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Wilfred T. Grenfell

GRENFELL  
OF  
LABRADOR

BY

**CUTHBERT McEVOY, M.A.**

*Author of "The Great Embassy," &c., &c.*

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NORTH. BY JOHN OXENHAM.

MAP.

## CHAPTER I.

### AN ADVENTURER'S ENVIRONMENT.

**W**ILFRED THOMASON GRENFELL, the most arresting personality in the mission field to-day, was born on February the 28th, 1865, at Mostyn House School, Parkgate, near Chester. It is worthy of observation that one whose life was to be lived in unceasing conflict with apparently insuperable difficulties came of a great fighting stock. On his father's side his ancestry is traced back to the famous Sir Richard Grenville, the hero of *The Revenge*, and Basil Grenville, commander of the Royalist Cornish Army, who was killed at Lansdown in 1643, and who is referred to in the lines:—

“ Four wheels to Charles's wain :  
Grenville, Trevanion, Slanning, Godolphin  
slain.”

Later came John Pascoe Grenville (1800-1869), the right-hand man of Admiral Cochrane, who boarded the Spanish admiral's ship *Esmeralda*. Nor has the strain died out to-day. It was a kinsman of Dr. Grenfell's, Captain Grenfell,

who, though wounded, saved the guns at Doubon in August, 1914. On his mother's side we find a similar roll of honour. Four of his mother's brothers were Generals or Colonels Hutchinson, who played a gallant part in the Indian Mutiny and fought with distinction all through the Defence of Lucknow.

But there was another strain as well that entered into Grenfell's blood. His grandfather, the Rev. Algernon Grenfell, a sound classical scholar, was a house-master at Rugby in the days of the great Doctor Arnold. His father, the Rev. Algernon Sydney Grenfell, after a brilliant career at Rugby and Baliol, became assistant master at Repton, and afterwards head master of Mostyn House School. He was such a gifted linguist that he was often mistaken for a Frenchman in France and for a German in Germany. He was, moreover, a man of fervent Evangelistic faith, and was a welcome preacher in churches in his neighbourhood. In the gifts of father and grandfather as organiser, teacher, preacher, and student we may read the prophecy of those talents to be so remarkably developed in their descendant.

The boy was also being unconsciously prepared for his future work by his local environment. Close to his home was a desolate, sandy estuary, indented with hollows, the haunt of flocks of wild birds of all kinds. Add to this

the equipment of a home-made, flat-bottomed boat, an old gun, and a friendly coastguard who supplied powder, and there are all the elements of a perfect paradise for boys and a very nursery of adventure and romance. It was doubtless amid these surroundings that young Grenfell first felt the lure of the wild that was in after years to rule him so imperiously. To the love of sport was added a scientific interest in his "bag." Birds and animals were skinned and stuffed, and some of these early trophies are still to be found in the old home side by side with trophies of a later day—heads of Moose, Caribou, Walrus, and Polar Bears, White Seals and Arctic Foxes, Labrador Porcupine, and birds of all kinds from the frozen North.

Unusually favoured as this boy was in his birth, ancestry and environment, he was fortunate also in his friends. Those who believe in the mutual attraction of kindred spirits will be peculiarly satisfied to know that Charles Kingsley, who embodied in himself such a combination of the spirit of Elizabethan romance and of modern social reform, was related by marriage to Dr. Grenfell. It is impossible to suppose that Charles Kingsley, with his love of sport, of nature and of science, did not find an ardent admirer in his youthful relative. As Canon of Chester, Charles Kingsley was a frequent visitor at the school-house. It is said that on one

occasion, when Charles Kingsley was visiting Mostyn House, he took the boy upon his knee and playfully pretended to foretell his future from a phrenological examination. Unfortunately, no written record of the prophecy exists ; but those who heard it aver that there was a remarkable amount of truth mingled with the jest.

The adventurous, free life of Parkgate in due time gave place to the sterner discipline of Marlborough College, where Grenfell gained a scholarship and developed a passion for Rugby football. In 1882 his father accepted the chaplaincy of the London Hospital, and the family came to London. This change may have had a determining effect upon the course of Grenfell's future, for in the following year at the age of eighteen he matriculated at London University and entered as a medical student at the London Hospital. Here he came under the commanding influence of such men as Sir Andrew Clark, the physician, and Sir Frederick Treves, the famous surgeon, and had the opportunity of acquiring all that was best in the medical science of that day. The warm friendship formed between Sir Frederick Treves and his brilliant pupil has continued uninterrupted to the present time.

The year 1883 marked another and far more decisive epoch in young Grenfell's life. Walking

with two other students through the slums of Stepney, he was attracted by a huge crowd of people entering a large tent. There was singing inside, and out of curiosity Grenfell and his friends went in. A plain, straightforward man delivered a plain, straightforward address full of common sense. Though the young student did not remember the speaker's discourse, he found his spirit irresistible. It brought him face to face with the fact that his own religious life had been a humbug. He vowed that he would either give it up or make it real. "I stayed, I listened, and learned at once one thing: that if I had any faith it was not the kind these men possessed. As far as I could judge, I possessed an unreal, spectral resemblance of the genuine article, strong enough to keep me from wanting anything better. I would always attend a place of worship to please anyone who wished me to, rather than be conscious of offending them. But my faith must have been the nearest resemblance to a Grand Bank fog that anything in that line can be. For it began and ended nowhere, and helped nobody, except to get adrift on the ocean and hopelessly lose sight of everything. I can honestly say I had all my life been a more or less regular attendant at Sunday church services. But all the numberless parsons I had listened

to had never succeeded in teaching me that God gave us faith as a potent factor in life to enable us to do things, and therefore that I should expect direct results from it.”\*

Grenfell did not know at the time that the speaker who had produced so profound an effect upon him was none other than D. L. Moody. The experience led him some days later to attend another meeting in the tent, at which J. E. K. Studd, the famous cricketer, was going to speak. At the end of his address Mr. Studd invited anyone who was not ashamed to confess that Christ was his Master for this life, rather than a kind of insurance ticket for the next world, to stand up. To his shame and surprise, Grenfell found that he was afraid. He had not known before that he was afraid of anything. At last a boy stood up. This was too much for Grenfell. In his own words, “I knew pretty well what this meant for him, so I decided to back him up, and do the same.”

