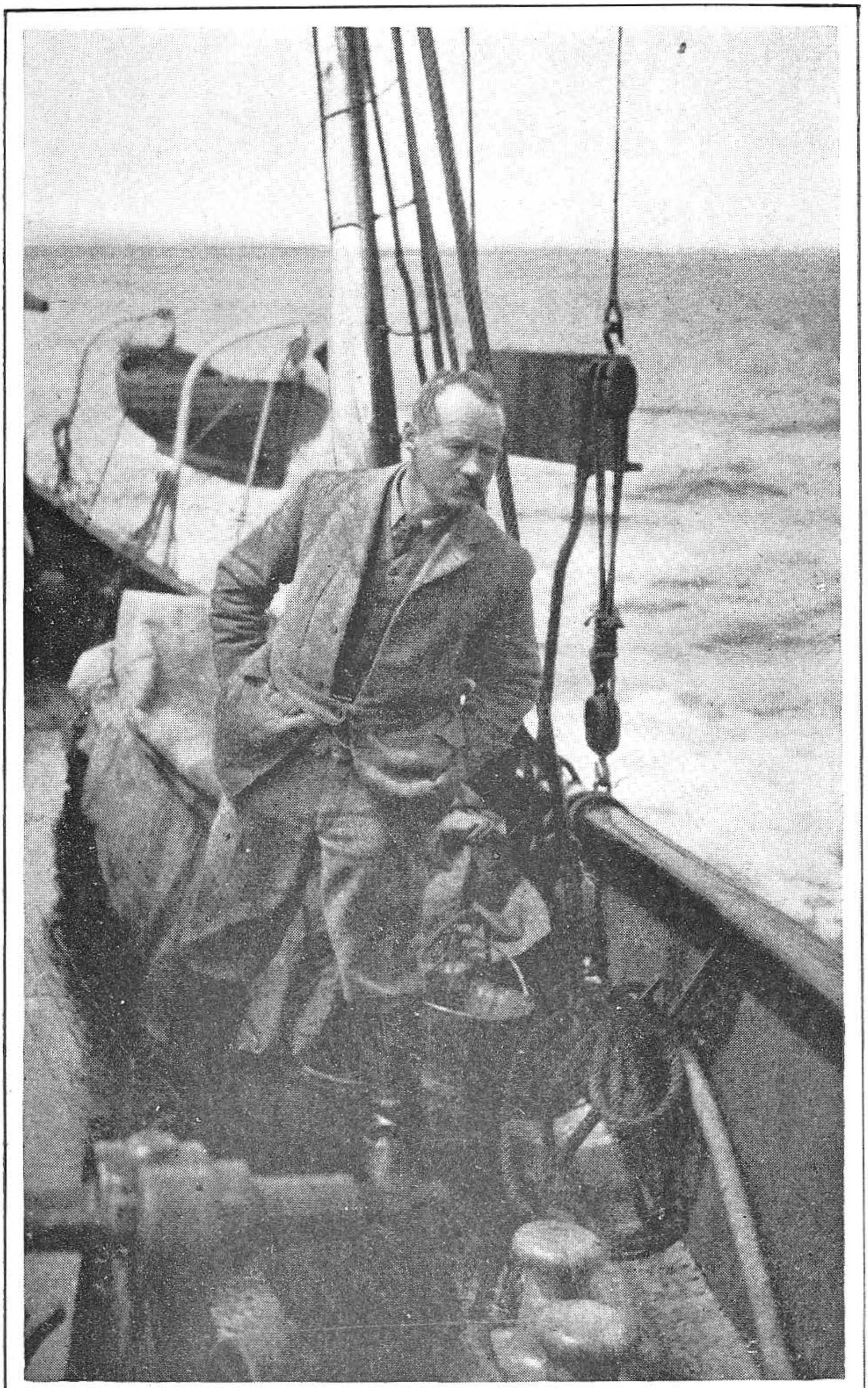

CRUISING DOWN NORTH ON THE LABRADOR

Down North on The Labrador

By

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ILLUSTRATIONS

I

The Silver Fox

THE capture of a fox would not be considered a matter of extreme importance in most countries, but in Labrador it may be and has been more than once the event of a lifetime. If the fox is red, or white, or blue, or cross, or patch, even in Labrador it means little enough, but if it is a silver, and especially if it be black beyond the shoulders, then it looms very large on the horizon of a northern settler's economy.

And Anthony Dyson had really caught one. Yes, there it was. He had just taken it out of his "nonny" bag, and it lay on the floor of his humble home, a mass of frozen hair and ice. A solid ball like a real Christmas cake, only with dark black hairs protruding through the frosting. For the ice must be thawed off carefully, not to injure the beautiful long hairs. The veriest tenderfoot would not try to knock it off with a tomahawk, as from a common skin.

Early in November, before the "runs" between the outer islands were quite caught

fast, long after the fleets of fishing schooners had winged their way south, Anthony and his man Chesley had worked their little boat through the slob ice to a large island lying off in the Atlantic, in order to tail their traps and prospect for chances of winter game. They had carried with them, as they always did in the boat, their sleeping bags and some food, in case they were benighted. For they were careful men, having little ones at home depending on them.

It was, however, this very fact which now betrayed them. The northern sky loomed very angry when they left, and in their little sailing skiff they had shipped enough water to wet their clothing well before they landed on Sandy Point. It seemed too hard to turn back now; so, hoping against better judgment that the weather would get no worse, they hauled their boat above high water line, while they went around the big, long island tailing their traps. They had calculated on having plenty of time to recross the arm of the sea before dark. But, alas! even before they got back to their boat the sky broke, and a hurricane of wind leaped down upon them, so that the water was in an instant a mass of smoke and drift. The intense cold froze their already wet clothing. They tried

to keep moving, searching the island for shelter from the storm, but finding none. The snow on the ground, which they depended on in winter for a night's lodging when travelling, was not deep enough to be any material help, and was wet and soggy from the driving salt spray. Capsizing their boat, they crept in beneath it into their sleeping bags. But these, too, were wet with the spray and as soon as they lay down their own clothes froze solid, so that they were obliged to get out and walk down near the breakers, so that the driving salt spray might soften their whilom armour, as vinegar would a crab's shell.

It was too cold to eat, and though they had dry matches in bottles, like the careful hunters they were, the force of the wind made a fire utterly impossible. A hare they had killed that day was as hard as a piece of iron, and they were too cold and wretched to break it and eat it raw.

All night they walked up and down and up and down in the dark. Returning one time to look for their boat, they found that the gale had piled the sea so high that she was actually rolling over in the surf, and with her their few remaining things were gone, including their axe and kettle. They

could do nothing then to save them. Still, fortunately, the wind was on shore; so that when daylight broke and the tide fell the boat was ten yards up the beach. Oars and contents were all gone, and she herself lay a miniature iceberg, with many inches of frozen spray making her almost unrecognizable. Painfully they dragged her beyond the reach of the sea; for if she were lost, with her would go any chance of ever seeing their homes and loved ones again. Even if the women and children had endeavoured to come and look for them, it would have been impossible for them to launch the big trap boat in the absence of any men. And they knew well the men had all left for their winter homes long ago. All this long day the fierce storm continued to sweep over the devoted island, until every high pinnacle and every blade of vegetation was covered with snow or was thick with frozen glitter. Soon after the first streak of daylight they were able to find a niche in the rocks under the lea of the island where they could remove their clothes and beat out the ice. But they found nothing to make a fire with, and had to be content again to put on their frozen apparel to thaw out against the heat of their bodies if possible. For food they

could only nibble a piece of hard bread, the best friend of the poor man on his winter travels, for it is cheap and cannot freeze and become useless.

By dark that night Chesley, the younger of the two men, was fast showing signs of failing, and it took all Anthony's spare energy to rouse and hearten him. Unfortunately the lad had been reared as one of a large family, and in his boyhood had never really been able to obtain the nourishing food a growing boy requires. While escaping the fate of two of his brothers, who had for this reason fallen victims to consumption, he had nevertheless grown up with a diminished vitality, and the few months of better living in Anthony's house had not yet brought to him the vital energy he should have had.

The next was indeed a horrible night for both of the men, and doubly so because of what they knew it meant to those in the cottage across the strip of water. Anthony declares that with him the night went quickly, and he remembers little personal suffering. The need to keep his companion on the move and to stimulate him not to give up, lie down and die, apparently diverted his attention from himself. But he

admits that every now and again his spirit travelled over those foaming billows, and just as really as if his body had been able to conquer material circumstances, he seemed to be watching his loved ones in his own home. So real was the impression that he seemed almost puzzled as to where he actually was, and he positively expected at times that his next footstep would land him at his own door.

He was perfectly conscious of his young wife in her agony of doubt, wrestling with God, rather than "saying her prayers," that his own life might be spared. He had been himself too self-opinionated to ask for divine help against a physical storm, even all through that long night. Without actually confessing it to himself, he had been dominated by a resentment in his own mind against any idea that he was not master of his life and his environment. But the vision of his stricken wife seemed to soften his heart, and now, without any particular consciousness of humbling himself, he cried for mercy to God; first for the almost helpless man he was trying to save, and then—yes, then, odd as it would have seemed to him at any other time—without any feeling of meanness he asked God to save him. He

thinks now, had it not been for the trust of his companion's life, he might never have learned the lesson of that night—a lesson he firmly believes that storm was sent for, and for which he has lived to heartily thank a Father of love in heaven for teaching him. He still puts it in the half fatalistic way of the country, "I s'pose my time had not yet come, doctor." But the sense of a personal God really watching over the affairs of men had begun to make a new man of him.

In the dark hours before dawn there was a sudden lull in the wind, the sea dropped quickly, and before the splendid sunrise broke over the exquisite tracery of the hills the hurricane had gone as suddenly as it came. After chafing the limbs and rubbing the body of his charge until he saw signs of returning life, Anthony carried and drove him back to the boat, where he laid him down in his own oil coat until he could beat the ice off the boat's sides and bottom, and once more make her manageable.

Hidden under bulks of seaweed and other débris he was able to find, alongshore, pieces of two of the now dilapidated paddles, sufficiently large for a man of his calibre to venture the passage home with. By a great effort he succeeded in effecting a launch,

getting his companion into the boat. After a weary journey he reached his own shore, where he had long been spied by his anxious wife from the lookout. It had been such an experience as he never wanted to renew; but he now confessed that, taken with other of life's happenings, it had been honestly worth while.

A week had gone by. Both men were so thoroughly recovered that one would have supposed they had forgotten their hard experience. It was now once more time to cross the run and examine the traps they had tailed on the island; and as good signs of foxes had been apparent where they had set, Anthony, nothing loth, proposed another journey to Sandy Point.

They were all in need enough, God knows, of some reinforcements to the larder. But if this were true for Anthony it was ten times more true for his companion. Chesley's family at home was a large one, and his father's credit at the store, thirty miles away, had "not reached beyond dry flour," so that while he himself was getting butter and molasses, he was anxious enough to be able to carry something home to his parents and the family. This was his first "winter out"; and, full of high hopes, he had begun work,

determined to play the man in the eyes of those loved ones who were in such dire need.

The events of the last round of his traps had had the effect on Anthony of making him absolutely certain of a watchful care over his life. But, strange to say, exactly the same circumstance had so preyed on the mind of the younger man that he flatly refused again to venture the journey. The more Anthony insisted the more determined was the refusal—and the day ended with Chesley's abruptly leaving the house altogether, after resigning all interest in the traps, travelling on foot to the mainland which he was now able to reach on the ice, and doggedly holding on his way until he arrived penniless at his father's door.

Anthony felt he had nothing to blame himself for. He had reasoned and ordered, all to no purpose. The outcome was that now he was left alone, to all appearances unable to pursue his only method of earning a livelihood. His wife had not yet found out the true state of affairs. She supposed that Chesley would return in the morning, and that at least her husband would not have to add to his inevitable risks the perils of going these long distances alone. Anthony re-

membered that she knew how her own uncle had come by his death two years before, by some fit or seizure while away with his dogs; the gruesome story of how the dogs had returned some time later without him, and that only when the snow had gone in the spring his half eaten body had been found, was not likely to be forgotten. Anthony did not dare suggest to her what he knew was now the only course open to him.

All the next day he himself still kept silence, hoping against hope that Chesley might return. He dreaded asking his wife to let him depart alone, though he had, like most of our men, absolutely no fear about going. But on the second day the real truth dawned upon him. He would be alone for the winter now, and must either go by himself or starve.

Screwing his courage to its utmost limit, he at length told his wife; expecting that a scene would follow that would make his determination impossible to put into practice. He confesses that in this dilemma he had forgotten again the good hand of his God upon him. For it took him utterly by surprise when his wife seemed to welcome his decision. Indeed, she had already begun

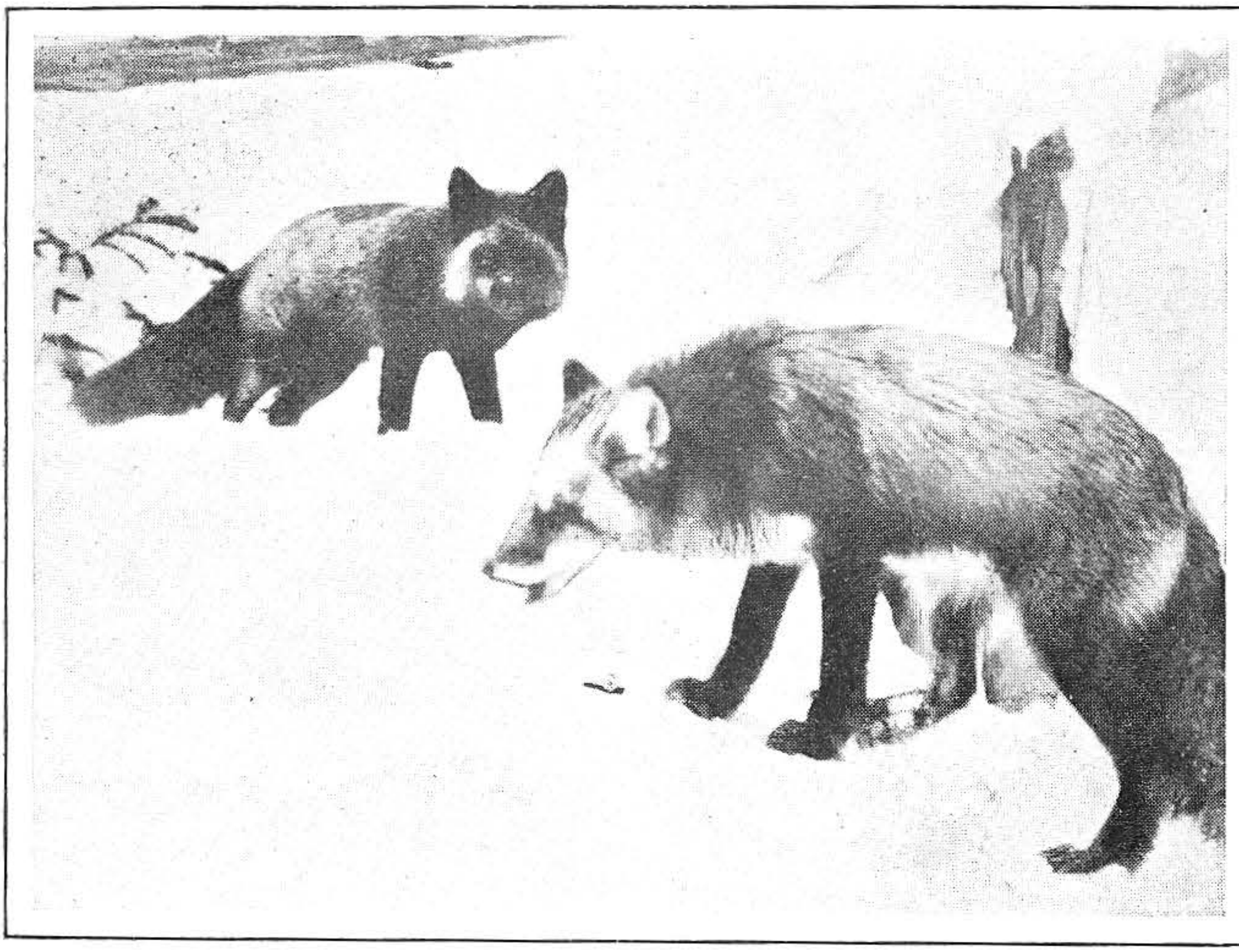
to pack up his outfit and put his things together, almost before he had done explaining his reasons.

He had now, he confesses, yet another lesson to learn; and that lesson, too, will stand him in good stead yet, I'm sure. His brave young wife had read him like an open book. She had solved his unspoken riddle, and—showing a courage to my view far superior to his own—with a smile on her face but an awful load at her heart she bade him do as he judged best. He had hardly learned what trust in God meant to him; he now realized what the same trust could do for another.

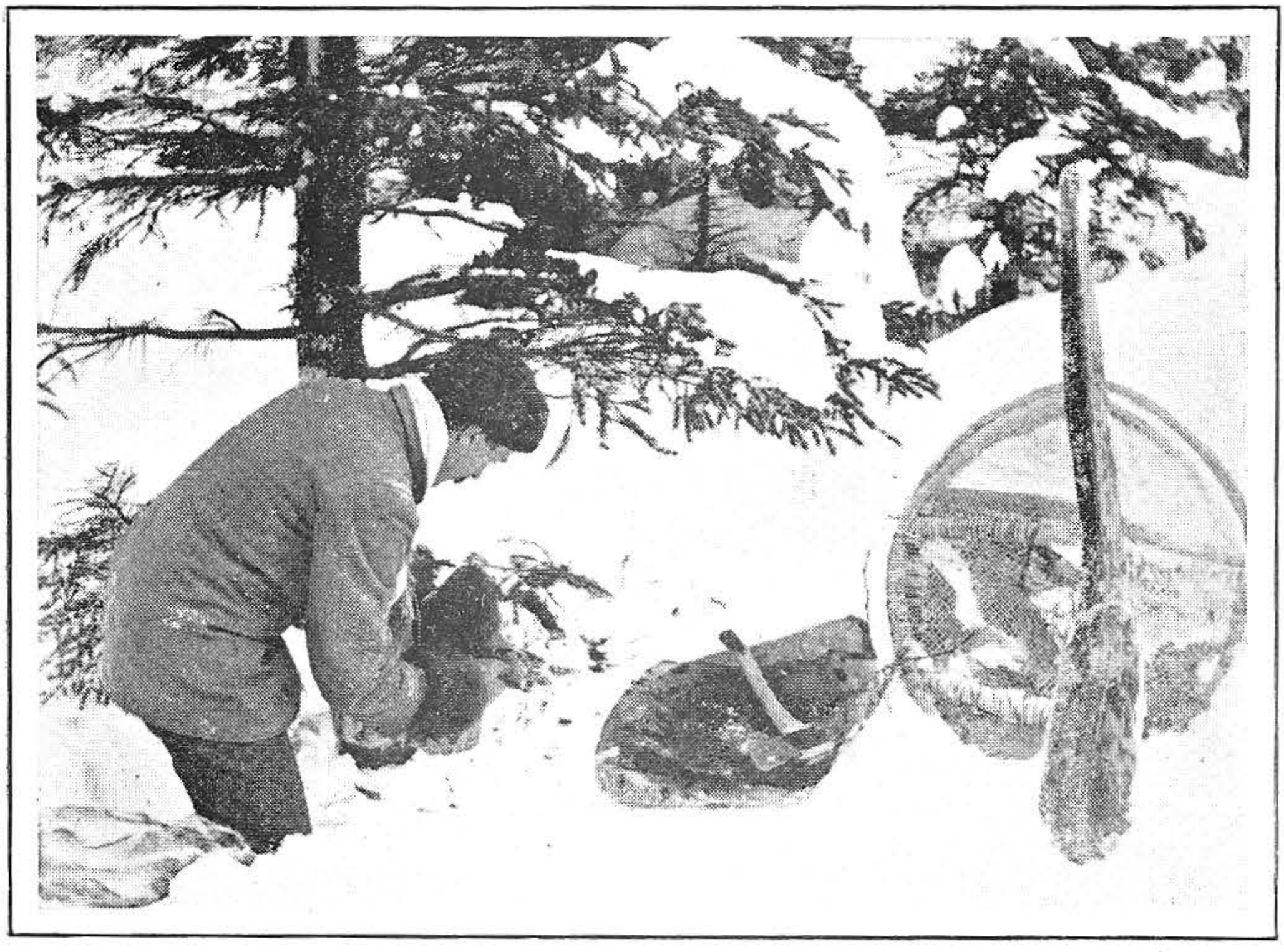
As he left the land in the old punt, however, he knew that it was a heavy heart he left behind him; and he did not fail to feel that a pair of anxious eyes were watching him from the eyrie as once again he skillfully sought to drive his little craft between the large "growler" forms of ice that swept endlessly through the tickle. So much had this feeling told on him that, when he eventually landed and hauled his punt up over the ice barricades which had piled up on Sandy Point in the few days since he was last there, he had ceased to expect anything worth while in the traps. The whole world seemed

somehow cruel and relentless; and as he wended his way alone to trap after trap along the desolate sides of that bleak island and found one after another empty, once again life seemed to him to be a blank. His apathy was, however, half dispelled when he came to the seventh station. His trap, set here on the top of a heavy stump—driven into the ground to prevent its being iced over—had disappeared. The chain had apparently snapped near the peg and whatever had been in it had gone away also; while the driven snow that had fallen the previous nights had obliterated all trace of the direction in which the quarry had carried it. Carefully he blew away the surface of the snow, as in ever-widening circles he eagerly scanned the ground for some faint trace that might supply to his keen eyes evidences as to which way to start in pursuit. But all to no purpose. The snow, packed as hard as adamant by the wind, had obliterated everything. Now thoroughly discouraged, he tramped along to the next and last post, about a mile and a quarter farther on.

A tiny dark speck some hundred yards out of the path had not escaped his keen sight, but it had until that moment appeared like the hundred and one other snags and



"IT WAS A FOX, TRULY—A SILVER FOX!"



"THE FIRST SILVER THAT HAD EVER FALLEN TO HIS SHARE!"

stone tops that protruded through the snow on every side. Suddenly it seemed to move. At first he thought it must be his eyes deceiving him. But no; it did move, as a reed shaken in the wind. In considerably less than a minute, his gun unslung and cocked, Anthony was standing, his eyes staring, his heart bounding, over a tuft of black hair protruding through the general level of the snow.

It was a fox, truly—a silver fox! The first silver that had ever fallen to his share! Poor beast, there was no need to shoot. Amid all the wild sense of triumph now coursing through every fibre of his body, he could not help feeling it had found the fate he and his friend had so recently and so narrowly escaped—with a trap on two of its feet it had frozen to death on the island.

It was this valuable fox that now lay on the kitchen floor of the little kitchen. "It's mine, Bessie!" he almost shouted. "Mine all mine, every hair of it! And I've no shareman. What will Chesley say now for having run away and left me? It would have meant everything to those children—a diet for the whole winter."

As he was speaking the ice was melting off the glossy skin. What a beauty it was!

No tracing of the long hairs, as there would have been in a spring-caught fox; no thin mane from hair falling off as it pushed through bushes; no faded fur from a February or March sun. No. It was a real large dog silver fox, in prime season—dark to the shoulders, mane like a lion, and a pure white mixed with the black, that told him it would fetch $500 if it fetched a dollar. Five hundred dollars! A new sail for the schooner, a new mooring chain that she needed so badly, tinned milk, a new rifle, a proper boat for his cod trap, a fleet of new salmon nets, enough twine to put the old seal nets in order, visions of plenty of everything dear to the soul of a Labrador trapper and fisherman!

But Chesley—what of Chesley and the family? Anthony had yet one lesson to learn. He had to learn what real faith in God means. It does not mean singing. It does not mean praying. "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into His kingdom here on earth, or hereafter in heaven." Into that kingdom which is righteousness, joy, and peace in believing, entrance comes only of doing the will of our Father which is in heaven.

"Dear Anthony," said a quiet voice by his side, as he stood silently thinking over his

good fortune, "it will be good to get a new sail. How lovely the little *Daryl* will sail, and she'll bring you back safely to me, and with the new mooring chain I shall have no fear when the wind blows, and you are away on the voyage to the Hudson Bay Post. But, Anthony dear, there is something which you will love better than that. Let's get the dogs harnessed up and start right away, and we will have the best part of all. You will, won't you? And we'll drive right over and tell Chesley that half the fox belongs to him."

Without a word of argument Anthony went out and called the dogs.

For to Anthony had come at last—as it must often come to many of us also, through humiliation and suffering, the lesson of Christmas that God would have all mankind learn.

II

The Regeneration of Johnnie Elworth

JOHNNIE ELWORTH was as dear a little chap as ever brightened a home, but he was not calculated to inspire enthusiasm in a teacher. He was only four years old, and only just in the glory of his first trousers. His parents, brought up on the coast, had had no chances for "getting learning," and Johnnie had a strong family trait that suggested at once, and confirmed in a very short time, that in spite of our best efforts his chances of outrunning his parents in that direction were far from rosy. His very limbs seemed to be always tied in inextricable knots, and every time the teacher unfolded him he succeeded in getting himself more tangled.

He had a marvellous way of sitting with one hand in his opposite breast pocket, and the other in his wrong trouser one, and both so far in that it was almost impossible to get them—I had almost said him—out. With infinite patience our gentle schoolma'am would unwind Johnnie and straighten him

out opposite his slate, fixing his pencil in his hand. But so soon as her attention was directed to the other side of the class Johnnie would, in less time than it takes to write, get "all snarled up again." What his limbs were, his brain seemed to be, and what his brain, so his will. He seemed to be naturally fortified against acquiring any kind of learning.

We have emerged from the "putting-it-in-with-a-stick age," having found that course harmful, so Johnnie became apparently an insoluble problem. No doubt this needn't have been the case had the schoolma'am had a limited number of "Johnnies" to attend to, and less limited help to do it with. But our school was small only in the magnitude of its accommodation and paraphernalia for education that we had been able to collect within its walls. The scholars varied in nothing so much as their ages, and when an attempt was once made to add a night school to our labours we found it impossible to record an average age—our eldest scholars having long lost any knowledge of the date of their embarkation on life's voyage.

If age was the main point of difference in the scholars, the inability to make suitable provision against the inclemencies of our

subarctic climate was their greatest point of similarity; a resemblance that keenly accentuated the divergence of ingenuity displayed in overcoming this paramount difficulty. How many times the places of our most interesting scholars would be empty because "Please, teacher, Tommie hasn't any boots to come in." I can still see our tiny Elsie trudging to school in a pair of boots, generously supplied from her own wardrobe by a somewhat large lady, whose sympathy was aroused on her chance visit to our village by the grief she saw caused by a deprivation apparently so easily remedied.

Arrayed in these "seven leaguers," for a little while Elsie became a regular attendant once again, and her prospect of getting learning flourished. True, she had to make an earlier start than heretofore, and leave home long before the rest of the scholars if she was to navigate successfully such large craft on the journey to school, but that did not trouble her as much as not being able to "keep up" when the others were "seeing their schoolma'am home." Alas! a worse casualty overtook her soon. As she was missing from her place in school two days in succession, the schoolma'am "looked her up," only to find that "mother thought them boots

fitted Carrie" (her older sister) better; a fact that there was no contesting.

The almost universal scarcity in the matter of wearing apparel fortunately made a false sense of modesty never any factor to be reckoned with. No one remarked unkindly on Tommie Carlson when he appeared for the first time in his bread-bag trousers, though the virtues of its former contents were indelibly stamped up and down the legs. The old trouser leg transformed into a sweater or jumper for Jimmie MacKenzie, though its former function was very thinly disguised, attracted no particular attention; nor did any one resent the appearance of Harry Gray when he succeeded in forcing a passage to school in the cast-off sea boots of his father, over the tops of which he could hardly see. In the mind of our little schoolma'am it only created a sense of admiration and gratitude that this dear little chap should set out on so arduous a venture just to get to school. No one else, however, was in the least surprised. For we all knew a little about the power of magnets.

It was, alas! often the same with food as with clothing. When proper nourishing food was not obtainable, it was neither advisable nor possible to insist on the little ones

coming for "book learning," and our paternal government has not yet provided us with the means of supplying a meal at midday.

In addition to all other disadvantages, there is the ingrained "cussedness" of human nature; the universal slowness of all of us to appreciate the true value of things, and the inability to discipline ourselves to that we don't really care for. Most fortunately, we had, *per contra*, the personality of our schoolma'am; which, as one of our apt neighbours once said, "Be just as good as molasses for flies."

Still education progressed but slowly in the village, and our aspiration to be ahead of the rest of the country in mental evolution seemed improbable of realization.

Christmas had come and gone, and even here "away down north," we were already discussing plans for the still distant season of open water. A flag raised one day on a high pole across the harbour heralded at breakfast that a dog mail had arrived that morning—and as we gathered round the log fire at night, each one was contributing for the general benefit titbits from the news received from our widely distributed homes.

It was our schoolma'am's turn to talk; she

evidently had something on her mind. She was a poor dissembler of emotions. "A friend of mine who teaches a large kindergarten near home," she broke in, "has offered to come down for the summer, and help with the school. Do you think it would be any good telling her to come along?"

In a country like this, conundrums are our daily portion. But it was unusually unanimously, as if by instinct, that all hands plumped for a kindergarten, to be taught by a friend of our friend. After which, like so many children, we proceeded to discuss its possibility.

