

## "Johnnie."

## A Story of the Deep Sea Fisher Folk.

By Wilfrid T. Grenfell, M. D.

The boy's name was Johnny Sexton. He was the oldest son of a poor Roman Catholic fisherman living about eight miles from St. Anthony hospital in a tiny cottage by the sea. One day last winter, when everything was ice and snow, Johnny's father was away with his dogs getting wood for the stove from the neighboring forest, and his mother had gone out to a neighbor's house—which was some way off—for houses are not near together where Johnny lives, in Labrador. When his father got back to the house he saw a number of children coming along over the snow, dragging something with them. Alas! when they got near, he saw that they were dragging Johnny by his head and one leg. His other little leg was hanging down, broken, and trailing along on the snow. He had fallen off the "slide" or sleigh, which they had been using as a toboggan on the steep side of the hill, and had broken his thigh across the middle. In old days (only three years ago) Johnny would have had to lie for weeks in terrible pain, and could not possibly have seen any doctor for months. Now, however, the father could leave his little boy with his mother, and fly away himself over those eight miles of hills and dale to St. Anthony to find "the Mission Doctor."

It did not take them long to travel that eight miles, yet, oh, how long even that seemed to the poor fellow! The wondering dogs had never known him to shout and hurry them along so fast before. Gallop and strain as they would, they could not satisfy their master. What could it mean?

At length they topped the last hill, shot down like an avalanche some six hundred feet on to the snow-covered ice of the harbor, and a few minutes later panting and exhausted, they were trying to bury themselves in the snow in front of the little mission hospital, to get out of the biting wind.

Was it only "a piece of luck" that the father found the Doctor had not yet started to a place some sixty miles to the south? Why, right there against the hospital was another big team of dogs—two days they had been travelling, and only half an hour before had arrived, bringing word that the good priest at Conehe was taken ill with sudden bleeding, and wanted the Doctor in hot haste. Yes, and even then, in the hall, was the Doctor packing the familiar medicine box, and his man "Rube" stowing away some rough food in the "nonny bag," in case of being caught out during the long journey: Do you think it was chance, or did the Lord, who loved the children so dearly, allow that anxious father to be "just in time," even if for some good reason, known only to himself; he had permitted this little one of his to meet this suffering?

"What's the matter, Pat? You seem to have dropped from the sky, from the look of you."

"'Tis an accident, Doctor. My Johnny's killed himself! Can you come back with me at once?"

The distress was so evident, and the pleading so heartfelt and urgent, there was no answer but one.

"Yes, at once, Pat, of course."

"Here, Rube, sling this old box on the 'lend-a-hand' komatik, and lash it on well. It's a hilly road we'll have tonight, and it's dark now."

"Go in, Pat, and get a cup of tea, and Rube and I'll be ready in two minutes to race you home."

There were great tears welling up in the poor fellow's eyes, as, with a husky, choking "God bless you, Doctor," he followed the maid to get some hot tea, which indeed, he was badly in need of, having been out in the woods since morning.

"It's a beastly monotonous life you live among those people, isn't it?" a wealthy rich man said to me only yesterday, as if one could prefer to go to a theatre every night, or vary that with progressive card parties and occasional dances!

"No, I can't say that I find it monotonous," I answered. A "God bless you!" with the fervor of poor Johnny's father, is a fee that, once you have tasted the sweetness of, would alone rob many of your days of much monotony. God grant us all in those hours of loneliness that will come—yes, will come some day come to all of us—the gracious echo in our hearts of His words who draws near to comfort us in such hours, whispering "Ye did it unto me," "unto me"..... "to me."

The barking dogs are straining at the traces. It is dark, and only the hospital lights reflected on the snow enable us to be sure that every knot is tight. There is a flash of steel as Rube draws his big hunting knife across the stern-ropes, checking the komatik to a driving-post, and then the straining dogs leap off into the night before even a word is given them to start. "Hist! Hist! Good Damsion! Haul in there, Spot! Haul in!" There is no need of lash or spur, for the keen cold night air makes the snow crisp and braces their magnificent muscles, while the fact that they know their food is still ahead of them, makes every dog anxious to get the journey quickly done. . . . Now we are overhauling Paddy's team. For having impatiently swallowed his tea boiling, he has gone ahead to give our leader a

