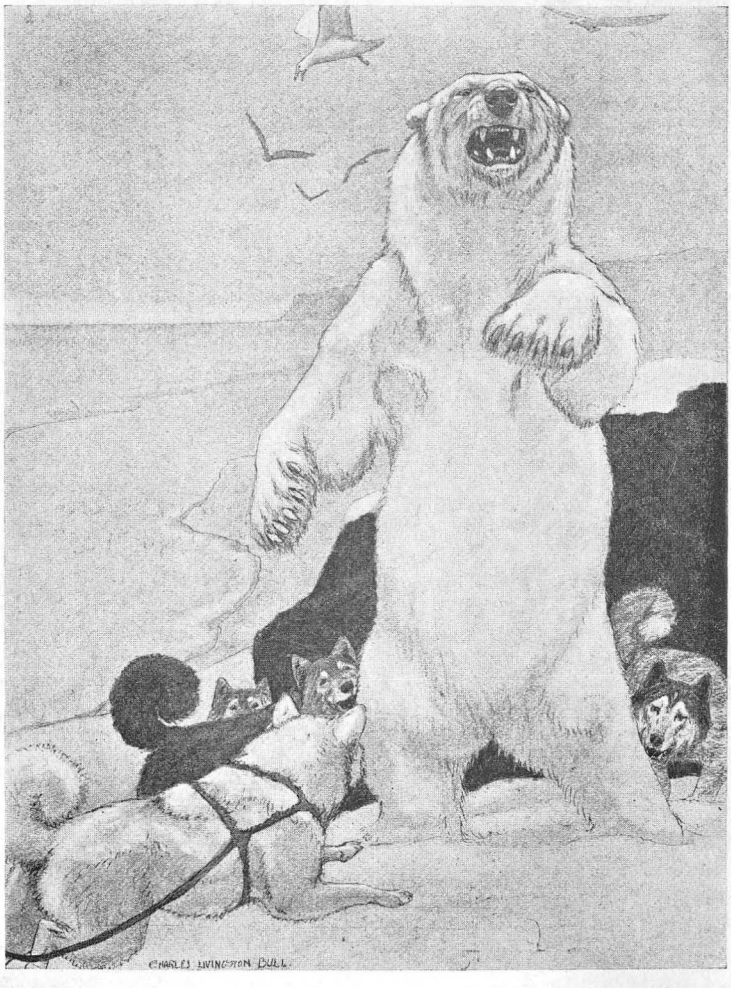
Tales of the Labrador



HE SOON RECOVERED HIMSELF AND STOOD UPON HIS HIND LEGS

Tales of the Labrador

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THAT CHRISTMAS IN PEACE HAVEN

Our country has long been called the land of cods, fogs, and dogs. We are glad of the first, we are sorry about the second, and we are divided about the third. The first give us our food and clothing; the second much of our resourcefulness and nerve; the third our winter fun and firewood, but also, alas, a great amount of trouble. They kill any domestic animals we may try to keep; they destroy any gardens we laboriously tend — if once they succeed in getting in over the palisades: thus they are a real source of menace to our needed vegetable-supply; and they disturb our sleep and the peace of mind that plays so much larger a part in human life than most of us recognize. But Providence, which always gives compensation for loss, has blessed us with the most peaceful country in the world. There are no crowded cities; no smoky, bustling factories; no noisy,

screaming railways; no dusty roads and dashing traffic; no daily mail; no imperious telephones We have no drink traffic. There is no excessive heat in summer, and the country provides us with the skins for such clothing as enables us to take full advantage of the bracing winter cold. Here the snow is always white. The hillsides provide us with a firing which leaves no grime behind it. The very ashes from our spruce logs, boiled with the fat of the seals which are so plentiful in the North Atlantic, afford the soap-supply of most families. The blaze of our log fires, contrasting with the crisp cold outside, would make a miser generous. The sunshine, reflected from the snow in winter and from the sea in summer, is our most efficient medical officer, and gives our faces a color that suggests perennial youth.