"*Experimentum fiat*" was the best verdict we could come to, even after prolonged discussion; and sure enough our first July boat deposited a trained kindergartner in our midst, with mysterious boxes of apparatus such as the sun had never shone on in our village before.

The question of installation was settled by clearing the diminutive schoolroom of all the impedimenta of rough board, forms and desks, that we had so laboriously collected and had previously been so highly prized. They were replaced by a few chalk lines on the floor, now resplendent from much soap and scrubbing. Some dainty little chairs occu-

pied but little space, while in the corner stood the marvel of the shore—a real grand piano. It was no bantling, this piano—on the contrary, it had an added sanctity of years sufficient alone to commend it to our veneration.

Its size was appalling in its setting of our tiny school, while from the very first day the gorgeous polish of its mahogany case did for the ill-lit corners of the room what it has since been doing steadily for the far less penetrable corners of many small minds. It has been a veritable light to them that sit in darkness. How many of our little scholars stood open-mouthed and speechless, as, after bounding through the door with characteristic energy, its awful presence first dawned on their startled gaze. When at length they saw their beloved schoolma'am actually sit down and handle it with familiarity and force it to give forth sweet music, enthusiasm knew no bounds.

The grand piano had only one rival for many days, and that rival also had but just been unveiled. It was a large "stuff" cow, that not only was as real as life, but the wise ones knew that if you "slewed her head round" she would twist it back herself and give vent to a loud moo-oo as she did so. It was long the ample reward of the industrious to be permitted to slew that head.

And so the kindergarten got under way and our new helper could be seen surrounded morning and afternoon with an eager crowd of hitherto unappreciative youngsters, who in increasing numbers flocked to enjoy the marvels of modern kindergarten methods.

The hearts of all those who were interested in the children's welfare rose like sky rockets, and the gleam in many eyes betrayed that we were counting once again on leaving our southern, usually more favoured rivals, "hull down" on the race for learning.

It was a week after operations commenced before I managed to get down to a "recitation" at the kindergarten. When I entered, the children were sitting in a ring on the floor and singing, while one of their number, from the teacher's feet, took shots at a long line of coloured balls, while the others counted the numbers hit and the numbers left in line, clapping boisterously as each new hit was made. The vigour of the thrower and the evident pleasure he got from the game attracted my attention. His whole energies were absorbed in the task. To my astonished gaze, the profile of this wide-awake, keen, eager little player slowly resolved itself into the familiar features of Johnnie Elworth. I could scarcely believe it wasn't an illusion.

The humour of the position, however, was what perhaps most struck me, for, quite off his guard and unaware of the fact, here was Johnnie at last, in spite of himself, obviously "getting learning."

When Johnnie himself as successfully counted backwards the balls he was to aim at, my facetious colleague suggested that our little schoolma'am at the piano must surely be in danger of nervous prostration.

Things went along swimmingly with the kindergarten; rumours that a weird desire to acquire wisdom had developed like measles in all the children reached us daily, at hospital. Had we known the sad story of the Pied Piper of Hamlin we might have had reason to be jealous of this success, and we might have been pardoned for listening to the disquieting rumours that began to creep along the harbour. These, however, came from a different cause altogether. Our people have a very well defined though sometimes a singular idea of what Almighty God allows and does not allow. They are people who stand for fixed principles, and the cost to them and the sacrifice involved don't count one iota with those who claim to be Christian men—a trait which has many things to commend it.

Among the pursuits that have received the irrevocable condemnation of the local leaders of religion, in spite of the concession of Solomon on this particular point, is dancing. It comes within the same category as dram-drinking, and must be unhesitatingly discountenanced. The laxity of foreigners on this particular article of the creed is proverbial. No wonder then that rumours were soon afloat that at the afternoon session of our kindergarten the "thin edge of this wedge of sin" was being secretly inserted. Now if this scandal were permitted to spread it spelled nothing short of ruin for our most promising effort. It was obvious that this bull had to be taken by the horns, and that at once. There were two ministers who were our oracles on all such subjects at the time, in our harbour. I left in search of them without delay. It was agreed we should unexpectedly drop in at the very next afternoon session, and, if necessary, nip this poison plant while yet it was in the bud.

Three o'clock saw us, strengthened by the company of yet one more expert on vital matters of this kind, knocking at the kindergarten door. Our arrival, I must confess, seemed in no wise to disconcert the new teacher whose integrity was at stake. She

certainly could not have realized the magnitude of the issues this solemn conclave foreboded. Politely but firmly we were ushered to the sole remaining wooden bench and told to perch ourselves well out of the way against the wall at the end of the room. Arrayed in a solemn row, and, there is no denying it, awed into silence by the atmosphere prevailing, we must have appeared to an intelligent onlooker like a tenderfoot jury at a new quarter sessions. I confess to misgivings of conscience as I sat watching without a word the "carryings on" we were shortly to pronounce on for good or evil. The first "game" or two were irreproachable. The interrupted ball game was reënacted. Every child was sitting on the floor. No adverse comment was possible on this or on the second game, called "Now we turn in, turn in," "Now we turn out, turn out." For fortunately no one left the places allotted to them, though at the magic words "I turn myself about" every one jumped round about. This game was certainly permissible.

But now the children are "choosing partners," and though, with the perversity of childhood, the boys had all chosen boys, and the girls girls to share the intricacies of the coming evolutions, I noted with trepidation

that the suspicions of the vigilance committee were undoubtedly aroused. I could see it in their eyes, and, being unaware of what was to follow, I felt proportionally nervous. We were informed by the teacher that this performance would be a "folk game," and was known under the title "Piggiewig and Piggiewee." It was to be accompanied by singing.

There proved, to my intense relief, after all, no danger of our yet incurring theologic odium from this innovation on the road to the three R's. The children actually sat down part of the time, and the undoubted risks attaching to all forms of motor dissipation were then confined to rhythmic movements of the fingers. With a sigh of relief, I recognized we were still surviving the test.

Our teacher next successfully navigated us clear of any possible stricture through the game of "All on the Train for Boston." For, in spite of the motion, each player only held on to the shoulders of the one in front, and shuffled on after the engine along that apparently circuitous route. So that we could think of no form of dance (known to us in our unregenerate days of course) comprehensive enough to include this, as even a collateral. But we had scarcely begun to

breathe freely when we were forewarned that the whole company would now "join hands, and move round and round in a circle" to music. This was a very different matter. And now the whole committee realized that the supreme moment had arrived! With no little apprehension we saw boys and girls actually alternated, hands actually held in hand—and we noted that as all sang the undeniably secular script of "Louby Loo," many of the tiny feet positively left the floor as the circle went merrily round. We had seen sufficient. For we had now no doubt whatever that we had traced to their lair the very natural suspicions that had necessitated our visit. Without question there were those who would classify this proceeding "as unbecoming to a wholly devoted religious person."

With the most studied politeness we bade farewell to the prisoners at the bar, and adjourned to consider the whole problem at issue—*in cæmera*—on the nearest fishing stage.

The question now resolved itself into a very elementary one, viz., what should we do? It was no longer the kindergarten that was on trial, it was the committee. We, we, the irreproachable—we who were regarded as

the patterns for the orthodox. It was *we* who were on trial. How were we to avoid becoming a stumbling-block to the feeble-kneed, and at the same time escape our own convictions that unregenerate scoffers might be justified in seeing a humorous side to our dilemma? I will not describe the vicissitudes of the session. There was nothing in Holy Writ to which "Piggiewig and Piggiewee" was subversive, that was clear. Without any fear we decided that by no subtlety of construction could any known passage of even the most obscure portions of Scripture be construed into a ban on games restricted to the "Piggiewig" class. By a natural process which gave us great relief and we hoped was not "a falling back," we soon excluded also all but "Louby Loo" from the "questionable procedure group."

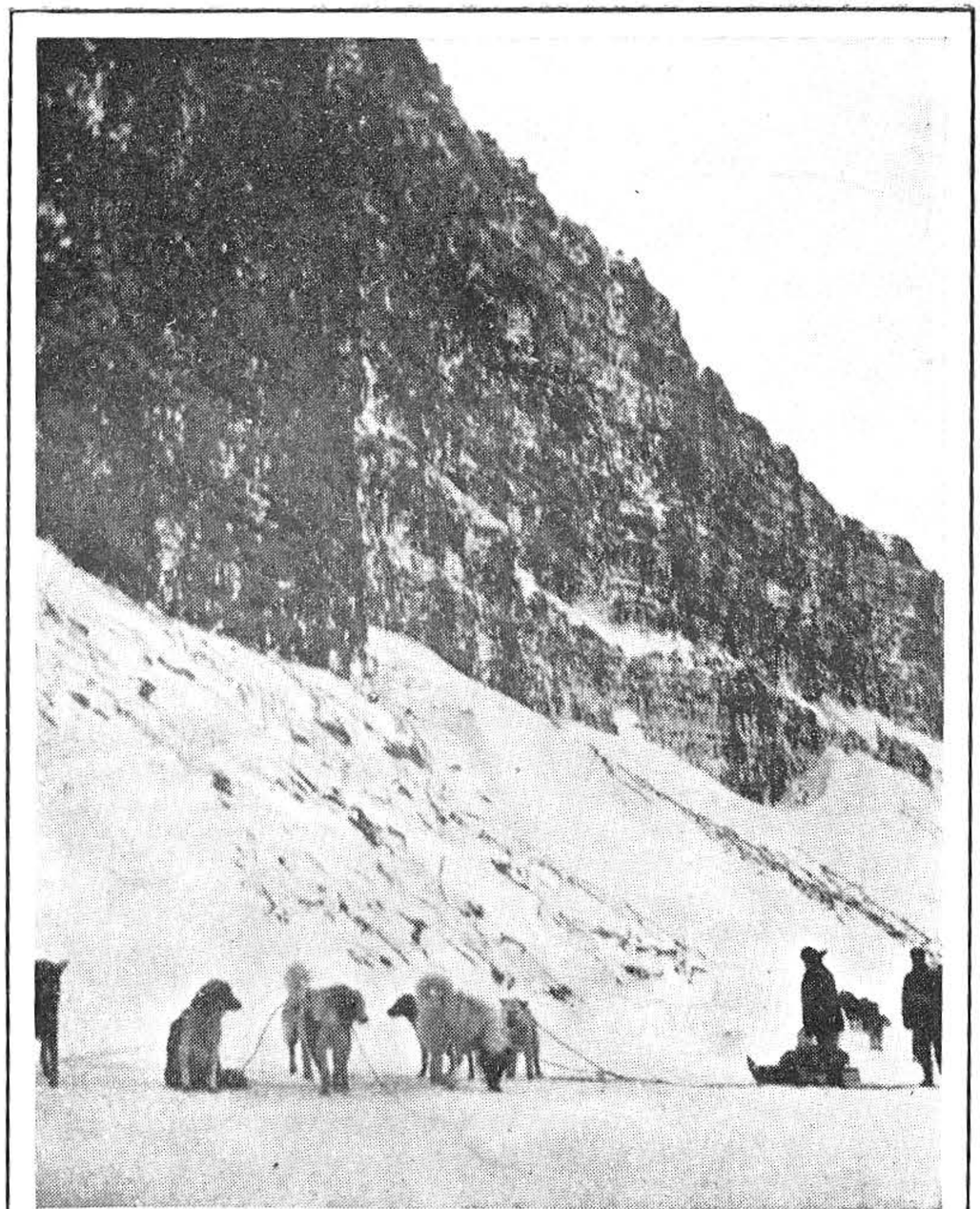
An end has to come to all things. It was at length decided to put "Louby Loo" to vote. On division we pretended to be seriously surprised that we were unanimously in favour of non-interference.

I may as well confess right here that the expression I had seen on Johnnie Elworth's face, combined with the fact that his bare legs had unwound themselves voluntarily for once, and had then dragged his diminutive

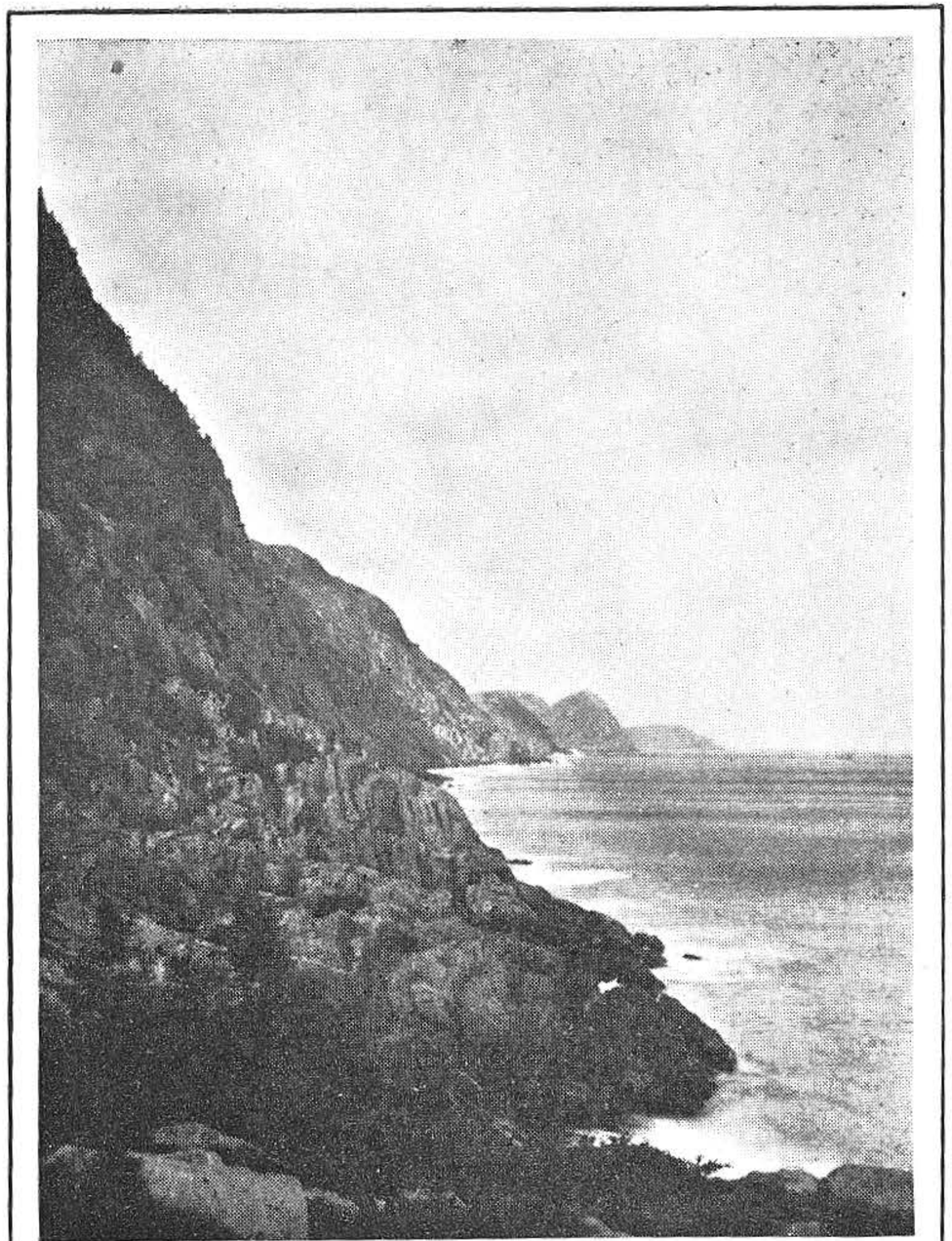
partner off the floor in that game, combined with the undoubted discovery that he was actually singing, had seriously prejudiced my mind in the matter. I was forced to rely on the hope that my more theologically-minded brethren had escaped this bias. I cannot tarry here, for the benefit of posterity, to debate the reasons which impelled the minds of my colleagues to come to a conclusion so momentous in the annals of our interpretation of the divine will. It will be more far-reaching than most would suppose. The verdict, anyhow, was for the defense. The crowd in court alone remained to be dealt with.

I have never suspected the cloth of anything but open and aboveboard methods of attaining their ends. I would be the last to suggest that any plan of action that commended itself to them should suggest the evil devices of the political arena. I protest that I hereby acquit my clerical friends of all suspicions of subtlety in the course we finally decided on. It was bold. It was wise. It was successful.

The following Sunday even the "Loûby Loo" group received from the pulpit the official sanction of the churches, and Johnnie Elworth is still on the high road to regeneration.



"PATROLS THAT WEARY, LONG COAST IN WINTER"



THE SAME COAST IN SUMMER

III

How Jimmy Hampton Made Good

THERE was a feeling of dampness in the air, the first for several months. Still, it was only the second week in March, and rain is at that time an unexpected phenomenon away down north in Labrador. The "winter doctor," the title by which the solitary man is known, who patrols that weary, long coast, giving help to the sick in winter, had long since turned his northern limit and was slowly working south towards his headquarters at the hospital, located on an island just where the Straits of Belle Isle flow into the Atlantic Ocean.

His whole outfit, never a large one, consisted of two sledges, with ten dogs each. The chief pilot and dog-master, with a young companion, carried on the leading sledge the food supply for the dogs, and not a little for the men also. For the poverty of the scattered settlers, and the long distances that intervene between houses, and the liability to storms in which neither dogs nor men can move, make it imperative to haul at least forty-eight hours' food along with one. The

doctor, on the second sledge, carried the medical and surgical supplies and a complement of sleeping bags, axe, rifle and snow-shoes.

It happened this year he had for his companion only a lad of some sixteen years. The boy had been given the chance of this work to enable him to help out his parents, and a band of smaller brothers and sisters who were sorely in need of nearly everything that we are accustomed to consider necessities. The doctor had made the selection, though not without much misgiving.

Jimmy's bright eyes and winsome face made his mute appeal to be given a first chance to earn something for home almost irresistible to a man with a soft heart like the doctor. Yet the power of endurance that even a trifling accident might at any time demand was a possibility that he could not overlook. The journey meant 1,800 miles' hard travelling; often, when the going was bad, the dogs would be tired, and then all hands would have long distances to battle through deep snow on foot. Indeed it would often be necessary for the men to trudge ahead of the sledges for miles, beating a pathway with their snow-racquets for the toiling teams behind. Now they would be

half carrying sledges over hummocks of ice, now lowering them down steep hillsides that it had taken hours of still harder work to climb—and yet from which they derived no benefit.

The home from which Jimmy came was among the humblest of the humble; and one might add, without consciously stretching the truth, that it was among the nakedest of the naked. For the children to take their day clothes off when going to bed at night would be as sane a proceeding as to do that adrift on an ice pan. What is the good of taking off your day clothes when you have no night clothes to replace them? The most skillfully made wood-fires in a small stove will burn out before morning, and Labrador climate in winter soon cools a house down to the freezing point. I had on one occasion given these children an excellent large blanket, but in twelve months all that was left of it was in the form of patches in their garments. For, as their philosophic mother remarked, if five boys all try to get under one blanket at once every night, it *will* wear out in time.

The storeroom also was always so near the hunger line that, when, on one occasion, I had tempted the boys to taste some sweet-

ened cocoa, they had been unable to drink it, not being accustomed to the taste of sugar Mother Hubbard's experience is common in Labrador. Alas, these last years often enough not only butter but molasses also had been a stranger to the household, and even a smaller bit of loaf came their way than their young and healthy appetites could easily have disposed of.

It was, therefore, a boisterously happy day when the final decision was at last made known to them and Jimmy was promoted by the doctor to the rank of a wage earner.

To make the arrangement feasible for the boy to be able to face the Arctic journey, he had to be newly fitted out from head to toe. When at length, in his snow-white kossak and knickers, trimmed with bright braid by the nurse, and his new leather boots and their gay tassels, Jimmy stood all ready for the start, he looked such an attractive little figure with his jet black hair, large dark eyes and olive skin, that the doctor felt somewhat reconciled to the risk he was taking in relying on so young a comrade for all that the long trip might have in store for them.

Nothing extraordinary had happened while they had been journeying north. Indeed the new experience of having all the good food he

needed had told so favourably on Jimmy that when they reached their northern limit and began to face south once more, the doctor noted with enthusiasm a real improvement in his appearance, and was encouraged to trust some responsibility to him.

They had been moving south now for some ten days, taking it more or less leisurely, as the winter showed no sign of breaking up and there were many calls for the doctor's services in the bays and inlets across which the line of their travel lay. For the most northern two hundred miles of the distance, they had hired new dogs, leaving their own somewhat played-out animals to recruit and rest with friends, who were fortunately well supplied with fresh seal meat for them. Their own faithful teams were thus in overflowing spirits, when once more they were harnessed up; and they needed no undue encouragement when they knew that their own masters were with them, and that they themselves were headed home. Only those who have handled a pack of these huge Eskimo dogs, which are at their best and wildest in the coldest of winter, have any idea of the difficulties of controlling teams such as those of the picked dogs the doctor is compelled to collect for the exigencies of his work.

As I have said, on this particular day the air was muggy and damp—an evil omen at night, if you have to travel far on snow next day; and so it proved to be this time, for when they inspanned before daylight next morning, it was drizzling with rain, and a sticky, soft surface to the snow made travelling very difficult.

Reports had reached the party of an early break-up further south, and all were at once anxious to make no unnecessary delays, for fear of rivers and estuaries breaking up between them and their goal. The day's trail lay over a neck of land some fifty miles across, without human habitation,—an easy enough journey with picked dogs and in good weather; one that could be accomplished before lunch. As luck would have it, however, when by noon half the journey was over, some perfectly fresh caribou tracks crossed the path, and as meat was very short and the pilot considered he knew every inch of the country like a book, they decided to try to get a shot. The two teams were accordingly hitched up to tree stumps and Jimmy was told to "stand by" them, while the three men made a circuit to cut off the deer. Before starting they carefully warned the boy not to move from the place

till they should return. They would not be more than an hour gone, whether they got the deer or didn't. But at any cost he was to "stand by" where he was, so that there might be no fear of their missing him.

The fresh slots of the deer got more inviting as the men pressed on, and every moment promising to bring them up with their quarry, they somehow permitted the rapidly changing sky overhead to escape their notice, so that a sudden snow-squall took them practically unawares. They had scattered somewhat to get round their quarry, and it was a little while before they could get together. Since they left the sledges, much more time had elapsed than they expected, and it was agreed without wasting time in discussion they must retrace their footsteps without delay. Already, however, all marks on the snow had been obliterated, and they had to march in file, relying entirely on the guide's knowledge of the countryside. So confident was he of his own ability that another precious hour was allowed to pass before the doctor realized there might be any doubt about the direction they were travelling.

When at length, however, through the driving snow-storm which had now settled down upon them, they found they were fac-

ing a hillside that they certainly had not crossed on their outward journey, the truth suddenly flashed upon them. A summons to the guide and close questioning showed that he had certainly lost his reckoning.

There seemed nothing to be gained by talking, so it was agreed at once to keep within calling distance of each other, and taking a spot of woods as centre, by circling in ever-enlarging circles and by shouting and firing, to see if perhaps they might get an answer from the boy.

Though this sounds a fairly simple arrangement, it worked out as anything but easy, and when, after losing one another temporarily, and refinding one another and restarting the circles, they at length heard an answer to their shouting, no one could have been more surprised at the success of their efforts than themselves. Now, once more, they gathered together, and agreeing as to the direction whence the sounds came, started off by compass in that direction. Half an hour's hard walking brought them face to face once more with the very same hill rise that had first conveyed to them the information that they had lost their way. It was now getting dark, and the blizzard still continuing, they resolved to camp, though they had

neither food nor axe, and though they were wet through with the rain and snow.

Fortunately the clump of trees they had used as a centre was, after somewhat of a search, refound, and a little protection provided from the driving snow, while even such a fire as they could make without an axe was no little comfort. After alternate watches all night, it seemed rather hard to start in the morning without any food. The only possible substitute was obtained by emptying a two-ounce tin in which the pilot carried his tobacco. This was first boiled out, and then served full of boiled snow as a hot drink to each in turn. Somewhat wearily, steering by compass, as the weather was still thick, they started in a southeast direction, thinking that in that direction the dogs and sledges must be.

On and on they toiled, hearing nothing and seeing nothing but the ceaseless falling snow. As evening once more drew near, the guide recognized that they were crossing a big river, and on this he knew there was a hut specially built for travellers and always stocked with some food against just such a dilemma. A new spirit revived within them when at length they struck the banks of the river. But now everything was deep in fresh

snow; only the tops of bushes protruded above the general level, and no possible indication could be obtained as to which way they should follow the stream to find the food and shelter they so much needed. A consultation was hurriedly held, and it was decided to follow to the eastward.

It was a hard struggle following the windings of the river bed, for the soft snow hid all irregularities, and more than once they nearly fell into crevices in the heaped up ice, or through "rattles" (rapids), where the boiling torrent never froze. But it seemed little to them, with the expectation of food and fire ahead. Mile after mile they pushed cheerily along till slowly again it began to dawn on them that they must have chosen the wrong direction, and that it was too late now to return. They had travelled eastward all afternoon. They should have gone westward.

The claims of hunger began now to be more insistent, for they had eaten nothing since the previous morning, so, halting in the brush by the riverside, and making the best night shelter they could, they kindled a fire, and filling a skin glove with snow, melted it, and then tried to broil the skin out of which the glove was made over the fire. It wasn't exactly an appetizing morsel, but it was

"something," and with hot water it served to slightly revive them. They supplemented their quota before night by pieces of green sealskin which they cut from the legs of their moccasins.

The outlook the third morning was so discouraging they were driven to the decision that, to save their lives, they must now abandon the hope of finding the sledges and go direct south over hill and dale till they should strike the north shore of Hamilton Inlet. They would then follow that, if their strength held out, till they should reach the houses of a tiny settlement called Tikoralak. What had become of Jimmy, they couldn't tell. They had warned him not to move away, and they knew that he realized what it might mean to them if he did go. But they realized also that he was only a lad, that he had twenty hungry Eskimo dogs to handle; and that they might, if he interfered with them, at any moment turn on him and tear him to pieces. Probably, therefore, he had been unable to remain all that time anyhow, while there could be no doubt that Jimmy knew if he climbed up on the komatik, the wonderful instinct of the dogs would certainly carry him to safety at the nearest settlement.

It was clear to them all that they couldn't

hope now to find him, so long as the weather remained thick, and that might be till all their strength was gone and it was too late. It seemed also probable that he must have moved on, whether he wished it or not, and after all, he was young—a mere boy—and they felt they could forgive him if he had given them up and tried to save himself. There was nothing to keep them now—sleep, as they were, was scarcely possible anyhow; moreover they all recognized that, unless they soon reached help, they would probably never reach it at all.

It was a somewhat desolate party that trailed south in those dark hours before daylight. Hour after hour went by, and it seemed as if the goal would never be reached. But the darkest hour is often just before dawn. Suddenly, without any warning, the wind changed to the northwest just before daylight, and the snow-clouds disappeared like dew; the sun rose in most exquisite glory, flooding the snowy mantles of the east with a deluge of crimson and gold, and revealing just before them the shore line of the fjord they were in search of. Far away, along its winding shore, a small column of smoke greeted their eyes. Even that was far better than they had expected, and reanimated by new cour-

age that the light and warmth gave them, stimulated by the knowledge now that help was close at hand, they put their best effort forth and were soon once more in safety.

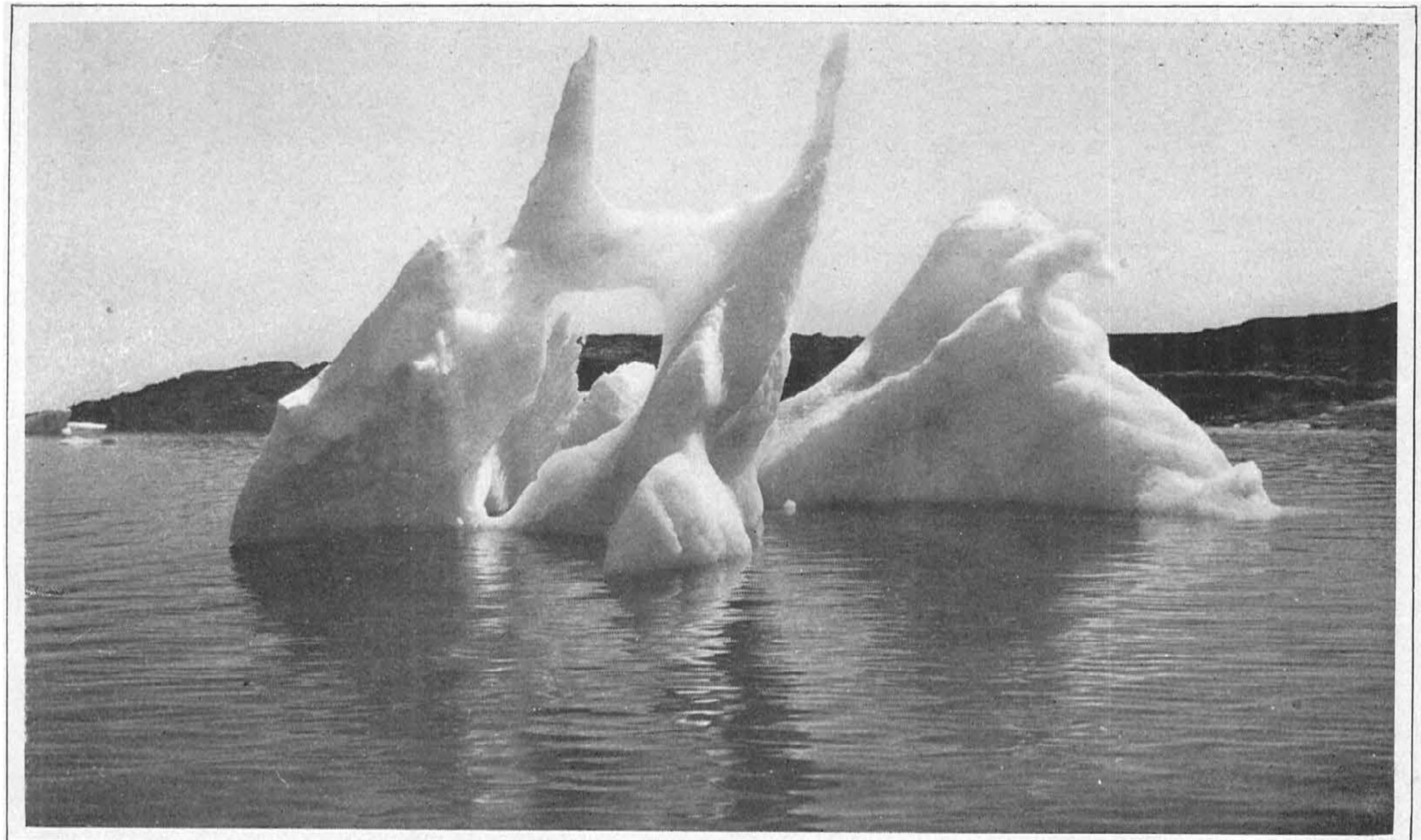
But Jimmy and the dogs—what had happened to him? There was no news to be had. A messenger was sent at once on to the next house and returned with a similar report. Jimmy must have surely gone back with his dogs to the place they had left last on the north side of the neck.