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\* “What Life Means to Me,” pp. 53-4.

## CHAPTER II.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER, OXFORD BLUE, AND NORTH SEA DOCTOR.

The decisive step was now taken. To a man of Grenfell's temperament it was impossible for that step to be a mere empty formality. It must be real. It must bear some practical and tangible fruit. He offered himself forthwith as a teacher in an East-end Sunday School, but a vivacious and eminently practical mind here came into conflict with time-honoured methods. The new teacher had no relish for that form of martyrdom which placidly submits to pandemonium. He saw that to do any good he must secure order, and that to secure order something more was needed than an hour's brief contact on Sunday. With the help of four other medical students he turned his lodgings into a gymnasium, and by means of a horizontal bar and boxing gloves was able to win a complete and gladly conceded ascendancy over the noisiest boys.

This led to an ever-widening circle of beneficent activity. The young doctor became an inspiration among the city waifs. He was

one of the founders of the great Boys' Brigades which have done so much good ; he also assisted in the promotion of Boys' Camps, which have of recent years come into such vogue in many connexions and have been found a remarkably fruitful method of work amongst boys.

Meanwhile, with that practical common sense which is one of his great characteristics, the worker never allowed his bodily machine to be crippled. He kept himself fit and fresh by strenuous exercise. He went in for rowing, founded the inter-hospital rowing club at Putney, and rowed in the first inter-hospital race. He distinguished himself in the Blackheath football team, to which he was elected on the strength of his performances for the "United Hospitals." He found time also for fives, and one of his regular partners or opponents in the game was the Rev. Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, who is now Bishop of London. He kept up his athletics when he went on to Queen's, Oxford, winning his Blue for Rugby and the "throwing the hammer" at the 'Varsity sports.

But unspeakably delightful as Oxford life is, it does not afford a great deal of scope for one in whose blood burns the passion for adventure in the perilous places of life's battlefield. After a couple of terms at Queen's, Grenfell turned for advice to his old friend, Sir Frederick Treves.

He wanted work that would satisfy his medical aspirations as well as his desire for adventure and for definite Christian work. Sir Frederick happened to be a member of the Council of the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, and suggested that Grenfell should join the staff of the Mission.

Sir Frederick knew from personal experience what course of life he was advising, for he himself had rendered yeoman service to the mission. A born sailor, "he had stood on the carrier's bridge when the seas were coming over both to leeward and to windward, and the men and fishboxes were being washed about in the scuppers like a lot of ninepins. He never missed a haul without turning out and giving a hand the whole time he was out, and helped to paw the net like a new deck hand. His skill, which has saved the life of the highest in the land, has also saved hundreds of the fishermen from suffering and loss, and perhaps death."

No doctor ever made a better prescription for a patient than did the famous surgeon when he prescribed the Deep Sea Mission for the ardent soul of Wilfred Grenfell. It was a task that challenged all the young doctor's resources of energy, wisdom and faith. Prejudice and evil habit had to be overcome and to be replaced by better knowledge and better desire. There was plenty of room for teaching and for fighting,

and the young Viking revelled in his work. Difficulties were tackled and overcome. "When you set out to commend your Gospel to men who don't want it, there's only one way to go about it—to do something for them that they'll be sure to understand. The message of love that was 'made flesh and dwelt amongst men' must be re-incarnate in our lives if it is to be received to-day." This was the spirit of Grenfell's work and the secret of his success. He did something for the fishermen that they thoroughly understood.

After three years another world emerged before him, to become the scene of his life work. In 1892, at the age of twenty-seven, he set out from Great Yarmouth in the *Albert*, a 97-ton sailing vessel, one of the hospital ships of the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, to bring his North Sea experience to bear upon the desolate coasts of Labrador.

## CHAPTER III.

### LABRADOR: DR. GRENFELL'S PARISH.

Six hundred miles of iron precipice, the stormy sea that lashes it in the brief summers and the ice that locks it in the long winters—such is Dr. Grenfell's parish. Labrador is all that vast country to the East of Canada and North of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is the most desolate place in the world.

For the most part the eastern coast rises precipitously from the sea to a thousand and even in some places to four thousand feet of naked, gray, weather-worn rock, broken at intervals by long ribs of black. The iron face of the stupendous cliffs is scarred by storms and the battery of mountains of ice hurled against it by an angry sea. In places the very fury of the elements has wrought a refuge for man by cleaving the precipice and fashioning a narrow inlet or "tickle" between towering walls of rock to a fine harbourage within. In other places where there are no cliffs, smooth, ice-ground rocks slope inland to starved forests and rugged hills.

There is no pleasant sandy beach, no grassy

bank, not even a line of shingle. The coast is for the most part uncharted, and many a sunken reef lies in wait for the inexperienced mariner who has not learned to steer his course by the sound of the breakers or the echo of his own steamer whistle. When the perils of reefs become known there still remain the perils of icebergs. For some part of every year the danger to which the *Titanic* succumbed is the danger amidst which the fisherfolk of the Labrador daily ply their craft. Icebergs have even been known to gain entrance to the harbours, and, as if instinct with malicious purpose, to follow ships around and shoot tons of ice upon their decks to overwhelm them. As though these perils were insufficient to exhaust the unkindliness of Nature to this land, it is visited by winter gales of inconceivable violence. "The little new church built where I am wintering now was a few years ago blown clean away. Even the pews, the pulpit and the Communion table were all blown into the sea." Even when the wind falls the resources of an unkindly climate are not by any means at an end. Then is the opportunity for fogs—thick, widespread, dispiriting—so dense as to make midnight on deck while the sun may be shining brightly at the masthead.