The most restful time of all is naturally the winter. Then we are shut off from the anxieties of disturbing tidings which often have righted themselves before we hear of them at all. As shops are inaccessible, we are relieved of the constant suggestion that we need something, and we escape much of the tyranny of things. Nor are we tempted to keep late hours in

crowded auditoriums, and so sap our vitality by chronic asphyxiation. Our food is plain, but when well cooked is amply sufficient to maintain the highest bodily efficiency, while there is no temptation to surfeit one's system with semi-poisonous food-products which we have learned to crave.

The chief menace to our cerebral equilibrium arises from mechanical and physical causes, and not from imaginary mental worries that induce the popular malady of "nervous prosperity." We err rather on the side of being too well satisfied with what we have than on that of being overanxious about to-morrow.

If a peaceful mind is the asset in life I take it to be, then we can also be thankful that we are still so far behind the times that we have not yet embarked on the controversy between religion and science, or begun to dabble in cheap metaphysics and shallow "higher criticism." We are not entirely unanimous as to which method of approaching the Almighty is infallible for all the world, but we are pretty well decided on the one which helps our own life most. The sermons in seas and ice-floes, in storms and stones, conduce to as restful a con-

dition of soul as do the edicts of ecumenical councils. Our simple explanation of the phenomena of nature gives us a peace which, so far as I can learn, is still past understanding in the academies of learning. I wish the worshiper of the No God the very best he can get out of his "inexorable laws," but we folk in the Arctic value our faith in a reasonable universe, and a God who cares for us, quite as much as we do Santa Claus and his good cheer.

As we venture off on running ice-floes in pursuit of seals, as we fare far from the home port in small boats, wresting our livelihood from a reluctant environment, we recognize that it is only in absolute faith we go forth each time. How many a gallant lad has departed on just the same quest and never returned at all!

At this very moment my eyes rest on my trusty snowshoes hanging from a stag's horns by the fireside, and visions of the rest-giving miles — I say it advisedly — of tramping over winter snows rise before me, and they suggest such a contrast to my present prosaic occupation that I just have to get up and walk round the table.

The generous and oft-expressed sympathy

of many friends that I, a physician from the outside world, should "sacrifice life" so far from all that is desirable, has always been evidence to me of the fallibility of pure reason. It by no means follows that what I like best is best, or that that from which I shrink at first is not really most desirable. But such mundane things as whiskey, a fine cigar, a plum pudding, afford potent pleas for the justice of this really common-sense judgment on my part. A twinge of conscience always pricks me for fear I have unconsciously misled these well-meaning, kindly folk. In these days of universal kodaks the only safe path, anyhow, is to go about with the perpetual smile that won't come off. But I must admit also that with the prick comes some little regret that more of our friends do not take a term in this subarctic university. Yes, indeed, there are things to learn here. For though its secrets are sometimes hidden from the wise and prudent, we have graduated some even from that class — and our only failures have been the overwise freshmen.

Once you will admit to me that the prizes of Christmas may be other than the dollar or

the toys we give, or the proportion of currants in the pudding we eat, why, then, I'll venture to spin you a yarn of a Christmas "down North." It may be worth the telling, because it may tempt some of you good folk to come and share our supposititious misery.

The trouble with this particular Christmas was that it came after such a "total blank" in our fisheries that, far from expecting Santa Claus, it was absolutely certain that some of our folk would be looking for "a bit o' loaf."

The salmon-fishermen in the bay had not more than a hundred tierce between them, and British Columbian salmon had cut the price as well. Our beautiful trout was temporarily a drug in the market, and had hardly paid the cost of salt and cooperage. Not a deer had come to the landwash to help out the larder, and, owing to the necessity of devoting every moment to the fishery, the usual time for an early fall hunt had been allowed to slip by. The only plentiful creatures in the country seemed to be the mice and the lemmings. But that fact augured ill for our last resource, the fur-trapping, for foxes won't come out

to the landwash if they can get food in the country, and marten and mink won't take bait when there is no need for them to run risks.

Yet when I ran into Peace Haven in the late fall to leave a box of supplies for the doctor on his winter journeys, you would never have thought there was anything but the jolliest of Christmases ahead for the good people round the little harbor.

The patriarch of the place, Uncle Joe, expressed the general good sense by saying, "Well, youse see, Doctor, troubles hurts just that much less if you don't go to meet them till they comes after you."