Anyhow, a relief party must instantly be organized and despatched, the doctor's party being too exhausted to attempt to retrace their steps. Careful instructions were given the rescuers as to where the sledges had been last seen. Fortunately, as it was certain they had at that time been on the proper winter trail, it was entirely unnecessary to accompany the relief party to make it certain they should recognize the spot.

There was much speculating as to what the result of the search would reveal, but no one suggested that the boy would still be where they had left him—that seemed impossible.

There is a kind of sixth sense among these trappers and lonely settlers, which seems developed to supply the place of telegraph,

telephone and rapid transit. They seem often to divine somehow what others are likely to be doing, or to be experiencing. But this time they were all doomed to be mistaken. Before they left, they had all decided that either the dogs had eaten Jimmy, or they had all gone back on their trail and safely lodged somewhere were just waiting events. That is just where they were all of them wrong. When they neared the spot indicated by the doctor, some black dots in the distance greeted their astonished gaze. No signs of death or destruction developed as they drew nearer. As in their excitement they covered the last mile at a stretch gallop, the scene before them assumed the very ordinary proportions of two large dog teams harnessed to two loaded sledges, and a small boy patrolling quite quietly up and down between them. A lump rose in some of their throats as they realized that little Jimmy Hampton was still "standing by."



THE LAST OF A LABRADOR BERG

IV

A Venture in Economics

SAM CARREL'S house stood on the extreme end of the southern bank of Big River—a site selected as a compromise between the fur path in winter and the fishing ground in the summer, out of both of which he made, or tried to make, a living. The isolation of the position was also a compromise, for when Sam, as a young man, had decided to settle on the coast, his choice of a suitable spot had wavered between a region where game might be expected to be more plentiful and one where his prospective family might enjoy some of the advantages of social life. His mind was largely influenced by the experiences of his own youth. His father's had been a very large family, and he had never quite won out in competition with his neighbours in the Newfoundland village. Indeed, it was that stern mother, necessity, that had forced Sam at the age of twenty-two to leave his own country with his young wife and to search for his land of promise in Labrador.

The conundrum as to why any man should

have settled in such an utterly lonely place is, therefore, not so hard to solve as it might at first appear. That it was not necessarily an altogether mistaken conclusion he eventually arrived at before he started to build his house on the point, is testified to by the fact that for many years, till his family became unwieldy, he got along well enough.

However, when baby number eight made his appearance while baby number one was still little better than a "toe biter," one economic feature peculiar to isolation began to make itself painfully felt. He still caught as much fish as any man, and did better with salmon, seals, and fur than most. But the lack of competition in the only market he knew how to reach told so heavily on the prices of his own produce, and the essentials of life for which he had to barter it, that the truth was gradually forced upon him that he could no longer provide his family with even bare necessities. His thrifty wife altered and patched the clothing as it descended from one to another of the family. But long before it reached the last candidate even she herself could scarcely tell which patch the original garment had resembled. The house became barer and barer—the larder emptier and emptier—the family nakeder and nakeder.

In cold weather the children had to huddle behind the stove for warmth, and eventually were unable to go outside, even in the daytime. The house itself had to be contracted to make it warmer. The nets, through age, were no longer reliable, for Sam could not afford "to reach to more twine." His chances for fur grew less and less, for his traps got lost and rusted out, and he was unable to replace them. It was even hard to find paint and nails and ropes for his fishing boat, or powder and shot and caps for his gun—moreover, that trusty but somewhat antiquated weapon was beginning to show signs of being as dangerous at the breach end as at the muzzle. "She would no longer carry a ball true"—which lost the family more than one dinner.

Such was the condition when first I knew Sam Carrel. He had sunk deep into poverty. His children were ignorant, half naked, and half nourished. Alas, his own physical condition was telling also on his enthusiasm for making the best of the situation, and discouraging his efforts. A hasty judgment might have called him a lazy fellow, his family dirty and unkempt, his house a miserable shack—every single thing he owned in need of repairing. With such undeserved conclusions many men anyway dismiss their

responsibility to their neighbours. It would have been quite wrong in this case, for I have come to know Sam well. It has been my privilege during the succeeding years to be able to render some slight services to my friend. Some of these were but sorrowful ones at best. One of his little lads I had carried away to our hospital, to die there of consumption induced by their poverty—to die without seeing his father and mother again. Once when Sam had secured a good fox I had been able to carry it to market myself and change it into flour, molasses, tea, and other necessities under circumstances very favourable to Sam. His family were all away when on my return journey in my own little steamer I anchored once more off his house. The picture of the barrels and bales we landed on the beach and fortified with logs and stakes to fend off the attacks of the somewhat plentiful wolves while his supplies awaited his return, still rises vividly to my mind.

So things continued till the competition of his own sons' families, which were settled around him, and one or two new arrivals, made it still harder to get ahead.

It was late one fall, several years later, when it so happened we dropped anchor in

a heavy breeze of wind under the lee of some islands near the mouth of Big Brook. We had somehow lost sight of Sam of late, and his fight for existence was more or less completely out of mind. But before turning in for the night the bump of a boat alongside brought me on deck. My joy at recognizing my old friend was, however, greatly modified by the obvious impression the battle of life had left on him. I had no need to humiliate him by waiting for him to state in so many words that he was "on his beams ends." I knew that fishery in the region had been very poor.

"I may as well own it, doctor," he said when at last the comfort of the cabin had given him confidence to say anything, "we shall starve this winter if you can't do something for us. The Southerners are gone, and owing to their bad fishery they left nothing here for the winter. And we couldn't get the credit of a barrel of flour against our winter's hunt. I know you've *your* hands full. But when I saw your smoke, and then you anchored right off where we was staying, I thought I was meant to come off and tell you, and that's all there is to it."

"How many of you are there now around here?" I asked.

"We're six of us now in all, and then there's Jack and his two little ones and there's the two families on the point; and then Tom up the bay and his crowd. There must be between forty and fifty, all told, doctor."

"Let me see, how long will it be before you can get supplies again?"

"Nigh eight months," was his answer. "You can't count on them Southerners getting through the ice till well into July, anyhow."

"Humph! That means a heap of provisions, doesn't it? Let's reckon up how much it does mean. There's the seals will be in soon, and that will give you some fat. And you have the ducks passing along directly—we'll have to see the first to the powder being obtainable. Then you have got to have some clothing. You can't work a fur path in winter without *some*. Fortunately, I want some fire-wood cut down here somewhere and I shall be able to send you down some warm things I've collected to pay for it. That will be a start. But how shall we get the flour and the pork?"

It proved to be an all-night sitting, and it was almost time to get our anchors up again and be off on our journey south before Sam and

I had evolved a plan which would in any way solve the problem without risking the pauperization of all concerned and reducing them to the position of dependence on the government or private charity. Matters were complicated by Sam's inability to compass the three R's—in which occult sciences, unfortunately, none of his offspring or neighbours could help him much.

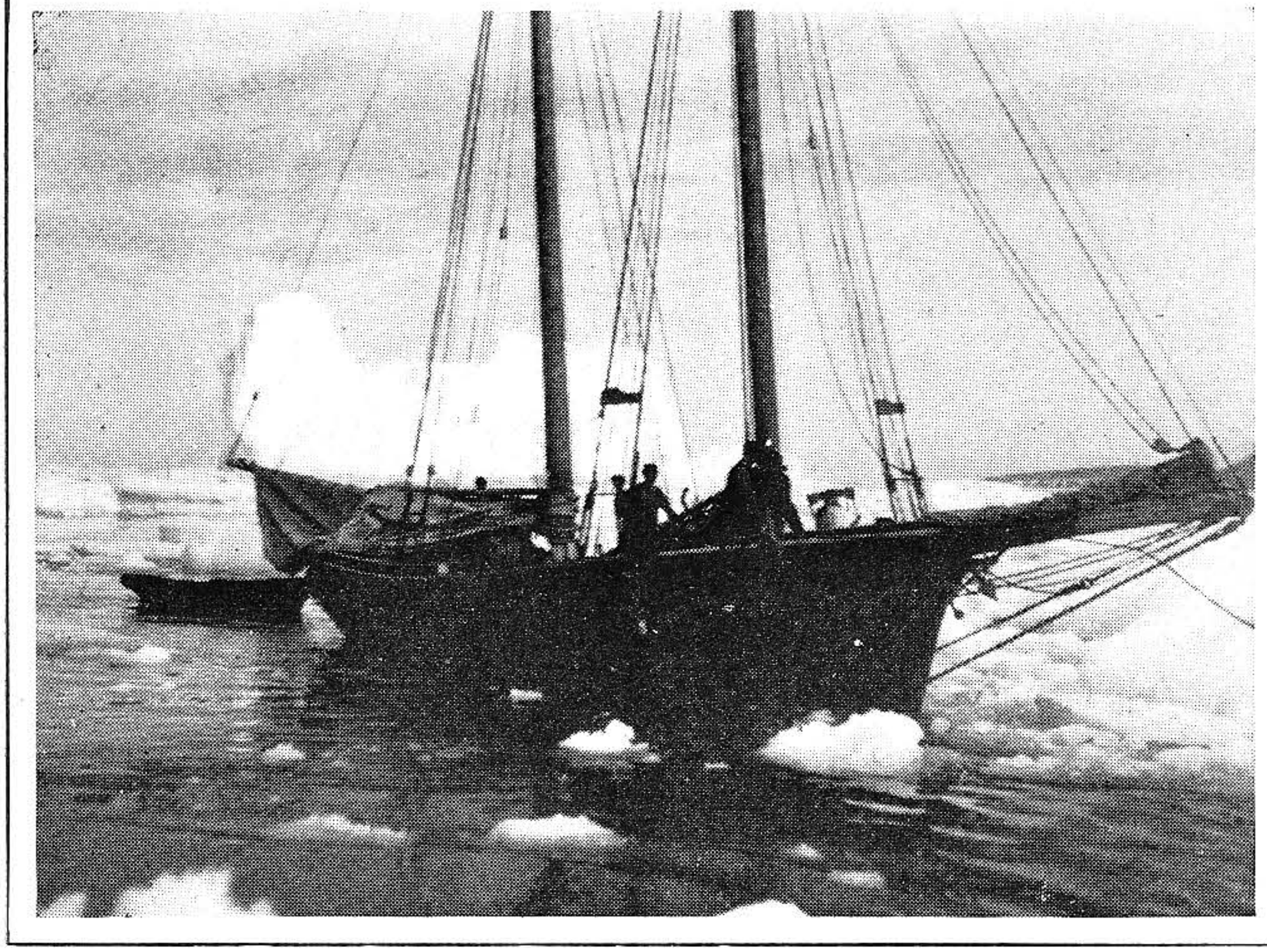
The first decision to which we could find no alternative was that for once I should become a patron of that which of all things I have fought against—the credit system, and should advance food and necessities against their prospective catches. How it should be done was the difficulty. How could goods be issued with any likelihood of being paid for, with so little to commence on, and with no one to keep accounts?

Fortunately, much of that which was lost owing to the absence of artificial advantages is often enough supplied by native wit to our Labrador friends. It was Sam himself who evolved the solution upon which at last we decided. All the goods were to be sent to his care, the exact price at which each article could be sold was to be absolutely fixed and marked up in plain Roman figures which his wife could decipher. Meanwhile he was to

find out the best prices offered on the coast that winter for each kind of marketable product he could accept in return, including all skins, such as otters, fox, ermine, martens; also seal oil, sealskins, feathers, and indeed anything else that would be saleable. Against these he was to trade his goods. The prices marked included a small profit for himself. But as he himself expected a deficit almost as fully as experience taught me to, we neither of us counted that as a part of the project. Furthermore, he was to estimate how long each neighbour could last out before he sold any of his supplies. As the total supply would certainly be a minimum needed, he was to hold on to each article as long as possible, that only the neediest should obtain it.

Before winter finally set in I had a cheery word from him, written in what I might call "cipher" by his wife, saying the supplies had arrived and that he himself had had to begin on one of the new barrels of flour that very day.

During the early winter, for the first time in Labrador, a mail courier crossed the Straits of Belle Isle on the ice. He had made an unsuccessful attempt with a tiny wood boat and one companion who, since they had nearly lost their lives in the first effort, re-



A FISHING SCHOONER IN THE SPRING ICE

"IT WAS A LATE SPRING NEXT YEAR ON THE COAST"

fused to venture with him again. He then built a still smaller canoe of canvas, which he could carry when necessary by himself, and had safely crossed to the place where we were wintering on the south side of the Straits.

Word had meantime reached us that there had been a rise in the prices of furs—more especially in those kinds I expected Sam would have secured. On his return the mail man took down letters informing the trappers of the good news and advising them not to sell their furs if they could afford to keep them.

It was a late spring next year on the coast. Moreover, our vessel was itself delayed, and August was nearly gone before once again we saw Sam's fishing punt pulling alongside. We had been speculating considerably as to how this particular experiment would turn out, for, judging by the history of Sam's past years there seemed no doubt that, now that it was necessary to settle up, we should be called on to meet a goodly deficit. There was one satisfaction, anyhow. Sam himself looked ten years younger as he climbed over the rail, and we all noticed he shook hands with a vigour that had not been his for some time past.

"I think it's all right, doctor," were practically his first words. To him the matter of meeting that debt was the biggest thing on earth. The transparency of his intense keenness to come out square was perfectly delightful. We had supposed, of course, that as all the fur buyers had come and gone long ago, he would of necessity have parted with his returns. He could so easily have done so, and with the money have purchased supplies for the summer from the new arrivals. Nor did it take any particular acumen to see he stood sorely in need of them. Most men would most certainly have done this, and would thereby have involved us, willy-nilly, in a venture against their summer catch, though they knew we would have to pay for their winter supplies at once.

"It's all in a barrel headed up for you," he went on without waiting for any questions. "Won't you come ashore and see it? I thought you'd likely get more than I could for it, so I just held on to it. It was a bit hard till the fish came along, but it's all right now."

People differ as to what "all right" describes. I confess if the only flour barrel in my house that wasn't empty contained dry skins, I should alter it to "all wrong."

But Sam and his family had learned in the school of adversity what it meant to "scrabble along," and the occasional pinch of hunger it entailed was honestly more than repaid him now when he knocked the head in and pulled the skins one by one out of the barrel.

The wireless outfit on our ship enabled us to arrange a meeting with the Southern fur buyers, and thus we were able to sell the furs and visit Sam once more before winter.

This time we were more eager than he to bear the news. With a sense of duty done he had busied himself with the fishing, and the excitement of the incident had subsided when he had handed over the barrel. This time our boat was out first and we were up at his cottage before he had pitched the fish out of his boat, fastened her up and reached his own doorway.

"Well, Sam," I asked, "how do you think it turned out? Do I owe you a winter's diet again, or do you owe me your summer's fish?"

Sam said nothing. He just pulled off his old "sou'wester," his friend of many years, and stood scratching his head in "offish thought." At last he ventured, "I'm reckoning, doctor, there ain't much between us.

But so be there's a dollar coming my way, I'd say nothing against it."

"The balance is down in your favour, Sam. Guess how much?"

"I've no idea, doctor, no more'n a child. But I wouldn't take no more than twenty dollars, anyhow."

"Oh, yes you will. You'll take all there is. I've sent the money for the goods long ago."

"Square's square," he repeated two or three times. "Twenty dollars is more'n enough for what I done, but I'm that glad you'se is paid. I'd be more'n satisfied if there weren't none left over."

"Well, there's one hundred and thirty-seven dollars, Sam, and you'll just take every cent or I'll throw it overboard. Why, I can get you a new gun, a breech-loader with the gear, and a lot of new traps, and some twine for the old nets. And please God then there'll be something left over for a few things for the 'old lady.'"

By a strange coincidence it proved this very day to be Sam's birthday. Our cook, who had gone ashore to forage for some fresh food supplies, had discovered his wife mixing a few spoonfuls of the ever-scarce molasses into the loaf she was baking, that

the family might, in "lassie loaf," have the nearest approach to a birthday cake they could afford, wherewith to celebrate the occasion. This had given away the secret and the good fellow had called me out privately to know if he mightn't give them a little surprise from our galley. Incidentally, also, we sent up a "drop o' kerosene" and a few candles, the lighting of which was to be the signal to us on board that the feast was beginning.

Of course we walked in by accident and joined the fun, for we had looked up a few little things to serve as birthday gifts. The feast was a noble one. "Figgy duff," a big boiling of family-mess pork, some crackers, a tin of condensed milk, a pot of real jam (not Labrador berries), and some apples. There were so many of us present we had to let the fire go out as well as keep the door and window open, and though every box and loose plank was requisitioned for seats, the old chopping block had to be brought in to help out. It was a most festive occasion, a real opportunity to "rejoice with those that do rejoice."

Later in the evening, when we had seen that there was ammunition for every pipe and could as a consequence now scarcely see

each other, I told Sam how an exactly similar experiment had failed that I had tried with another man at the same time who lived fifty miles further south. The cause had been that he had used the money obtained for his fur supply for a summer outfit, and had not been able to repay it.

"I hardly know what to do, Sam. I really can't afford to do it again. When you find you can't trust a man once, you don't feel like helping him again, do you?"

"No, doctor, I can't say you does. But it isn't just as easy to hold out as some might think."

"Yes, but I don't see how I can give him another chance."

"That's what always seems so queer about the old Book, doctor. It seems we has such a lot of chances."

I hardly knew what to say at first, so we relapsed into silence for a minute or two while we nursed our pipes. Suddenly Sam looked up, a gleam in his eye as if he had at least spied a good fur within reach of his gun.

"I've got it, doctor; suppose we lends him that hundred dollars."

But I had learned a lesson that it would have cost many dollars to obtain in the

schools—and I managed to get my anchors and leave Sam sufficiently pacified with the plan I outlined, to enable me to send him the whole hundred and thirty-seven dollars for his own use, if he ever does use anything solely for himself.

So this was how Sam Carrel came by his new lease of life. His balance bought him the new outfit, for want of which he was gradually starving. He knew well enough how to value his acquisitions and to use them to the best of his ability—and so no one has ever ventured to say to us he didn't well deserve to have them.

V

Given to Hospitality

OLD Uncle Malcolm of Dove Brook, Labrador, was a world citizen. For though born on the shores of Newfoundland, he had ranged the seven seas in his youth in every kind of craft and in every kind of clime. But his "time came," as they say on this coast, as everybody's else does. For after a harder trip than usual, reaching his native shore and tired of roaming, he had sought and won the hand of as true a partner as it was ever man's good fortune to fall in with.

Fishing had been Uncle Malcolm's boyhood occupation and that of his father and forefathers before him, so he had no difficulty in finding a calling that was at once congenial and would support him nearer home. It was all the pleasanter that that industry afforded a livelihood to the bulk of his neighbours also.

The "shore fishery" as it was called, that is, the cod fishery in their own bays in Newfoundland, was for some reason then just be-

ginning to fail, and the bolder souls were venturing further down north each year; crossing the Straits of Belle Isle and cruising the rock-bound coast of Labrador in search of fish. Among these it was but natural to find Malcolm. When the fall commenced and ice beset the Labrador harbours, Uncle Malcolm's craft, which he had first partially mortgaged on the strength of his savings as a sailor and had then paid off from his voyages of fish, used always to repair to the "bay" and "lie up" for the winter, waiting the new fitout for the succeeding year. On all his trips his good wife accompanied him, cooking for him on the schooner and helping him "put away" the fish, enjoying, as she used to tell me, "every bit of the voyage," for she too had the genius of the sea in her bones, an heirloom from many generations past.

But as time went on little ones were given to Uncle Malcolm, and it became harder and harder to close the home for six months and carry the children among the dangers of the Labrador coast, more especially as every year the "snapper" fishermen were pushing further and further north, where the coast is not only unlighted and unmarked but also unsurveyed and uncharted.

At last the question had to be settled, as with many others, should the wife and children stay home while "dad" took his vessel on her perilous journeys, or should they "find a place" on the Labrador coast itself where fish was plentiful, and selling the schooner should they abandon the long cruises and enjoy a home life, even if it involved the isolation of the then almost unpopulated country?

To Uncle Malcolm moving was as second nature and a move of five hundred miles one way or the other with him did not count for much. But to the wife and bairns the breaking up of the home and the leaving of her people were matters of great difficulty. For a long while she felt she could not leave the old folks. But eventually her love for her husband rang true. To be near him being her chief end in life, and loving the simple home ties more than ought else, she at last gave her consent and the whole family migrated, settling on the shores of a huge inlet.

The new home was far enough in from the open sea to have trees enough for fire-wood and for protection, growing close alongside the house; and was near enough to good trapping grounds to give Uncle Malcolm a chance of furring in winter, without his hav-

ing to live practically the whole time away in tilts on the fur path. Yet the chosen spot was near enough to the open sea that in their small boat he and his boys could also work nets and lines for the abundant cod fishery in the fall, while from the point jutting out below the house and forming their little boat harbour, they could also tend salmon nets and so add yet another string to their bows for earning a living with. Excellent berries grew in extravagant plenty on the hillsides above the house and no one could preserve them better than Aunt Anne; and along the land was enough grass to keep his goat all winter in hay.

It might be supposed that with his long wanderings "before the mast" the sweetness and simplicity of Uncle Malcolm's character might have been much impaired. But this was far from being the case. The strong religious upbringing of his old home had been so real, so fine, and so exemplified in the lives of his own parents, that he had imbibed his Bible teachings to as good purpose as he had his mother's milk; and that was to very considerable purpose, for Uncle Malcolm stood well over six feet and was far beyond the average in chest measurement. He stood as erect as a soldier, but when first I knew him, his hair

and beard, both of which hung in wavy abundance around his honest weather-beaten face, were already gray-flecked. For twenty years he has been my friend now. And if I were asked to name a man who, in spite of a strong personality and no little "temper of his own" has always appeared to me to deserve the title of a man, with the prefix of Christian before it, I should unhesitatingly say, "You needn't go beyond Uncle Malcolm."

For many years things material went well with the family and under their hands grew up a fine house with a large, airy kitchen, which had twice to be enlarged, as the family grew and visitors and friends on pleasure cruises also grew more and more numerous. Aunt Anne's table was seldom, if ever, clear of refreshments. For no one may arrive at any time of the day or night without being pressed to "sit in" and "take a cup o' tea." I've known more folk "stopping off here over Sunday" as they passed along the komatik road in winter with their dogs than ever I saw in a house party at a country house ten times the size. "It was all very well them times," said a sententious neighbour, "but nothing could stand agin that of late years. When times began to get bad in the

bay half the shore took to cruising, and them that brought up at Uncle Malcolm's fairly ate him out o' house and home."

For things have changed both with the coast and with Uncle Malcolm since first I knew him, and it is that that caused me to write this story. To begin with, the Nemesis that overtook the Newfoundland shore fisheries has pursued them also to Labrador and of late the fisheries have "been that uncertain" that a man "could no longer do as he'd wish to in providing hospitality for his neighbours," though, like Lot, these good folk were ever on the lookout for strangers. The years have dealt hardly also with Uncle Malcolm. One of his lads has left him for those shores where "bar'les" of flour and gallons of molasses no longer are subjects of anxiety; one, following the footsteps of his father, has gone to sea, joining the crew of an oversea brigantine that carried fish to Spain and has not been heard of since. A third is in "the States," doing well, but his letters of late years have been only "scattered," and there is little likelihood of Malcolm ever seeing him again. His devoted wife has gone also before him, and only his youngest boy, Anthony, is left.

It would seem as if it would be no difficult

matter for these two to provide for themselves all that was needed. I could not help noticing, however, as successive seasons brought us in the mission vessel once more to Uncle Malcolm's door, that the house looked barer each time; and though a brave show of hospitality was still made to us all on our arrival, there was now no milk for our tea, and even the bit of sugar gave place to molasses. Still the home was kept scrupulously clean, though the bright, home-made rag mats gradually disappeared from the floors, and all the many little tokens of a woman's handiwork followed in their wake. The maid, whom he fed and clothed in return for doing "his rough work," displayed a spirit worthy of her master in her use of the scrubbing brush, soap and water, and she had succeeded in inducing such a sense of utter nakedness in the great kitchen that unavoidably a sense of sadness filled one on entering it.

The old man, with the grit that always characterized him, was silent on all personal matters, and appreciating the self-respect which held him from reposing his confidences in me, I came and went without broaching the subject of his ways and means. At last what he could not bring himself to say he put in writing—an acquirement he had to

thank his early sailing days for—and I received a letter asking me to refer to these matters on my next visit.

Uncle Malcolm had now passed the threescore and ten years allotted by the Psalmist as the years of our strength, and in spite of his erect figure, his clear eye, his steady hand, it was not difficult to see that in his case this span of years was probably approximately correct. The hard life had told on his vitality and he was no longer the man he had been.

"It's this way, doctor," he exclaimed, when at last his door was shut and we found ourselves alone together. "The cupboard is bare at last. There has been hard times these three years. The neighbours get that numerous they have driven most of the fur away. I got ne'er a skin last winter, and how I'm going to get through this winter I can't tell. No, I owes no man anything, thank God, and what bit o' flour Anthony and the maid eats don't amount to anything. But you see how it is, doctor, it isn't ourselves we have to look for only. There isn't a family to the westward what isn't in debt to the company, nor to the eastward either, this side the big river, and when them's hungry in winter what's them to do? They can't get no more credit. Lots o' them haven't got no credit now and

more o' them has got children in plenty. What's them to do? They can't go away wi'out a bite, when them is hungry and comes here. He wouldn't do that, would He? And He wouldn't 'low His friends to either."

There was no gainsaying the difficulty. There was no denying that the Christ would have fed them. In my own mind I couldn't help fearing I should have somehow avoided the issue; possibly by moving off the komatik track each winter, as many I knew had already done. I even ventured to suggest this. But Uncle Malcolm stood firm.

"No, no, doctor, as long as God gives me a bit, I stay right here and share it with 'em. What I'm afeared of is it won't go round this time. Still if the Master fed thousands with a few fishes them times, I got that many anyhow, and He can make it go round. It wouldn't be much trusting Him now after all these years if I just ran away up the bay wi' them fishes. It wasn't to complain, doctor, I wrote to you. I knows the Lord'll be true to His promises; but we got to do our part, and I thought I'd like somehow to speak to you to see what you thinks."

"Uncle Malcolm," I replied, "I'm delighted you did. I was just looking for some one to get me a few thousand billets of good dry

wood put on some place like your point where the mission ship could easily call and get them. We're always short of coal away down here and I find I can pay enough to make it worth while. I reckon I'll help out by giving you flour for the winter, and you can place the billets right here where you can keep an eye on them."

I was narrowly scrutinizing his face as I spoke, and I fancied I saw an even brighter sparkle in those honest gray eyes than usual, a sparkle that counts for more to some folk than that of any jeweled trinkets. A short silence ensued, and being a man of few words, he shook hands and went out.

Two days ago we once more dropped our anchor off Uncle Malcolm's point. Two years had passed and each time the large quota of fire-wood has been faithfully procured and ready for us, and now once again the same problem faced us. His failing strength made him realize that to haul logs, which got ever further from his door, and to cut billets enough to supply his needs had become impossible.

"Fourteen barrels I used last winter, doctor," he began as he saw my eyes roaming about the great kitchen that outrivalled a

Mother Hubbard's for bareness. Not a bone either of beef or of pork would the neediest of visitors have found; no, nor a speck of dirt either; the place was swept and garnished like a great skeleton.

"Fourteen!" I replied. "Four you mean. Four is more than enough for you and Anthony."

"Every ounce o' fourteen," he said, "and but for what you bought for me in the south, every barrel at $8.50 a barrel."

"Who ate them, Uncle Malcolm?"

"Well, we had as many as twenty-seven staying here one week end, and they with ne'er a bite or sup at home. Isn't us told to 'be given to hospitality,' and that isn't feeding them as 'll pay us back, is it?"

"It's you that is the real relieving officer down here," I answered.

