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Along the Coast of Labrador.

The heart of the English-speaking race has ever responded to tales of the sea, with all their daring and heroism, and in particular to tales of the northern seas, where the ice and snow make the conflict with nature sterner. It is hard to imagine any place where this conflict, this fight for life as it really is, is keener, involves more constant daring, more patient heroism than among the rocky bays and inlets of the Labrador coast.

The whole peninsula of Labrador lies 'sterile and forbidding among togs and icebergs famous only besides for dogs and cod.' When the average man or woman of to-day was at school, there was an even scantier fringe than there is now along the north coast, of hard names, in which the 'k's' seemed to be showered with impartial liberalty-survivals of the gradually disappearing Eskimo race. If we remembered Cape Chidley and Cape Charles we felt it was all that could be expected of us, while for some of us, at least, all thought of real life in such a bleak place was centred round the Indians, the Eskimo and the fur traders in Ballantyne's 'Ungava.'

To-day it is different, for, largely through the work of the Royal National Mission to Deep-Sea Fishermen, during the past thirteen years, the central figure of which has Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell, whose picture we give, the fisher-folk of the Labrador coast are no longer strangers to us. In many places, indeed, on this side the ocean and on the other, the name of Dr. Grenfell and his helpers are household words. The children whose busy little fingers make scrap-books or sew quilts for the hospitals, the older folks who make and mend warm clothing for the shivering frames or supply drugs, instruments and needed stores for the mission hospitals and the mission vessel, aged helpers here and there throughout the country who show their sympathy by knitting warm socks, mittens, hoods or helmets,all are coming to understand more and more the conditions of the Labrador fishermen.

Dr. Grenfell himself says of these men:-"For over twenty years I have lived among the deep-sea fishermen on both sides of the Atlantic, and I can safely challenge any man to say that they are unworthy representatives of an ancestry we love to boast of. The same courage even unto death, I have seen exhibited again and again, and that where no other spur to action existed than the imperious conscience of a brave sailor. No reward was looked for, ne mead of praise obtained. Yet I have seen men go to save a human life, where heroes might have feared to follow; for more than once it meant passing, alone and unobserved, into the Valley of the Shadow of Death.'

The people of Labrador are chronically poor. The 'livyeres,' or people of the country (live heres), as distinguished from those who come from Newfoundland for the fishing season only, depend, of course, on fish for their main living. With the best possible catch, and barring all accidents, they can get only a very modest livelihood, while under ordinary circumstances, it is often little more than a pittance.

If for any reason the fish catch fails them, then starvation stares them in the face, for

the long winter is yet to come with only the scantiest supply of flour to take them through it. That these people are incapable of avoiding these extremities without help of some kind is shown by the following extract from one of Dr. Grenfell's letters:--

"We have been calculating up the gross earnings of a fisherman on this coast in a bad



DR. WILFRED T. GRENFELL,

year. I have a whole list before me, and at the risk of being tedious I will here reproduce one:--

'X-Y-Y-, widower. Has eight children. Mostly quite small. Owns one herring net and two salmon nets. His only help is his son of eighteen.

Caught this year 30 qtls. of fish. Valued

at \$3.20 \$95.00 Salmon, none. The easterly seas des-

troyed his nets Cod oil. Just paid for the salt he used

to cure the fish Earned on the roads, nil. None at the

place he lived Came to the mill and cut logs, and thus

earned..... 44.00

(This is beyond the reach of most of the families.)

Total earnings for the twelve months\$140.00

These are the people among whom Dr. Grenfell and his helpers live and work, gladly giving of their best to the needy, the desolate, the sorrowing, for the Master's sake.

Dr. Grenfell has made a notable record on the stormy coast of Labrador as a medical missionary. His parish is a wild, bleak sea that is swept with storm and breaks in angry foam along a rocky shore. For daring and danger his work is not surpassed by any missionary field in the world, and Dr. Grenfell has proved himself a worthy match for it. An Oxford graduate, he is seaman, missionary, promoter of industry, magistrate, physician, nurse and helpful friend, and his bravery and sympathy and sacrifice have made him dear to every fisherman on the coast. In his vessel,

the 'Strathcona,' built largely from the generous gift of Lord Strathcona, he visits every remote cove, bringing away to the hospitals, of which there are three, such as need treatment there and in countless ways ministering to the needs of the people.

An extract from Dr. Grenfell's own pen, in his fascinating book, 'Vikings of To-day,' gives a vivid picture of the mode of operation and of the homes reached by the mission:--

'On our arrival in a harbor our method was to hoist our blue flag to announce our arrival, to then visit any seriously sick I could hear of, after which we had evening service in a shed, stage, or house, and then, last of all, any would come for advice or assistance. To every family or vessel a good bundle of reading was given if they wished it, all the literature being selected at home as healthy and suitable for fishermen. If any wanted God's Word that too was to be had for the asking for it; while a register was kept of all the poor, describing as accurately as we could the nature of the needs and deserts of each case, in order that when at the end of the year we divided up the warm clothing we had brought out, it should fall into the hands of the most deserving. In this way also we became possessed of a valuable record for future reference.

Thus in one home when visiting a case, I found my patient to be the mother of a large family. The poor thing, who, with self-sacrificing courage, had refused to believe herself ill till she could get about no more, was lying on one single wood form in a bare and dirty room, her head close to an old cracked stove, behind which a crowd of shivering urchins were huddled together. The sickness was acute bronchitis and pleurisy, made worse by little clothing and less food. A haggard man meanwhile was pacing up and down nursing a screaming and hungry baby.

I pulled the children out from behind the stove for inspection; but their rags so failed to cover them, that each hastened back at once after the ordeal to the seclusion and warmth behind the old stove. The complete attire of one bony little mite was an old trouser leg into which he was packed like a sack. All were alike barefooted.'

Besides the three hospitals, the mission has instituted co-operative stores, that the fisherman may get the utmost possible profit out of his season's catch, and industrial work that the young men may be trained during the winter months in carpentry and other useful trades, that the girls may be instructed in sewing and other domestic knowledge, and thus the way be opened for self-help and independence. The mission has obtained a lumber grant from the Newfoundland Government which offers winter employment to a good number who need that help, the lumber finding ready market in St. John's.

At a moderate calculation, the mission benefits in greater or less degree close on 10,000 people each year. All this involves great outlay; in fact, even with the wisest administration, it takes some \$20,000 yearly to carry on the work. This money must come almost entirely from private gifts, and there is every need for increased support.

This is a work that we can most heartily