It so happened that Jake Kelsom's little boy was sick and that had stirred Jake's mind, because it was acutely visible. He had come some two miles across the hills from a neighboring harbor for help. "I see'd t' smoke, Doctor, as you rounded Fishing Point Head," he said, "and t' ole missis thought maybe you'd come over and see our Jakie."

It was late before we reached his house, and only just not too late for Jakie.

"It will mean staying here for the night, and

perhaps taking Jakie away with us to-morrow," I said to the anxious man. "Can you give me a shake-down for the night?"

"'Deed us can, Doctor. T' ole missis 'll fix up t' room for you."

There was only dry bread for supper, and tea with a drop of molasses, and I had omitted to put anything but medical supplies into my "nonny bag."

"It's only poor fare us can offer you," Jake apologized. "But it's hard times t' year."

"As long as you have enough flour not to starve, and can get some fat, you'll be all right, Jake, till the ducks come south. Perhaps you can kill a deer, too."

"That's just the trouble," replied my host. "We're on our last barrel now, and God knows where the next is to come from. Mr. Roper have shut up t' store at Brandy Harbor for t' winter. He says he can't afford to give credit, and he 'lows us won't be getting anything to buy un with."

Noticing just then that his mouthpiece was an empty pipe, I handed him my tobacco-pouch. The smile which spread over his face repaid me for the fill, and for the half-pound

more which I later sent over from the ship's stock. A couple of curly-headed youngsters of four and five were on the floor playing with two old cotton spools in absolute contentment. The shortage of soap even had not in the least affected their equanimity, much less the eccentricity of their garments.

As we sat in silence, puffing at our pipes, my thoughts went awing, and from the heights I seemed to get a view of all men as children, forgetting the higher joys of manhood in playing with toys, and it made me want to help my fellow in distress.

I was suddenly brought back from the clouds by a knock at the door. On opening it, there stood a man with a large tin baking-pan in his hand. He seemed somewhat confused at seeing a stranger in the house, and after toying with the pan for a minute was evidently about to beat a retreat.

"Come in, Tom," sang out my host. "'T is only t' doctor. Come right in."

Tom closed the door and came forward somewhat sheepishly to shake hands. Meanwhile, without a word's having passed between them, Jake rose and, seizing the baking-pan,

removed it to the proximity of his last barrel of flour, from which he promptly proceeded to fill it "chockablock." As he returned and gave it to its owner, I noticed the same kind of look light up Tom's face as I had previously seen on my host's.

As soon as he had gone, Jake tried to excuse his soft-heartedness by saying first that it was only a loan. But he spoiled that statement by adding, "One baking more or less won't make much difference, will it?"

"Perhaps it will make more than you think," I replied; "'there is that which withholdeth and yet maketh poor.'"

We turned in soon after, and I found no difficulty in diagnosing that my needy friend slept far more soundly than I.

A heavy nor'easter with fog outside kept us in Peace Haven another day. I was soon satisfied that, however good my intention, it was far beyond my capacity adequately to relieve the situation. What we could do was cheerfully done, but when we came to get up our anchor for sailing, I felt badly over even the few guns the good-hearted folk fired to give us a "send-off," for I knew how scarce a load of powder

was, and that each discharge might mean a duck less for the cooking-pot.

There have been similar cases in my experience when somehow the windows of heaven seemed to open to supply the people's needs. But this was not one of those occasions. On the contrary, all the friends alike, including even Uncle Joe, only just "scrabbled along." By the first of December, the little community was almost at its wit's end to know what to do for food. They had all moved up the bay now to their winter cottages to get the protection of the trees from the winds which make life on the islands and even on the outer land almost unbearable. Some of the families had been lucky enough to strike a head of caribou and had secured a supply of venison. But among these fortunate ones were neither of my straitened friends. These two men were furring together — that is, they shared the same fur path and halved all they caught, an arrangement due to the small number of traps either of them could afford to purchase.