During the eight or nine winter months the land is deep in snow and the raging shores are

silent. Every bay and creek is paved with thick ice. When summer comes it is blistering hot inland, with swarms of flies, while on the coast it is wet and blustering. Yet even here there are compensations. There are warm, sunny days in August, when the sea is quiet, the sky deep blue, the rocks bathed in yellow sunlight, the air clear and bracing. Dr. Grenfell avers that "the climate of Labrador is not excelled anywhere in the world for its bracing and invigorating effect." He pronounces the rainfall to be exceptionally small, and with unconquerable optimism even commends Labrador as having indisputable advantages as a holiday resort.

It is remarkable that human beings should be able to call this inhospitable coast their home. Yet so it is. Labrador lives chiefly on the harvest of the sea. The principal industry is the cod fishery. As long ago as 1766, 17,400 quintals\* of codfish were exported from Labrador, and to-day that export has been multiplied seventeen times. Whale, walrus, seal, herring, and haddock are other fisheries that have proved remunerative. There is in addition some trading in skins. Fur-bearing animals such as bears, wolves, caribou, foxes, martens, otters and beavers are plentiful, and there is

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\* One quintal = 100 lbs.

also a large variety and quantity of wild fowl. But this list exhausts the attractions that the country offers for the purposes of sport or gain.

Long before Labrador was famous for its fishery, even before it had its present name, man's adventurous spirit had driven him over stormy waters towards its frowning cliffs. Icelandic sagas link with it the names of Eric the Red ; an old monk, Adam of Bremen, writes of it ; and documentary evidence seems to indicate that it was known nearly a thousand years ago. We tread firmer ground when we come to the names of John Sebastian Cabot in 1497, Sir Humphrey Gilbert in 1583, Sir Walter Raleigh in 1594, and Henry Hudson (who gave his name to the Bay and Strait) in 1610. Later came the names of the Governor, Sir Hugh Palliser, the ingenuous Cartwright, and the gallant and energetic Courtemanche, the first French settler and commandant of the coast about 1770. All these touched at, knew, explored, lived in, or controlled, Labrador.

As the name of Dr. Grenfell's ancestor is indissolubly associated in history with the Azores, so it was an inhabitant of the Azores who gave the name to the land that was to be equally associated with the name of his distinguished descendant. It was a yeoman farmer (labrador) of Azores, sailing in the ship of John Sebastian Cabot in 1498, who first

sighted the land, and from him the land derived its name. John Sebastian Cabot is regarded as the discoverer of Labrador. To this fact an old Spanish map of Ribero in 1529 rather contemptuously refers in the statement : " Labrador was discovered by the English ; there is nothing in it of any value." Labrador may have been discovered by John Cabot, but in a much deeper sense it has been discovered by Wilfred Grenfell, and this wild and barren coast, which the Spanish cartographer dismissed as worthless, has for more than twenty years been made to yield a priceless harvest, which will be counted for all time as part of the imperishable spiritual treasure of mankind.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DR. GRENFELL'S PARISHIONERS.

The hardy folk who cling to this cruel coast and call it home consist of an aboriginal population of Eskimos and Indians, living for the most part in the north and inland, and a population of some thousands of fishermen, mostly of Scotch and English descent. The latter fall into three classes: The Newfoundlander fishermen, who come up from Newfoundland and fish off the Labrador coast during the season: the Outport folk, who are not rich enough to own vessels, and who gain their living by hook and line, fishing near the ports; and the Liveyeres, settlers on the coast, so-called because in answer to the question where they live they reply, "We live 'ere."

As Dr. Grenfell's parish includes not only the coast of Labrador, but that of Northern Newfoundland also, the different types of people who inhabit those coasts, and who have all benefited in some way by Dr. Grenfell's work, may be called Dr. Grenfell's parishioners.

They form a strange and fascinating variety.

Their traditions, their superstitions, their tragedies, their stern conflicts with ice and snow, with storm and starvation, would require the pen of a Blackwood or a Conrad to depict them adequately. Amongst the white population are found characters and situations so noble, so pathetic, and so quaint that they well might provide material for an Ian Maclaren, a Barrie or a Jacobs.

The Eskimo, living in scattered communities mostly in the north of Labrador, subsist in summer on the cod, and in winter on the seal and whale fisheries. While some of those in the extreme north have scarcely emerged from the Stone Age in respect to beliefs, food, dwellings and manner of life, the Christian Eskimo inhabiting the coast-line from Cape Chidley south are the best educated people in the country. They can read and write, play musical instruments, and share in part singing. They know the value of things, keep accounts and hold their own in trade. This extraordinary change is due solely and entirely to the work begun by the Moravian missionaries, Erhart and Jens Haven, in 1752, and carried on to the present day with such splendid persistence as to have won the entire Eskimo population on the east coast of Labrador to the Christian faith and preserved the race from extinction.

The other aboriginal people in Labrador are the Montagnais Indians. They are comparatively few in number, and are a diminishing factor in the population. Being mainly confined by their interests to the inland parts, or moving to and fro from coast to interior, they do not loom so largely before us as others. The manner of life and something of the poetry of the language of these children of nature have been made familiar to us by Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. Unfortunately the taint of civilisation has made itself manifest amongst them as amongst the Eskimos, and the methods and maladies of the white man are sapping the strength of a people who possess a language, a theology and a folk-lore that are full of interest.

Dr. Grenfell's main work lies amongst the white population of English descent, settled on or about the coasts of Labrador and Northern Newfoundland. It has been noted that these parishioners are in three grades. There are first of all the Newfoundlanders—"an adventurous, thrifty folk, bright-eyed, hearty in laughter—twenty-five thousand hale men and boys, with many a wife and maid," who leave their homes in Newfoundland and sail the Labrador seas during the season. Many of them own their vessels and return after a good season comparatively well-off. After a

bad season, however, even they may find themselves sinking into the quicksands of debt and pledged to a kind of slavery by the trading system that has long prevailed amongst them.