"Thank God," he replied, somewhat piqued, "I've not had to come to the gover'ment yet for help, though we has been on dry flour all summer."

"What, you are without any fats in the house for yourself? Is that true?"

"Well, you see, doctor, they comes round first one and then another for 'just a bit to grease the pot,' till there's none left for our own pot. I thank God I doesn't have to take

none till I catches what to pay for it with, but I haven't seen a bit o' butter this three months. There's a few salmon and fewer fish on the land yet, I know," he went on.

"Isn't it better in here in the bay?" I asked.

"No, indeed. It'll be a poor lookout for winter. The best of them haven't a quintal under salt yet, and t' season be fast slipping away."

"You'll simply have to shut your door to them this winter then, whatever happens now, Uncle Malcolm."

He stood and looked at me and said simply: "I'll not last much longer anyhow, doctor, and please God it'll never come to that. I doesn't want to hear Him say, 'I was hungry and you did not feed Me, a stranger and you took Me not in.'"

"Well, what can you do?"

"There be that thirty dollars what you'se sending me for the wood this year, and that'll do for all Anthony and I needs. Ther'd ha' been more o' that as there was other years, but I can't chop like I used to, doctor, and the folks what visits me doesn't seem to be able to go at it."

"They ought to do the whole lot. But since they don't, however can you manage?"

For answer he had already gone to a large

time-worn seaman's chest and after carefully unlocking it, was feeling about among a mass of heterogeneous wraps and relics. At last he apparently found what he was hunting for, for closing the lid he came back to the table with what was evidently a schoolboy's ancient pencil case. It required much persuasion to open it, as it had obviously been lying some years untouched. When at last the feat was accomplished, with his jack-knife he picked out a packing of spun yarn that had been well "caulked" into it, and then holding it upside down a small roll of greenbacks fell out on the table.

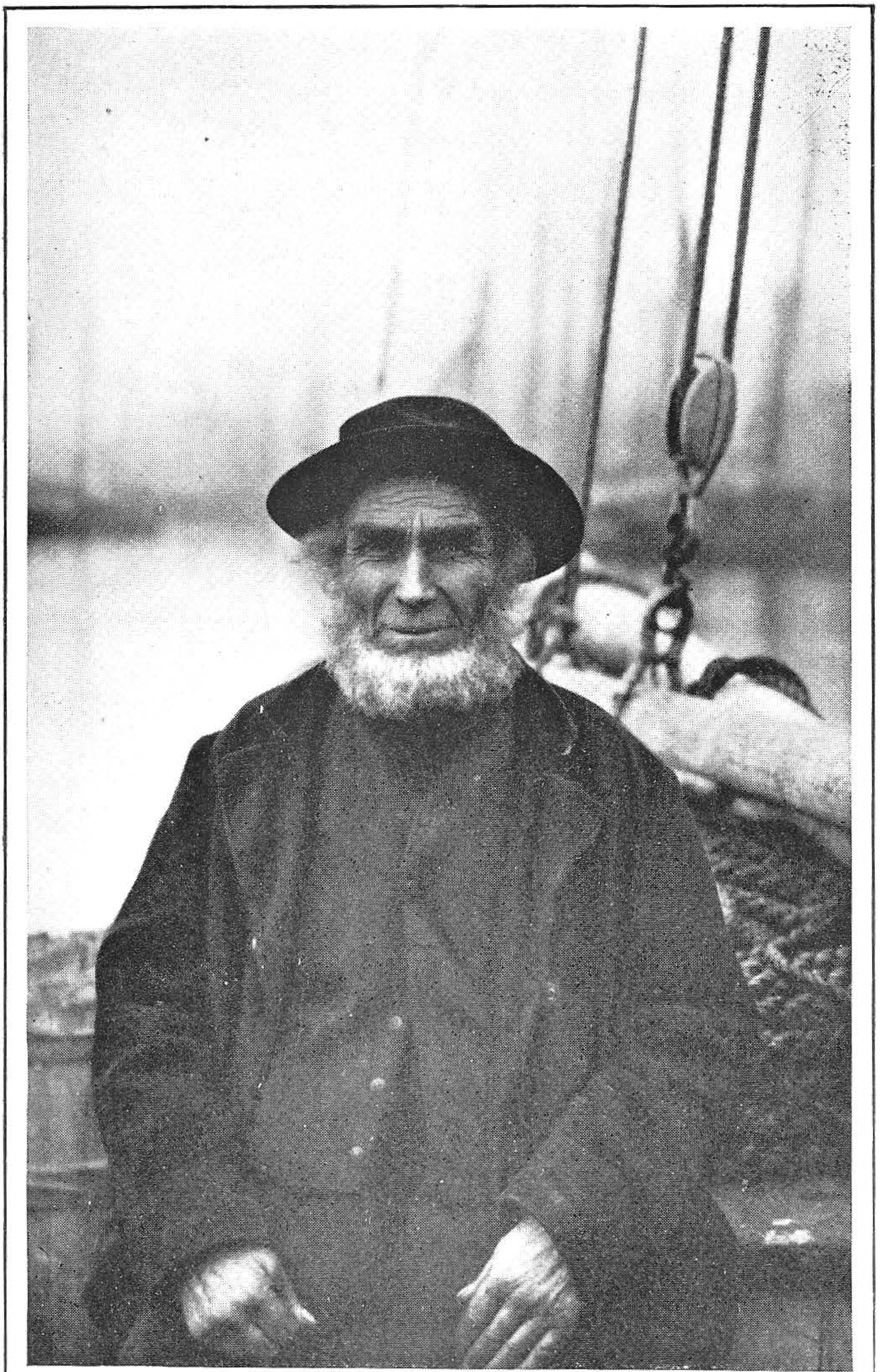
"If them as killed the fox that brought them notes had done with theirs as I done with mine," he began, "there would be less hunger in the bay this day. There's many in the bay, doctor, that's caught two to my one always. But there, they didn't know how to look after them when they had 'em."

He picked up the notes and handed them to me.

"There ought to be twelve o' them," he said; "that makes sixty dollars. But I can't read 'em, so you count 'em."

He was correct. The roll proved to consist of twelve old five-dollar bills.

"What shall I do with them?" I asked.



"I'M SEVENTY-THREE COME MICHAELMAS"

"Do with them? Why, won't you buy food for me with them?"

"What food do you want?

"Flour and molasses, and some butter, if it'll reach to it."

"But you have flour enough already, and you needn't spend all this on butter and molasses. Is this all that you have laid by for your old age?"

"Yes, doctor, it's all I has laid up and I wants it all, every bit, in flour and butter and molasses; that is," he corrected himself, "molasses and some butter. No, it isn't me that wants it, but I've got to have it, and that's all there is about it."

"But, Malcolm, you are getting old and you shouldn't cut the last plank away yet."

"I'm seventy-three come Michelmas," he said, "and I feel more'n that, since the old woman's took, and I'm thinking maybe I won't need any flour next winter."

"But maybe you will be spared many winters yet, and if you spend all you have now, how will you take care of those years?"

"He'll take care, doctor. I guess I'll trust Him. It wouldn't do not to have used that sixty dollars and have sent folks away hungry, would it, doctor? It would look as I didn't have much trust in Him. Doesn't the Book

say, 'I was hungry and ye gave Me nothing to eat'?"

What could be said? I mechanically took the sixty dollars and put them in my pocket and was silent. It certainly seemed to be the Master speaking. I had once imagined I knew what hospitality meant.

VI

Remedy for Worry

CUT off by the frozen sea for the long winter months as a general rule, we enjoy the enforced simple life, and store up energy for the open season. But last year it had been a very wearing time with us at the hospital.

It was not because our patients had not done well; on the contrary, we had had more reason than enough to be satisfied with our results.

Beyond letters of gratitude from those to whom still a modern surgical operation is a miracle, and who are also tender-hearted enough to express their feelings, each successive mail-steamer had brought us an increasing number of sufferers ever coming from longer distances, whom it was our enlarging privilege to help.

The comparatively small fall of snow had made some of our longer journeys by dog-sledge physically exacting, which in our experience is as a rule the best antidote for worry of mind. It had added, however, its quota to a strenuous time, and the tax on our

nervous energies had been a fact even if we had not recognized it.

On the top of this there had been financial worries; the doubling of the hospital had increased the running expenses greatly; the enlargement of the orphanage meant a further increase in upkeep.

We had discovered that the new school, simply essential if we were to be able to give the "whole man" the uplift needed, could not be built for the money donated.

My colleague looking after the new sailors' home had written that the contract was much larger than he had expected or could afford.

The poor price for fish, with a very moderate fishery, had made it very hard times with some of our poor friends and neighbours along the shore.

The "coöperative" or people's stores that we had started and been fostering were wondering whether they could meet their liabilities.

On account of lack of communication we were powerless to prevent some plans from being carried out that from experience, gained recently, we now knew would involve probably considerable loss and suffering.

Everything seemed to come at once, and

we were caged in and powerless to do anything to remedy things.

The seat of the human emotions is a physical thing, and even to the optimist the world will look blue when nervous vitality is exhausted.

Though it certainly goes hard with me to confess, it was in just such a mood that I was sitting watching our mission boat, which some friends had collected the money for, and which seemed only able to say to me, "Ought you to go to the expense of my upkeep, when there is more than enough work coming to you anyhow?"

Its beautiful lines and costly outfit rendered it a perfect handmaid to our work; but to my distorted view, as I was worrying over the unkind comments of an enemy, who had been accusing a missionary of being self-indulgent, even his helpmate was out of joint.

The ice had gone now; but open water with all its undoubted blessings had brought us an incessant stream of poor folk coming for sympathy and help, and also an endless delayed correspondence and a complexity of problems that permitted little relief from nervous strain.

Every man's lot seemed to be better than my own; and, as the white-winged fleet

flitted north in quest of its harvest of the sea, the cheering welcome of our many passing friends seemed only to emphasize my own troubles.

My introspective mood was, however, abruptly interrupted by a maid announcing, "There are some men to see you, doctor; they seems in a terrible hurry."

In the waiting-room I found six broad-chested, blue-jerseyed vikings, who had rowed over from their island home twenty miles away to the southward.

With characteristic bluntness only a vise-like grip of the hand preceded the announcement of their business, which was that Paddy Dunster's wife had "borned her eighth baby ten days ago," but had "got the fever," and was very near to dying. Would I go over at once?

Our mail-steamer only twenty-four hours previously had landed forty-nine sick folk at our door, and we had not only a large group of surgical operations ahead of us, but some few patients already fresh from the operating-room.

Even while my colleague and I were debating the possibilities of going, another lot of men were reported by the maid, and they also were "terrible anxious."

This time in the hallway I found almost a replica of the first group, and immediately recognized them as coming from about ten miles to the north.

"Elisha Marston's woman is very sick and like to die. Her baby was borned two days ago, and there were no one to see to her. We wants you to come right along at once. Us 'll carry you back glad enough."

It wasn't an easy matter to decide, but it was somewhat the stimulus I needed; namely, the realization that there was a need for what one had to give.

While I was still undecided as to what to do, my eye fell inadvertently on the mission-boat at the wharf.

Oddly enough, it upbraided me no longer. Instead it said perfectly plainly, "Come at once, and I'll take care of you." What more was needed?

A few hours later, as happy as a cricket at the prospect of the trip, I was chasing the already departed trap-boat, which had disappeared at a pace that I have seen exhibited only in boats rowed by just these men, and by them only when they are bound on sick-calls.

Meanwhile, my colleague, having satisfied himself that the condition of the "in"

patients permitted it, left to answer the northward call, and, preferring shank's pony over the hills to the longer route by water, was toiling already through tuckermore and over bog, through brooks and over rocks and barrens, for no fee but a woman's life.

As we drew towards the island, a second hurrying boat met us. The helmsman waving his hands caused us to stop, when he boarded us with a letter from our poor patient's husband.

It ran:

"*Dear Doctor:* I knows you'se coming; but Mary's no better, and it's five o'clock, and there's no signs of you. Do come along quick, doctor. I knows you will.

"PATRICK DUNSTER."

Without a word except of greeting on landing I was hurried right into the sick-room.

It needed no special insight to recognize the danger. The collapsed condition of my patient, and the flickering pulse, showed that if there was any hope of recovery at all, it lay in immediate action.

It was already dark, and the house I had come to was very small. The other seven children were only too obviously at home, while the baby and its attendants occupied,

to say the least, all the room that could be spared them.

Cold is still supposed to be harmful by our people. Heat is man's friend. Therefore the windows were closed, and the stove was in full blast.

I had served a long apprenticeship in these troubles, and have learned that a people accustomed to one ritual do not resent another, and also that a little trouble can transform even such an environment into a possible room for effective surgery.

Without delay the transformation was accomplished and the last chance given.

Every time the door was open Pat's eager face asked, even before the words came, "How is it going with Mary?"

By ten o'clock all was quiet again, and every effort was being made to keep life in my patient till she should reap full benefit of the work.

At midnight in spite of all precautions there were no signs of rallying; the balance of the scales seemed to hang by a hair.

One o'clock passed safely; two struck; and still there was hope.

But it was now, alas! only the hope of a David in the anguish that made him exclaim, "Who can tell whether God will be

gracious to me, that the child may live?" The battle was going against us, and my tired brain seemed unable to afford any further suggestions.

I tried to explain it to my poor friend, but the intuition of love had already revealed to him the probable outcome.

While there was still hope, yet there was nothing further I could do. Other duties would be pressing on us with the returning day; so I gladly accepted the kindly suggestion that I should lie down to await events.

It hardly seemed five minutes later when my opening eyes fell on the figure of Pat standing by the couch.

Daylight was breaking, and the infinite loneliness and silent sorrow in his face made any questions unnecessary. He had come to tell me that I had lost.

It was a perfect morning that was breaking outside; not a ripple could be seen on the placid waters of the Atlantic. Only now and again the flash of an oar or the bumping of a boat against a schooner's side broke the silence, and reminded us that the world must go on in spite of our sorrow.

The lack of wind to carry us on our homeward journey gave us time to linger, while the last sad offices that could be rendered to

the poor wife and mother were willingly performed by kindly hands.

It would be a time that in many homes would make any attempt at offering comfort seem an intrusion. But here in the face of the immediate sad outlook for this large family of small children an excuse was furnished us for not hastening away, and an opportunity was opened for assuring our old friend of so many years that he might count on us to stand by him, without appearing to trespass on his grief.

Years ago his right hand had been shot to pieces by an explosion of his gun while the hand rested on the muzzle as he loaded the other barrel. It had been my privilege then to be able, after many weeks of constant attention, not only to save his life, but to patch up the fragments left sufficiently to enable him to nip a fishing-line while he hauled it in with the other hand, and thus follow his calling successfully.

It had ever since been a very close bond of affection between us. It gave me a privilege that with complete strangers in the hour of distress I should have hesitated to exercise; so that, when at last we started homewards in the boat, we had the small comfort in the consciousness of our failure that we could still be of service.

Moreover, we also had the welcome assurance that confidence in our ability to serve had not been shaken; for among the friends present was waiting a young mother with her only child, a babe of fifteen months, to accompany me back to the hospital for a dangerous operation on the brain. This has since been successfully performed.

As I reached the hospital and began storing away in their places the various apparatus that we had chosen to rely on for help in our unequal task, the nurse informed me that my colleague had just returned also, and was now seeking a well-earned rest upstairs. Success had crowned his efforts; and, as I peeped into his room, I could see he was enjoying the restful repose of the victor.

To many it would seem that the personal unrest in which this call to service had found me must have been enhanced by this additional exaction. To my surprise it proved absolutely the reverse. A few hours later I awoke to realize the fact that I had enjoyed the most refreshing sleep for many months.

The mission-boat was still at her old place at the wharf when I looked out of the window.

There was no upbraiding about her this

time. She just said: "Capacity is worth paying for. Here I am waiting again."

On the hill behind her stood the enlarged hospital, and the long row of patients sunning themselves on the veranda and upstairs balcony seemed all to say, "We may have cost money, but we pay you in opportunity and a full life."

Further back stood the orphanage; a batch of hatless, barelegged children as happy as sandhoppers were skipping around outside, waiting to accompany the schoolma'am to school. They seemed to say, "God will provide for us; you have no right to worry."

On the other side of the hilltop rose the spire of our little church. It had an odd message this morning, in which it seemed at first to be stultifying itself, for it said plainly so that I could not but understand: "I cannot give you peace. Not in creed or sect can you find it. Kindness is more Christlike than righteousness. His peace comes only to those travelling in His footsteps. The remedy for unrest is work."

" 'Tis something, when the day draws to its close,
To say, 'Though I have borne a burdened mind,
Have tasted neither pleasure nor repose,
Yet this remains: to all men, friends or foes,
I have been kind.' "

—*Dawson.*

VII

On His Beam Ends

NEW YEAR'S DAY had come and gone at our little winter hospital. "The mildest winter this fifty year, doctor, anyways," the patriarch of the village declared it. "Why, years ago us'd drive round heads many times 'fore Christmas, and now there's open water right to Uncle Adam's stage," he added in a somewhat querulous tone, as if that was a modern innovation not to be accepted without protest, that the open Atlantic beyond the steep cliffs that formed our harbour mouth should still be free of the Frost King's control.

"It's only my second winter on the coast, Uncle 'Lige," I answered, "but I haven't noticed any heat to complain of. They wouldn't call this sultry where I came from, and so long as the heads keep the seas out of the harbour I can forgive the ocean, if it does love Jack Frost's rule as little as I do. I'm sure there's snow enough on the land to suit any one."

"Well, well. It all helps to fill up the

holes, doctor. But you can't trust to cross the tickles yet, and it's too long to go round till we get a drop o' rain to give the snow a surface. It's this 'twixt and between that's no use. It's never no use anywhere."

"Well, Uncle, I'll admit it keeps the hospital slack of work—people can't get to us any better than we can get to them. So I'm going to try a trip on Monday to the west coast with the dogs, and see how the folks are getting on. It's a long while since we got word from them, though I hear the first mail has come over to Lock's Cove across the county."

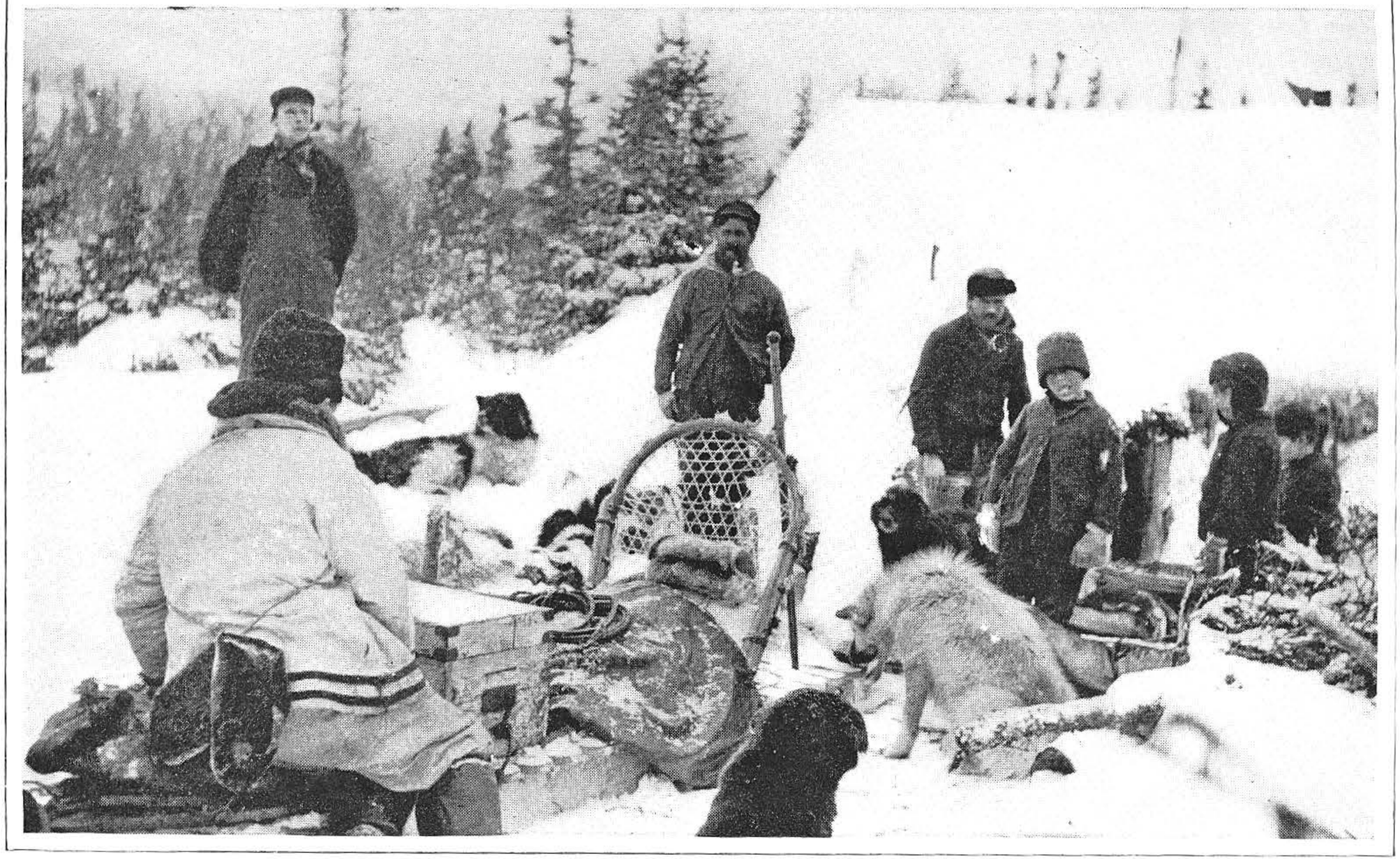
"Yes, I know the trail's cut, and you're young still. Perhaps you may," he reiterated, "but don't take no risks, doctor. Don't take no risks."

I thought of his parting words a good deal next day. For word came from the north that Jack Byrne had been drowned crossing a tidal arm of the sea with his dogs, as he left to get a load of fire-wood. The current, which had kept the ice from freezing strongly in the spot he happened to cross, swept him under when he fell through. His comrade had only been saved by the heroic action of his sister running out from the shore. She had flung herself down and crawled to where he

was clinging to the ice edge, tangled up in the traces of the dogs. She held on to him till help came in the form of a flat-bottom boat hauled over the ice.

There are few sensations more delightful on a clear brisk morning than the prospect of a fifty-mile journey over hill and vale, with the glorious evergreen trees and the perfect whiteness of the snow. It is a sight not easy to forget. It is not lessened by the almost crazy delight of a well-fed team of dogs turned out for their first long journey. On this occasion a good driver had fairly covered the harness with bright woollen bobbins. Our gaily decked snow racquets adorned the netting on the raised sledge back, and the familiar long box with the big red cross was firmly lashed amidships. Kettle and axe, rifle and instrument cases, all were there, and as soon as I had bade good-bye to our friends assembled to see us off, I cut the back strap which, tied to the starting post, alone prevented our team from running away from us too soon. There were few hearts anywhere lighter than ours, though we *were* cut off from many of the most "modern blessings" of civilization.

It was just two weeks before once again our dogs brought up at the hospital doors.



"THERE WERE FEW HEARTS ANYWHERE LIGHTER THAN OURS"

We had only covered some three hundred miles on the trip, having visited a great number of scattered hamlets and villages. But we arrived home with a good conscience. For food for our dogs had everywhere been plentiful and they got back as fresh and as sturdy as they started. We had left very little sickness behind us on the coast, and expected a rest for quite a while among our own people.

But the unexpected always happens. That very night we were called out of bed by a loud knocking at the hospital door. The voices of men and the sound of dogs on the crisp snow greeted our half-wakened senses. "Who's there?" from the window brought in stentorian tones the information, "It's me—Jonas—we've come over from Stark's Cove. Jennie Gardner broke her arm yesterday, so them says."

"All right, I'll be down directly. Go and call Ben out to give your dogs a feed."

Our visitors, like most of their kind, are not men to rest easily, when trouble of which they don't know the extent is hanging over them, and it was all we could do to persuade them that a few hours' rest before we started would not injure the prospects of an ordinary broken arm. It would have been no use ex-

pecting them to take anything but their outer clothes off. A rug and enough room on a hard wood settee to lie on was all they would accept, and no sooner had they finished a huge draught of hot tea and some supper than their two great forms lay stretched out near the stove, as motionless almost as if they had been corpses.

As the messengers were from the coast we had not visited, and brought us no news of any further trouble, and since haste seemed the object most to be desired, we decided to take no equipage beyond that needed for this particular case, thus enabling us to load our sledge as little as possible. This was more especially desirable as fresh snow having fallen in the night it became all the more important that the komatik should run lightly. As it turned out we did well, for the downfall continued steadily all the morning, and the drifts were enormous when we had to force through wooded country. The leading dogs sank into the feathery blanket almost out of sight, and though we walked ahead all day in our racquets to beat a path for them, we had to give them turn and turn about in their positions in the train.

Night overtook us, in the middle of the country, and glad enough we were, in a dense

spruce thicket, called the "Green Rudge," locally, to dig out a wayside log tilt or hut, and to crawl down into it for the night. With the perversity that sometimes appears to characterize inanimate things, the downfall during the hours of darkness was almost phenomenal, and though we were ready for starting long before daylight we were forced to hasten slowly by being unable in the dark to unearth two recalcitrant dogs who were hidden snugly asleep under the snow.

The overcoming of physical difficulties is one of the chief pleasures in life, so when, as it grew dusk that evening, we emerged on the southern shore of the Straits of Belle Isle, we felt quite pleased with ourselves, even if we had lost twenty-four hours on our usual time. There were only eighteen miles more to do. The land in this section is level and the road is kept more or less beaten by the numerous teams travelling over it. When we had "boiled the kettle" and shaken the snow out of ourselves, we pushed on towards our destination.

Soon only three miles remained. The familiar lighthouse out on an island was in sight and we expected in a few minutes to be in the warmth of the comfortable cottage of our patient.

But as chance would have it, just as we came to the parting of the trails, one of which led out to a little village on a long promontory, we noticed so many fresh tracks of komatiks that we guessed something unusual must be occurring. "Anything wrong out at Safety Cove?" I sang out to the messengers who had come to fetch us. "Nothing we knows on, 'cept us heard Jim Kempson had a hurt on his knee, but us 'lows there must be more than that doing to take all this lot out there. For they hasn't come back by their tracks, and there's a power of 'em gone."

"There's a couple of men up on the top, doctor," one of the men shouted as we swung round the next hillside, and a little bunch of houses nestling above the cove loomed up against the snow. "'Low them's watching to see us pass. See, them's got a flag up!" he added excitedly. "All right, Charley. Ouk! ouk! ouk!" (to the right) to the leading dog, and our little cavalcade in less than a trice was swinging off in the new direction.

Evidently we were spotted instantly by the vidette, for they commenced running down the hill to meet us, and we were soon in possession of the facts that were causing trouble. Jim's knee had got worse and worse, and

"there was no stopping it." It had swelled up and down till his leg was as large as his body, and all hands said he was dying.

According to the custom of the coast under these circumstances, all his friends had gathered from far and near to show their sympathy—"just to see him off," as some one once put it. Jim had a wife and four children, and only four rooms all told—a kitchen and living-room below and two tiny bedrooms in the slope of the roof above. The inevitable result was that the house was packed like a beehive and the air could almost be cut in slices with a knife. In one of the small up-stairs rooms lay poor Jim on his back, struggling for life, encouraged by as many friends as could get in at once, but hampered sadly by bad air and heat.

Having succeeded in the delicate task of persuading this kindly assembly that their room was really of infinitely more value than their company, and in sending the four children to other houses, we retained three good handy men and started in to work.

With as little noise as possible the board partition between the two bedrooms was taken down, and one hand told off to plane it up, and convert it into a full-length bath. Assistant No. 2 was detailed to make a win-

dow in the roof, and No. 3 to carry away everything movable to the store outside. The new room was meanwhile cleansed and all the kettles of the village set boiling, as many as possible on our own down-stair stove. Food was also short; there was neither a drop of any stimulant nor a tin of milk obtainable —much less fresh milk. Messengers volunteered to try and cross the ice and get some at the lighthouse; and fortunately in this they were successful.

The condition of the patient resembled that of a rapidly spreading erysipelas. The only hope of saving his life lay in numerous and extensive incisions. As no lancet was obtainable, our hunting-knife had to be impressed to replace one. An anæsthetic anyhow was out of the question. For an antiseptic a bottle of strong carbolic acid, left in the next village by our hospital boat for another case the previous summer, was fortunately brought in just when we were ready, and after some hot milk had been administered, the rough but most admirably sensible full-length bath, made out of the old partition—the seams being well caulked with pitch—also made its appearance. Filled with its warm antiseptic solution, it was immediately put to use. The patient, in whom seven long incisions had

been made, was placed reclining in it. He described it after as being like crimping a cod. Blankets and quilts, commandeered from the neighbours, were now packed all round, while a cover made with fishermen's oilskin jackets protected those from getting wet. In this way it was comparatively easy to maintain an even temperature. Regular port and starboard watches were set, and when morning dawned we ventured to finish our own journey and settle the broken-arm patient before turning in for some sleep.

The cheerful woman whom we had originally set out to help almost persuaded us that it was a pleasure having a broken arm—the chance for his life it was the means of giving to her poor neighbour, to her mind quite offset the inconvenience and the pain which would make so many people selfishly introspective.