It had come Tom Marvin's turn to visit the "path." The snow was now lying deep on the ground, and the nose and ears of even a well-

fed man needed careful tending in that atmosphere. Tom was on half rations, and "dry flour ain't much to start a day's work on." But, clad in the best he could find to keep out the weather, he started on his long tramp. Mile after mile went by; trap after trap was examined. But always the same tale repeated itself. The trap was frozen over, or drifted over, but never a sign of a living animal nigh any of them. On and on he plodded till he had reached the very farthest trap tailed. Lo and behold, it was gone, and not a sign to be seen of it. There was a layer of young snow on the ground hiding even the most recent tracks, and the light wind that was blowing had drifted them all over. Poor Tom was weak from want of good food and worn out from the journey as well. This last disappointment seemed to take the last bit of grit out of him. This particular trap had been tailed, as he knew, on the top of an old stump which they had fixed in a very narrow part of the pathway. The stump had been selected to prevent the trap from being snowed deep under. If only he could find that stump, he might be able to get some clue as to the whereabouts of his trap. Pulling himself

together, he staggered on in search of it. "You see, Doctor," he said afterwards, "I wa'n't quite myself, perhaps, just then, or I would n't have missed the spot."

As it was, he came back twice on his tracks before, just under the surface of the snow, his foot struck the stump. Lying down and blowing away the dry, powdery snow, he was able to make out three things: first, the trap had gone, chain and all, the staple having been drawn out of the old stump; secondly, it was a fox that had taken it away; and thirdly, it had gone within the last twenty-four hours. But where had it gone, and could he find it? On every side could be seen snow, snow, nothing but snow, — except that here and there a few green tops of some scant spruce trees which we call "tuckamore" peeped out. The excitement of the hope bred of the knowledge of his find had almost made a new man of him. He tried every art he knew to guide him as to the way to go. But after starting in all four directions and circling round and round with the post as a center, weary and disheartened, he felt he must give it up.

Already night was coming on. What would

be the use of even a silver to him if he perished in getting it. He was cold and he was hungry. He had already drawn heavily on his reserve of strength.

Yes, he would give it up. Just as well to die one way as another. What was the use of struggling against such odds any longer? He had almost turned to strike out for home, when the vision of his two curly-headed lads crying with hunger that he was powerless to appease, and the sad face of his young wife rose so vividly before him that he turned once again. "God help me! it's better to perish alone than to see 'em suffer." And once again he set out blindly on the quest.

Heading for the nearest clumps of tuckamore, he carefully examined the ground all about, but found no signs. He set off once more, closely scrutinizing drogue after drogue, as we call these small clumps of trees. On and on he wandered till suddenly a white mark like a fresh trail-blaze, low down on a young fir, caught his watchful eye. A closer examination showed that the bark had been notched by some sharp instrument — and in a moment more he was certain that some animal carrying

a trap had been seeking shelter in the thicket. But there was none there now, and which way was he to go? What was he to do next? The land to the north of him was steep, rising eventually at the top to a jagged wilderness of high pinnacled rocks. To the southward it fell away in a long even slope to a large lake. The chances were all in favor of the fox having sought the shelter of the rocks. But there was no visible track. It might be exactly the wrong direction. The torturing dilemma nearly drove him crazy. Would n't it be as well to take the easier path? But he decided to play the game to the finish. Without exactly knowing why, or even how he got along, he began to climb the shoulder of the hill. He had not gone more than half a mile, when, as he topped the level of a low ridge, he thought he saw, away above him on the snow, a tiny black speck moving. A second more and he was sure of it.

Now began a race for life. His will was working at its best. He was really crazy now, but it was with tumultuous hope and maddening excitement. The memory of fatigue, the fear of perishing alone, everything in heaven and earth had vanished from his consciousness.

There on the hill above him and almost within his very grasp was the price of food for his loved ones. But with every second the gap was widening. Once the fox should gain the craggy summit there would be no hope of getting him. Tom was a great runner, and at any other time the issue would not have been in doubt for five minutes. But his will had flogged the willing muscles into action to the very limit of their power; their reserve was exhausted. Even as he started on the chase, his snowshoe caught in an unnoticed snag and he stumbled and fell. When he rose there was a dizziness in his head which prevented his seeing the speck. However, an agony of fear like the prick of a big spur sent him stumbling along again. Another minute, and he sighted the speck moving away far above him on the hillside.