Next in order of worldly prosperity come the Outporters or Outport\* folk of North Newfoundland, the small fishermen, who gain their livelihood with cod-trap or hook-and-line in the vicinity of their own harbour. "The hook-and-line man has a lonely time of it. From earliest dawn, while the night yet lies thick on the sea, until, in storm or breeze or calm, he makes harbour in the dusk, he lies off shore fishing—tossing in the lop of the grounds, with the waves to baulk and the wind to watch warily, while he tends his lines. In the little punt he has made with his own hands he is for ever riding an infinite expanse, which, in 'fish weather,' is melancholy, or threatening, or deeply solemn, as it may chance—all the while and all alone confronting the mystery and terrible immensity of the sea. It may be that he gives himself over to aimless musing, or, even less happily, to pondering certain dark mysteries of the soul; and so it comes about that the 'mad-house 't Saint John's' is inadequate to accommodate the poor fellows whom lonely toil has bereft of their senses—

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\* Outport is used in contradistinction to St. John's, the capital of Newfoundland.

melancholiacs, idiots and maniacs 'along o' religion.' ”\*

The third class of whites is the “Liveyeres.” It is inconceivable that there can be a more forlorn, afflicted, poverty-stricken and altogether wretched portion of all English-speaking humanity than the Liveyeres of Labrador. Illiterate, squalid, bearing many children, often destitute, with such destitution as clothes a child in a trouser leg and feeds babies and strong men alike on nothing but flour and water, cut off it may be by fifty miles from the nearest neighbour, and by two hundred miles from the nearest doctor, the Liveyere lives out his bleak existence fastened to the sterile cliffs and ignorant of the fact that there is any fairer land on earth than his.

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\* “Dr. Grenfell's Parish,” page 107.

## CHAPTER V.

### SORE NEEDS AND STRANGE NOTIONS.

The thin mat of starveling earth upon the rocks yields the inhabitant of Labrador nothing but berries, and, in the summer, turnip tops. The fierce breed of dogs needed for winter travelling on the coast makes it impossible to keep live-stock. There are no pigs, no sheep, no chickens; moreover, there are neither goats nor cows, and so there is no milk nor butter; little children and sometimes babies have to be content with flour and water and molasses.

Degrees of wealth are marked amongst the Liveyeres by the frame house and the pork barrel. The poorest of all live in huts of turf, and subsist on roots, fish, and a paste of flour and water. Others there are who flaunt their wealth by living in a frame house, having a bed to sleep in, muslin curtains in their windows, and a plant in a red pot upon the window-sill. In addition to the flour and water, they also have a barrel of salt pork, and on special occasions there may be raisins in the bread. It is no uncommon thing for the flour to run short. A journey of fifty miles must perhaps be made to replenish the store. There, too; there may

be the same need, and the traveller must go further on. A case like this occurred where a father of five children, seeking in vain to make good the disappearing store, on his return home sent out his wife and two eldest children to fish in the river, and then, having killed his three youngest children, made away with himself that the remainder of the family might live. Pitiless to its inhabitants during life, Labrador is as pitiless to them when they are dead. In many places the soil is so thin as to deny the dead a grave, and their last resting-place has to be won by blasting it from the solid rock.

To such people medical aid was available only on the occasions when the mail-boat was able to reach them in the few summer months, perhaps eight to ten times at the most in the year, sometimes not at all. Even when it did reach them it was often like the draught of Tantalus, that brought torture rather than relief to his parched lips.

On one occasion a doctor was called to a little cottage where three children lay sick of diphtheria. He refused to inject the anti-toxin till he had received his fee. The fee was two dollars an injection. But the father could only produce four dollars.

“Four dollars,” said the doctor, “two children. Which ones shall it be?”

How could the father choose? The doctor in

the end chose the "handiest" ones. The third one died.

On another occasion, when the mail-boat dropped anchor one stormy night, a man put out in eager haste to summon the doctor.

"What!" roared the doctor. "Think I'm going to turn out this time of night?"

"Sure, zur," stammered the astonished boatman. "I—I—s'pose so. He's very sick, zur. He's coughin' ——"

"Let him cough himself to death!" said the doctor.

The Government had provided for the transportation of sick fishermen from the Labrador coast to their homes in Newfoundland. Once a fisherman brought his consumptive son aboard the mail-boat. The boy wanted his mother, who was at home in Newfoundland. To all the fisherman's entreaties the doctor only replied with a laugh and a jest.

"We'll have a laugh at *you*," cried the indignant fisherman, "when *you* comes to die!"

Then the father cursed the doctor most heartily and took his son ashore. They did have the laugh of the doctor. Being drunk on a stormy night, he fell down the companionway and broke his neck.

Such was medical attention in Labrador before Dr. Grenfell came.

Being so far cut off from medical assistance,

the poor Liveyeres have devised strange remedies for themselves. Wise women and seventh sons are credited with marvellous powers of healing. A seventh son of a seventh son is a sort of super-doctor amongst them. Once on stripping a fisherman to examine his chest Dr. Grenfell perceived a string around his neck. On enquiry he was told that it was a charm against tooth-ache. A green ribbon round the left wrist is regarded as a charm against bleeding. A father attempted to cure his little lad of diphtheria by wrapping his throat with a split herring. A sure cure for consumption was pronounced to be a bull's heart, dried and powdered and administered with faith and regularity. A certain specific for sea-boils was discovered in the practice of cutting one's nails on a Monday. Surgery, as well as medicine, by force of circumstances falls into unskilled hands. An old woman in Labrador had gained quite a name for amputations of frozen fingers, feet and hands. A father, whose little daughter chanced to freeze her feet to the bone in midwinter, perceiving that a surgical operation could no longer be delayed, cut both feet off with an axe. It is good to know that Dr. Grenfell afterwards visited this girl and succeeded in restoring her to health. She has now been adopted by a charitable lady in the United States, and is a strong and useful member of society.

