

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Work in Labrador and the Perils of the Frozen Sea.

(Wilfred Grenfell, in 'The Leisure Hour.')

March 10, 1898, broke a glorious sunny day on the snow-clad shores of Newfoundland. Glowing reports, which had been coming in all morning, of quantities of seals seen on the ice-floe drifting south, kept the spirits of the thousands of men crowded on the wharves and vessels at fever heat in anticipation of a successful hunt.

Whistles were blowing, bells were ringing, and every conceivable piece of rag that could do duty for bunting was flying, as the sturdy little vessels steamed gaily out from St. John's towards the harbor's mouth.

March 25—only fifteen days later—thick fog was hanging like a funeral pall on the sea, and made darker and drearier the usual gloomy aspect this rockbound coast

is a flag in her rigging,' said a third; 'something is wrong, I'll warrant.'

Anxious and fearful always are the hearts in many homes while fathers, husbands, and sons are away amid the perils of the Arctic ice, in their endeavors to snatch from the reluctant bosom of the deep the few dollars which at best will fall to each man's share when the catch comes to be divided. But now anxiety has become a panic, until the eager, rapidly gathering crowd can learn what new tribute the sea has demanded. It was a woe-ful story they had to listen to. The 'Greenland' was a death ship indeed.

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After leaving St. John's in company with the 'Neptune,' 'Walrus Iceland,' 'Aurora,' 'Mastif,' 'Leopard,' and 'Diana,' she had steamed to the north, cleverly picking her way and forcing a passage through the heavy ice, until she was far out to sea off the north part of Newfoundland. At length

main body being still adrift. Thank God, however, this time, as often before, they got the right track at last in the fog, and before midnight the reassuring cry went aft, 'All's well,' the last straggler had struggled home, and was enjoying his well-earned pot of tea, already forgetful of his perils past.

And so for a week the gallant ship went her way among those tossing, growling icepans, killing and hauling on board her precious fare of fur and fat. Sunday, the 20th, found her still lying among the young seals. But Sunday is observed better by these hardy fishers of the frozen seas than it often is, alas! in our own home waters, and not a man was allowed to touch a seal that day.

At dawn on Monday, however, the fated expedition started. The ice was in enormous sheets or pans, very heavy and strong, and the good ship steamed along the outer edge, landing at first streak of



TOILERS OF THE DEEP.

assumes when it is girt in its winter mantle of ice and snow.

Suddenly the unexpected sound of a steamer's whistle faintly echoing through the fog startled the loiterers in a small harbor in Conception Bay, some sixty miles north of St. John's. Nearer and nearer it sounded, till the eager straining eyes were able to make out the form of an approaching vessel as it came yet nearer, proving to be the famous sealing vessel 'Greenland.'

'She is back very soon,' said one. 'She has no bunting up,' said another, for that always distinguishes the joyful arrival of the first vessel home. 'Yes, she has—there

from her crow's nest rang out the welcome cry of 'Young and old harps on the bow!' and almost in less time than it takes to write it, her eager and excited crew were crowding her rails, all ready with tow-ropes, knives, and seal gaffs, to leap over on to the ice and commence their perilous work. But amidst the dangerous floe-ice, March gales, Newfoundland fogs, and the cruel wintry frosts have to be reckoned with, and on the second day of hunting darkness fell suddenly and found the men still out on the ice. The hearts of those left with the ship grew anxious indeed as hour after hour went by and only one or two men at a time kept coming in, the

daylight fifty men under a well-known leader, James Goulton. Two miles farther on she landed 104 more men under three leaders—viz., Jesse Knee, Nat. House, and James Norris.

Scarcely had the men been lost to sight when a dull leaden look about the sky and a sudden fall of the barometer warned the ever-watchful skipper that bad weather was brewing. The ship's head was at once turned and headed for the band of men first put upon the floe. Even as the ship went snow began to fall, the wind chopped round to the north, and the bitter cold foretold only too certainly the fast gathering storm. The captain, George