Fortunately for Tom, it was a handicap race all round. The wretched fox, flying for his life, had to drag the heavy trap on his leg. He was stumbling and falling scarcely less frequently than his competitor in the race. Already the goal was in view and it seemed as though the fox, as well as the man, recognized the winning-post, and each was straining every

nerve to get an advantage. Now the man would gain, till a slip of his snowshoe in the rapidly increasing incline, or a further stumble from carelessness and exhaustion, again made him lose ground. Now the trailing trap, catching in a snag, would trip up the fox for a second with a round turn, and he would lose time snarling and biting at it. A couple of hundred yards ahead loomed the tangled labyrinth of huge rocks, torn by the iron foot of our winters from the massive peak that formed the summit of the hill above, — a huge moraine with endless rocky fortresses, a very plethora of cities of refuge, from any one of which the fugitive was well aware he could bark defiance at his enemy. On the whole, the man was gaining, but not fast enough to give him the victory, and without his realizing it, the fact was telling against him. At this moment a new element entered the arena. A sudden clear glimpse of the fox betrayed the dark, glossy coat of that *doyen* of our northern furs, a black silver. This is the prize of the North. With its capture the trapper not only wins his knightly spurs, but also money enough to keep him without fear of want for many a day to come.

Here was a man, himself half-fed and half-clad, his loved ones perishing by inches for the want of mere necessities at home, his future so black that he greatly preferred death to facing it, and here, almost in his hands, but yet slipping from his grasp, was food, clothing, rest from anxiety, and all he needed to make life contented.

A madman is said to be capable of sudden superhuman feats of strength, the ill control of his nerve impulses making it possible for him to let every reserve go at the same moment. As Tom told me the story afterward, there was only one explanation of what happened. He must have gone stark mad. All he remembers was that something, he does n't know what, shot him forward up that last incline like an arrow from a bow. He recalls that somehow his snowshoes did not hold as the angle of the hill became too steep. But in spite of that on and on he went. He remembers the fox as it got into the mouth of a great cleft, turning and yelping at him, and that with one big jump he flung himself bodily upon it. And then oblivion.

When he came to himself it was dark. At first he forgot where he was. He was miserably

cold, his head was dizzy and aching, he was in the open, lying on the snow. Surely he had gone to sleep by mistake. There was something wet on his head. He put his hand to it, and examined it by the reflection of the moonlight — blood. Something must have hit him. Probably a rock had rolled down on him. Then suddenly his hand touched something cold which stuck fast to his wet finger, burning it like a red-hot iron. He tore it off and with it a piece of skin from his hand. But he felt no pain. A chain! What could a chain be doing there? A chain! Then suddenly it all flashed back into his mind: the misery at home, the tramp, the lost trap, the struggle. But the fox — where was the fox? He tried to rise, but could not. So he crawled up on to his feet against the face of the big rock, and stood for a moment swaying in the moonlight. Then, dropping on his knees in the snow, in an agony of unspoken supplication, he groped in under the rock to find if possibly the fox might still be there. Nothing but snow and rock met his touch. He listened, but no sound could be heard. It must have slipped the trap while he was unconscious, or perhaps gnawed itself free.

Dizziness was overcoming Tom, and the night was getting darker.

He was too weak to hope to get home, and the savage comfort came to his mind, "Well, it won't make any difference to me that I lost him"; and once more he sank down into his old place on the snow. Ugh! What was that? The chain again. He tore at it in mad anger to try and hurl it from him. But no, it would not move. He grabbed it in both hands and in senseless rage flung his weight into the strain. It gave slowly. It was fast to something: the trap, of course. Why had n't he thought of that? At least, it should deceive no one else. He would hurl it into this rocky fastness where no one could ever find it — to lure another man to his undoing. But even as it came, a great heap of snow came with it, and, flinging his arms around it, Tom once more rose from his knees as he prepared to hurl it from him. But what was that? Surely God Almighty wouldn't mock him now. The snow was soft in his arms, yet it certainly was hard in lumps. Something was projecting: a frozen stick. No, it was n't that; it was hairy. Once more he reeled and fell on the snow, as he realized

that he held in his arms the dead body of the black fox.

Exactly what followed is very hazy in his memory. Something had made him stronger. He supposes it was the unconquerable determination to tell the good news. At first he pictured himself going straight home, and opening the door, with the fox in his arms. His strength seemed like that of ten as he thought of the look on his wife's face, and of the children when they found what it meant to them. No more hunger, no more of the awful anxiety which was worse than hunger. He thought of Jake's joy and what he would say first. It was Jake who had fed him when he was hungry. He loved Jake with a man's whole love. Oh! he could get back all right. He must get back if he fell dead at his own door.

