

THE GOSPEL ON THE FROZEN SEA.

BY THE REV. R. J. PFCK.

THE icy regions of the North have a special interest to the British race. We love to hear of the adventures of such brave men as Sir John Franklin, Admiral McClintock, Lieut. Peary, and Dr. Nansen. No matter what may be said regarding the practical use of Arctic exploration, we must admit that the deeds of such men have left their mark upon the hearts of the people of our British isles. But the objects these noble men had in view were but temporal—they did not, as far as I am aware, seek to evangelize the Eskimo. I know that Dr. Nansen on his last voyage did not come in contact with this people, but other Arctic heroes met them from time to time, and no doubt, through ignorance of the people's language and other causes, they could not, even had they so desired, convey to them much knowledge of the Christian faith.

But who *first* carried the Gospel to the Eskimo? A good man named Hans Egede, who labored on the shores of Greenland for several years. After he left, the good Moravians carried on the work, and later on they extended their Mission to the coast of Labrador. I cannot here dwell upon the labors of the devoted Moravian Brethren, but I may remark that I believe God has used their lives and example to create, foster and deepen in no small measure the missionary life and zeal of our own Church.

The work among the Eskimo of Hudson's Bay was commenced in 1876 (the same year that the Uganda Mission was started), and the writer had the great privilege of being the first missionary specially appointed by our Society to labor among this race. My readers will doubtless remember that in July, 1894, Mr. Parker and myself went out to Cumberland Sound, and our experiences, etc., given in this paper are in connection with this region.

Speaking of one branch of our work among the Eskimo, viz.: preaching the Gospel on the frozen sea, it will be necessary to give you, first, some idea of the people themselves.

The temperature in Cumberland Sound is sometimes over 50 degrees below zero. How can the Eskimo live in such intense cold? To stand the rigors of such a climate it is most necessary to wear suitable clothing. Material for such clothing is found close at hand. Seals and reindeer, especially in some parts of North America, are very numerous. The skins of these animals make just the garments the people need. Two suits are worn, the inside suit being made with the fur turned inwards next to the body, and the outer suit is made in just the opposite manner, i.e. with the fur

turned outwards. The lady's dress differs chiefly from the gentleman's in respect to the large hood, which forms part of the woman's fur coat. In these hoods the mothers carry their babies, and I have often seen the little creatures, even in the very depth of winter, carried in these peculiar cradles. If these babies cry—and of course all babies do sometimes cry—the mothers cut off a piece of seal's fat, which they hand to their children in the hood. This is seized by the resident inside, and is sucked with the greatest relish and delight.

The Eskimo live upon animal food, the flesh of the seal being the staple article of diet. To capture these animals the Eskimo live, in the winter time, on the frozen sea, and as one seal has several breathing holes, the hunters may have to wait for hours before these wary creatures arrive at the holes where the Eskimo patiently watch and wait. When the seal breathes in the hole, the hunter drives his harpoon into the seal below. The ice near the hole is then cleared away, the seal is hauled up on the ice, and the gory flesh is often eaten by the hungry hunter, who does not even think of cooking or sauce.

The Eskimo dog is a most valuable animal, used principally for hauling sledges, either loaded or unloaded, over the frozen sea. Some seven or eight dogs are tied with seal thongs to a sledge; when all is ready the driver seats himself on the fore part of the sledge, and generally holds in his hand a whip made of plaited seal line. With much shouting and cracking of whip, the Eskimo manages to start his canine friends. But to start is *one* thing, to go on is quite *another*. Eskimo dogs very seldom seem inclined to go the right way, and being of the most pugnacious nature, they often stop and engage in a regular fierce battle. The driver, losing all patience, then rushes in and belabors the combatants with the handle of his whip. Yelling and howling, they pull away, and pursue their journey over the frozen waste. The snow-houses in which the Eskimo live are made out of blocks of snow cut out of snow-drifts. A rough circle is generally drawn, then the frozen blocks are placed side by side around it, and when the lower tier is complete, another is placed on top. As the walls are built they are made to incline inwards, so that a snow house, when finished, is almost of a dome shape. A small hole at the bottom serves for a door, through which one crawls on hands and knees. Strange to say, one of these peculiar dwellings can be made in an hour.

I must now, in imagination, carry my friends away to Cumberland Sound, and let me try and describe an Arctic village, which I saw last year, and also tell my readers something of our work for the Lord on the frozen waste.

The Eskimo village consisted of fourteen