At one place where Dr. Grenfell called, a young fellow came aboard imploring to be bled. The doctor examined him, and, finding it was only a case of impure blood, discharged him unbled. But the next morning he returned with renewed entreaty to be bled, and Dr. Grenfell perceived that he had better bleed him to ease his mind. While the operation was going on the young fellow remarked, "An old Indian squaw she bleed my feet a good spell ago, and I haven't had ne'er a pain since." "But," he added, referring half regretfully to Dr. Grenfell's method, "it doesn't feel quite the same. *She* bored the holes with a kind o' corkscrew."

It is not to be wondered at that where life is lived in such desperate conditions as these the religious outlook of the inhabitants is of a peculiarly sombre tint. One old man of generous and hospitable disposition and of simple piety confided to his guests in a fireside talk at midnight, while the gale howled round his log hut, that "his besettin' sin was laughin'." "'Tis the sin of jokin' that puts my soul in danger o' bein' hove overboard into the burnin' lake. I were a wonderful joker when I were a sinful man. Ah! sir, 'tis a wonderful temptation. But 'tis not set down in the Book that Jesus Christ smiled an' laughed, an' with the Lord's help I'll beat the devil yet. I'll beat 'un!"

Jared, though young, lusty and light-hearted, lived in the fear and dread of hell. A sportsman remarking to him casually at the end of the day that he had been suffering the tortures of the damned through the bites of innumerable flies, was surprised to find that he provoked his hearer to great gusts of laughter. On enquiry he found that in his hearer's estimation if the tortures of hell were no more than fly-bites he would "jack aisy about it." "Ay," he said, "if that's all 'tis, 'twould not trouble me much."

In such a soil as this superstition takes root. Mermen and mermaids have been seen rising from the sea and beckoning to the sailor or to the lonely squatter. One night, at dusk, the dogs came whimpering into the hut, and soon after came the children. They had seen a monstrous form approaching their home through the wood. As the husband had not returned, the wife took down his gun, and firing from the doorway into the dusk, in the direction from which the advancing sound came, slammed the door. There was the noise of a crashing retreat down the hillside through the wood, and then silence. The next morning a great pathway was found torn through a thick wood that covered the hill-side. Great branches were snapped from the trees. There were also footprints in the ground which sank

to a depth of six inches, where a horse's hoofs would only sink two inches. Of these well-attested facts no satisfactory explanation has ever been given. Scientists have hazarded the conjecture that the unknown interior of Labrador may be the last home of some monster like the iguanodon. But the Liveyeres were quite ready to adopt the Indian legend of the Windigo, a monstrous man, twenty feet in height, who lies in wait for the lonely traveller and casts a spell of evil on his life.

The conditions of existence which are made so stern by the poverty of the soil and the inclemency of sea and sky, were made even more burdensome by the avarice of man. The Liveyere who was fortunate enough in the winter to trap a silver fox, or other fur-bearing creature, would receive from the trader only one-tenth of the market value of the skin. The Newfoundland fisherman, in many cases, was induced by his own poverty to mortgage the "catch" of to-morrow for the food of to-day; or he allowed the merchant to remunerate him for his "catch" by setting him up with a new net or a new boat or with some other part of his tackle. This system of paying in kind deprived the fisherman of his independence and reduced him to a condition bordering upon slavery to the merchant. He never saw cash.

This system produces a fruitful crop of evils. On the one hand it plays into the hands of idleness and dishonesty ; for though the man's catch is nominally the merchant's, he is tempted to keep back some part and sell it elsewhere, or even to sell all his fish right away to another firm. On the other hand the merchant or capitalist may easily find himself taking advantage of the needs of his dependents and sliding unconsciously into ways of robbery and extortion. And so when the inhabitants of this region had surmounted the hardships of angry seas, inhospitable coasts and inclement weather in order to reap their harvest, the rapacity of man waited to deprive them of their liberty.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DOCTOR HIMSELF, SOME VISITS, AND AN ADVENTURE.

It was into this Dantesque hell of accumulated misery that Dr. Grenfell came in the year 1892. His avowed object was "to succour with medical aid the solitary fishermen of the Northern Sea." That was a modest programme that covered a mighty purpose. In the light of his many-sided activities for the welfare of Labrador during more than twenty years, it is clear that his master-passion was to lavish all his splendid resources of heart and mind and soul and strength on ministering to every conceivable shape and form of human need that he could find in his vast parish. He does "succour with medical aid" it is true. There are literally thousands upon thousands upon the coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland who owe their lives and their health to Dr. Grenfell. But Dr. Grenfell has been to Labrador far more than the kindly medical practitioner. With magnificent audacity he has faced up to every tough and tangled problem of the social and

industrial life of the country ; he has investigated its physiography, its oceanography, its ethnography, its history and its zoology ; he has viewed his work from every possible standpoint ; and his passion for serving the struggling denizens of the coast has given him a comprehensive grasp of all that Labrador stands for. Hence it is not surprising to find that he is not only doctor, but also mariner, magistrate, preacher, hunter, traveller, explorer, stock-farmer, storekeeper, financial adviser, lecturer and author.

The personal appearance of the man reveals his abundant vitality. Says one : " A robust, hearty Saxon, indefatigable, devoted, jolly." Another writes : " Here he sits to-day opposite me, an athletic figure, with a round russet face, clear blue eyes and light moustache, and tells with his clear-cut English speech, and quiet English ways, yarns of adventure that make my boys want to follow him at once to the Northland." A third account speaks of him as " athletic, adventurous, dogged, unsentimental, merry, kind."

It was a memorable day for Labrador when this strong and gifted man arrived in the mission ship *Albert* in 1892. The development of his work has been phenomenal. Within a year of his arrival two hospitals were built, one at Battle Harbour, just north of the Straits of

Belle Isle, where the southern corner of Labrador faces the North Atlantic ; the other further north, at Indian Harbour. In addition, a new steam launch, the *Princess May*, was provided to extend the work of the hospital ship. In this first year nine hundred sick folk received medical attention, and services were held at different places on the coast. Such an achievement might well have lasted any average missionary for a lifetime ; but with Dr. Grenfell it was only a beginning. Within the next dozen years a hospital had been built at St. Anthony, in Newfoundland, and another at Harrington, on the southern coast of Labrador, while the two first hospitals at Indian and Battle Harbours were both enlarged. Besides all this, an orphanage, several co-operative stores, a mill, and numerous vessels owe their existence to Dr. Grenfell's vigorous initiative.