Cuddling the fox like a baby, he was able to get on his feet and start down the hill. The next thing he remembers was picking himself up out of some tuckamores into which he had wandered. That reminded him. The tilt, the mailman's tilt in the green rudge could be only a short distance away. Of course he could n't

get back as he was. He must get shelter till morning. It was trees he needed; trees to shelter him. The tilt! Why had n't he thought of it! And, once more climbing to his feet, he stumbled on into the night, clinging to his precious burden like a drowning man.

Elsie, his wife, had been anxious when he set out. She knew he was n't his real self. Only because it was as bad to stay as to go had she consented. She had persuaded him not to carry his gun. It was too heavy for him on such a long round. She needed it to fire for him if he was late. They all said there was no use in it, as there was n't a rabbit around, and besides it might frighten away foxes from the path. All the coast knew that Mark Gulliver had shot himself a year or two before, when his family were starving. Now she was glad she had kept it. She'd go over and see Jake. Jake would certainly know where to look for him even if night had overtaken him. And Jake — why, he 'd go anywhere at any time for anybody, much more for Tom.

Bertie and Johnnie were given a rather larger piece of bread — the merest smear of

molasses disguised it. There had been no kerosene for a light for weeks, and sleep kept them from thinking of hunger. Only half-satisfied, the children had cried themselves to sleep in their deep wooden bunks, before she locked their door and slipped over to Jake's house.

"Said he'd be back early, did he?" said Jake in his kindly way as poor Elsie explained her fears to him. "Well, sure it's early yet if it is a bit dark. But I 'lows he's changed his mind and is going to sleep in a tilt to-night."

"But he promised he would n't," urged the woman. "He promised, hit or miss, he would n't leave me alone to-night. I can't bear it, Jake. I tell you I can't bear it. If he does n't get back by ten o'clock, I'm going to ask Jessie to let me bring the boys over. I must go after him. I can't stay here, and he perishing."

"He won't perish, lass," Jake answered; "there's a thousand things as 'ud make him stay on the path."

"I tell you, Jake, he's in trouble. I know it as sure as I'm standing here. If he is n't back by ten, may I bring Bertie and Johnnie over?"

"Yes, and welcome," he answered. "But if it comes to going, why, you 'd better let me go."

"No, no," she replied. "I know the way the path runs, and if any one can find him, why, I can, if so be he 's lost."

The cheap wooden clock still pointed far from ten when once more Elsie trudged over to Jake's with her bundle, one lad trotting beside her. Though Jake was himself all ready, there was no dissuading Elsie from going also.

"Jake," she said, "since I left you, I 'm sure something 's wrong with Tom. I did n't see him, but I heard him. He 's out on the snow, and he wants me. I've got some bread here and a little bit of raw tea. There 's nothing else in the house now." And unbidden tears welled in her eyes as she thought of the little she could give the husband of her love if she did find him.

"Don't fret, lass," said Jake. "I've put in a small bottle of molasses. 'T is a pity there be no fat. But it 's no good crying over it." And, seeing she was determined to go, he said no more, but started out with her.

It was getting light before they had visited

their own ten-mile tilt, only to find it empty. Fortunately there was no wind, so that when this strange couple reached the spot where the last trap had been tailed, they had a complete riddle written in the snow to solve.

Jake's keen wits, however, soon read it rightly.

"T' trap's got lost," he said, "and Tom's bin a long time lookin' for un. Come on. We'll soon find him."

Another mile following his tracks and they found another and fresher trail crossing it.

"It's all right, Elsie, lass. That's Tom coming back again. Us need n't follow round. Us'll follow the new track."

The new trail was far from being straight, and at the end of almost half a mile showed evidence of a struggle and a fall.

"Just tripped on his shoes," said Jake; and passed on without stopping.

"Why did he wander about so?" asked Elsie after another period of silence. "Why, he walked right into the tuckamore here!"

"Oh! It was dark, I 'low," answered Jake cheerily. "It's terrible hard to go straight in the dark. You just shut your eyes and try.

