



Typical Dog Team and Sled, used by Dr. Grenfell in his Labrador journeys.

DR. GRENFELL AND HIS DOGS

BY H. M. MOSDELL.

SEVERAL stories have appeared in recent newspapers concerning the remarkable experience of Dr. Grenfell, the medical missionary of Labrador, with a team of dogs afloat on a cake of ice along the coast of Newfoundland. One report stated that Dr. Grenfell fought with wolves; another that he fought his own dogs to keep them from killing him. All agree, however, that he killed his dogs on a drifting ice-floe and used their skins to wrap about his clothes. The whole matter happened more than a month ago, but owing to the remoteness of the region in which Dr. Grenfell labours the facts of the case have only now come to light. The story herewith was told by Dr. Grenfell to Rev. P. J. Richards, an Anglican missionary, with whom he lives in Newfoundland.

With the opening of navigation along the Newfoundland coast, come tidings of the welfare of the thousands of fishermen in the far northern districts of the island, who, throughout the long, dreary winter months, have been isolated from communication with the outside world. The railway system has not yet been extended to these more northerly parts, and in summer mails and passengers are transported in coastal steamboats, which give a weekly service to the various ports. But at the beginning of the new year, with the entire closing of the season's fishing operations, traffic becomes unprofitably slack; the general inclemency of the weather and the presence of much ice renders navigation of the coast dangerous and inadvisable, and the steamboats are then withdrawn until about the end of May.

During these months very little is known of the welfare of the general population of the isolated section of the coast. Letters take a month or more to reach south to the more settled districts and have to be conveyed by means of dog teams over hundreds of miles of rough, almost totally uninhabited country. The journey is a very dangerous one, leading through thick forest and over broken upland, along precipitous mountain sides and across many a frozen river, lake and arm of the sea. Almost every season some of the mail carriers lose their lives. The trip is especially hazardous in the early spring, when the streams begin to flow and the thaws render the ice dangerously weak.

The settlers in the north are ministered to during these months of isolation by a band of missionaries who undergo much exposure to the Arctic weather and brave many a peril in their journeys from village to village. At St. Anthony Harbour is the hospital of the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen. During the winter months it is superintended by Dr. W. T. Grenfell, the medical missionary of Labrador fame. Considering the fact that his practice extends along a stretch of some four hundred miles of rocky coast, it will be easily understood that the doctor and his famous team of dogs are almost continually on the trail. His work has inured him to the most terrible hardships and has many a time brought him face to face with death, but Wilfred Grenfell is a giant in energy and one of the most fearless of men. He and death have run many a race.

What was perhaps the most notable of his many thrilling adventures was that which concerns this story. A number of men had come to St. Anthony

Hospital with an urgent call to a patient at Englee, a coast settlement some fifty miles south. Harnessing his own trusty team the doctor immediately set out. Part of the journey led across a wide inlet known as Hare Bay. When its shore was reached the men who were driving the second team warned



Dr. Grenfell in the rig-out made from the skins of his dogs.

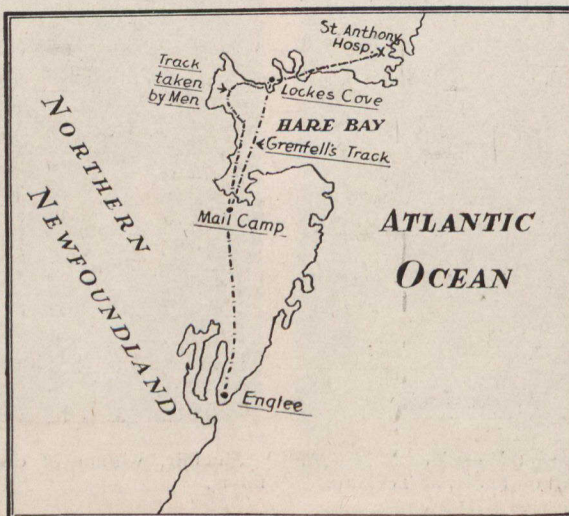


Diagram of Route covered by Dr. Grenfell.

him that the ice in the centre of the bay had been so broken by the sea that it was unsafe for travelling on; that, therefore, it would be advisable to keep to the more solid portion which fringed the shore. Hoping, however, to save time, Dr. Grenfell decided to try the short-cut. He went on alone, the other team skirting the weak spot and heading for a camp on the other side of the bay, where they were to prepare for his coming, should the state of the ice necessitate his turning back.

For a while the doctor's team made good progress, but when he had almost reached the other side he discovered that the ice had been so pounded to pieces by the sea that it would be impossible to cross it and reach the solid ice on the farther side. He decided to retrace his path, and turned his dogs northward again. But in the meantime a sudden gale of wind had sprung up from the north-west and was loosening the pieces of ice, sending them out the bay. The footing rapidly became more insecure until at last the doctor with his team and sled went through into the water.

Now his danger was threefold. The water was bitterly cold. The small pieces of ice filled his long skin boots and weighed him down like lead, while, splendid swimmer though he was, he found it almost impossible to make any headway. The frightened dogs began to beat their way towards him and he feared that in their efforts to escape they would force him under water. But before they came near he managed to get the harness unloosed from the sled. By superhuman efforts he battled his way to a small pan of ice, and on to this he also pulled his dogs. But he found that this was not sufficiently big to float them all, so he decided to get to a better position. Removing his heavy boots and coat, he fastened them on to two of his dogs and again plunged into the icy water, succeeding in gaining a larger pan of ice than that on which he had at first sought refuge. But he was soon deprived of even this frail support, for the wind and tide carried the ice over a shoal where it went to pieces and he was again forced to do battle for his life with the ice-covered waves. Finally he won his way to another icy raft and also managed to get his dogs upon it.

Even now his situation was perilous in the extreme. A heavy swell was heaving in the bay and at any time this support might go to pieces as the other had done. His clothes were drenched and his whole body numbed with cold and bruised by the struggle with the ice. Now he was drifting towards the ocean, tossed by the sea, bareheaded and exposed to the biting northerly wind and without a morsel of food. It was quite evident that unless his predicament was observed and rescue came soon his chances of escape were very few indeed. The pan was altogether too small to permit of his moving about enough to keep up the circulation of the blood. He began to fear that he was to slowly freeze to death.

One ray of hope there was. It was now quite early in the day and there was a chance that the people of Locke's Cove, the little settlement at the north of the bay, from which they had started in the morning, might discover his danger and effect a rescue; or that the men who had gone on to the camp might start in search for him when he failed to turn up in good time.

The day wore on and help failed to arrive from any source. The wind began to increase in strength and as the sun declined the cold became more intense. The situation was one of the most hope-

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