It would be incorrect to picture him as sitting in some quiet central office giving his orders like a *generalissimo*, and pulling the wires of a great organisation ; nor must he be conceived of as a consulting physician paying occasional visits to the hospitals to give advice with regard to serious cases. Rather must he be thought of as one of the rank and file in an army, taking part in all the rough and tumble of the firing line ; we must think of him in summer time scudding from port to port along the coast

and braving such hazardous storms that even seasoned mariners gasp at his daring and have come to say in admiring jest: "This gale will bring Grenfell." In winter we find him making up his dog team, clothed in skins like an arctic explorer, speeding from settlement to settlement and house to house over the snowfield from end to end of the land. In this way he covered in one winter no less than 1,500 miles.

No words can adequately describe the consolation of this beneficent ministry. One or two examples must serve to indicate the widespread blessing that his devoted skill has brought. At one place where the hospital ship dropped anchor the doctor was called out to see a mother of a family, who was said to be dying. It was a terrible case of psoas abscess that required drastic and immediate treatment. Even then it would be very doubtful if recovery would be possible. The case involved an opening through the muscles of the back. Where proper surgical appliances are wanting the next best have to be improvised. A scalpel and a stethoscope tube were the doctor's only assets. A hole was cut right through the bed, the abscess was opened, and the stethoscope tube was strongly sewn in and drainage established. The patient was strictly enjoined to lie on her back until the doctor's next visit in six months' time. Returning at the end of six months he inquired some-

what timidly, of those who came down to greet him, about the result of the operation. To his great relief a very healthy-looking woman answered, "Oh, that's me."

At another place, just as the ship was starting, an urgent call came for the doctor to stop, as they were bringing alongside a young man who required attention. Some weeks previously he had dislocated his arm, and besides being in great pain was unable to follow his work. The matter was soon put right, and the doctor did not regret the delay. Two years after he called at the same place, and a fine young fisherman brought a splendid pair of skin boots on board for the doctor. The doctor admired them, and asked the price. "They're for you," said the young man; "you put my arm right," and without waiting for thanks he dropped into his boat and made for the shore.

When it is considered that Dr. Grenfell's mission treated nearly 3,000 patients in 1912 it can be estimated what must have been the awful extent of suffering before there was any such medical attention at all, and when the sufferers had to wait months, and perhaps even years, before attention could reach them.

Hazardous as are many of Dr. Grenfell's parish rounds by sea, he meets with perils also when he travels over ice and snow by "koma-tik," or dog-sleigh. Sometimes on those vast

fields of snow the track is lost, and there is the danger of starvation or of being frozen to death. Sometimes the komatik will pitch over a snow cliff. Perhaps the most perilous adventure Dr. Grenfell had was in the spring of 1908. He had been summoned to perform a serious operation upon a young man forty miles away, and as the ice still lay thick about the coast he determined to take a short cut in his dog-sleigh across an ice-covered bay. The direct line from promontory to promontory was about seven miles, and by taking this instead of skirting the shore several miles would be saved.

Before the doctor had got half-way across it was evident that what had appeared to be solid ice was in reality a number of "ice-pans," or floating blocks of ice crammed into the bay by a wind off the sea. In between the blocks was "sish" ice, or soft ice made by the pounding together of great masses as they rose and fell on the waves; "sish" is of the consistency of porridge, and whilst it is possible to pass swiftly over it when it is crammed together, it is fatal as quicksand to rest on.

When the sleigh was three miles from shore the wind fell. Then it began to blow off the shore. At once the ice-pans spread abroad, the sish loosened, and in a moment doctor, dogs and komatik were plunged in icy water. By a

miracle the dogs scrambled on to a block of ice some ten feet square, and the doctor pulled himself up by the reins, but the situation was now alarming. The ice block with its living freight was steadily drifting out into the Atlantic. Not a soul was on that desolate shore, and even if anyone had seen the doctor's perilous plight, the thunder of the ice as it was battered against the shore gave warning that no boat could live through such a surf. Night with its mortal cold was approaching, and, without more covering than he had, the doctor knew it was impossible for him to live till morning.

It seemed as if there were no way of escape, and as if the doctor, and with him the welfare of thousands up and down that coast, were doomed. But in this predicament the resolution and resource of a determined fighter came to his aid. There was nothing for it but to kill three of his beloved dogs, and use their skins for a covering. There on the drifting ice-pan the deed was swiftly done, and, covered with the skins of the dead dogs, and cuddling up close to the live ones, the doctor affirms he slept soundly on his unstable bed.

When the sun rose, flooding with glorious extravagance the crimson hills of purest snow, he noticed that his ice-pan was fast melting. Every means of attracting attention must be

at once employed. Improvising a flag-staff from the legs of the dead dogs, he attached to it one of his garments for a flag, and as long as he had strength left, he kept this strange signal in motion.

Those who would enjoy the full narrative of this episode must read Doctor Grenfell's own account in *Adrift on an Ice-Pan*. Suffice it here to say that, by what seemed the slenderest chance, he had been sighted from the shore on the previous evening, the village had been aroused, and early next morning a boat put out and saved him. Though one hand and both feet were frost burnt, the indefatigable doctor, after a sorely-needed rest among his solicitous and thankful fisherfolk, proceeded on his errand, successfully performed the operation, and saved the young man's life. To-day in the hall-way of his Labrador home there is a bronze tablet "to the memory of three noble dogs, 'Moody,' 'Watch' and 'Spy,' whose lives were given for mine on the ice."