The only trouble is, I can't quite make out what's he aiming for. Reckon I'll climb t' knoll while you rests yourself a bit." And without more ado, he started off up the rocky piece of hill. On returning, he said briefly, "T' general line is towards t' green rudge. I thought maybe he'd gone for the tilt there. And anyhow, it's time us cooked a kettle if us wants to keep going."

Though hunger and weariness and self were far enough from Elsie's mind, Jake gave her no time to discuss the proposition, and, having carefully marked where he could, if necessary, strike Tom's trail again, he branched off in the direction of the tilt. Elsie followed for all the world like a child.

Another half-hour passed in silence, and then suddenly Jake, who was ahead, gave a joyous shout.

"Come along, lass," he said. "I thought as much. Here's his trail, and he's surely making for the tilt." "We might have saved the night's wandering," he thought, but was too generous to say so, and merely added, "Tom 'll be main surprised to get visitors out here, if so be as he has n't left again."

Time took wings to itself now, and it only seemed a few moments before the poles marking the track to the tilt, which was hidden in the dense spruces, came into view. Jake, still ahead, went in without waiting, for the marks of the trail had revealed to him a far more anxious tale than he had shown.

Tom was lying face down, stretched out on the big bed of spruce-tips — his arm still round the body of the beautiful silver fox.

A good blazing fire, some hot tea, and even dry loaf to eat soon made a difference — and chafing his extremities soon brought back animation to them. He had not been wet and the depth of the soft spruce bed had fortunately afforded him some little heat. Before night the whole three were safely home, and all the village knew that Tom Marvin had caught a silver.

Alas, you can't keep a family on fox-meat, and even now that they had good value to exchange for food, it was a serious task to get it. The nearest station was a Hudson's Bay Company's post, nearly a hundred miles away. Almost all the dogs in the village had either

died or been shot, as no one had any food with which to supply them. But all hands were interested, and enough half-fed animals were collected to enable Jake and Tom to set out for the Company's post.

It was two days' journey as a rule with an empty sledge, but it would surely take four days, coming back loaded,with the team available and the chances of bad weather. They hoped to drag back at least three barrels of flour, with fats and other supplies as well, so they were counting on a thousand pounds at the lowest reckoning. That meant the men would have to walk every step of the way back.

As soon as the skin was dried, it was carefully packed, and the two men set out on their journey over mountain valleys and arms of the sea, as light-hearted and confident as schoolboys. They should be back at least a full week before Christmas.

But the appointed time came and went, and still there was no news of the sledge. It was only four days to Christmas when Uncle Joe sent out a relief party on foot, as there were no more dogs left in the settlement.

The children, who had been expecting great things ever since the fox was caught, had been buoyed up on the tiptoe of expectancy with tales of the "wunnerful" Christmas they were going to have.

"No, no; Christmas is Christmas," said Uncle Joe. "I says it do matter. Why, if Santa Claus is to get to Noo Yawk on time, he'm obliged to pass here early. And if that there Jake don't bring un along, I'll 'low he'll never find this here cove t' year."

The growing anxiety of the village was not diminished by the symptoms of still unsatisfied vital organs in the younger members of more than one family. The hope of a happy Christmas for the children had almost been abandoned, when on the morning of Christmas Eve one of the relief party dispatched for the purpose reported the joyful news that the loaded sledge was climbing the last range of hills on the home journey. The enfeebled dogs had been of little or no use. Moreover, half of them had been sacrificed to feed the others. At every uphill the sledge had to be unloaded, and the barrels literally rolled up to the top. Many a time since I have had to laugh as I

thought of the two men solemnly starting a kind of egg-and-spoon race, as they pushed their flour barrels up over the long steep hillsides.

But everything has to come to an end, and before sundown the salvo of the last charges of powder in Peace Haven announced the safe return of the expedition. No time was lost in packing and all night was lost in cooking. But, at any rate, Elsie and Jessie and all the other good mothers had something ready for the day of days.

"It seldom rains but it pours," they say — and it seemed so in this case. Late in the evening, while the attention of the village was occupied with their sledge from the north, a noise of shouting and of bells announced the arrival of another team, from the south. Before any one could say a word a great team of Eskimo dogs, with a driver in Eskimo dress and a tall, bearded man in furs, had drawn up at Uncle Joe's door.

