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IN A BLEAK LAND THE DEEP SEA FISHERMEN AND ES- QUIMAUX OF THE LABRADOR COAST.

(Toronto Empire)

Dr. W. T. Grenfell, who for the past two years has had charge of the mission to the deep sea fishermen and Esquimaux on the Labrador coast, has collected a fund of entertaining information regarding the life and habits of those curious denizens of that bleak and inhospitable coast. For nearly five years Dr. Grenfell labored amongst the hardy toilers on the British North sea, but he does not seem to have been at all injuriously affected by the hardships incident to this work. Two years ago Dr. Grenfell and Dr. Bobard were asked by Mr. Heywood, a member of the British Board of Trade who had been to Canada and who had heard of the Labrador fishermen, to go out and minister to their spiritual wants. The request was favorably entertained and a vessel suitable for the purpose was fitted out, manned, and sailed across by Dr. Grenfell himself, whose nautical experience as a master mariner stood him in good stead. Dr. Grenfell has seen a great deal of the Esquimaux, with whom he was brought a great deal into contact, and not only has he been able to minister to their spiritual needs, but by reason of his being a medical man he has been able to relieve much sickness and suffering. When asked for some information regarding these strange people and their habits, Dr. Grenfell readily complied and spoke as follows:

THE EARLY ESQUIMAUX

The earliest that is known of the Esquimaux dates from the time of Esic the Red. A son of that hardy Norseman apparently visited the Labrador coast, and there discovered some of these people, whom he called Skroellingers, or dwarfs. From what can be learned, the Norseman cruelly slaughtered those whom he encountered because he could not understand their language. The Esquimaux call themselves "innats," or "the people," because they believe they were the last people created. They detest being called Esquimaux, which, in their language, means "raw meat eaters," and they regard it as a term of opprobrium. Neither do they care to be styled "Indians," because they have been frequently beaten in battle by the Indians who inhabit the interior of Labrador. These Indians are supposed to be descendants of the old Canadian Algonquians. Although they have always beaten the Esquimaux in battle, fortune has turned against them lately. They do not fish, and therefore have to undergo great privations for want of food. In some of their camps I hear that numbers of them have been found starved to death. Others have left to go farther west, where food is more plentiful.

A SMALL SIZED PEOPLE.

The Esquimaux are a small sized people, but some of them attain the height of five feet eight inches. They have flat features of a olive and not displeasing hue, jet black eyes and straight black hair. The men cut their hair straight across the forehead in a sort of "Picardilly" fringe, the remainder being allowed to grow down to the shoulders. Their dress consists of an upper garment of skin called a "kossack." This is in one piece and is drawn up over the head in a sort of cowl. The nether limbs are encased in skin. Skin boots, which cover the leg as far as the knee, and possess very heavy soles, complete the costume. The Esquimaux women carry their infants in the "cowl," which by the men is used as a head covering. It

is suspended over their backs, and there the infant rests quite cozily. At the back the woman's garment runs almost down to the heels in a sort of tail, giving the wearer a grotesque appearance. When viewed from the side the Esquimaux dress is most ludicrous in appearance. Considerable ingenuity is shown in the manufacture of these garments. The tendons from the reindeer serve them as thread, and with the aid of needles passed through fire and bent in the requisite way, they sew the strings together. The sole of the boot is very thick. It is rendered soft and pliable for sewing by being chewed.

THE ESQUIMAUX HOUSE.

A mud hut forms a summer residence for the Esquimaux. In the winter, by means of an old saw, they cut out frozen blocks of snow, and as these are ready they are piled up in the form of a bee-hive around the aperture thus made, space being left at the top for ventilation. Ingress and egress are obtained to these snow houses through long passages, so constructed as to barely allow a person to crawl in on the flat of his stomach. These passages, however, prevent the cold air from entering the hut. The houses are lit up by means of a rudely fashioned lamp. This consists of a piece of soapstone hollowed out, into which seal oil or cod oil has been poured. The dried fibre of a kind of moss which abounds in that country serves as a wick.

When the Esquimaux resort to the island for Esquimaux they live in tents of reindeer skin, several families often living in one tent. Further north in Greenland where Nansen encountered these people, and further north still, where Sir Leopold McClintock wintered, they reside in skin tents all the winter. The habit of the heathen Esquimaux of stripping their tents for the night is to strip off their clothes and oil their bodies. Then they wear only a breech cloth about the loins, both men and women.

