful and in-
structive; and like a diamond in a
queen's crown it unites a thousand
sparkling gems in one.

It teaches all of us—every one of us—
to look to God as our parent: "Our
Father."

It teaches us to raise our thoughts and
desires above the earth: "Which art in
heaven."

It tells us that we must reverence our
heavenly Father: "Hallowed be thy
name."

It breathes in hopeful words the saints'
reward: "Thy kingdom come."

And a submissive, obedient spirit:
"Give us this day our daily bread."

And a forgiving spirit: "Forgive us
our debts as we forgive our debtors."

And a cautious spirit: "Deliver us
from evil."

And, last of all, an adoring spirit:
"For thine is the kingdom, and the
power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

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Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

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PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

APRIL 3, 1898.

Some little things that are great. A
cup of cold water.—Matt. 10. 42.

PRACTICAL DUTIES.

This text is found among an interest-
ing cluster of precious sayings of our
Lord. He was speaking more especially
to his early disciples, and through them
to all those who should hereafter believe
on him to the end of time. The object
which he seemed to have in view was
that by their practice or outward life
they should exhibit the evidence of true
discipleship by the practice of benevo-
lence.

CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

This is a duty often inculcated. Jesus
Christ and the writers of the New Tes-
tament often refer to it as the result of
the doctrines of our holy Christianity.
You remember what Christ said respect-
ing the good Samaritan who relieved the
poor man who fell among thieves, and
how highly his conduct was commended
rather than that of either the priest or
the Levite. St. John, whose three
epistles are full of practical Christianity,
questions every man's love to God if he
shuts up his bowels of compassion
against any poor brother whom he knows
to be in need. The more the principles
of Christianity imbue the public mind,
there will be greater kindness manifested
towards the poor.

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

Ecclesiastical history is an instructive
and profitable study, and we learn this
grand lesson that the nations who are
most under its influence are the nations
which have the most hospitals and
houses of industry, and other institu-
tions which have been provided for the
poor. Greece and Rome, even in their
most palmy days, never cared for the
poor. Horses and cattle and sheep were
better treated than they were. Chris-
tianity teaches its professors to be kind
to the poor.

REWARD OF GOOD DEEDS.

To do good even of the smallest kind
receives a reward. Our divine Master
is always kind, and he would encourage
us to deeds of kindness by the promise
of reward. A cup of cold water is cer-
tainly not an act to merit much com-
mendation, and yet see, whoever acts the
part of a benefactor in the bestowment
of a little of that liquid shall not be
forgotten by our heavenly Father.

"HOW DO YOU DO" IN AINU.

BY E. R. GOULD.

When I was in Yezo I went to an Ainu
school, taught by a missionary. When
we entered the school-room all the boys
rubbed their hands together, and then
stroked downward from their chins,
where they hope their beards will one
day be. Each girl passed one hand
backward and forward above her lips,
and then with both hands pushed back
her hair from her face. This was the
Ainu way for saying, "How do you do?"