## CHAPTER VII.

### STORES, REINDEER, SCENES IN COURT, AND BOOKS.

Dr. Grenfell has realised that it is not only by medical work that Labrador may be made susceptible to his message. His comprehensive view includes everything that touches the true welfare of the inhabitants, social and moral as well as physical. To lift them from their dispiriting financial condition of dependence he has resolutely fought the truck system of payment by supplies. Side by side with the work of opening hospitals he has organised the establishment of co-operative stores at Red Bay, St. Anthony, West St. Modeste, and Flower's Cove. In addition to this, he has opened a sawmill, which, by giving employment in the winter, in one year kept as many as sixty-five families alive; for the same purpose a schooner building yard and a seal-boot factory have been established. The co-operative stores cheapened articles of necessity, and brought within reach of the people the opportunity to become free of debt. It may have been due in some measure to representations made by

Dr. Grenfell that in 1901 Sir Henry McCallum wrote informing him that the Ministry had introduced legislation for bringing into force the Truck Act of 1831, which made it illegal under a heavy penalty to give payment by supplies.

Another important commercial enterprise of Dr. Grenfell's has been the introduction of reindeer. From Labrador to Lapland is a far cry, but it was not too far for Dr. Grenfell. In 1907 he imported a herd of 300 reindeer from Lapland, with four Lapp families and eight dogs to look after them. According to latest reports the experiment is a complete success, the animals having taken quite kindly to the conditions of life in their new home.

By this enterprise one of the great difficulties of the coastal population is overcome. The crying need from the beginning has been the need of milk for children. Cows, goats and sheep, besides being expensive and difficult to acclimatise, are exposed to the attacks of the wolfish dogs used for the sleighs. The reindeer replaces dogs as draught animals, and at the same time gives a fine, rich milk; diseases which arise from a want of fresh meat are warded off by reindeer flesh, which is good to eat; butter and cheese—staple and palatable articles of diet in portable form—are provided; reindeer skin is used for boots and flexible overclothes,

for parchment and for sledge lashings; the tendons afford the women all the sewing material they need for making boots, skin boats and clothing. Even the horns and hoofs are valuable, and furnish many of the household essentials of the natives.

Besides being a leader in commercial enterprise, Dr. Grenfell is also a magistrate. He was reluctant to undertake this function until he saw in it possibilities of dealing with the life of the people as only one in that position could. Many are the tragic estrangements and quarrels which he has been able to heal in his magisterial capacity. In the homely court held in a parlour or mission hall, and crowded with the fisherfolk whom the doctor knows by name, they learn not only justice, but that art of living together which is so necessary to learn in those bleak solitudes where men are for the whole year entirely dependent on one another's company. On more than one occasion defendant and plaintiff have shaken hands at the conclusion of the trial, and in one case two women who had not spoken to one another for many months made it up, and in accordance with the judgment went home to tea together after a touching scene "in court."

But Dr. Grenfell can be severe as well as gentle. A rich man who had continually behaved in an oppressive manner to his poorer

neighbours in a certain community at last committed a flagrant sin. Dr. Grenfell heard of it, and his anchor was soon up and his ship off to the place.

“Now,” said the doctor to this man, “you must make what amends you can, and you must confess your sin.”

The man laughed aloud. It seemed to him a joke that a mission doctor should interfere with a rich and influential man who was in with the politicians of St. John's. But the mission-doctor was also a magistrate.

“I say,” said he deliberately, “that you must pay one thousand dollars and confess your sin.”

The man cursed the doctor with great laughter, and dared him to do his worst.

“I warn you,” said the doctor, “that I will arrest you if you do not do precisely as I say.”

The man defied him still, and pointed out that he had a crew behind him to fight for him. The doctor questioned whether his crew loved him enough to fight for him, and pointed out that he too had a crew.

“On Sunday evening,” said the doctor, “you will appear at the church at seven o'clock and confess your sin before the congregation, and next week you will pay the money.”

At the morning service the doctor announced that that night a sinful man would confess his

sin before them all. There was great excitement. The hour of service arrived, but not the man. Dr. Grenfell bade the congregation remain while he fetched the man. When he arrived at his house he found him with his friends praying. But the doctor was adamant.

Before the whole congregation the man was questioned and confessed his sin. The people were bidden to have no dealings with him for a year. If he then showed signs of an honest disposition they might take him to their hearts again. The offender paid the thousand dollars and soon afterwards removed from the district.

Not less determined is Doctor Grenfell in his fight with alcohol. Many a barrel of intoxicating liquor has he seized and emptied overboard from a vessel that was trying to make gain out of the fisherman's weakness. "It is impossible for me to suggest as a scientist or, let me say, as a physiologist, or as a rational human being, much less as a follower of Christ, that this stuff should be poured down the throats of men. We borrowed an axe from one of the group, and smashing in the head of the barrel, let it run out into the ocean. Wasn't that the best way of regulating the liquor traffic among us, where all knew it was a matter of life and death to many of us?"

It must be counted amongst the most valuable assets of the Labrador mission that

Dr. Grenfell is not only a man of action, but also a man of letters. This Ulysses of the North has in some dozen delightful books given us his own Odyssey. *Adrift on an Ice-Pan, Down to the Sea, Down North on the Labrador*, with their excellent illustrations and enthralling stories, have made the perils, the humour, the pathos, and the suffering of his people vividly felt on both sides of the Atlantic. His devotional books, *A Man's Faith, The Adventure of Life, Immortality*, and *What Life Means to Me*, let us into the secret chambers of his soul, and reveal a strong and courageous spirit, rebelling against conventionalities and taking the storms and perplexities of life with a frolic welcome. The reading of them has the same effect as the glorious fen wind that Charles Kingsley found so good a tonic for "over-mentation." *Labrador : Its Country and Its People*, is a thoroughly scientific and comprehensive study of every aspect of Labrador life. It runs to some five hundred pages, is abundantly illustrated and eminently readable, and is an abiding monument to Dr. Grenfell's absorbing devotion to everything that concerns the country of his adoption.

