

## MISSIONARY WORK IN COLD REGIONS.\*

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**I**N his intercourse with the Eskimo Indians of the Mackenzie, Bishop Bompas assures us of the very meagre notions of a Deity possessed by these people in their natural state; indeed the good Bishop goes so far as to say that he was of the opinion that their sole god was the sun. This was by no means found to be the case with the Labrador Eskimo, among whom the first attempts at evangelization were made by the Moravians, as we are assured by Mr. Drachart. On one occasion he had spoken to a group of these people upon the subject of the Creator, and of his power and providence, when one of them exclaimed, "Thou speakest of Torngarsuk." On his putting the question whether they believed that Torngarsuk had made the world and all things, they confessed their entire ignorance of the matter. "But," said an Angekok, "*Torngarsuk Ajungilak*, the Great Spirit is good and holy." Another added, "*Ajuk-kangilok*, nothing is impossible to him." A third said, "*Saimavok*, he is gracious and merciful." When Mr. Drachart spoke to them of the depravity of all mankind, they would allow this to be true only of *Kablunat*, or the foreigners; as for themselves they were honest *Karalar*. "Have you then," he asked, "no wicked thoughts?" They replied, "No." "But when you think you will murder the *Kablunat*, and seize their boats and goods, are not these bad thoughts?" They answered, "Yes." "Do you not then wish," concluded Mr. Drachart, "to be freed from your wicked thoughts and deeds?" To this all-embracing question the only reply vouchsafed was a sullen and a very doubtful, "We do not know." When the missionaries had made known to these very interesting savages that their brethren in Greenland had been washed from their sins in the blood of the Lamb of God, they wondered much, and finally expressed their opinion; which, although conceived in the mind of an untutored savage, is true of all who live without God in the world, that they must have been very bad people. Again, when first acquainted by the Moravians with the doctrine of eternal punishment they agreed that the *Kablunat* who did so many wicked things might go to hell, but since they were good *Karalar* it would not be so with them.

The Eskimos exhibited the greatest pleasure upon the arrival of Mr. Haven, according to his promise in the previous year, amongst them, and, indeed, greeted him with the "liveliest demonstrations of joy." The secret of this rejoicing, alas! was not to be traced to their anxiety to hear more of the good news, for when, subsequently the subject of religion was mooted by Mr. Haven they, one and all, showed a most determined aversion from discussing it. No; it was simply because he had been true to his promise of visiting them;

they had not been duped by Mr. Haven; he had deemed them worthy of being honestly and fairly dealt with. But he had won their confidence, and although time was precious and their souls perishing, still the Moravians under the wise and prudent leading of Haven, were content to wait, but also to labor in quietness for the time of spring when they would endeavor to sow the seed of eternal life in their hearts. It cannot be supposed that Mr. Haven was otherwise than grievously disappointed at the indubitable and determined opposition of his savage friends to listen to the words of eternal life, and in the quietest and least offensive way, he endeavored to discover the probable reason thereof. On being interrogated they urged several points in reply; but chiefly, their opposition sprang from their inability to see what practical purpose the profession of any particular religion would serve, "the plain meaning of which was," as one has wisely remarked, "that they did not see how the belief of a religious truth could help them to catch seals, construct kayaks, or build houses." Here again is another touch of our common nature, and an additional evidence if such were needed, that the true barrier to spiritual progress in the soul is big, ungainly, selfish self.

The early missionaries to the Labrador Eskimo seem never to have met with anything like decided hostility from them, only to have suffered intolerably from the thieving propensities and troublesome freedom of their savage children. Mr. Drachart tells us that on one occasion his pockets were relieved of the whole of their contents, and his hat was also stolen. Guessing that the culprits were to be found amongst the younger savages, he appealed to their seniors, who obliged the depredators to restore the booty, which they did, with the exception of a knife to which they had taken a fancy and, on that account, begged for a keepsake. On another occasion, a thief on being convicted of stealing, stepped forward without the slightest fear or shame to the person robbed, and, offering the stolen goods to him, coolly remarked, "There are your things—you perhaps need them yourself!"

Of the physical sufferings undergone by the Moravians in the early years of their pioneer work in Labrador and Greenland but little, comparatively speaking, is generally known, although no one supposes that so much solid and enduring good could have been effected under such conditions as such countries would naturally and inevitably impose, as we know has been the case.

Here is a paper from the journal of a missionary bearing the date of September 12th, 1765,—“In the evening a violent wind storm, with rain, arose. A shallop was driven to the shore, and ran aground on the rocks. By the offer of an ample reward, we persuaded the savages to lend us their assistance in bringing it off. Eight of them put on their sea-dress, waded into the water up to their breasts, and toiled upwards of an hour, without being able

\*Being a continuation of "Some Aspects of Life and Work in Cold Regions."