line to follow. "Look out, sir," we hear him shout. "You'd better loose your dogs. It's terrible icy on the cliff side going down to Craneliere Bay," and Rube has scarcely time to lean forward and slip the traces from the bowline before our faithful "lend-a-hand" shoots forward at a pace no dog can hope to attain, and gathering momentum each second warns us to cling tight, if Johnny is to be the only one with broken bones that night. Down—down—and down! Now and then a shower of sparks warns us that still some snags of rock are jutting out through the generous mantle of the snow. But Rube and I are now lying full length on the crossbars, as close to the ground as ever we can get, so that we may not capsize or be shaken off. Fortunately we strike nothing. I say fortunately, for we went down with closed eyes! The pace and the darkness make open eyes only an additional danger in such a descent.

Pat's haste had not allowed him to use even his drag of chain. Moments were hours to him that night. What might not be happening to Johnny while he was away?

Our faithful dogs were leaping on the top of us almost as soon as the level bay ice brought the komatik to a standstill. To them it was the highest summit of good sport, and they were showing their joy in their excitement.

"'Tis just there, Doctor," came echoing above the whirring of our runners, as right below us a single twinkling light came into view far down the last hillside towards the sea.

Already they have heard us, those anxious watchers, and we see the light blaze up as someone brings it to the open door. "'Tis welcome you are tonight, Doctor. Come in, sir—sure Rube knows where to get food for the dogs. Come in—Johnny's a bit easier, thank God. But it's longing for you to come we've been since Pat started."

No one could mistake it. The thigh bone was obviously broken in the middle. For as the child lay on his back on the bench, the knee and foot of the right side were at an angle with the little fellow's body that made one "creep" to look at it. "Get a plank, Pat, we must get to work at once, for I must leave at daybreak." Pat, who was already clearing things away, a most necessary proceeding in so tiny a room for so many people, at once went out and brought in his only plank, well covered with ice and snow. It was not easy planing it smooth, still wet from the thawing ice. But these men are the "handy men" of this side of the Atlantic, and with them obstacles are merely "things to be overcome."

Meanwhile Johnny had grown drowsy, and at length has dozed off to sleep. In a minute or so, however, an involuntary twitch woke the little fellow with a cry of pain. Fortunately we could spare his father now and he went and held him in his strong arms to comfort him; yet as soon as ever weariness overcame his fear the child would fall off to sleep again, only to wake with a cry of suffering that made us feel miserably slow-fingered as we toiled on, padding the splints, and getting all our preparations made.

Midnight had long passed before the lad was laid out on the rude table to have his limb set.

The naked body of a well-formed little child is a thing of tender beauty, and it would seem a cruel task to inflict suffering purposely upon it—even though meant in kindness to set a broken limb. But God had placed in the hands of the mission doctor that which made it quite painless to the child—only a few breaths of heavy sweetened vapor, and Johnny was off to a land of dreams, where twitching muscles could not give him pain, and whence even the straightening and grinding of the broken bone could not bring him back.

Two o'clock—"He'll do now, Pat, till morning. You must keep watch by him till he wakes. I shall sleep here on the floor, and you will call me as soon as he stirs. For I must be gone by daylight, as I told you. My assistant will be with you until evening to see the orders properly carried out."

"Deed I will so, sir," said Pat. "There's no fear that I'll close my eyes this night." He had not seen chloroform given before, and he was still not quite convinced that Johnny would ever wake again. "No fear, Doctor, lie down—lie down." Already his wife had placed their only mattress on the floor in the corner. "Just a word to ask God's blessing on the child, Pat. There's only one God over Catholic and Protestant." It was a very brief but heartfelt petition that went up to Him who marks even the sparrow's fall. There ascended also a word of real gratitude from all of us. For should a doctor feel more joy if he had received his reward in those things that perish, than for the change of a service to one of the least of his brethren, who have nothing "to render again?" God give us all, yet many times, that sweetest, peaceful sleep which comes from hearing, as it were, a curfew tolling in our very hearts for something " . . . done unto Me" . . . done unto Me."

The red glow of the early morning, reflected from the little window as I woke after a sailor's rest of a "watch below." The dim outline of Pat, sitting watching without a movement by the side of his lit

tle child was only just discernible, for even the tiny flame of one little lamp had been necessarily tempered to their scanty store of paraffin. He turned at my slightest move, and seeing I was awake, whispered, "Johnny has just wakened up, Doctor. He has slept like a lamb."