Thus this man of splendid endowments has given himself heart and mind and soul and strength for utmost ministry to sorest needs. Every avenue of life—physical, social, intellec-

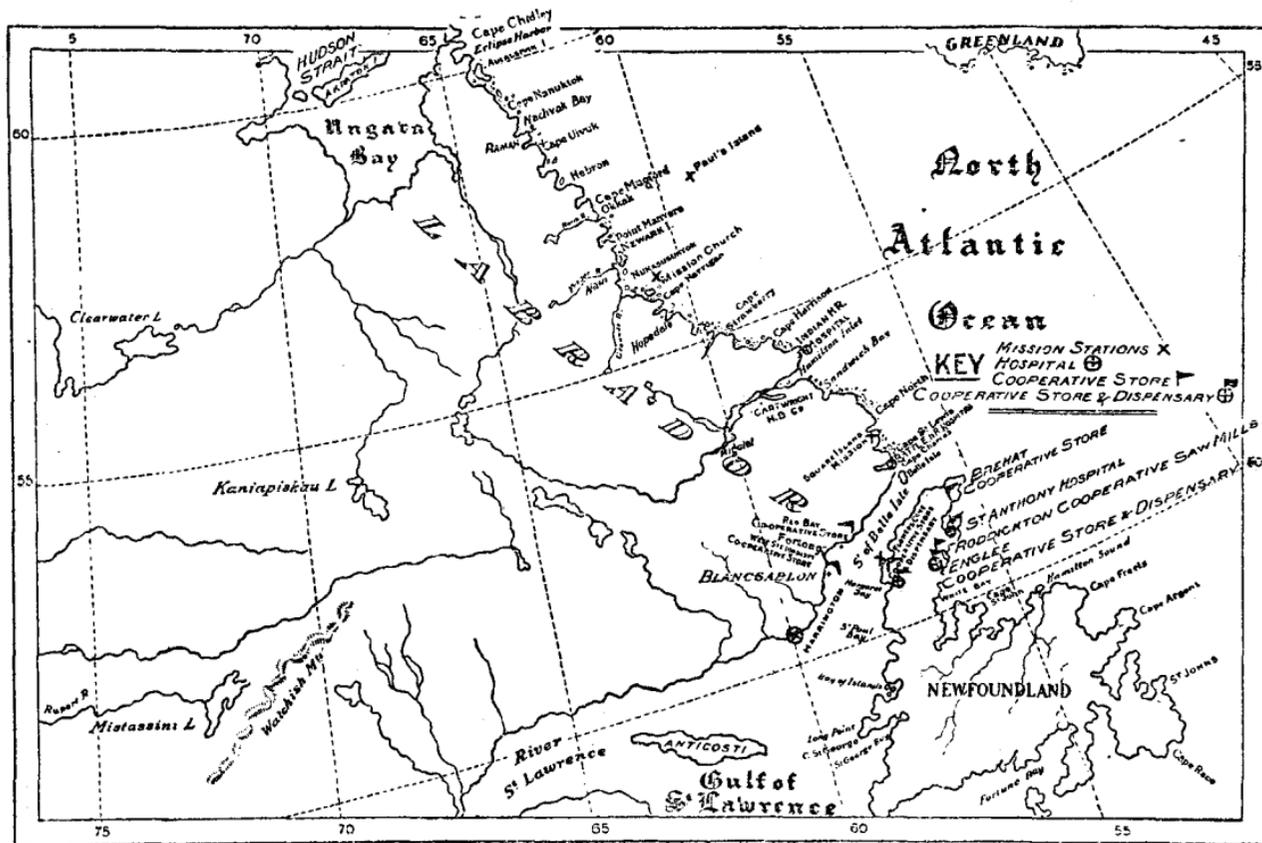
tual, industrial, commercial—has been employed by him to interpret the glorious message of the comprehensive salvation which he has to give. He could eminently adopt as his own Bishop Westcott's adaptation of Terence's famous line, "*Christianus sum, nihil humani alienum a me puto*" ("Christian am I, no human interest count I alien to me"). With such a many-sided appeal he was bound to succeed. The United States and Canada have taken his work as warmly to their hearts as Great Britain. His old University of Oxford has conferred upon him the honorary degree of M.D. in recognition of his life work, as well as of his medical ability. His Majesty King George has honoured him with the Order of Companion of St. Michael and St. George. But nowhere is his name held in higher esteem and in more affectionate reverence than among those hardy fisherfolk who fish the seas of Labrador or cling to its penurious coasts. To him they owe health, comfort, freedom, incentive, consolation, life. Nowhere could a better illustration be found of the words, "He that would be greatest among you, let him become the servant of all."

Let this brief sketch of a strenuous life conclude with the strong and simple words of the doctor himself—words which reveal the purpose and the spirit of his career :

“ God grant that when I come up for inspection, when my voyage is over, I may not fear the verdict. God grant that He who inspects may see in me the evidences of work done, of cargoes carried home. May the log-book record many a brother helped. Yes, and saved. For though He will see—as see He will—the dints in the planking and the scratches on the paint and spars—yes, even if they speak to Him while they remind us of the sorry contact with rock and shoal—still we have confidence to believe there will be nothing to dread from Him. ‘ Yes, yes, skipper: God bless the old ship. Let her be inspected, I say, just as she is.’ ”

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*The little hospital steamer “ Strathcona ” is lent to Dr. Grenfell by the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, 181, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.; the Hospital and other buildings in Labrador and Newfoundland are all vested in this Society, the offices of which are Dr. Grenfell’s Headquarters in England.*



## NORTH.

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*We come from the gloom of the shadowy trail,  
Out away on the fringe of the Night,  
Where no man could tell, when the darkness fell,  
If his eyes would behold the Light.*

*To—the—Night,*

*To—the—Night,*

*To the darkness and the sorrow of the Night,*

*Came—the—Light,*

*Came—the—Light,*

*Came the wonder and the glory of the Light.*

*There are wanderers still, without ever a guide,*

*Out there on the fringe of the Night ;*

*They are bond and blind—to their darkness  
resigned,*

*With never a wish for the Light.*

*To—their—Night—*

*To—their—Night—*

*To the darkness and the sorrow of their Night,*

*Take—the—Light !*

*Take—the—Light !*

*Take the wonder and the glory of the Light !*

—JOHN OXENHAM.