The need for constant supervision of the kindly and unremitting efforts of my strange nursing staff left me little time to visit elsewhere, and the track from my lodging to the sick man's house was soon worn as hard as a macadam road. To get so heavy a man easily in and out of the bath called for no little strength and skill, and I had to drill my squad with a dummy, for Jim had no strength

to lose from rough handling. How much oakum was picked for dressing I cannot say now, but the occupants of the next door neighbour's front room came nearer to enjoying the calling of a convict than ever any one previously has in our north country.

The supply of milk from the lighthouse was limited, and it had to be served out as if it were rations for a shipwrecked crew. Fortunately some of the boys came across ptarmigan on the second day, and the fresh broth was as welcome as the first flowers of spring. Numbers of small offerings of this kind were gladly brought in from a distance of many miles, as soon as the news reached along the coast of the reason they were needed. The unstinted, unselfish kindness of the poor for the poor made even these anxious days a benediction to us workers. Surely the real kingdom of God was deeper in the hearts of this people than any one could possibly have supposed. The showers of kind acts, little though they may have appeared, were no small spur to all the rest of us to do our best, as night succeeded day and there still was no improvement in poor Jim's condition—nothing that suggested to us any chance of ultimate success.

The fourth day was drawing to a close.

Though a crowd of friends sat with me by the log fire in the fisherman's hut, where I was being temporarily entertained, my mind kept wandering over the miles of snow back to our people on the western coast. I knew that by now the sick that we had left behind, and possibly others who had gathered since, must be anxiously awaiting my return. I was too restless to notice even much of the conversation. So, not unnaturally, I had failed to realize that the talk had turned to Jim and his chances, and what to do with his little ones if he did not pull through. "There's no money round here on Jim's chances, doctor," one man remarked, "though they does say he seemed like clawing to windward a bit after them cuts."

"Don't be too sure, Dick," chimed in another; "Jim's lived hard o' late, but there's good stuff in him. There wasn't a soft spot in his timbers when this took him."

"It was always that way with Jim," added a third. "Not much to look at in fine weather, but never no give when t' pinch came."

One of the company, sailor-like, had been out to get "a sight o' the weather," not for any particular reason, except that the men

find it hard to sit still for long at a time. A breeze of fresh cold air as he opened the door roused us to the fact that he was returning, and in the conventional way, hardly even anticipating an answer, he was greeted with the usual question, "Well, what of it, Sam? Anything doing?"

"Night's fine," he replied. "There's lights moving across t' hill by Jim's house—seems as if something was going on over there."

There was at once a general move in the company, and each man momentarily searched the faces of the others. Soon the whole company were on their feet, and one by one, almost shamefacedly, slunk out into the night.

For myself, I just sat on staring into the fire, wondering if all our efforts and prayers that this humble life might be spared us a little longer had been in vain. True, when a skiff sinks before the storm, the tiny eddy and gap in the waters is noticeable only to those very close at hand, and the great sea then rushes in, and no trace of the catastrophe is discernible. If such were God's will now we could only bow to it, and face the aftermath as it becomes a brother, who is one not only in name, to try and do.

The hurry of steps and the lifting of the

latch brought me quickly back from the land of dreams. A muffled figure, with a large hurricane lantern, was being ushered in by the crowd of friends who had just gone out.

The footsteps told me the news was good before my uncouth looking head nurse with his irrepressible Irish humour broke out: "Bedad, doctor, Jim's showing ould Nick a clean pair o' legs after all. He's hisself again if ever he was."

"Be sensible, Pat, and tell me what has happened."

"Oh, don't distress yourself, doctor; 'tis himself that's woken up and asked for something."

The diagnosis of a professional nurse would have given me no more confidence This was not the first sick-bed Pat had watched over by a long way, rough fisherman though he looked, and the instinct of simple love is often as true a guide as even text-book or lecture. It was with a load off my heart that I started to accompany the faithful watcher back over the snow.

"Prayer is out of date," a man of millions said to me only a few days ago. "No one believes now that prayer makes any real difference." But I like to think still that there are "more things in God's heaven than

man wots of," and though Pat and I said our prayers differently, we both thanked God together that night for sparing the life of the man we had, each in our own way, been asking God for.

As I harnessed up the dogs next morning and started on a seventy mile drive home, the very team seemed to be of my mind also, and even the weather chimed in and endorsed the verdict that God is in His heaven, and that so long as He permits us to believe that we can serve Him, life is very much worth while.

VIII

A Partial Conversion

FOR two years I had made summer voyages in our one hundred and fifty ton hospital schooner from England to Labrador, returning when the summer exodus of fishermen was driven south by the advance of winter. The short seasons of open water had been spent in doing what we could to help the fishermen. A local failure of the fisheries the previous year had brought me a piteous appeal to try and aid a district further south than I had hitherto considered our territory. Moreover there had appeared that spring a sickness that was painful and fatal—a new terror to the settlers. Large black bruises broke out about their bodies. Joints became suddenly rigid. Mouth and gums turned purple and fetid. No doctor ever visited that coast, not even on the occasional mail-boat. It was a most pathetic situation. "Would I at least come in and see them?"

So it happened that as we once more

sailed south, in company with the large fishing fleet that were again returning home, we ran in and anchored in the safest and most central harbour, to decide finally whether we should stay the winter on "the French Shore." A cursory visit around the little settlement left no doubt in our minds that there existed an undeniable need for such services as we could render, and an ample scope for labour that would keep us busy till our schooner could return to us from England once more. It was equally and somewhat painfully apparent, however, that we were not overwell equipped for the task. Finally, however, we proceeded to disembark, for with me was a young friend from England who had volunteered to help me with whatever work I might be called upon to do.

Our difficulties began at once. It was by no means such an easy matter as might be supposed to find a lodging-place among the cottages of which the village consisted. When finally we *had* succeeded in transforming two rooms to suit our purposes, it was still evident that if we were to do any serious surgical work we must find accommodation in some other house for our sick folk. Owing to the constant calls from far as well

as near, during the first few weeks after the schooner left us, we were prevented in spite of our best efforts from giving the time necessary to secure that resemblance to a hospital which we desired. Indeed the March gales had already broken up much of the standing ice that all winter had enabled us to cross the arms of the sea, and answer quickly the calls of our neighbours, before half another house was really ready for surgical occupation.

The great bridge that crossed to some off-lying islands had just given way before an angry Atlantic ground swell, heaving in under the outside ice, and thus had temporarily cut the inhabitants off from all communication with the mainland. We were not a little surprised, therefore, to be suddenly summoned out of bed one night by the stentorian voices of a number of men gathered outside our cottage. On descending to admit them we found that they were the crew of a sealing skiff that had forced their way in through the running ice. That something serious must have happened was evident. The men were excited and in haste. So while some started our fire and got the kettle on—the universal order of events all along our coast—the skipper told

us how "Tim Bryan had shot hisself, and wanted a doctor bad, right off." Three men had been duck shooting together and from a point of vantage where they "were well stowed away" they had just had "a desperate shot into a small pond o' water," formed by a fissure in the ice. They had killed or crippled some seventy-six birds, and Tim had been reloading in so great a hurry to secure the wounded ones, that a spark left in his gun had exploded the new charge. The flash from the muzzle had entered the powder horn that he held inverted over the muzzle. To stop the bleeding his comrades had rushed him home, and plunged the shattered right hand into the flour barrel. This had fortunately proved effective. Pain and weakness from the loss of blood had, however, caused them to leave him there in his own home. "Would we come right along?" There was much heavy running ice and they were anxious to get back while the channel they had rowed along might still make it possible.

After less than an hour's rest and refreshment these Vikings were ready to start on their return voyage, though it was still pitch dark, and the sea was covered with the slob-ice. With them on the journey back went

my young colleague, leaving me to "stand by" our other patients, from some of whom I dared not risk being cut off.

The moving of the injured man proved a harder task than was anticipated, and another valuable forty-eight hours elapsed before he was carried up to our makeshift hospital.

Tim was a family man—he had five small children and a wife dependent on him. He had nothing but his skill as a fisherman and trapper to count on for his daily food. Now—alas—his right hand lay before me, one huge shattered mass of blood, flour, and corruption. The man himself was flushed and feverish; already his face had assumed the sunken aspect of general blood infection—the telltale glands in the armpit were red and swollen. I was forced to put the position plainly to him—"Tim, boy, if what's left of your hand isn't cut off it will probably cost you your life."

"Oh, doctor," he replied, "don't tell me that. It's not the hand I'm thinking of—but it's my right one, doctor. It will mean that we shall all starve together. Can you do nothing to help me save it, doctor? For God's sake, say you can," and the great

strong man, now utterly overwrought, broke down and wept like a child.

"Yes, Tim, we can try, if you decide to chance it. But you should know that the risk to your life will be very great, and even if we do save what is left of the hand, it may be of no use to you."

"Give me an hour to think it over, won't you, doctor, and then I'll give you my answer."

Laying the arm on a weighted board and sinking the whole into a trough of carbolized hot water, we went off, leaving only his comrades to give him counsel. The clock marked one hour exactly when we returned for his decision, for time then was of the utmost importance. The patient was quieter now. His piercing blue eyes seemed trying to look through me as I walked up to the couch on which he lay stretched out. He had evidently made up his mind—and his answer was without doubt final. There was no questioning the tone in which he said, "I'd rather be dead than live without her, doctor. You knows what that would mean, to live like that and see 'em starve. You must just do your best. They all knows you'll do that."

The preliminary operation had to be done

without putting him to sleep—for he dreaded the idea as less familiar than pain, which he knew well enough how to bear—while we too were glad enough not to have to incur the additional risk of an anæsthetic in his condition.

By the time we were through, the handy owner of our little house had ready for us a wooden arm bath of large dimensions with well-rounded and sloping sides, capable of holding plenty of water. The whole was as neat and water-tight as the boats he built, its seams being well caulked with pitch.

Into this the arm was slung, with real blocks and tackles from the ceiling, so as to be quite movable. And so the long struggle began.

Messengers had been despatched long before for the priest, who was domiciled fifty miles to the south and so was considered comparatively close. The good fellow arrived just at this juncture, a man of hearty, cheerful disposition, whose ministrations were, if of no other value, at any rate a psychological factor that added yet another chance of success in the struggle we were dreading.

At the end of the first week victory seemed ours. The priest had left for the south entrusting the daily reading of the prayers from

the missal to the good house-mother, who, though herself a very rigid Methodist, was far too kind of heart to feel any compunction in rendering a service that might give help or pleasure to another in trouble. It was possibly some little offset to her conscience that the wording was in Latin, in which language she was not versed, nor for that same reason did errors in reading seriously affect poor Tim.

By the tenth day the swelling of the shattered limb was in no way reduced—the powder driven in before being burnt resisted all attempts to get a clean wound. The brave fellow had lost flesh steadily. To keep his arm under the hot solution he was forced to sleep in a sitting position, and now our scanty supplies of antiseptics were getting exhausted. Once more we had to advise him that he was risking his life, and that even removal of the whole arm might be of little value if there were any longer delay. But Tim was as immovable as a rock. "I'd rather die without it, doctor. I couldn't bear to live and be no use to no one." It was of course still impossible to leave him by night or day, and with no trained nurse to help, we took turns to re-

main in the room at night, getting what sleep we could in our sleeping bags, stretched out on an improvised settee.

Our supply of antiseptics finally ran out at the end of the fourth week, and we had to do the best we could with well-boiled water. This involved a material increase in the supply needed, and taxed to the utmost our kettle capacity. The water itself had to be carried a long way, as every source of supply near at hand was frozen solid. Chopped ice thrown into the kettle served for the limited needs of the household under ordinary circumstances. We had now to look to our dogs, or those of some kindly neighbour, to haul us barrels full of water from a rapid mountain stream that never froze solid quite to the bottom.

To add to our troubles we had not again been able to communicate with the islands. The heavy Atlantic ice outside had been constantly gliding through the channels with strong winds and a heavy swell, so that we had not the comfort of being able to keep Tim's wife and friends informed of our views of the situation. Moreover, the poor fellow had been suffering a great deal of pain of late and it was simply impossible to keep him constantly under opiates. At his own

urgent request messengers were once more despatched to the priest that he might at least send down a few bottles of water that he had blessed, in the hope that it might afford some relief. Of this each morning and evening a few drops were sprinkled in the bath before his eyes, and though, of course, we had had to boil it beforehand, it didn't lose its efficiency. For it never failed to quiet him down, and so to render possible the rest that was a vital necessity in his condition.

It was not till six weeks had elapsed that it became no longer necessary to float the wounded limb. Openings and counter-openings had been imperative as high up as the armpit, and even now, though delighted with the fact that with improving appetite and sleep, Tim's life was going to be spared, we were rather apprehensive that the result he dreaded more than death would still be unavoidable. The arm was a veritable wreck to look at, and as immovable as the broom-handle, which it much resembled. What a joyous night it was, however, when at last we got Tim out of his armchair and into a bed between real sheets. An event which, happening on the same day that we once more got news through from the islands,

made it indeed a red-letter day in our annals. A fortnight's massage and passive movements worked wonders with the arm and wrist, but more than that is necessary for a hook and line fisherman.

To earn a living a poor man like Tim must be able to row cross handed, that is with two oars at once—to haul his long hand-lines he must be able to grip them with either, and so haul them in hand over hand —the only alternative being to nip the part hauled in by one knee against the gunwale of the boat, while the hand seeks a new grip. In our deep waters this process makes fishing altogether too slow to be remunerative.

It therefore became necessary to try a secondary operation with a view to giving him something against which to oppose the thumb, which he was, as if by a miracle, still able to control. By a little careful scheming beforehand and a transposition of fragments, a plan devised to accomplish this proved successful beyond our anticipation. Though, through lack of tendon tissue, we could only make the hand resemble a bird's bill with but one movable jaw, we secured the ability to "nip," which, though apparently only a slight advantage, really meant all the difference in the world to our friend.

The final stage was to obtain a covering for the still large open surface from which the skin had been destroyed. We were all so interested by Tim's pluck and gratitude that volunteers to supply grafts from themselves for that purpose were not long lacking, and before the time came for Tim to leave us, and commence the summer fishing, he was to all intents and purposes a well man. Once or twice during the summer his small boat might have been noticed running in to our harbour, during a spell in the fishing, just to report progress. Happily it was so ordered that the season should prove a good one for the inshore fishermen, and it added no little to our pleasure to see now and again the beaming countenance of our friend, as he came with some small offering to help on similar work being done for others. With a quiet smile on his face he would sometimes hold up the injured hand, and point out the similarity of it to the fore fin of one of our seals, dryly remarking on one occasion, "Well, doctor, all the rest of me is Catholic, but I 'lows even I can't stop this flipper being Protestant."

IX

The Sources of Pleasure

IN our small mission hospital steamer, *Strathcona*, we were as usual cruising among the fishing fleets of Labrador during the season of open water.

"There's a big yacht alongside, doctor, and their boat has brought you over a letter," said our steward one morning, handing me a neat envelope bearing the crest of a big yacht club. We were working at the time over a sick man in the little hospital below decks, where we hold our peripatetic clinic. Thus we had missed seeing her approach. A crowd of other applicants were waiting on deck for such services as we could render.

The caparisons of wealth are so rare in our northern regions that this unexpected news brought us all up on deck. Anchored quite close alongside was a large and beautiful steam yacht. Her brass work shone in the sunshine, and her enamelled paintwork gleamed and glistened so beautifully, it did one real good to look at her. She carried also the snowiest of white sails, which were lying still

IMPROVING THE TIME IN FAIR WEATHER ON BOARD THE STRATHCONA

"deshabille" on the spars, having been recently lowered. The whole was touched off by the gay bunting flying at her foremast and flagpole that announced her club affiliation and her country. A party of gaily dressed ladies and gentlemen in yachting suits were on the bridge, some of whom were spying down through glasses at the crowded decks of our battered little mission steamer. Remembering the feelings that scratches on painted sides inspired in me before mission work compelled any interest, I confess I felt momentarily ashamed of the rust marks, where the banging of many boats alongside had chipped off our spring coat of paint.

On opening the note it proved to contain an introduction from a mutual friend, and an invitation to go on board to lunch which "would be served shortly." As there was a thoughtful postscript, "no need to dress up," I accepted more readily, not to say more easily, considering the state of a Labrador wardrobe.

She certainly was a beauty. Hard wood decks in tiny strips, mahogany deck houses, well nickelled fittings, bright Turkish mats, setting off red Morocco leather upholsterings. To the table, laden with southern delicacies of fruit, fresh from her ice lockers, was added

all the attraction that the best of silver and cut glass could afford. The colouring of the ladies' dresses, the immaculate table furnishings, and the almost polished stewards, sent a sensation down one's back, when thus suddenly contrasted with our own humble ship, like that afforded by the morning plunge into these always stimulating waters.

Yet in spite of it all, the prevailing note in the conversation was one of discontent, and there seemed to be more complaints against the "bad luck" they were having than I had heard since we put to sea. The sole object of their cruise was obviously pleasure. They had hoped to trap that somewhat fickle lady by catching unsophisticated salmon, large and numerous, on what our people call a "fly pole." But it seemed the salmon in the three rivers they had already tried had not fallen in with their ideas on the matter. "The largest we've landed," said my host, "was only fifteen pounds." "Gerald caught eight in two hours the other day in one pool, but they only ran to six pounds apiece." "These confounded rivers are a fraud," was the general consensus of opinion.

This decision was emphasized by the fact that the party had ventured off on one occasion without proper provision against mos-

quitoes, and the results had been neither dignified nor æsthetic. They had eventually heard that the best rivers for salmon fishing were known to me, and they had sought me out to ask advice as to which one to try next. Having explained that an old fox doesn't readily go to a trap, and consequently the unwisdom of giving advice to any one, such charts as exist of our coast were produced and I marked in a few rivers that the cartographers have overlooked.

Our new found acquaintances proved to be what I have heard called "good sportsmen," in spite of their environment of soft things. Though a long pull up to the "first pool" and a poor anchorage "when the wind came in northeasterly" did not seem to appeal much to them when deciding the all important question as where to go next. What a terrible knotty point it was! Unluckily there was a show at ——— in three weeks' time, which two at least ought not to miss, and then there was what appeared to be an exceedingly important house party, which left two others just as anxious. For these causes a somewhat more distant but almost "dead certain river" proved a thorn in the flesh which cost me much valuable time discussing. One couldn't help feeling sorry that there was any

friction over even a point of, what appeared to them, such absorbing importance.

But I confess what was troubling me most now was my own temporary desertion of my colleague on the mission boat, whom I had felt mean in having to leave behind at all on this great occasion. For he was such a good fellow and had such a keen sense of humour, and was moreover a volunteer at his own expense, having actually left his own yacht out of commission for the season to come and give me a hand among the fishermen.

At length a decision appeared to be arrived at, and I perceived my hosts were getting anxious to be off about their business. I felt also that it would not be right to let them waste further time. So I rose and bade goodbye to my new acquaintances and prepared to take my leave. My courteous host accompanied me to the gangway. As we approached we heard a somewhat acrimonious discussion being carried on from the ladder. It proved to be the yacht's boatswain, who was ordering a fishing boat away from the side of the ship, to which a stalwart fisherman had evidently intended to fasten it. There was a girl in the stern of the boat, wrapped round in a warm shawl.

"The doctor says you was going to ——

Harbour, sir," said the fisherman, catching sight of the owner walking with me, "and perhaps you'd give her a passage down to hospital. She be very sick, sir, and he says it wouldn't be far out of your way."

"You keep that boat away from our paint, I tell you," was the boatswain's only reply. "You've made a black smudge already. She wouldn't be fit to look at in half an hour, I tell you."

I recognized the boat, and knew the kindness it would be to get the girl to where she could be properly taken care of, so I plucked up courage and explained that we were ourselves bound the other way, and that as they would have to pass near the hospital before night, it would only be a deck passage that she would need.

I could see at once I had utterly failed to realize the view-point of my friend. It had absolutely never occurred to me how they regarded sickness of any kind. He was far too courteous to say anything to hurt my feelings, but I could see what a terrible new feature I had introduced into his already sufficiently puzzling dilemma. He merely replied, "I'll speak to the others, if you'll wait a moment." Meanwhile he thoughtfully told the boatswain to take the boat's painter and

make it fast. But I felt like a bull in a china shop all the same as I leaned on the rail, while he went forward to fling this new thunderbolt among his guests, leaving me to watch the evidently chagrined boatswain fending off the intruding boat with a fine brass-topped boat-hook, as if it were some dangerous animal.

"Is there no other way to get the girl where she wants to go?" queried the owner on his return. "She might be infectious, you know, and the ladies are just a little afraid."

Fortunately that point had been agitating my brains also during "the interim" and I was all ready with an answer. "Oh, don't trouble, that schooner over there is going north soon, and I have no doubt I can arrange with the skipper to take her. They are more accustomed to that kind of work, and will be glad to do it, I know. Indeed I often get them to do that sort of thing for me. I assure you it's nothing out of the ordinary and I'm really sorry to have added to your worries."

"Do you think they'd go at once?" he replied. "I shouldn't be easy if I thought anything might happen to the girl by the delay."

"I can't be sure, of course, because it would

not do to ask them, if they are doing well with the fish here—it might mean losing a voyage of fish. But I'll certainly do my best, and I beg you not to worry further."

With a sigh of relief he took out his pocket-book. "There's one hundred dollars," he said; "do you think that they'd run her down specially to the hospital for that?"

"I should feel less diffidence in asking them," I replied. "But the skipper wouldn't take the money, I can assure you, for carrying any sick person along, unless his sharemen will lose by it. I know his men are on shares, and it might give them cause to complain, as they wouldn't feel they were asked in the matter, and therefore they wouldn't have the pleasure of doing the kindness." We never pay on the coast for this kind of brotherliness. It is the only wealth they have to give away much of, and they know the value of the joy of service.

The yacht waited long enough to see that the schooner master was willing—and then got up her anchors and left us. But I noticed, as she passed the heads, that in spite of our long conference and final decision she headed after all in the opposite direction. Maybe, I thought, they were sent in here to learn about other things than they expected.

I found my colleague patiently at work still, when I returned on board. I narrated the incidents of my visit to the yacht.

"I hope they won't have anything more to interrupt their enjoyments," he replied, "but it sort of makes one feel not desirous to change places with them."

X

Suzanne

UNCLE JONAS had missed the fish. For the first time within the memory of many neighbours in Deep Water Creek Uncle Jonas' schooner had "come back from t' Larbador, clean."

Under ordinary circumstances even the catastrophe of one family being unable to purchase supplies for the winter would not have been a matter of deep concern to the inhabitants of the Creek. For they were accustomed to having "to make things do" and no one ever heard a real Livyere from the Atlantic seaboard "squealing" because it had "pleased t' Lord they shouldn't be able to reach to fats after Easter."

But this case was somewhat different. Uncle Jonas' hospitality was an institution. It was as much a matter of course as the ice in the harbour. Every benighted traveller, every desolate family following the komatik track because they had no longer any food in the locker at home, even every starving

dog team whose lord and master could no longer find them a morsel to put in their stomachs, knew which way to turn when they caught sight of the blue smoke of the cottages above the cliffs that made the harbour of Deep Water Creek. Uncle Jonas' had ever been a veritable city of refuge for many miles of coast both north and south.

No one, good, bad or indifferent had ever been known to knock at Uncle Jonas' door without getting, whatever the time of day, the cheery invitation "to sit right in and have a cup o' hot tea."

But though this unaffected love out of a pure heart had ever proved to the man's own soul the truest of God's blessings, it had not been purchased without cost. For Uncle Jonas enjoyed yet another blessing straight from God's hands, and that was a quiverful of children—possessions of which a millionaire might have well been proud. His four stalwart boys were already able to help with the trap net, and though the youngest could scarcely yet row "cross-handed," *i. e.*, handle two oars at once, all four were rated in the crew of the *Saucy Lass* when Uncle Jonas cleared in the spring of the year for the annual voyage "Northward Ho." His five lasses also, having come early in the sequence,

had been invaluable, first in helping in the home and in the garden and with the rapidly following babies—while the eldest had twice sailed as cook in the schooner before the boys had been of an age to leave home. She was eighteen now, and though as bonnie a lass as the countryside could produce, with her clear, rosy cheeks and the curly shock of black hair she had inherited from her mother, she was still living at home.

There are no industries in the Creek at which young women can earn money to help out on expenses. When the men bring home a full fare, however, they are able to earn quite a bit at washing, cleaning and spreading the fish and so helping to get it earlier to the market and secure a better price. This year even that occupation was denied them.

It is not unnatural that the families in these out-of-the-world places should cling together with even more than the tenacity we are accustomed to in the more crowded centres. For everything outside is like one vast unknown land and ghosts of the dangers that lurk there unseen haunt the fancies of our home-loving fisher folk. Indeed, who shall blame them for the sensitiveness of their imagination, seeing that the contempt of

familiarity has so often proved the path to ruin among our own.

However, with Uncle Jonas' failure to secure a "fare of fish" a crisis of unusual portent faced the Creek. If he had no fish under salt, there were certainly others in the same situation, and there could be little doubt that there would be more mouths than the supplies attainable before navigation closed could be expected to fill. No wonder that a certain amount of gloom lurked in this usually happy little cove.

There seemed only one way out of the dilemma as far as the village fathers could see, and that was to lessen the number of mouths.

Reluctantly, as Virginius of old, Uncle Jonas realized that only one way was open to him. His eldest girl, Suzanne, would have to go out to service. It was neither a pleasant nor easy task to finally bring the matter to an issue, and it was only after many tearful farewells that at length, with her home-made travelling chest filled with all the little tokens of love that her family and friends could "reach to," Suzanne finally embarked on the last schooner from the harbour that was going south. Thus she fared forth into the wide and unknown world beyond the dearly loved, though rugged cluster of

rocks that closes the harbour in, and that were not inappropriately known as Break-Heart-Point.

The letters that reach Deep Water Creek in winter are few and far between. True, twice during the long months of frozen water, toiling dog teams bring what we please to call the winter mails. But they are unsafe and uncertain at best, and many prefer to consider no news good news rather than risk anxious weeks because they have trusted to what has so often caused entirely unnecessary worry.

One letter, however, did come through, and it brought the joyful news that Suzanne had found a home with a fine Christian planter, whose wife promised well to be a second mother to her. The maid that helps is as much one of the family as those she ministers to in our unsophisticated country.

No letter was ever received from Suzanne again—only a brief line from the planter to tell Uncle Jonas the sad news that his own young wife had died during her first confinement just before Christmas. Consequently Suzanne had been thus out and about a good deal during the spring. She had eventually sailed north for the summer, having shipped as cook on a Labrador schooner entirely

against his will. She insisted she had filled a similar position twice before.

Late in the year I was cruising in our mission hospital boat with the most northern fleet of vessels. We had been threading our way through a veritable archipelago of uncharted islands, seeking a place to bring up for the night where we might be in the neighbourhood of other vessels, to the occupants of which we might be able to give medical or surgical assistance. Suddenly the watch reported a small schooner with flag at half mast, and a six-oared seine skiff with a spudger (or sign) up, crossing the ship's run to intercept us.

It was only necessary to slow down and throw their bowman a line to soon have the seine master on board.

"Skipper's compliments, doctor," he said as he gripped my hand. "We've a girl very bad on board. We wants you to come alongside if so be you can manage it."

We needed no second invitation. While our new friends returned to relieve their skipper's mind, and prepare for our arrival, we moored for the night and got ready such accessories as we deemed from the information derived from our visitors that the circumstances called for.

The details that impressed this case vividly on my memory, among so many others, do not bear retelling here. I was ushered into the schooner's small and dark after-cabin that had been abandoned by the kindly men. There, by the light of a tiny kerosene lamp, I found a young girl lying in the dark bunk built into the side of the ship. Her bloodless face, hollow eyes, parched lips and fevered cheeks, in the setting of a tangled mass of endless jet black wavy hair, loomed up as soon as my eyes got accustomed to the semi-darkness. I was conscious she was peering directly into my face with the hungry look of some wild animal at bay.

A child of fifteen, her only companion, was crouching at the foot of the bunk, and adding to the pathos of the moment by her pitiful wailing, which seemed to beat time with the sounds of the waves lapping against the planking of the vessel's quarter.

It was the old story—a trusting girl—a false lover, a betrayal—and a wild, unreasoning flight to anywhere, anywhere that seemed to offer, however vaguely, still a temporary postponement of the inevitable harvest of shame, and sorrow, and suffering. Hither, hundreds of miles from anywhere, this mere child had fled, hoping that possibly death,

with its false offer of mercy through oblivion, might spare her seeing the grief of those who loved her. For well she knew the inevitable consequences, when the sorrowful tale should reach the peaceful hamlet by the sea from which she had but so recently set out.

This was no time for philosophy, however. Every minute was precious. For it was a case in which one had to work single-handed.

The baby had been born four days and was dead. Every member of the crew was a stranger to the girl, and anyhow even with all the sympathy and kindliness so universal in our men of the sea, they had been far too frightened lest they might do injury to touch even a rag of the poor coverings that fairly littered the bed. For every man had contributed generously of whatever he had that might possibly be of any use.

An hour later my patient, wrapped up like a mummy in clean linen and blankets, was tenderly carried on deck, and ferried over in the ship's jolly-boat to the hospital steamer. The boat that served us then was indeed so small that she allowed no special provision for patients. Beside my own cabin and the saloon, there were no spare accommodations below decks. On the settle of the latter, as being more airy and convenient for moving

about in, we built up a bunk which should prevent at least the risk of a serious fall in a seaway.