"Put the kettle on then, for we must be moving. I am to meet the priest's messengers at the narrows of the long lake an hour after sunrise." Already I could hear, outside, the wakeful Rube calling the dogs from their hiding places, and also the calling of some other driver, taking his team off betimes to the forest in the bay.

It was indeed a pleasure to find Johnny in smiles when I went over to where we had fixed up a level fracture-bed for him. I might have expected the look of fear, for he could only associate me with having pained him. But the plucky little chap had forgotten his woes, and was lost in cuddling the curly head of my retriever. "No pain, eh, Johnny?" No answer—only a look at his father, as if to ask "What does he mean?" and he went on playing with the dog, who had seized the chance to stand up and lick his cheek. So I took it that the splint fitted, and was able to insist on Pat getting a nap "to once."

It was a glorious morning as we drove right out of the harbor mouth over the firmly frozen sea, galloping round the feet of the beetling cliffs that form so ominous a landmark when the mission steamer visits this cleft in the hills in the summer time.

Human life is a long series of leaving things behind. In one brief hour the hummocky ice had shut out from our eyes all sight of the harbor, where "only a poor fisher-lad lay."

Pleasure derived from what we "get" in life is a fleeting thing at best; it soon fades from our sickle memories, and must ever fail to give us back again the throb of delight we felt when first we thought we owned something new of the valuables of earth.

But the memory of having well used those valuables while we were stewards of them is a well of joy that is everlasting.

May God give us the open eye to see this while yet the talents are ours.

If there are no sumptuous menus, no silks and satins, no lordly halls, and such like things to efface "the monotony of a life among those people," there are at least many simpler pleasures and ever with us the scope for usefulness for our humblest talents, giving us the glorious pride of knowing we also are united, as all may be, in service, not only with "those people" but with the King of kings—in whose presence there shall one day be joy everlasting and for evermore.—The Sunday School Times.

## Yellow Pulpitism.

Yellow pulpitis, using sensational methods akin to vaudeville shows and blood-and-thunder novels, may pack the pews for a while, and tickle the itching ears of a fickle and curiosity-seeking public, but in the long run, only truth, presented in chaste, dignified forms, leaves impressions that are permanent and transforming. Christ's blessed gospel lives and works best in a pure, elevated atmosphere of love, not in a world stirred and fretted with theatrical posturings and amazing topics of discourse. Earthquake, fire, and whirlwind may possibly have some essential part in the large economy of preaching, but the voice of gentle stillness is often a more forceful demonstration of the divine presence than reading rocks or howling tempests. If the sacred platform wishes to lift and regenerate the masses, it certainly must not attempt to do it by descending to gutter phrases or police-gazette illustrations or circus witticisms. As soon as the house of God becomes emphatically a place of entertainment rather than a temple of worship, it loses its distinctive tone and value, and becomes an instrument for carnally pleasing instead of spiritually informing and converting. Nothing, after all, is more spellbinding and heart-touching and crowd-catching, than the clear, sweet note of eternal truth. If men will not hearken to the prophets and apostles of everlasting light and duty, neither will they believe the theological fakir or the spectacular preacher. A low, degraded, starchy pulpit, however popular, is a detriment, not a blessing, to the gospel cause. To be sure, a holy, formalistic deadness of homily is to be scrupulously eschewed, but the evangel of Christ is so full of narrow, exquisite point, and crystalline beauty and clearness, that the dry-as-dust preacher is an excrescence and anomaly. Happy, thrice happy, is that people whose minister is not a sensation monger, nor a tedious haranguer, nor a mere setter-off of rhetorical fire-works, nor a museum collector of doctrinal fossils and relics, nor a mere logical hair-splitter, but a live, glad, incarnate expositor of God's truth, which has come to him through the Bible as a personal revelation, shining and speaking in his authoritative words and authentic, upright life. Indeed, wherever truth, to use Bishop Brooks's famous phrase, manifests itself in and through a prophet's personality, there the hungry and anxious throngs are apt to gather refreshment and comfort and there yellow pulpitis comes not with its secular spirit and hollow, glittering externalities that bring no real healing to the broken heart and no perceptible transformation to the worldly life.—Dr. Philip Graff.