A MERRY DISPOSITION

The Esquimaux are a merry, happy race of people, and very affectionate in their disposition. They endure pain with considerable fortitude. I have performed a number of surgical operations upon Esquimaux, and when I have not given an anesthetic the endurance shown was such that one would almost imagine it was an inanimate object and not a human being that was under the knife. They are very grateful for any service you may render them.

Polygamy is the natural condition of these people, but, of course, those who have come under construction at the Moravian mission only have one wife, and a marriage ceremony unites them together. With the others there is no marriage ceremony. There is much immortality, because the heathen Esquimaux do not understand the spirituality of it. There is no word in their language for God or for love. Some have as many as seven wives.

The Esquimaux are very musical, and at the Moravian stations they are taught to play musical instruments. Each Moravian station has a brass band, and the natives frequently gather together for the purpose of singing.

HOW THEY PURSUE HUNTING

There are about 3000 Esquimaux in that part of Labrador which I am familiar with. They live by catching seals and whales, and eating the blubber, using the skins for the purpose of clothing themselves. They hunt in their "kayaks," or canoes. When seated in these a piece of skin is drawn from the edge of the place wherein they sit right up under their arms, pre-

venting any water from entering, and rendering the buoyant little craft water tight. The method of catching the seals or whales is by harpooning them. The harpoon is ingeniously made of walrus tusk, attached by a strip of hide to the end of a pole. To this is attached a buoy, made out of an inflated skin. When the harpoon is thrown the whale dashes away, but the appearance of the buoy indicates its locality. The Esquimaux follows in his kayak, secures his prey and tows it ashore. When out hunting the Esquimaux tugs or lying on the stern of their kayak, from the mainland to the adjacent islands. This is done because the kayak will only hold one person. They are very liable to be upset. A native named Michael—they all have but one name—luckily rescued a companion named Simeon whilst crossing from Okkal to the hunting islands on one occasion. The weather was cold and stormy and Simeon's kayak upset. He could not extricate nor handle his paddle, as he became benumbed with the cold. Michael, notwithstanding that all his energies were required to look out for himself, managed to right his companion's boat after extreme difficulty and bring him to shore. The Esquimaux play a kind of leap frog in the water with their boats. Swiftly propelling their kayaks, which all possess high, pointed bows, the more active ride over their less skillful companions forcing them down in the water. The only other game I have seen them play is hitting a kind of ball made out of an inflated skin with sticks over the ice.

Every Esquimaux keeps dogs and his wealth is measured by the number of animals he owns. He travels the greater part of the year in a "komatik," or dog sleigh. The komatik is made of cross pieces of wood tied to runners, the latter being shod with whale ribs, or often with frozen mud. The driver holds no rein but a long whip made of walrus hide, with which he could flick off the ear of a dog, it is said. The traces which control the dogs radiate from the dashboard of the sleigh, on the right and left of the long trace, which is fastened to the leader. The leader is a well-trained dog, who runs at a distance of about 70 feet from the driver. He is trained to go to the right when the driver shouts "ouk," and to the left when "ra" is called. The other dogs obediently follow his lead.

THEY ARE FATALISTS.

The Esquimaux are to some extent fatalists. I was out hunting all day with a native, and on returning he informed me that his son was dead. I asked him why he did not tell me before so that I might have attended him. "No good," he replied with a shrug. The dead man was buried in the sand, and next morning there was not a mark or scratch to show where he had been interred. The Moravians hold a burial service, but do not teach the erection of anything to mark the spot. The original Esquimaux mode of burial was to lay a dead man on the ground face upwards and build over him a heap of a few dozen big stones, through the interstices of which the body could still be seen. The dead man's kayak and harpoon were put by his side, and in a cache alongside were placed his hunting tools. I unearthed one or two of these caches, and found in them a number of dolls, probably representing the wives of the deceased.

It is exceedingly difficult to convey a knowledge of the Scriptures to the Esquimaux. They do not know what a fruit tree is, and they have no sheep, oxen or horses, and they do not understand seed, and harvest, because they never sow or reap, except in a metaphorical sense. In spite of this the Moravian mission has been very successful. There are six stations, with three Moravians at each, on the Labrador coast.