As soon as the first rays of dawn permitted us to weigh anchor we ran south for a Moravian mission station, where we hoped we might induce a kind-hearted married woman with some knowledge that might be useful to us in our dilemma to come south with us as far as our northern little hospital.

It was not until next day, however, that we anchored once more in the quiet waters of Okkak Bay. Here, under the great cliffs that flank the harbour, lies the little station where for over one hundred years the self-sacrificing missionaries of the Moravian Church have been doing their best to uplift the Eskimos of this bleak north coast. One might have supposed that a mother with children of her own would hesitate even in such a dilemma from venturing forth in so small a vessel as ours. For the troubles of the sea are by no means confined to the sensitive organisms of those living in civilization.

But she looked upon the opportunity as only one more gift of Him whose service had called her from the homeland nearly twenty years before. Without hesitation, as if it were an ordinary daily duty, she set about

preparing for the trip, her husband agreeing to accompany us that he might see her home when her service should be no more needed.

The evening was by no means idle; to afford even a chance of saving my patient an operation became necessary, and the help from the station and the quiet of the harbour made it possible and wisest not to risk the delay that would be inevitable before we could reach hospital, if the weather should be boisterous. Things went well. Before night the patient's pulse had fallen, and the watchers in turn reported a much better rest. When morning came the girl herself felt she could face another stage of the journey. To run out to sea, make the necessary crossing and run in on a parallel of latitude to the hospital would be our quickest way. But that, with the wind on the land, made the heaving and rolling dangerous. By keeping the inside runs, we got smooth water, but could not move during the darkness.

A brilliant aurora favoured us the next night and we pushed on until about midnight, when its sudden disappearance left us in such absolute darkness that we were compelled to anchor at once. The improving pulse and temperature and the steady diminution of physical symptoms that had caused

us much grave anxiety during these first two days gave me a light heart.

Every time I visited the patient I expected to recognize the corresponding assurance in her face that she was really on the road to recovery, but every time I looked in vain. It became such a puzzle to me at last that to cheer her I assured her she would soon be herself again so that when the mail steamer should come to hospital we should be able to send her back as well as ever to her own home once more. I had watched her carefully to see whether the thought of an early return to her loved ones would not act as a stimulus to the child, an encouragement to her to bring into play the force of her will, which to my mind is a most important factor on the road to recovery. It needed no Sherlock Holmes to tell me I had failed. She just lay there looking at me with a far-away look in her large black eyes, as of some terrified fawn that is too frightened to fly though certain of impending danger.

I thought perhaps the loving encouragement of the woman who had ventured on the trip solely that for the Christ's sake she might be of service to a sister in distress might help me in the dilemma. So I explained the need to her exactly, and begged

her to do her best to effect that which I seemed utterly unable to attain. Tenderly and prayerfully she tried, but only, once more to meet with failure.

In the dusk, just before weighing our anchor, a trap-boat crew going to their nets caught sight of our riding light, and came aboard with a man who had a badly poisoned hand. They had not expected us to be going south so soon and were delighted beyond measure to be able to get relief and dressings. When they learned that we were running south with a sick girl for hospital they at once inquired as to who it could be. Much to my delight they at once claimed acquaintance, and expressed a willingness to wait while I went down and prepared her for their visit, on the chance that they might be able to cheer her. I had hoped that so irresistible a reminder of the love of home might help her to cry, and so relieve the soul tension that was killing her. But once again it was simply to count failure. I could find no way to get her consent to see them, and I had sorrowfully to convey that information to the kindly fellows on deck.

It was no longer possible to avoid recognizing the inevitable. I tried a final appeal to her to live for her parents' sake; her only

reply at once was, "I want to die, doctor; I can never go home again."

The end came sooner than I had anticipated. She began to fail so rapidly and so obviously that I decided to abandon the attempt to reach the hospital and finally anchored in the still waters of a lovely inlet to await the last chapter of the tragedy. We had not long to wait: it was a scene I shall never forget. Overhead the sun had all day long been pouring down out of a perfect sky. It spoke eloquently of life and the presumption of its permanency. Beneath, the exquisite blue of the deep waters of the fjord were so still that the last thing in one's mind was any realization that storm and danger lurked in them and on them.

The bold relief of the massive granite cliffs, flanked here and there with jet black columns of outcropping trap dykes, gave an entire sense of security and permanence. A majestic iceberg, carried in by the tides, lay only a few hundred yards away. The deep greens and blues in the great crevasses, that relieved its dazzling whiteness made one forget for the moment that even so immense a mass of matter was, like ourselves and all the rest, but a thing of a day. Beyond that was silence—not even a single fishing craft lay

within miles of us to disturb the sense of rest and security. The sun sank behind the hills. The tide was returning to the great ocean whence it had come. It seemed to me after all not an unfitting setting for the passing of a soul out on that tide, which is ever bearing on its bosom all humanity into the great unknown beyond, carrying out with it the visitor from the arctic which it had brought us in the morning, as we rendered the last service within our power to the poor girl whom we had so hoped to save.

Wrapped in a simple flag, covered with a monument of unhewn boulders, we left her on the lonely headland which looked out over the great Atlantic, to wait till the day when the graves shall give up their dead. A simple wooden cross alone indicated the reason for this artificial interruption in the course of an untrammelled nature. It is the emblem of our highest hope, that which signifies that what is wrong in this life shall eventually be put right in that which lies beyond.

The crosspiece bore the legend:

"*Suzanne*
'*Jesus said, neither do I condemn thee.*'"

In a letter to her parents we did our best to comfort them. For we felt that the tragic

sequence of events which led to the poor girl's death ought not to be laid to her charge.

Two years passed away. Meantime many troubles were poured into my ears, and the memory of the pitiful little story of Suzanne had almost faded from my mind.

Once again we were on the Labrador coast. Guided by the twinkling deck lights of fishing schooners "putting away" the day's catch after dark, we had anchored amongst them for the night in the roadstead near some high cliffs behind whose shelter they were working. We had announced our arrival with two blasts of our fog whistle—a signal known now to most of the fishermen. The usual crowd of visitors that resort to our little vessel for news, or medicine or other reasons, had come and gone. All was silent on deck, and we were just "stowing away" for the night when the sound of yet another boat alongside brought me up again.

As I came out of the companion, a single white-haired fisherman was climbing over the side with his painter in his hand. He was evidently well on in years, though the feeble ray of our riding light scarcely did more than reveal the darkness.

"Anything I can do for you, friend?" I

inquired, as he finished tying his boat fast and turned around as if uncertain what to do next.

"No, not much. Thank ye all the same," he replied. And then hesitatingly, "I jest wants to see t' doctor."

"I'm the doctor, friend. What do you need from me?"

"Be you t' doctor what tended a girl 'bout two years agone on t' schooner *Shining Light* down north? The baby were born dead on board."

"If you mean a girl called Suzanne, yes. I tended her and buried her."

Without another word the old man reverently took off his well-worn sou'wester hat, and stood bareheaded before me. I remember in the weird setting of the night his long white hair and gentle manner suggested the visit of some departed saint. I waited for him to speak, not knowing exactly what he wanted, though it was plain he had something of moment on his mind.

"Do you'se think there be any hope us'll see her again, doctor?" he ventured at length. "I'd dearly love to tell the old woman what you think."

"No, friend, I don't think it, I know it. I'm certain of it—as certain as that I see you

now before me. But better than that, she was certain of it too before she left us."

"What makes you say that, doctor? I'd give all I have, glad enough, to be able to think that."

"Well, friend, her face told me so. She was afraid to go back to Deep Water Creek, but you would have known also she had no fear of entering the harbour you and I are bound for also. The peace of God which the Master promised to give us was hers."

The old man said no more. But I saw, even by the feeble glow of our swinging lamp, a bright sparkle on each of his rugged cheeks. He took my hand in both of his. The silent pressure, the wordless good-bye, will remain with me till my last call also comes.

As the sound of his retreating oars gradually disappeared into the night, I found myself still standing in the hatchway. Surely for the humblest service done in His name the Master gives here and now the reward which is above all else worth while.

XI

"*Brin*"

WE were a hundred miles from hospital on the west coast of the long promontory of north Newfoundland that lies between the two branches of the polar current. One branch sweeps the east coast, while the other, entering the Straits of Belle Isle, chills the waters of the gulf of St. Lawrence and materially affects the climate of eastern Canada. Its latitude, which is that of the south coast of England, entitles it to no small amount of sunshine, yet its mean temperature is that of northern Norway or southern Greenland.

Our harbours remain frozen till late in May and the brilliant reflection of the April and May sunshine lends a colour to our faces like that of tanned leather boots. These months afford us a combination of germ-killing light and bracing cold that is equalled in few parts of the world.

It was a fortnight since we had left hospital. As things had been quiet there, my

new colleague had decided to accompany me in order that he might become familiar with the country which next winter he would have to travel alone. It was, however, time to be turning homeward and we were out giving our dogs an extra feed over night, preparatory to the additional call we intended to make on their capacities on the morrow, for we had decided to leave at daybreak.

It takes all the attention of two men to feed a team of husky dogs, if you wish to make sure that they shall share even approximately equally. When possible we feed each dog separately. Here, however, we had only the open snow for their accommodation, and it was impossible to serve dinner without the assistance of our long whips. For not only is there a master dog who takes all he wants anyhow, but each single dog knows exactly which of the others he can bully. It doesn't in the least matter how good a piece of meat may fall to his fortune, if he sees another apparently with a better he will immediately fly at him. The result often is that before they have settled the dispute, both pieces have vanished, and only fresh assaults and batteries will save them from going supperless. The fact that naturally the blocks of meat are hard frozen and therefore take some time

even for an Eskimo dog to dispose of safely, naturally prolongs the period of excitement.

Indeed our minds were so occupied with our task that the approach of a large team of dogs from the north escaped our notice. Stimulated by the well-recognized signs of a meal, the new arrivals, turning deaf ears to the cries of the man who was driving them, and who was now clinging to the sledge with both hands for dear life, simply leapt into the middle of the fracas. Before a word could be said the komatik was capsized and the driver was sprawling beneath it, while the heaving, writhing, yelping masses of fur were enjoying the one superior attraction to a meal—a good straight fight. They were quite regardless of the fact that the champions of one side were still tied to their sledge, and were rapidly snarling themselves and everything else up in an utterly inextricable tangle. It went greatly against the grain to have to whip our dogs off, but under the circumstances there was no alternative. Worse still, it left the victors in possession of the supper, when our sympathies were entirely with our own gallant team, which, if left alone, would have beaten their opponents off their heads.

The task was all the more galling as our dogs are not gifted with a retiring disposi-

tion, and it took much more application of the whip than we cared to administer to persuade them to leave the field and hand over their dinner, even to entertain strangers. Moreover, one of my trustiest dogs somehow hurt his knee and was lame for a week. The ruffianly Joe, their driver, even dared once during the evening to inform the crowd around the log fire that one of his pitiable curs had bitten it. He did not, however, insist on this point later. This irritating sequence of events had not materially helped us to appreciate the explanation for his untimely arrival which Joe blurted out as soon as he had sufficiently recovered his equanimity.

"They is wanting you in Island Harbour, doctor. They doesn't know what t' sickness be."

"Oh! That's it, is it? Then you weren't running away from the police. How long since you left?"

"Only two days, doctor. I got as far as the Green Ridge tilt first night."

"Why, you came all around by the coast, didn't you?"

"Only as far as Caplin Cove Tickle. None of us had ever been straight across the Cloudy Hills, and us heard t' Beaver Cove trappers wasn't in t' Big Mountain tilt t'

winter. So there be no track, and it's nigh impossible to find t' cut path through t' big drogues o' wood from there out here unless you know every inch of it."

Now it couldn't be more than sixty or seventy miles across country to the place we wanted to reach, and it would be nearly twice that distance to go round. We could count on covering the former in a day if only we could follow the trail. But that was just where the rub came. If once you lost it, it would be an endless task getting a team of dogs through our dense stunted spruce forests, with their windfalls of ages which make them like one huge battle stockade with countless pitfalls hidden under light snow coverings between the logs, where you crawl over one only to fall incontinently into the next. We had had more than one experience of that kind before, and had to abandon our sledges and exhausted dogs while we struggled ahead on foot, footsore and frozen.

It was a great dilemma. For not only did every sporting instinct within one cry out, "Have a fling at the cross country route," but success in the venture also meant reaching our desired haven a day sooner.

Naturally it was the topic of the evening as soon as our pipes were lit, and just as

naturally half our friends were on one side and half on the other.

"What would you say, Malcolm?" I asked of our best but aged woodman.

"I'm thinking I'll no advise you, doctor. I've been round, and I've been straight in my time, but I'm no saying I could find the way myself now. There've been no cutting done on t' line this ten years, and the young trees have grown that high that I'm doubting you'll not keep t' track."

Uncle Silas 'lowed he'd come in with us as far as t' Underground Hole Tilt himself, and "you'se can see t' hanging marsh from there." But he didn't know from the Old Deer Tilt on, as "there's never been no business to take him out there from the coast."

The odds were almost even on the route, and we had about decided to settle it in the way Captain Mose always adopted when he didn't know which direction to head his craft for seals. "I just t'rows up my old cap," he said, "and if she comes down face up I mostly heads t' the eastward, and if not I goes down along."

We had indeed just come to the point of getting the captain to go and search for his "wisdom cap" when the crackling sound of footsteps on the crisp snow outside warned us of the approach of a newcomer.

The door was opened with the assurance of an old acquaintance, and a chorus of welcome greeted the muffled figure that stopped to beat the snow off itself in the porch.

"Harry, you'se just struck it right this time. Here's t' doctor wants to cross the country to-morrow. Where have you dropped from? They said you was in after deer and would not be out for ten days."

We found Harry had come in a hurry to get help from the village to bring out two stags he had killed, and as he had not "scaffolded" them out of the reach of animals, he simply must go right back in the morning.

He was a quiet man, and the vocabulary of which he could avail himself in the company present was limited and soon exhausted. It was only after he had sucked in several deep draughts from his pipe, and was sitting in the corner almost hidden by the clouds of smoke he was blowing out, that he broke into the conversation again.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, doctor," he suddenly volunteered. "I won't see you left. If it is a bit of around I'll come with you as far as the big white marsh, and then if you'se don't get t'rough before dark you'll surely find one of the Gray Cove men's tilts." And I saw his keen black eyes fixed on mine as if

the sudden inspiration had relieved him of an intolerable burden.

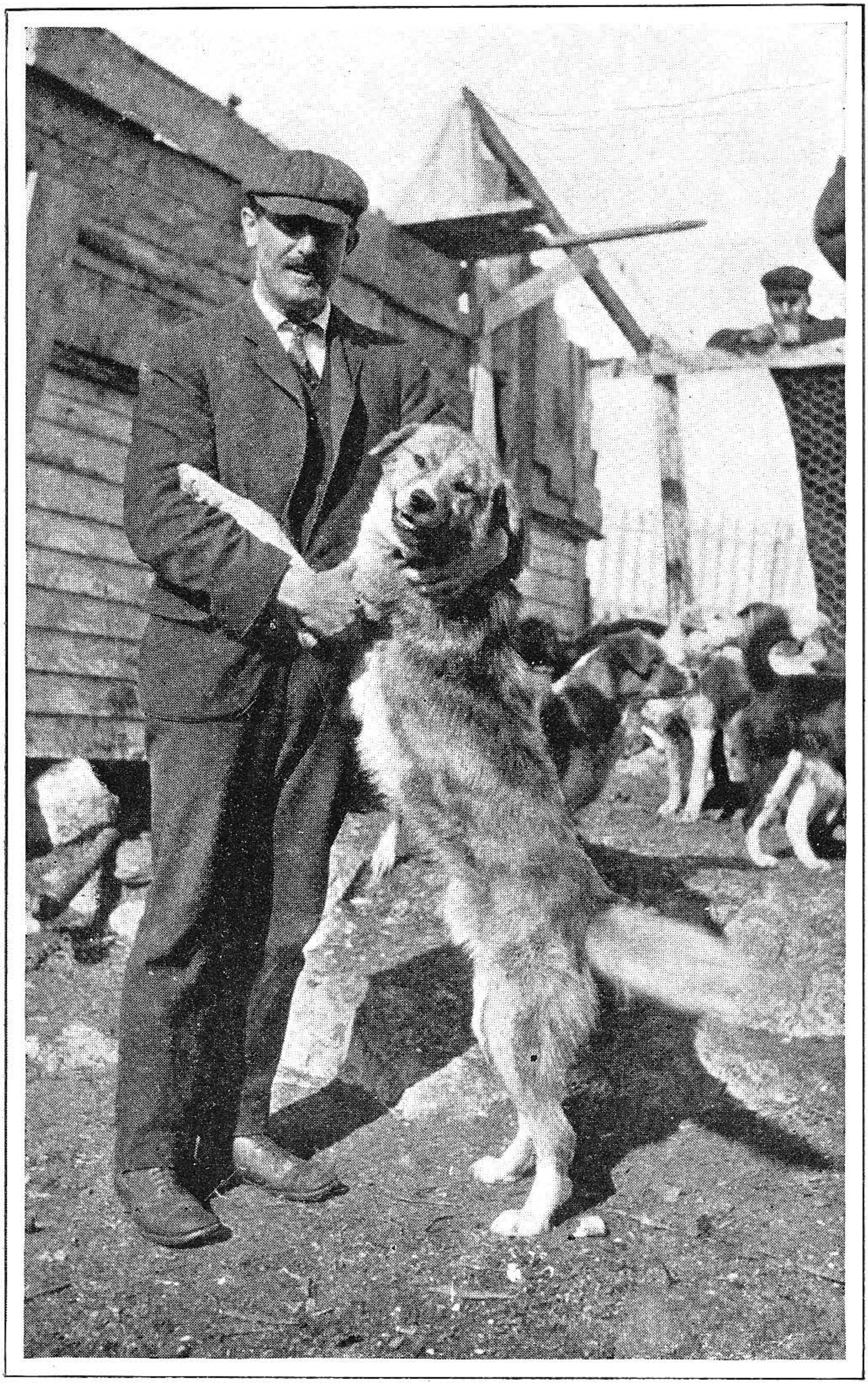
"A bit of a round! It'll be twenty-five miles out of you'se line if it's a yard," broke in the man who would have to go in with him after the deer carcasses, and who had listened to the whole discussion from the background. "But I'm not saying as us can't do it and get home t' same night all the same. What do ye say, doctor? How'll that suit ye?"

"A good deal better than relying on Uncle Mose's cap, Jake. Indeed, that settles it, and try we will whatever comes of it."

It was unfortunate that my colleague and I had decided to leave our usual driver at home on this trip, for he had crossed this very route the year previous with the doctor who had been supplying for me. They had had the unusual opportunity of the company of the one man living, who years before had been engaged with a government survey party in driving a track across from water to water. When we left, we had intended to return by the well-worn coast trail, in which case a driver's room would have been better than his weight on the sledges. We had left him, moreover, our good team of dogs, as there were a number of logs to be hauled

home from the woods, more, indeed, than we could expect to handle before the going broke up.

The result was that of all our last year's team we had only one dog with us, a yellowish brown fellow with queer black striped marking somewhat like a Bengal tiger. They lent to his sinister face the suggestion that he was eternally grinning—an impression intensified by an odd way he had of turning up the corners of his mouth when he caught one's eye. He went by the name of "Brin." I had reared this dog myself and run him his second winter as my leader, though he was then little better than a pup. On several occasions he had displayed unusual instinct for direction. Very soon after his first promotion I had been compelled to run eighteen miles, mostly over sea ice, without seeing any intervening house, in a blizzard of snow and a head wind. It was quite impossible to do any steering, as the driving snow, with no windbreak, made seeing to windward simply out of the question. But the pup had proved his mettle by coming out without a hitch at the door of the house we wished to find, as it marked the spot where the shore trail left the crossneck of land. Thus, of all the cavalcade, he alone had ever seen the trail we



"HE WENT BY THE NAME OF BRIN"

were now proposing to take, and that only once. It had, however, been very bad weather all the way, and they had taken three days from land-wash to land-wash. No one could say, of course, how much Brin's memory could be counted on, but personally I was prepared to bank a good deal on it.

An hour or so more was spent in discussing the way, and indeed I traced out a rough map of the trail according to Harry's ideas of it. Beginning from our present position I drew in ponds, barrens, marshes, drogues, as he called them out, and arranged them in order as he said the road led next to the right or left. It was a weird-looking picture when we finished it, the lines resembling rather the intricacies of an infant's scribbling than a sailor's course from port to port. When, however, it had been doctored by every successive member of the conclave, and the final decisions all averaged and inked in black—for want of an eraser—to hide the earlier efforts, the chart had at least the merit of being picturesque and not lacking in detail.

As soon as it had received the final fiat, "it's as good as us can do," the company began to break up, and we lost no time in turning in, as we would have to be on foot before

daylight if we hoped to "reach over" before dark.

But there was still one more thing to be settled. Mark Perrault, well known for his excellent dogs, didn't want to be left out in the deal. Accordingly he came round to where I sat and whispered, "I was going to get rid of old Snowball some time, doctor, though he's one of the best still on hard travel. I thought maybe as you'se got one of you'se dogs badly mauled you might care to take him along with you. It's nothing but what us ought to do," he protested, as I insisted that he would need Snowball himself for getting out his fire-wood. "But you'll have to keep an eye that he doesn't give you the slip, doctor. He'd come back home a hundred miles if you gave him a chance, anyhow. Yes, if you packed him and sent him by sea in a nailed-up box."

It was no use saying any more, and the grip of the good fellow's hand as I thanked him and said "good-night" was such a night-cap as a king might seek in vain.

The sky was overcast and it was cold and still dark as we collected our dogs next morning for the long run across country. But they were well trained to respond to our call, and though hidden away in every conceiva-

ble corner, or under houses, or often buried in the snow, they were soon rubbing their noses against our hands.

Mark Perrault was up before us, and while we "boiled the kettle" he kept watch over the unlucky Snowball, against whose introduction into their company our own darlings were breathing out threatenings and slaughter. For his better protection Snowball was harnessed nearest the sleigh, that we might the more readily watch over his safety.

Harry and his comrade with a large team of their own that knew that section of the country like a book, made the running all morning, and as we were climbing most of the time it was just as well for our teams that we had only one man on each sledge. Of course we had had to bring our medical stores and reserve food supplies with us. Before leaving every man who knew anything of the route had given us a last word as to the best way to take "Aunt Sally's Grove," and what point to steer for when we came out on "Five Mile Pond," etc., etc. All of this would have been very useful information if only any one of the thousand lakes and groves of trees had been labelled in any way.

Nothing of any particular interest transpired till we broke out from the woods about

ten in the morning by the big white marsh. Indeed nothing well could, for the path was broken for us by our pilots. However, here they had to leave us, and we halted under some large spruce trees to boil a "mug of tea," while we received our final instructions. "It was all easy enough if you know'd it," was the tenor of Harry's last words, with which sentiment I found it easiest to agree.

The main thing that interested me, however, while he was talking, was the fact that there wasn't a trace of any kind of mark on the virgin face of the Hanging Marsh. If I had to find my own way to where to leave it through the surrounding trees, I should certainly have had to go all round the edge, and then perhaps miss it after all. For I had noticed that even the blazes on the trees near the houses which were far more numerous and fresher than any we could hope to find for many miles to come, were so obscured by glitter, that is ice frozen on the tree stems, that had we been without our pilots we should have lost our way a dozen times already. As we sat discussing over a cup of hot tea and a pork bun, that most delectable invention as it won't freeze however cold the day may be, we dragged out the map which we had made

the night before, and found a new merit to it—a powerful sense of humour.

Having pointed out that the direction in which we must steer across the marsh was towards a tall spruce that towered up in solitary state above the rest of the trees, our good-natured guides returned on their tracks. It was already obvious to both of us doctors that we had not the slightest chance of finding the trail. Our only assets were our pocket compasses giving us the general direction, our axes to clear a path when we should get stogged, and a hopeful disposition which never spoiled for troubles till they came along —and Brin.

Whether he knew his importance or not at the moment I never could tell. But a light seemed to dance in his eyes like the demons on Feathertop's magic pipe when he pulled at it—and his queer face assumed a veritable Mephistophelian aspect as he strutted about at the end of his long leading trace. I remember he kept looking back and grinning at us as he waited for the word "go."

"Don't say a word," shouted my chum from the sledge behind. "Let's see if he'd head right across the marsh anyhow."

"All right," I called back, "mum's the word —go!" And we simultaneously cut the lines

holding the sledges back to keep the excited dogs from running away before we were ready.

Prosaic as it may seem to others it was a moment of real excitement to us when Brin led off at a stretch gallop in an absolute line for the tall lone spruce. As we whisked by it I can almost swear he looked back at me and winked, and although twelve fathoms away I fancied I caught an unearthly chuckle from him.

The snow surface on these highlands was splendid and the dogs were in a mood to go. So we just "sat tight" and let them. For the trail led now through wooded country and we were Indians enough from years' experience to notice that we were keeping to the old cut path, in spite of having to circumvent many snags in it. Shortly, however, we struck more open country, and as the trees were now scattered like those in an orchard the path might have been anywhere. We could only watch the dog, who though he had slackened somewhat was still trotting along merrily, and as unconcerned as if he hadn't yet discovered there was any problem existent. Somewhere about ten miles from the marsh in just such a setting we had marked on our map was a forked juniper tree standing by itself in the middle of a long

lead. The top boughs had been stripped from it and the skull and antlers of old caribou fixed in the cleft.

The utter inaccuracy of the map had led me to forget this landmark, and I was more than surprised to hear my chum suddenly shout out, "There she is!"

"There's what?"

"Why, the skull in the tree," he responded.

As we use no reins in order to guide the dogs, we rely entirely on our voices to swing them to the right or left. A good leader obeys instinctively even at top speed without apparently otherwise taking notice. But on this occasion we both thought Brin looked around and laughed. But even if he didn't, we did, for our spirits went up with a bound as we realized we were still all right and another ten miles lay behind us.

A little later we passed the top ridge of the Cloudy Hills, where the going was good, because there were no longer even scrub trees to worry us. Moreover, there could be no doubt of the right direction as there was only one gap through which we could well go.

From the outlet of the gorge we should have the sea some twenty miles below us. But the shadows of evening were already

drawn too close and the sky was still overcast. There seemed to lie between us and our goal nothing but endless miles of rolling forest. It appeared to be mere folly to expect to get through before morning. Yet if we were going to camp at all, now was the time to outspan and get a shelter built while we could see.

How much longer could we trust Brin? He had swung off almost at right angles after emerging from the pass, and was now guiding his followers along the upper edge of the woods. It seemed at last as if he were seeking something and was uncertain where to enter. But he showed no doubt about what to do a minute later, for without even slackening speed he dashed into the forest, and I looked back and caught the eye of my colleague as I saw he also had spotted a half-obliterated blaze on the trunk of a birch to the side of us. Down, down, down, we went, the cut path every now and again obscured by growing saplings or blocked by windfalls which had to be carefully negotiated. But they counted for nothing beside the fact that every minute was shortening the distance and we were obviously still on the track.

Time passes quickly when one is steering a loaded komatik down through woods. You

want all your skill and strength to avoid stumps and snags. Every now and again, even with the best of teams, some dog will turn the wrong side of an obstruction, and the whole team are suddenly brought up "all standing." As a rule it is not a very long matter to haul back the prodigal, and sling him round after the others, though when he finds he is being dragged back he hauls for all he is worth, thinking he is going to get whipped. But the presence of Snowball, a stranger in the team, added a very definite new element of trouble. For a sudden check would bring the dogs together, and they seemed invariably to associate him with the halt which they so greatly resented. The unfortunate Snowball was of course forced to defend himself, and the process of separating the contestants often enough drove several more dogs around tree trunks, so that the fracas had to end by clearing them all out and making an entirely new start.

At the foot of the first range the valley contained a long lake onto which we ran out squarely at right angles. Facing us was a steep bluff, and below the lake seemed to end in a narrow defile through which we guessed the river escaped, and towards which we of course expected to turn. But no such notion

apparently entered Brin's head. He made exactly for the opposite direction and then crossing a narrow portion of the lake, started to climb the hill in front of us. The excellent engineering of this move only became apparent when after a few moments we were once more through a pass and discovered that we were at the head of a second valley that led in precisely the opposite direction. There were no marks of any kind whatever that were visible, and it was now a long while since we had seen any indications that we were following a trail. We had hoped before this at least to see racquet marks of hunters from the opposite coast, but nothing of that kind either was discernible. However, Brin continued to trot on without a pause down the sloping hillside and there was nothing for us to do but "sit tight" and look on.

As we swung round a big drift of snow, presumably over an unusually large boulder, a very fresh fox track ran directly down the hill. Without once looking back Brin jumped right into it, his unquestioning comrades following him only too gladly. The pace at once increased, and it seemed as if we were being made mere fools of, while the dogs had a good time hunting. It was mighty hard

not to "butt in" and tell a "mere dog" which way to go. But then we didn't know which way we did want to go. I looked round, however, to see whether my comrade had noticed the turn of events. "It's a case of walking by faith, I reckon. Do you suppose Brin knows what he's after?" The sound of his name evidently apprized the dog that we were discussing him, for even at the pace at which we were now going, he found time to fling his impish head around and fairly grin in our faces.

I never would have believed that an ordinary fox trail could worry any man so much. But when we were still following that unsociable beast's footsteps after a full mile had elapsed, it became almost impossible not to interfere. For the likelihood that a fox was really heading for the village we were seeking seemed absurd. All of a sudden this deduction was apparently proven correct beyond the possibility of doubt, for we crossed the tracks of a man's snow racquets at right angles to our path. It was too much for any one, and so we halted the dogs, and donning our own racquets, followed the marks each way to see if they gave any clue as to how to proceed. Luckily for us we soon found signs that the man was hunting, for

his trail doubled on itself twice, and we knew he at least was not going in or out of the country.

"What's the best thing to do, John? There's still time to make a camp before dark. That fiend of a dog seems cock-sure of his way. But I don't know if the devil isn't in the beast. Look at his face. He looks possessed, if ever a dog did."

Brin was sitting bolt upright on his haunches and was staring directly at us—for all the world as if he understood exactly what we were saying. As he caught my eye he put his head on one side and actually poked out his tongue. It was surely quite unnecessary to begin to pant just at that moment. But he maintained so inscrutable a mien, without even a blink, that though I half unconsciously picked up my whip as if to teach him to "quit fooling" I couldn't find heart to give him a flick. It was getting late and I felt we really ought to do something at once.

"What do you say to blindfolding him? Perhaps he'll leave this miserable fox track," I suggested.

"I'm for giving him another chance," was the trustful reply, which almost made me think my chum also was laughing at me.

"It seems rather Sunday-school bookish, but if you're in earnest, 'Barkis is willing,'" and I threw myself onto the sledge with a "hist" to the dogs to go just where they jolly well liked. Bothered if they didn't again start off at a trot along that unspeakable fox track. It was with unfeigned gratitude that at last as we came out onto the bed of the river, the fox tracks disappeared into the willows opposite—for the animal himself was certainly not very far distant. It was a big credential on the right side to see the team leave it.

It was for a time a real relief that we proceeded to follow the river. The low banks had allowed the wind to blow the snow away and the resulting good ice surface, together with the drop of the river, made it easy to cover the miles at our leisure. Moreover, we knew the river must lead to the sea some time. Our hopes rose so high that we positively took the time to warm up the kettle, and get a second "mug of tea" for the day. When, however, we opened the tin of pork and beans which we had boiled with the water, we realized we were not as confidant as we thought. For though the under layer was melted, the centre was still a variety of ice-cream that was new to us. Moreover,

when we started, the valley narrowed, and the river bed was blocked with snow with every here and there great chasms that revealed the rushing water beneath. Worse still, the river ended abruptly in a huge lake with at least one large island in it. Nor was there the faintest indication now as to whether we should turn to the north, south, east or west.

It seemed possible, however, to eliminate the east, because we could see across the lake a high range of hills rising. Yet without hesitation Brin headed straight for them. Our only comfort was that there were trees on the sides of them among which we could at least camp, though it was already darker than we cared about.

On—on—on—till at last we came to the woods flanking the lake. The dogs instantly went straight into the forest, and in half a minute were on opposite sides of a dozen trees, as if a comb had been pushed into hair.

"That's the end of it, John. The sooner we get to work and make a shelter for the night the better." And having unlashed my axe, I whipped out my snow-shoes and started to find a dry tree to light the fire with.

John stood ruefully looking at the dogs.

Apparently, he had banked more on Brin than I had, and he said afterwards he felt as if the bottom had fallen out of his faith in everything. The dogs, glad of a rest, lay down where they were and started chewing the icicles out of their fur. Brin, at the end of his longer trace which was stretched to its full length, was nearly hidden by bushes, but I could see he was standing up and looking back as he did when the team slacked and he was accustomed to come back and snap at them. His odd manner influenced me enough to start off in his direction after I had turned over the komatik. To my amazement I found he was standing in a well cut path which ran at an acute angle up the side of the hill. He had tried a short cut into it about ten yards before it opened onto the lake.

There was no trouble after this. Once over the hill we struck the wood path of the Gray Cove men and by 8 P. M. had brought up outside my patient's house. We were able to tell him "what t' sickness was" and also to be of some little service in saving him pain and trouble.

Before turning in I went out to see what the night was and to make sure that Snowball was safely fastened up. For I knew he

would start directly back the moment he got the chance. Everything was all right, however, and the tired dogs were stowed away somewhere asleep. My hand was on the latch of the cottage door as I was about to reënter so as to turn in myself, when something warm and furry rubbed gently against my leg. By the light that streamed out of the open door I found myself looking right down into Brin's eyes. They were asking in as plain English as could be written, "How did I please you to-day, master?" I couldn't help putting my arms around his neck and hugging him. Then we both went off to our beds the happier for it.

Three days later we reached home, and three days more we kept Snowball penned in and fed even more generously than the other dogs. The seventh day after he had left his home we ventured to let him out.

Mark Perrault still sticks to it that Snowball reached home on the seventh evening after we left.

XII

Rube Marvin's Confession

IT was the very jolliest part of the whole year. Snow enough had fallen at Christmas time to fill up every inequality in the countryside, chock to the brim. All the scrub woods and bushes had disappeared, and every troublesome snag had long ago sunk out of sight under the generous white mantle of winter. A sudden thaw for a single night late in January had put a perfect surface on the snow which was already well packed down by nor'westerly gales.

We had been enjoying a long three days' drive with our dogs through the finest part of the country, over the high white hills, crossing the frozen bays on the ice from one wooded island to another, threading our way along the paths cut through the spruce forests, and sweeping down the courses of rivers at a pace that made it no easy matter to avoid the unfrozen rattles and rapids, as the dogs tore along the trail like a pack of hounds in

SEALING : THE HARVEST OF THE WINTER SEA

full view of their quarry, with nothing in the way to stop them.

Night had overtaken us at the head of a beautiful bay where our lumber mill is situated, and the hard physical exercise of the journey had prepared us to enjoy to the full the generous hospitality of the manager's house, which was freely extended both to ourselves and our trusty dogs.

The perfectly glorious sunshine which had continued steadily day after day did not yet fail us, and the simple fare at our humble hospice seemed sweeter with our rude vitality than any feast on earth.

"Have they got the framing of the new schooner finished yet, Walter?" I inquired as we sat at breakfast.

"It's time they had," he answered, "seeing they had all the knees and timbers ready before Christmas, and the keel and deadwood laid by New Year. I reckon there must be something wrong with Rube Marvin. He don't seem to mind if he does or doesn't this three weeks gone—and the boys can't get ahead without he's there to show them what to do."

"What can be wrong with Rube? I should think he had less right to worry than any man in the bay. He ought to make quite a

nice sum out of building the vessel. He isn't ill, is he?"

"He says he isn't anyhow, though his wife says he eats next to nothing, and scarcely sleeps any at nights. Jake Rumford says he thinks it's a touch o' the moon. They had worked a bit by moonlight to get all the knees out before the snow fell."

"What do you think of it yourself, Walter? It will be a bad business if we can't launch her before the men have to leave for the fishery."

"I can't say, doctor. He just seems like a man a mile away all the time, as if he was too far off to take notice of any one."

"Let's go and look at her anyhow, and perhaps I can help Rube some way."

So we donned our snow-shoes and crossed over to the sheltered cove on the shore of which the great white frame of the new schooner was silhouetted against the dark green background of the forest.

"Morning, Jake," I shouted to a man standing away up on one of the deck beams, who had halted, axe in hand, to make out who was approaching. "Good-morning. Where's Rube this morning?"

"Morning," he answered. "Morning. Where's Rube? Why, he was up here a second ago. Perhaps he's in the workshed

there—though us generally works out here fine days."

Following his directions, I turned into the shed, and sure enough, there was Rube standing sheepishly by the bench, only too obviously having gone in to avoid us.

"Good-morning, Rube. You're making a fine job of it."

"I'm glad you think so, doctor," he replied. "I suppose I'm doing my best."

There was such an utter absence of the usual twinkle about his eyes and the happy ring in his voice, and such a general tone of melancholy about him, that I couldn't suppress the retort—"I can't think you are doing anything of the kind to look at you, Rube. What's the matter? Not going to be hung, are you?"

Rube jumped as if he really feared such a thing, but as I could get nothing further out of him I went out and chatted with the rest of the men about the boat. I was at a loss to know how I could help him, for he did not seem anxious to speak of his trouble, though I knew well enough our foreman had something on his mind.

We had organized a big rabbit drive for Saturday afternoon, and a huge bonfire to be held in the woods in the evening, around

which we were all to gather and partake of a feast in the open, prepared for all comers. Rube was crazy about hunting, and every one fully expected him to direct the shooters. But no Rube put in an appearance, and to me his noticeable absence cast quite a gloom over the proceedings. We had a fine tale of "bunnies" by evening, and as jokes were cracked and yarns told around the blazing log fire under the greenwood trees, hot cocoa and hot toasted pork cakes were passed around. Every one seemed just as jolly as sandhoppers. The frolic closed with singing, the voices of the men echoing through the silent forest. But for my part, my thoughts were all the time in Rube Marvin's cottage.

After Sunday evening service, it is often our custom to gather such of the men as care to drop in and have some singing—and the following night there was quite an assemblage. As the men were dispersing and we were saying good-night, one of them touched me on the shoulder and said:

"Can I have a few words with you, doctor, quite in private?"

"Certainly you can," I answered. "I'll get my racquets, and we'll be able to walk off the path. We'll be more alone then."

"Doctor," he began, "if you tells anything you knows is there anything in it for you?"

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I means, doctor, you's a magistrate, isn't you? And if a fellow tells of something done wrong, will them pay him anything for it?"

I had walked to windward, as the men say, while we were talking, and now I stopped suddenly and looked straight in the face of my companion. There I could see written in unmistakable language the expression of greed—so rare among our men, and so hateful, that I shuddered.

He was pawing the snow uneasily now with one foot, and his eyes fell before my gaze.

"Jacob," I said, "if you know of a crime and conceal it, you are guilty of it yourself in man's sight; and if you sell your guilty knowledge merely for private gain, you are doubly guilty in the sight of God—and of all good men, too. Yes, you can sell your soul and your honour, too, if you want to; there are plenty of buyers; but I won't let you do it without thinking of it again. Good-bye. I'm going back to the house." And I left him standing there motionless where he was, till I had turned the corner

of the wood path, and he was no longer in sight.

Nothing further happened in the matter next day, and I tramped around the village from house to house as my business called me, wondering if I should hear more of the affair of the previous night.

The manager of the mill had built on to his house what he was pleased to call "the prophet's chamber," and in this I was wont to close the day alone, making up my note-books and finishing the day's round. The light shining through the windows apprised the people of the fact that I was in, and it was by no means unusual for some of them to avail themselves of the opportunity to come and speak about anything that might be troubling them.

I was glad that no one had come this evening, as I had so many things to occupy my mind, and I was just about to put out the light and "turn in," when a timid knock broke the silence, and in response to my invitation to come in, the door opened and the figure of my informant of the previous evening stood in the doorway.

"Shut the door, Jake, and sit down. I'm quite alone. No. No. Shake hands. You don't know how glad I am you've come out

on top. Thank God for it, if ever you did in your life for anything."

He realized at once that I knew he had won out, for he looked me straight in the face and the beauty of a right purpose beamed out of his eyes so that to me it made the poor little room in which we sat better than a conqueror's palace. Something seemed to be choking the throats of both of us, as we just looked at one another in silence. It was I who found voice first.

"Let's have it, Jake. God be praised, there's nothing we can't get right when He's behind us, as I'm sure He is now."

"Doctor," he began, "it's about Rube Marvin. I knows why he isn't hisself these days. He done a wrong thing two years ago, doctor, and he can't keep it to hisself no longer. He got going to prayers again last fall, and t' preacher at Christmas time seemed to know just what was wrong with all o' us. Leastways them things he preached to we about, just got hold. I've been to see Rube since last night, and he wants to come and tell you all about it, only he can't bring hisself to do it."

"Then you have nothing to say yourself?"

"No, doctor, nothing, unless you or Rube wants me to."

"It's best that way. Let Rube alone, and let whatever he does come from himself and not from us. It will help him afterwards."

As I started out on my rounds next morning I took occasion to pass the new schooner and sing out a greeting to the men.

"All well, I hope, Esau. You'll be ready for the top side planking soon."

"Ready now," he replied cheerily, "but we can't begin without Rube."

"Hasn't Rube shown up this fine morning?"

"Not a sign o' him, doctor. I guess you'll have to fix him up with a dose o' sorts. His nose has been out o' joint this three weeks."

"I'll call round and see if I can set it, Esau. But I'm thinking the cure may take longer than we expect. Meanwhile, get ahead all you can." And I swung off in the direction of Rube's cottage.

As I struck up the pathway from the side of the inlet—I had been obliged to walk on the sea ice owing to the thick trees along the land-wash—I heard the sound of children's voices, and found Rube's three little ones simply revelling in the crisp, dry snow and the bright sunshine streaming through the trees.

"Daddy dorn out," the oldest volunteered as she saw me heading for the front door.

"Where has he gone, dearie?"

"He's dorn in the trees ever so long."

I expected as much and went on into the house to chat with his wife as an explanation for my morning call.

As I tramped back along the edge of the woods and was nearing the Devil's Headland, I heard the crackling of bushes, and suddenly the tall figure of Rube strode out on his snow racquets into the trail ahead of me.

As I looked into his eyes, I could not help smiling at the transparency of these simple men. It was quite superfluous for him to begin without any other word of introduction—"I wants to tell you something, doctor. I wants you to send me to prison for it."

"There's no time like the present, Rube. If you've got anything on your mind the sooner you out with it the better for you."

"It's about the *Silver King*, doctor, what was lost three years ago come September."

There was a long pause during which neither of us spoke. Rube was fighting for his life; I silent, lest I should rob him of the help which I knew would come to him if he

won out alone. It was very cold, and the crisp crackle of the snow, as we strode along on our racquets, was for a full ten minutes the only accompaniment to the laboured breathing of my companion, in whom a contest was raging, ten times as exacting as any physical struggle.

Suddenly he stepped ahead, and facing around, stopped me dead in the path.

"I done it!" he exclaimed almost fiercely. "I hadn't nothing for t' winter, and Downer promised if I did it, he'd give us all t' back debts, and a winter's diet for all o' we as well. He come three times afore I gived in. He were sailing for home t' next day, and threatened he'd take every bit o' grub away with him—and he would, too. He knowed what us had, and that us would be hungry before Christmas, to say nothing o' no butter for e'er a one o' us, and ne'er a tin o' milk for t' baby. And Mary was sick too, then, as you knows, doctor, and ——"

And the great strong man turned away from me, and burying his face in his hands stood there with his broad shoulders heaving, sobbing like a child.

More than once it has been my lot as a surgeon to see a man learn that the trouble of which he had come to know the nature

spelled for him inevitable death—and to see his courage waver, and fail him at the thought of it. I have had to break to a loving wife and fond mother the news that her protector and breadwinner would never come back again till the sea gives up its dead. But this experience was new to me, and somehow hit me harder. Indeed a lump rose in my throat, and I wished with all my heart I might have been spared this experience.

"Rube," I broke in at last, "the best way is to play the man now, and regardless of what it costs, get this matter put right. Let's go to the mill, and you shall give me the whole story on oath. We'll have it properly witnessed, and then we'll send it off for good or ill to the chief of police in St. John's. If the worst comes to the worst, there are plenty of us who would just love to see that Mary and the kids want for nothing while you're away. Come along right away." I put my arm in his, and we swung off at a pace I haven't tried to equal since. We seemed scarcely to touch the snow now, though only a minute ago it had clogged our footsteps like so much glue.

When at last we stopped at the lintel of the "prophet's chamber" there was a flush on

our cheeks and a throb in our pulses rather like that of boys working off superfluous vitality than of a magistrate and his criminal looking for punishment.

"I think we had better have Walter for a witness. It's wiser, seeing he employs the men, that he should know the whole story from the beginning," I said. "Who would you like for a second? It's better to have two."

For a minute he answered nothing, as if he were thinking things over carefully, and then he said suddenly, "Jake Rumford."

It was a strange party that gathered round the tea table that night. The two men to whom I had sent word came straight in from their work, and I had dispatched a message to his wife that I was keeping Rube for supper.

The following is the confession, taken and abridged from the long tale Rube told me:

"It was on Sunday evening, September 14, 19—. Captain Adam Downer came to my house after evening prayers and said he were going to sail from this place after midnight for the winter. He asked me if I had changed my mind, and would I help him to scuttle his schooner, the *Silver King*, and promised if I would do as he told me there

would be no more said about it, as o' course he wouldn't and t' skipper didn't know nothing about it. He said it would only be t' skipper what would have to swear to the protest for t' insurance. He'd never know how 'twas done, and so he'd never be found out, and there'd be no need for me to get into trouble swearing to lies. I remembered then they'd been loading her with rocks the best part o' Friday and Saturday, and my Jimmie had said, 'They's taking in a fine lot o' ballast.' Downer said he'd give we all our old back debts, and a winter's diet besides for me and t' family out of what he'd landed. He said t' skipper didn't know, but he'd emptied every box aboard, and there were nothing now aboard for trading except old packing cases and rocks.

"'Come, Rube,' he says, 'don't be a coward. There's nothing to it. It's better than going hungry. You don't want t' kids to starve, do you?' Then he got up and took his hat and said, 'Well, I must be off and get some one else, if you's going to stand in your own light. I thought you had more spunk.' And then it came in my mind that it had to be done now, and some one 'd surely do it, so them insurance folk would be no worse off if I done it than any one else,

and why not Mary and my kids have t' grub as well as t' next man? And so I said, 'Well here goes.' God forgive me. And Downer says, 'That's right, Rube, I always thought you was no milksop. Just get your auger and come down along o' me.'

"We went on board, unknown to any one, and into the forecastle, where he had taken the ballast deck up. He lit a candle and showed me where to bore some holes in the planking, and I bored about a dozen, till there were only a shell left on the outside. Then us put back t' planking and roused all hands to get the anchor.

"It were a lovely fine night in harbour; there were no wind, and to get outside t' heads us had to tow the old *Silver King* in t' dory. Downer kept saying, 'There'll be lots o' wind outside, boys. Give her t' wood-sails.'

"It were pitch dark and us couldn't see hardly what was happening, but us found a nasty cross lop running what made it terrible hard rowing; then jest as we was getting tired of it, something seemed all of a sudden to loom up under our lea, and us knowed we'd drifted with the southern tide in under the White Bear Cliffs. You knows them cliffs, doctor, and you knows what them is.

Pull as us liked us couldn't even keep her head off shore. The skipper he was cursing Downer up and down deck for being such a ——— fool for coming out on a night like this, and swearing he'd lose him every cent of insurance if ever he lived to get alongside a magistrate.

"Meanwhile the roll of the sea on the rocks was making a cruel noise and us could see the white of the breakers as they rose against the cliffs. Of course t' skipper never looks to leave t' deck, but even now the *Silver King* were beginning to roll heavy in the back-bound from the rocks. Us could hear him cursing Downer and telling he to get over in the boat and help save t' ship. But Downer were far too afeared to do anything, and at last t' skipper shouted to us he'd come in t' boat and do it himself, and give we a hand.

"As us come along for him the schooner 'd lift on t' swell as it rushed in on the cliffs, and the back-bound would take her and nigh roll her on her beam ends. Downer were praying hard for God to save her, for he were a pious man most times, but he had no stomach for rough water, and he'd 'a' been drowned sure if the *Silver King* had struck. Yet I dunno, but I reckon Downer's

prayers were answered somehow. For what we couldn't do for she, t' old schooner done all of a sudden for herself, and she come walking off again after we'd scraped along by the Devil's Headland as if she'd just been playing wi' we afore.

"There were a hatful o' wind now and t' schooner were slipping along well. Downer had said he'd take the watch forward, while t' skipper steered and us got a nap after t' night's work.

"It must have been just about coming daylight, though it seemed as if us had only just turned in, when some one touched me on the shoulder quiet-like, and I saw Downer leaning over me.

"'It's all ready now, Rube,' he said; 'us is in near about to Roaring Meg wi' a fair wind in for Frenchman's Light. T' skipper's away aft at t' helm, and I've got the two half hundred weights way out along her bowsprit, and a line fast. I'm a-going to jerk 'em off so they'll hit her bow hard, and then I shall shout to the skipper for striking a piece of ice. You go at once and push out the rest o' them broken holes forward, and then I'll call to you to know if there's any harm done. You'll just shout out, "She's stove in forward and sinking," and then you'll run and tell the

skipper she's started a couple o' butts forward. Only give her time to get down by the head a bit before he can come and see for hisself.'

"I was more than half minded then and there to up and swear at him for a devil that he was. 'Deed Downer saw plain enough I was nearly ready to go back on my word, and he just hissed into my ear, 'There's the holes that you bored in her now, Rube. If you goes back on me now I swear to God I'll have you in jail for trying to sink my ship. And I guess they'll listen to me, for I've got your bit what fits them holes stowed away feared I might want it.'

"If I'd had a gun, I believe I'd 'a' shot him then and there, for I seed I'd been fairly trapped. Then I began to think o' home and I sort o' half give way. I reckon Downer must 'a' seen that, for he says, 'What'll your woman do, and you in jail all winter, and she nothing in the house?' You remembers Levi's three kids, doctor, don't you, what all died that winter he were in trouble for breaking into a vessel? Well then Downer went on calling me a coward, and saying I was false to my word. 'Do you think they'll take your word or mine?' he

said, till I just got up and knocked out the holes afore he was up the companion ladder.

"In a minute or two there were a huge crash agin her bow and I heard the skipper call out, 'What's that?' 'You've struck a pan o' ice,' shouted Downer, 'and I reckon you've stove in a plank. I'll rouse t' hands.' With that he jumped below, and seeing the water was already up to the flooring forrard and well above t' auger holes, he rushes up hisself and shouts, 'She's a-sinkin'. Get a boat out and let us save what we can.' The old skipper knew Downer for a coward and come forrard and peered over the fore-hatch hisself, and sees me with a hurricane lantern, peering round. 'Is it really bad with her, Rube? I wouldn't believe that ole vermin if he swore by all the saints, good and bad.' 'Skipper,' I says, 't' boards is afloat already as you can see, and there's three feet o' water over t' leak. There's no man living able to save her unless t' pumps does.' 'Get up at 'em, ——— ye!' he replied. 'And Dick, too. I guess I'll stay and see if I can do anything below here myself.' And down he comes just as if he suspected something.

"I was glad enough to slink off up the nor'-west passage. Dick mounted t' pump handle

in less time than I cared about, and began pumping hard. I were afraid he might gain enough on t' water to give the ol' man below a chance to learn the real truth. But pump as hard as he liked, not a drop of water did he get. I soon guessed Downer had fixed the pumps—*in case of accidents!*

"Seeing there were no good doing anything, while Dick tried to start the pumps with a bucket or two of water, I went forrard to peep into the fo'castle. There were the skipper, sure enough, lying on the settle and trying to reach down into the water to find out the rights o' things. But I knowed he were too late by the way he were swearing, and already the water was nigh up to the locker tops, and the vessel sinking head foremost.

"As soon as Downer saw the skipper coming aft, he started shouting, 'For God's sake, help us to save the freight. I'm a ruined man, if us can't save t' goods.' And he had already lugged up a couple of boxes which he left full, as if every old case were full too—and some of 'em did have a nice lot o' rocks in.

"The skipper, he said nothing, but he put the helm hard up and headed in for t' bight. 'Skipper,' says Downer, 'seeing it'll all be

lost, if you'll put her head up in the wind and let me save a few things, I'll give you half when we get on shore.' But the skipper didn't answer one way or t' other, but just held her right on for the headland. It did seem a *terrible* long time, but t' *Silver King* just wouldn't sink. A plucky ol' craft she'd been, and it seemed as if she just wasn't goin' to be killed. And I believe now she'd 'a' held on and got in to the beach and told her own tale if it hadn't been for that same ol' cross swell near t' land. For us could see t' skipper meant holding on to her till her sank, and no one dare even look up at t' boat without his leave.

"That were the worst time I ever saw—them hours doing nothing. Downer were praying. The dawn were breaking fast, and I could see his lips a-moving to his-self. For he daren't pray the kind o' prayer he were praying out loud for fear t' skipper'd hear un. And he were far too scairt anyhow, to move any farther than he had to from the boat. Anyhow, it got answered again somehow all right, for the very first roll that took the *Silver King* sent her lurching right over to starboard, and she never recovered herself one bit. Slowly and steadily she keeled over. There wasn't e'er

a kick in her, and it were plain enough that it were her death struggle.

"'——— her for a crinker!' shouted t' skipper. 'If her hadn't such a belly full I'd ha' saved her even now,' and he flung t' tiller from him as if it had been a serpent.

"It was too late, however. Her big mainsail were under water, and there were no chance now even to get below to save anything. Lucky for him, t' skipper had sent Dick to get his kit bag for him in t' boat before and lucky for us all he saw Downer sneaking into t' boat. He yelled to Dick, just in t' nick o' time to follow him. For I really believe he'd a cut t' painter and let her go fear she'll be dragged down with the schooner and he be damned forever and ever as he knew he ought to be. It's likely enough, too, he never would have got back to we, if he had once cut her adrift. But thank God he didn't, or I'd 'a' been in hell now too, having ne'er a chance for repentance."

At this point Rube suddenly stopped and there was a dead silence in the room—broken only by the scratch of my pen as I continued to take down his story. The thought of the awful peril he had run seemed to have robbed him temporarily of his power of speech. He sat for a minute or two with

his head buried in his hands. Then apparently without even noticing the pause, he went on again.

"Well, t' skipper just wouldn't let t' boat leave the ol' *Silver King*. 'Stand by,' was his orders, and stand by us had to.

"There seemed no good any longer standing by t' ol' schooner. It was only foolishness, though I were no longer afraid, knowing us could make t' land in t' boat any time we liked. But it did seem nonsense to be holding on if us were only just going to watch her go down. All of a sudden I guessed it. The port rail were going up and up and up, and t' starboard were already under water. Already we were almost climbing up her side, and I knowed if she didn't go down in a minute or two, the place where she'd been hit 'ud be out o' water. T' skipper knowed it too, I reckon, and all the time he were just enjoying seeing the fright Downer were in anyhow, and keeping it up as long as he could, while he were grinning to hisself that he'd find out yet what had done the damage to any craft in his care. I knowed it, for I could fair see him a-swearing under his big beard.

"'Let go the boat, Rube,' the skipper called at last. I thought then even he were forced

to leave her, for any moment she might dive down with all them rocks in her, and then she'd surely suck us all down with her. But no such t'ing.

"'All hands in the boat,' he says. 'You and Rube take the oars and stand by till I calls you.' Now he was actually sitting on the side of the vessel, by the fore channel plates, holding on to the lanyards. The swell was a-lapping up over her and over him every now and again, but he seemed to take no notice that he was getting wet. Dick leant forrard and whispered to me, 'The ol' man's got a devil, I reckon, or he wouldn't be fooling any longer round this ol' bunch o' boards. And what's more the devil'll get him sure enough if he stays many minutes longer.' But all of a sudden again the truth of it came to my mind. The skipper had guessed it long ago: the ol' schooner couldn't sink for the air bottled up in her, and so long as it didn't come on to blow, she'd float about forever like a murdered corpse on the water. And what's more, her 'ud show every one where she'd been killed.

"It was dawn now, and bitter cold and shivery, when suddenly Downer called out, 'There's a schooner coming out of the bight. Seems to me she's a-coming right for us.'

The skipper just looked round for a second. 'Maybe she is,' he said, and then he glued his eyes again on the schooner's forefoot which every now and then came nearly out of water on the swell. Not a catspaw of air now, only the swell of the sea. And it was so silent, I thought every now and again I could catch the click of the oars of the boat that we guessed was towing the schooner away off from under the heads of the cliffs, just as we did in the night.

"Once more the sweat nearly came out on me, for I thought that schooner 'ud surely be out to us and find out all about it. Downer were sitting in the stern. He looked the colour o' mud now, and he were praying hard to hisself again, and I know for what. It did me good to see him taking it so ill, for though I knowed I was as bad myself I just hated him, and hated him for driving me into it. And I knowed, too, even if us wasn't found out and was drowned, the devil would only be getting what was due to he.

"All this time the schooner were getting nearer. Us could plainly make her out now, heading right for us. At last Downer couldn't stand it no longer. 'For God's sake, skipper,' he kind o' prayed, 'let's be going.' There were no spunk left in him, and his

voice sounded more like a dog's whine, though it were much like his reg'lar prayer-meeting voice.

"Old Abe were standing up high on t' schooner's side, and, looking round right into Downer's face—'What's t' hurry?' he answered. 'She's been a good ship all her life long. She's served me well in many a tight corner, and I ain't a-goin' now to heave off and let her die alone. I'm a-going to stand by and see her through the last fight. Guess I shan't just want to go out alone myself when I gets my anchors up for the last time. No, no, there's no hurry, *Mister* Downer. You and me 'll get safely back to land, don't you have no fear of *that*,' and he looked at Downer as if he meant a good bit more'n that.

"The light were only duckish yet, and it made old Abe loom up right large, standing straight up there on the schooner's bilge. It seemed almost as if he was t' preacher at t' meeting speaking, and us sitting there in t' pews a-listening. No one said nothing. 'Deed it was for all the world like a prayer-meeting when the skipper hisself began to hum a line o' one o' the hymns us sings about—'I hopes to meet my Pilot face to face, when I puts out to sea.' I thought Downer were going out of his mind

now. He fair forgot hisself altogether like he done once at our revival, only this time he were shouting to t' skipper instead of to t' Lord. He started calling out, 'Why doesn't she sink? For God's sake, Abe, why doesn't she sink? Let's get away from her. I knows I shall die if I stays here any longer. I can't stand it. I can't stand it. You shall have all I owns if you'll only come.'

"'Can't you think why she won't sink, Mister Downer?' Abe went on that slowly you'd think he were just beginning a sermon. 'Can't you guess why she won't sink?' Downer didn't answer, so the skipper did it for him. 'No, it ain't just cause the devil is in her,' he said, 'though I'm not saying there's not been enough devils in her to float her on a sea o' fire—on times,' he added. 'No, it's because she's got air in her bilge what can't get out. *That's* what's making her forefoot stick up that way out of water. I thought myself maybe it was just old Nick a-playin' with her at first, and I wouldn't wonder now if he was sorry to have such a trophy lost sight on—fear he might need it one o' these days just for a witness against people.'

"Downer's jaw dropped like at a wake when the cloth comes off t' corpse's head, and he pulled hisself together once more.

"'We'll have to let it out, Abe. We'll have to let it out. She'll be a danger to the other schooners if us leaves her floating here.'

"'Yes, maybe she will,' he said, but that slowly that I knowed well enough what he meant, that if any of 'em saw how easy it was to lose a schooner they'd likely do it themselves. Just then Downer suddenly looked up at the heads again, and there us could see a catspaw o' wind off the land and the sails of the strange schooner just bellying out and airing her aloft slowly straight towards us. Downer took it all in at a glance. She'd be alongside us in a few minutes if the breeze held on.

"'Let's be through with it at once, Abe. It needn't take Rube two seconds to make a hole in the bilge. Here's the axe. And for God's sake, let's be quick, or I'll be dead o' cold, I knows I will.'

"But the skipper was not through with his sermon, and went on just as if he hadn't heard him.

"'Yes, she'd be a danger to some on 'em, sure enough. Lead us not into temptation, t' ol' Book says. So I reckon us won't leave no stumbling-block in t' way o' the least on 'em.'

"I dunno whether Downer seed what he

were driving at, but to help him out the skipper added, 'Money be a shocking deceitful thing and there's no knowing what us poor creatures won't do to get it.' And then at last, seeing it was that cold and wet, he come slowly down and got into t' boat. For t' holes was now well out of water and t' white splinters was sticking out on t' outside.'

"T' strange schooner were drawing nearer quite quickly now, and Downer couldn't stand it no longer. So grabbing the axe hisself, he ran forrard in the boat and climbed out on the ol' schooner's side, the devil o' fear sitting on his back. No one else said anything. Us just stayed as us was, while he started chopping at the planking, wild like. He didn't seem to mind what he hit so long as he got through, and he'd hardly begun before he hit an iron bolt and nearly spoilt his axe blade. My, he looked queer up there hacking and hacking like a wild man and as if his life depended on it. What's more, t' air in her made her something like a sounding box, and the noise must surely have reached the hilltops, much more the schooner coming towards us. Bang, bang, bang, went the axe. Meanwhile the skipper got into the boat and stood up in the stern with the steering oar in his hand, just waiting.

"'Keep her close, boys,' he said; 'maybe she'll go down sudden when the fool gets through her planking.'

"I guessed then he didn't know I'd had any hand in it, and I was sure later, when just as there were a gurgle kind o' explosion o' air, and Downer made a rush for the boat, I heard him say half to hisself, 'Maybe it's as well to let it go at that—"Vengeance is mine, I will repay."' For the skipper were as good at t' Bible as he were at swearin'.

"And so the ol' ship went down and us rowed in for the heads. The schooner passed us by without hardly noticing us, except one hand on the deck at the wheel waved his hand to we. Maybe they took us for a boat out fishing—maybe them didn't.

"That's all, doctor, 'cos soon as us got into harbour, Downer just told his story and nobody else said nothing. No, I dunno if he ever got his insurance. Most likely he did. The skipper could only have got hisself into trouble by saying anything, for he had nothing to show. He knowed nothing more than that he'd seen holes in her bow with the splinters on the outside, and the jury wouldn't care about that. It 'ud never have put Downer in jail, and so he let it go at that.

"No, I never got one cent or one cake o'

bread. Downer cursed me for a fool as soon as I put foot on shore. He swore he'd never give me a cent, and if I said a word about it, it would be me what they'd send to jail for boring the holes. I couldn't have swallowed a bite of it anyhow, and it would have poisoned my family, I thought. So I just let it go at that. I had come to myself partly with the morning light, but I daren't go and tell any one, and it has been worse than being dead ever since. I knowed I ought to be in jail, and yet I was afraid it would kill my wife and starve the children if I told. At last I couldn't keep it up no longer. It strangled me by nights, and I couldn't work anyhow by day. So I just telled Jake here. And a bit later he got me to go to prayers with him one morning. That were the end of it, doctor. I couldn't keep it in no longer, and that's all there is to it. It were like a great, awful pack on my back everywhere I went—I were never a minute free from it. I reckon every one must know, and I must take t' punishment to get peace in my soul again. So I come to tell you, and now you knows it all."

There was a pause for a moment; and then I said:

"You've told me a lot of details, Rube.

Do you remember it so well that you want to swear to it all?"

"I remembers every bit as if it was burnt into me," he answered. "Is that how I told it you, Jake?"

"Nigh as I can remember it's word for word, Rube."

"You understand I must send this on to St. John's, once you sign it, and that means you will be arrested and sent to prison, possibly next spring?"

"Yes, I understands it, and I'll be glad of it, too. I be a happy man once more."

I read over to him the strange tale he had told me, and then both he and Jake signed it, after taking an oath that the statement was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And there for the time the matter ended.

Rube went back to his work an absolutely new man. The crew of the new vessel didn't know what to make of it. Early and late he kept them at it, and she grew so fast that all doubts as to her being ready for spring were soon things of the past. The next time I went down to Rube's little cottage, his good wife told me he almost beat the baby sleeping now, and if it weren't that she hauled him

out of bed in the morning to go to work she reckoned he'd sleep the clock round.

But meantime the big envelope with the "story" in it was winging its way around our barren coast from dog train to dog train, and ever getting nearer the dread courts of the judges whose fiat would come down to us on the first mail steamer after the sea opened up, and would be pregnant with such big issues for poor Rube and his family. Knowing as I did their desire in St. John's to temper justice with mercy, I had ventured to attach an appendix of my own, humbly praying that the voluntary confession, the man's otherwise clean record and sterling character, the dire results to his innocent family if he were deported before the fishing season, might all be taken into account and the warrant for his arrest delayed until the fall at least.

The arrival of the first mail steamer is always a matter of importance. One may almost say the whole settlement runs riot with excitement. But it certainly was if possible heightened this spring to me when from among my letters there fell out a long, solemn-looking, blue envelope, stamped with the royal crest and official insignia of the Supreme Court of Justice. With almost

trembling fingers I tore it open, and then to my joy I found that my petition was granted, and Rube was not to be sent up with the witnesses for the trial of Mr. Downer on the charge of barratry, till the following October. This would give him a chance to get the season's fishing for his family.

The case came on in due time. Downer was sent to prison for two years, Rube for one. But when I was passing through the next spring on my way north, just as the fishing began once more, a petition we presented to His Excellency the Governor for the King's pardon for Rube was successful. I had the infinite joy of carrying the news to him in the penitentiary myself. I found him in excellent spirits and perfect health, and as I shipped him as a hand on my steamer the moment he stepped out of prison, and as I walked down the street with him myself to the boat, he felt the coming out into the world again less than, alas, many a poor fellow does. He has been one of my best friends and helpers from that day to this, and to-day I know of no man living on our long coast whom I love more, whether he be in broadcloth or fustian, than my ever happy and optimistic colleague, Reuben Marvin.

XIII

"The Spars of the Rose of Torridge"

MALCOLM ENGLISH was a Scotchman in spite of his name—at least he had potentially come over from that country in the loins of his grandfather, who seventy years back had served the great Hudson Bay Fur Trading Company as a cooper for the salmon and seal oil. It must be remembered, however, that the one or two carefully preserved letters which the good man had received after first settling on the coast bore the superscription of Malcolm MacIntosh. But when you are the northernmost white man and live entirely among Esquimos, what reason is there to be fighting for a pesky soubriquet just because it chances to label one's grandfather, especially when it happens to be as difficult to spell as it is impossible to pronounce. The ciphering on the old letters meant nothing anyhow to the present Malcolm, for he had "no learning." He was a modest, retiring fellow, and to all his world he was just plain "Malcolm English."

When I first met him he had just come out

"OUR HOSPITAL STEAMER HAD JUST DROPPED HER ANCHOR"

of one of the long northern Labrador fjords, at the bottom of which he lived. He was on his way to barter some fur for food supplies with the schooner-men of a small fleet of southern fishing vessels.

Our hospital steamer had just dropped her anchor in the midst of these craft and the watch on deck had at once called my attention to a queer looking boat which was approaching them. She was low and flat, evidently built for the bay only. But it was the speed with which she was advancing that first gained our attention. Our curiosity was greatly increased when our glasses revealed a girl standing up steering, while two more were each stoutly pulling a pair of sculls in perfect time with a tall man's rowing stroke. Naturally we were at once eager to know more about them.

An invitation issued by the mate, though conveyed in his usual unconventional manner through a megaphone from the quarter-deck, was successful in bringing the strangers alongside and aboard, where a few minutes' explanation as to who we were soon served to put them entirely at their ease. The natural grace of these tall, splendidly set up young women was something to remember. Though their home-made, simple dress was an odd

contrast to ours, they were just as much at home among us strangers as if they had studied deportment in a New York finishing school. Moreover the unaffected gentlemanliness of their big clean-cut father gave him an atmosphere of superiority with which no veneer of civilization can compare.

He had only brought in his "nonny bag" a couple of red foxes and an otter skin to barter. They were all he had been able to "hold" until the fishermen who had befriended him before could get down north through the ice, though he well knew they would trade with him out of their supplies, flour, molasses and pork, at less than half the cost he could get those necessities of life from any of the trading posts. As Malcolm's home proved to be "'way back" up the bay, and as it was late before his trading was satisfactorily accomplished, we persuaded "all hands" to stay for the evening and tell us yarns of their isolated life "down north." The evening ended with some singing and the simplest of simple services. The complete absence of any attempt to hide their delight became to us all the more enjoyable when we understood that not one of our new friends could either read or write. They were familiar, however, with most of the hymns and the

transparent satisfaction which they found just in the singing of them was a real lesson for us in the philosophy of the sources of happiness.

It was not a great effort, at their earnest request, to run up the bay in the morning and visit the log cottage, which served them for a salmon fishing station in summer, for trapping in winter, and for sealing in spring. Their mother had "gone before" and there were no boys, so the girls took naturally to their share of all these occupations. I very much doubt if anywhere there could be found a more simple, wholesome and charming family. Nor was this due entirely to the setting of their life, for men can be slaves to self-indulgence in squalid surroundings as well as in luxurious palaces. But the simple piety of this little home made us literally take our hats off.

After the inevitable cup of tea and a visit around the house, we went up to the trout nets, set in the fjord from points of vantage. Each fleet of nets was watched over in friendly rivalry by one of the girls. Though one fleet was set from the face of a sheer overhanging cliff, and could only be approached by boat, we managed in the wake of one of the girls to scramble up above

it, and there lying out on our faces we could see fathoms down over the edge into the clear water below. Even as we watched, several large sea trout came swimming lazily along, and disdaining to swim under or jump over the barrier, they continued to butt straight into the nets, till having succeeded in getting their heads into the meshes as far as their gills, they were unable to get out, and so lay there kicking and panting until their captors should come after them. Our friend, owing to his Scotch stock, had some knowledge of agriculture, and by the side of his house was a small garden in which he had some nice heads of lettuce in addition to a few straggling cabbage and turnip plants.

Moreover we could not help noticing, even in our short walk, how few things escaped the girls' observant eyes. They knew, though by names of their own coining, the birds, the beasts, the flowers. The very marshes held friends for them in their abundant lichens and mosses; while the native blueberry, red cranberry, yellow cloudberry, black teaberry and white maidenhair berry formed an orchard prepared for them by nature which appeared to them none the less generous because it offered none of the more luscious southern fruits of which they knew nothing. The simple jams

served at tea were made from the arctic cranberry, picked in May, after it had been sweetened by a long winter under the snow. This with some yellow "bake-apple" or "cloudberry" jelly, made from the new crop which had just been gathered, left our kindly hosts no cause to apologize for the lack of anything.

The same attractive simplicity characterized everything about them. They possessed no spring hats, no rings, no earrings, no rich brocades, no frills of any kind—and yet there seemed nothing lacking. Their hair, the sole covering of their heads that they either wore or needed, could not have been improved by either puffs or curls culled from other people. There was in everything an entire absence of that coarseness which the environment of "mean streets" is so apt to engender. Indeed they seemed in every respect like a breeze fresh from unspoiled nature, a genuine product of their simple life.

The pride with which we were shown the dogs' house, the store, the new splitting stage covered with boards, sawn by the girls themselves with their large pit-saw, the sledges, and indeed all the winter outfit, left us impressed with the fact that contentment is, after all, a greater asset than riches, and we

felt almost like envying our new-found friends their quiet life in the bay. They would not let us leave them at night till we had had together again a word from "the old book," and also sung several of the hymns with the tunes of which they were familiar.

We had noticed in the cottage a lamentable absence of pictures, due to the complete isolation. They had picture frames hung up, made out of birch and ornamented by elaborate whittling. Also some made of smoked deerskin strips ornamented with coloured beads, but all pathetically empty. The delight afforded by the gift of some old illustrated papers with a few of the Christmas coloured inserts was in itself a reward for our journey. These simple gifts were such an obvious addition to the brightness of the rooms that the ruling passion, so manifest in our northern folk, namely their beautiful home love, simply dissipated any remaining reserve. "You isn't going to give us them, is you, doctor?" "Not really, is you, though?" was a chorus rather than a monologue. It made us almost afraid even to suggest that they might like to trade for a few simple household devices of civilization that we wished they could have.

At last it was time to leave, and as we steamed out of the bay we realized that there are sermons in other things besides pulpits and stones.

A couple of years passed away and our hospital steamer was again lying at anchor off the northern hospital. The season was late and much floe ice was still around, while the snow had by no means gone from the land. For the sake of the work of this station, which is with the fishing schooners that come down for the cod fishery, the hospital is placed among a group of islands lying well out in the Atlantic. Here, owing to the extreme coldness of the polar current, the land offers nothing but barren rocks, with the result that early in the season before the return of the summer fishermen has wakened it up into something like activity, the environment is about as depressing as one can easily imagine.

The sound of some one shooting from the shore roused me one morning from my reveries as I sat in the chart room. As I arose to go out, the deck hand announced that a man on the rocks was beckoning, and asked my permission to take away the jolly-boat and bring him aboard. "Certainly, Abe, go off

at once," for indeed I was glad enough to find another human being moving around. Soon a tall, familiar, yet unfamiliar, figure climbed over the rail, and after looking at me a moment with a twinkle in his eye, said, "I see you's forgotten me, doctor; it's Malcolm English, whom you came over to see two years ago in Tikkertane Bay."

"Shake hands," I replied. "I remember you now as if it were yesterday. Whatever are you doing up here? What induced you to leave home, and where are your girls?"

"It's a long story," he answered, somewhat wearily, "and that's just what I come over here to tell you, doctor."

"Come right in, Malcolm; you found me idle and I will be just delighted if I can be of any service to you."

"No thanks, I don't smoke," he said as I pushed him the tobacco jar. "I had to give it up for want of tobacco, and I can't afford to learn to want it now. Well, first of all, doctor, I t'ink you knows that there were no chance to get ahead down where we lived in Tikkertane Bay. You couldn't get any cash for anything ever, and so us never could put anything by. There is only me to fend for the three maids, and so I got to t'inking I would like to come where perhaps we might

get some money. T'ings was terribly dear down there too, and it didn't matter how much us bought we was always just a bit in debt to the store. You knows Captain Abe Niccols of the *Quickstep?* Well, one day he said I might get a chance with Mr. Flashman at Wild Cove, who wanted some one to mind his rooms in the winter. So he wrote him a letter for us, and sure enough he said if us would come up to the cove, he would give us our living and forty dollars for t' winter, so long as we would mend his nets, and boats, and gear, and watch his place and paint everything up ready for the fishery. We could trap in the winter as well if we liked, and if we would sign on for a year, he would fit us out and take our fish next summer as well. So Uncle Abe brought us up in t' schooner last fall, and us has been working for Mr. Flashman ever since."

"Well, what's the matter? Do you want a passage down again with all the money you have made?" Malcolm noticed at once an odd ring in my voice, and looked up sharply to see what I meant by it.

"Money!" he said. "Money! Well, that's just the trouble. It's eighteen months now and us has worn out all our things and us has no money yet. Mr. Flashman has just

come back yesterday for t' summer, and he says again, 'There's no cash coming to you, boy, this year. Your winter's diet has swallowed up all that.' He wouldn't listen to nothing I could say, and threatened to drive me and the girls right out-of-doors if I said any more about it. Then there's worse than that, doctor. There's men drinking there all the while, and it's bad enough to see the goings on. For the poor fellows soon gets so they doesn't know what they's doing, and then they just parts with the fish that they ought to be carrying to their women folks at home. Then I am terribly feared for my girls, doctor. There's been several fisher girls round there drunk since t' big schooner come down, and I seed one poor creature lying out there on the hillside as I crossed over to see you. It means no good for them poor things, and us wants to go back down to our home again."

"It's far and away the best thing you can do, Malcolm. I never yet knew any one get rich out of Flashman. I wish you had asked me about it before you came up at all. It might have saved you this. But, of course, you couldn't do that without any mail service. How are you going to get back?"

"That's the trouble; us hasn't got nothing

left. Captain Abe could call in for us in t' schooner if he knowed, but he doesn't call in nowhere going down in the spring if he can help it, fearing some one might get down before him and get his trap berth."

"You say Flashman won't pay you anything for the winter; perhaps there is some way to make him. Let's see what you have done all winter."

"Well, t' girls mended t' nets, and t' twine, and sails, and cleared up t' rooms, and helped me fit out the stages and fix up t' boats. Them is almost as handy with an axe as with a needle. We got everything just ready for Mr. Flashman's men to go right to work the day they come down. And yet he says there is nothing coming to us."

"Did you have any visitors in the winter who hadn't any food of their own?"

"Well, there is always one or two, doctor, and maybe there was more than usual this winter. But what can you do, doctor? You can't see folk go hungry."

I had been listening as a magistrate, though I didn't think he knew I was a magistrate. However, I was certain from the nature of the man that he had not come for help by physical force. But after all, I had

the power of a justice of the peace, and even if there wasn't any one in Labrador who could try civil cases, I might find some loop-hole to help out. But this last information seemed a mighty weak spot. Neither he nor his daughter could figure. With his frank nature, and what I might call his "uncivilized" sensitiveness for truth in the smallest matters, he insisted, "Maybe I used a bit more molasses and flour than if I had been alone all winter. There was nothing said in the agreement about us giving a meal to them as might come along, and o' course I doesn't want to rob Mr. Flashman." But even he felt sure that twenty dollars would pay for what he might have had more than his allowance, as there were few folk that came off to the island, since it wasn't near the komatik track. There certainly should be twenty dollars coming to them for their winter's work.

"Is there nothing else, Malcolm, that you can think of?"

"Yes, doctor; there be a few coals that had been left over since the time when there was a steam launch. There is no wood out on t' island, and us couldn't get through t' slob ice to go in t' bay afore us had to be painting and fixing t' boats. Mr. Flashman

agreed to find us wood, but there wasn't enough to last out, and so us had to use a bit of coal or perish."

It was clearly a more difficult matter to decide than I had hoped. I knew I had heard every word of the truth. I knew the family were destitute, if Malcolm would confess it. I knew there was no other course possible than to get them straight back home. But how to find the money to renew their nets, boats and outfit, to keep them from starving when they got there, I couldn't see, for there was nothing left after two years. If law and equity were synonymous I could manage it easily. For then I should have taken my crew down and helped my poor friends to the full amount promised them out of Flashman's store. But even if there were a written agreement Malcolm had no copy; and probably as he was illiterate there never was one. I had more than once given judgment where only verbal agreements had been made. Indeed, being a surgeon and not a lawyer, and having no knowledge of precedents, the deck of the vessel was always a court of equity rather than of law. In spite of which, hitherto its working has been more rapid, less expensive and I think as satisfactory, so far as we had found, as that

in more ornate and conventional surroundings.

But Flashman had the right, and undoubtedly would use it, to appeal from any decision I might make. We had been at issue more than once before, and I had neither time nor desire for mere recrimination, as our aim is to be remedial, and not retributive. An appeal meant no possible trial until next winter, and then neither Malcolm nor I could by any chance be there to proceed with the case. It was a hard problem, and I sat chewing my pencil, while Malcolm, who in spite of his statement couldn't resist filling and lighting the new pipe I had pushed over to him, smoked in silence. "Isn't there anything else you can think of at all? Haven't you anything left of your own?"

"Well, doctor, I thought I had; there's them two pitch pine spars; I reckon them's worth a hundred dollars, and I 'lows I ought to have something for saving them."

"Tell me about them."

"Well, doctor, t' winter before last there was a large brigantine from England called t' *Rose of Torridge* that had come out with a cargo of salt for Mr. Flashman. She were loaded with fish for the market, and was just beating out of Wild Cove when she missed

stays and struck on Dead-man's Reef at the mouth of t' harbour. There be plenty that says they could ha' got her off easy enough if they had liked. Leastwise she had no right to strike at all on a fine morning with a light westerly wind blowing. But she were put up for sale right away, and Mr. Flashman bought her for a wreck. She weren't floated for a week, but then they towed her right up and anchored her in the 'run' to leave her for the spring. For, of course, Mr. Flashman had no crew for her. Somehow a lot of talk about her got around, and some said that men were coming down from t' government to see about how she were lost, and then suddenly she got on fire and burnt to the water line.

"Well, doctor, last spring t' ice all broke up, and my Maggie saw what was left of the wreck driving down alongshore in a big pan of ice. There wasn't nothing worth saving but the spars. But it seemed a shame to let them go, and them pitch pine, without a try to get 'em. So us all four set out to try and cut them out of t' ice, and get them fast to a point of rock as they went by. It took us all day to get them loose from the ice and we got wet and cold enough. But at last we got a line to the cliff, above where

the ice was carrying them along, and just as the floe swept by the point us rolled them off into the water and they drove into t' back-water behind it. Us had a big enough job to get back to land ourselves, and we didn't get t' spars safe for a few days. But at last t' wind stopped, and there was a lane of water along the ballicater ice, so us could tow 'em around and haul 'em up to safety."

Knowing the Labrador winter ice as I do, and having lost my own steamer exactly the same way, I just jumped up and shook hands with him.

"Well done; good for you and the girls, Malcolm. That was worth while if you never get a cent for it." Think of it, a solitary man and three girls out with axes and bars, prizing out that old vessel's spars from the floe as it drove by their island, and saving them at the foot of a sheer cliff, and then getting safely ashore again!

"Splendid. What did Mr. Flashman say?" I added, suddenly recollecting what led up to the story.

"Mr. Flashman said the spars was all his, doctor. He said he had paid for my time, and all I got was hisn."

"I guess I'll come over and see Mr. Flashman myself," I said, "though he did say he

would throw me into the sea if I landed again on his wharf. Come along; there is no time to waste."

It was only a couple of miles by sea, and two pairs of sculls soon made that look small. As we neared the point, I landed Malcolm and rowed on alone, not wishing to complicate matters unnecessarily for him. I had learned from Malcolm where the spars lay, and went to estimate their value before going up to the house. But evidently I had been recognized, for while I was fastening the boat an ugly crowd of men had come down and were standing by the spars, as if it were possible for me to carry them off single handed like Samson did the gates of Gaza.

However, when I gave them " good-morning " they returned my greeting, and I knew then I had guessed right. They had little love for their task for Flashman, for they did not offer to interfere with my measuring and estimating the value of the masts, which I found had been chopped off at the gammon as the only way to get them free from the submerged hull.

This being done, I proceeded towards the house, and on the narrow path by the cliff edge met Flashman, evidently watching me.

His men, who had posed all the while as chance onlookers, remained by the spars.

"Good-morning, Mr. Flashman."

"Good-morning; can I do anything for you?" he answered.

"Yes, you can; you can pay me one-third the value of those pitch pine spars, or I shall have to seize them. . . ."

There is no need to record the conversation that followed. It wouldn't be helpful, and foolish language isn't generally a Labrador failing. Suffice it to say, we soon understood each other.

"The sun is already long past midday, Mr. Flashman, and the matter will have to be settled elsewhere anyhow. So I will bid you good-bye for the present." And I turned to go down the edge of the cliff to where I had left my boat.

As I did so, I caught sight of the well-knit figure of Malcolm, standing in the shelter of the rocks about half-way between me and the water, while sitting on the bank by him, but well out of sight from above, were his three bonnie girls. Exactly like Flashman's men, they were playing at being there by chance.

I could not help smiling, for I knew the real reason, and I wondered whether Flashman

had also seen them, and had suspected that I had arranged for this Amazonian body-guard to be in reserve. The strain of the interview had been somewhat intense, and the possibility that he had pictured them as Valkyries swooping down upon him from their native heights was so irresistibly ludicrous that I fairly burst out laughing.

The sound reached Flashman. He was standing, evidently in doubt, just where I had left him. Suddenly he called loudly down to me that he wanted to say something to me. To my utter surprise it was, "You've a long way to go, doctor. I suppose you wouldn't care for dinner before you start?" With the extraordinary versatility that characterized the man, he had altered in an instant from the sordid, heartless money-grabber, to the chivalrous mediæval host, who took pleasure in feeding his enemy. He was a veritable "Jekyl and Hyde," where the wizard's potion was a sense of humour. He had obviously spied my volunteer body-guard.

"Will I take dinner in your house? Certainly I will. I shall trust you not to poison me,"—and we solemnly marched off together up the hill.

As half an hour later I sat at the table, with

Flashman carving, the sense of the ridiculous was once again too much for me, and I broke out laughing incontinently. What made it worse was the expression on his face, which betrayed that he was just dying to know the cause of my merriment. Nor, though we had called a truce during the hour of refreshment for the sake of Labrador hospitality, could I refrain from describing to him how I felt certain I should one day live to pick his bones instead of those of the fat sea birds on which he was regaling me.

We parted as we met, without shaking hands. Both of us meant war. I saw no way but the gospel of the maily fist for Flashman. And he—well, he had no fear of a —— —— missionary.

When I went out, the faithful Malcolm was still "standing by," though, thinking it safe to do so, he had sent the Amazons to get their dinner. I walked up to his cottage with him and told him how matters stood, and that he was to come over and see me in the evening. Then we could settle what to do next. "Bring your girls along with you, Malcolm, and we can give you all one good time anyhow aboard the ship, if you never have another."

That evening, as once more Malcolm sat

opposite me, smoking the pipe I had given him, my inspiration came.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Malcolm. I want some pitch pine badly to panel the hospital hallway and staircase. I'll buy your share of the spars, and as we can't do anything else we'll just pray that the good Lord may send Skipper Abe into Wild Cove as he goes north."

It took some persuading to make my friend agree to the first part of the bargain, and I am certain it was only an unlimited confidence in my powers to have my way, that I at last reconciled him to selling what he knew he could not hand over in person at once. Seeing my advantage, I forced the matter to an issue directly, and we drew up a written deed of sale signed with the humble X of each of the vendors, none of whom could sign otherwise.

Meanwhile, we had secretly packed a small box with some useful things from our clothing department, and secreted it in their boat, and when finally we shouted "good-night" from the rail to our friends, they at least had enough warm garments to get home with, if only Captain Abe came in. There was no possible way to insure this otherwise, so we just asked the good Lord before we turned in

for the night to give Captain Abe Niccols, of the *Quickstep*, a rousing head wind when he should reach down to latitude 56° 25′ north.

We had to leave during the night, and it was nearly three weeks before I ran in to Tikkertane Harbour. By this time my crew knew the story of poor Malcolm only too well, and they were all on deck as we stood in towards our anchorage, for they were just crazy to hear if the schooner *Quickstep* had brought down Malcolm English or not.

We had not long to wait. Even as our anchor chain rattled out through the hawse pipe we saw a quaint but familiar flag being rapidly hoisted on a tall mast among the bunch of schooners in the bay.

"She's there all right, doctor!" my mate called out somewhat needlessly, with his characteristic enthusiasm. For which, however, we make concessions on these occasions, seeing he is a family man himself.

"Yes, the *Quickstep* is there all right, Bill. And what's more, you may be sure she's got 'em, or they wouldn't think of hoisting that flag in such a hurry. Get out the jolly-boat and go and see."

But there was no need for that. In less than no time a large fishing boat was sweeping along straight for our steamer, and the

style of oarsmanship spoke as clearly to us all as ever did a Galilean accent to a Jew of old. There was a man steering and three girls each pulling double sculls.

No, I never got those spars. The victory cannot always be on one side. But worse even than to lose them, Flashman had the laugh on me. For I was foolish enough to steam over to try and take them "willy-nilly," only to find that they were already miles away, sailing the sea as spars in one of Flashman's own schooners. They were good spars, and I hope they brought no trouble to the good fellows whose safety depended on them.

It was some years before I got even with Flashman. But his reckoning did come later, though in another manner. There was to be, however, one more chapter to this story.

Some years later a much battered package, evidently hailing from the far north, made its appearance on my chart room table. To my dismay, when I opened it there fell out in postage stamps the price I had paid for the two pitch pine spars of the good ship *Rose of Torridge*. It was Malcolm English's last word.