"Come right in quick, Doctor," said the old man. "We're just looking for Santa Claus, and I don't know but you 's him. Come right in." And in the doctor promptly went, need-

ing, indeed, no second invitation after his long journey.

The plot was soon hatched, Uncle Joe being chief conspirator. "T' box what t' steamer left for you in the fall, Doctor, — I've got it right here. But, of course, there's no knowing what's in un."

"Is it very heavy, Uncle Joe?"

"Well, now, it is and it ain't. I'm thinkin' there's something beyand tinned meat in he."

The box was soon brought in and duly opened. Fortunately I had noticed in Peace Haven, as in many other places on the Labrador, that, beyond cotton reels and other educational but somewhat unsatisfactory substitutes, toys were characterized almost entirely by their absence. Here and there a cheap painted effigy could be seen perched high up on the wall, well out of reach of the children — a precaution probably as salutary for the doll as for the infant. But I had tried to remember this shortage, and before even a tin of milk appeared, a large parcel of toys containing many dolls was discovered.

The midnight round of Santa Claus; the excitement and shouting in the morning; the

full meals at which you might eat all you liked, but of course could n't; the magic lantern slides shown by the doctor in the school-house in the evening — are possibly just so many negligible quantities in the economy of the universe. But they were not in the annals of Peace Haven. Joy filled the heart of Bertie as he clasped to his breast his new calico cat as tightly as had poor Tom the silver fox; bliss reigned in the soul of Johnnie as he strutted from house to house to show his cronies the first Teddy bear that ever braved the climate of our Northland; while to the hearts of Jake and his good wife, of Tom and Elsie, of Uncle Joe and all the grown-ups in the village, not excluding the doctor and the dogs, to whom had been given an extra portion, came the "Salaam" of Him whose Birthday they were keeping, a present which can be given, but never purchased.

SAINTE ANNE DE BEAUPRÉ

PROBABLY the very last troubles one would expect to meet in our country would be those arising from the theories of ecclesiastics. Yet the very bitterest animosities of which our kindly folk are capable have almost always been the outcome of the conviction that they knew all about the road to heaven, a subject on which every one else was hopelessly — and probably "damnably" — ignorant. The fact is that our minds here, like our snow in May, have such deep rills cut into them by the warmest and kindliest of suns that no power on earth can ever level them off again; and, once sectarian teaching and denominational schooling have done their deadly work on such simple folk, the bias needs no adventitious aid from the sinfulness of nature or the deceitfulness of the tongue to switch off at times the pure waters of an innate kindliness almost synonymous with life under isolated and hard conditions.

One result of these unfortunate dogmatic interpretations of our duty to God is very

obvious on this coast. Men of different affiliations do not like — nay, hardly dare — to live in communities where their isolation is made more complete by it than by any physical conditions. I know many a man who will not hesitate to settle in the wildest and loneliest localities, but whom no money would drag to live amidst those of a different persuasion. There is always one factor, however, which, like the proverbial hospitality shown to the very bitterest foe, will surmount even this terrible mistranslation of religion, and that is the bond which unmerited misfortune or suffering creates. That never fails to release the really divine in the most fanatical among us, and, like some specially focused ray of our exquisite sunshine, causes the living water of human kindness to spring forth from the most unexpected snow-bank.

It was just such a calamity which had originally led the family of the subject of this story, strong adherents of the Roman communion, to settle in the little village of Peace Haven, where only once a year could they expect the visit of their tireless peripatetic priest, and where, when death came, there was

always a risk of being deprived of those last ministrations which they especially value so highly.

Once the die is cast, a house built, a fishing-room established, a fur path secured, the settler here, like the limpet on our rocks, finds moving to a distance almost an impossibility. So it happened that this family of Irish extraction was surrounded by descendants of those sturdy men of Devon and Dorset whose greatest pride it ever was of yore to have had some hand in helping to singe the King of Spain's beard.

Patrick Bryan, the eldest son of this somewhat isolated household, had been, as was only to be expected from his nationality, well to the fore in every piece of boisterous fun and harum-scarum adventure, in opportunities for which the life at Peace Haven abounded. Why some folk are not satisfied to get to the top of a precipice, without climbing its face, it is hard to say; and why others are never content to hold the sheet in their hands when the lee rail of a small boat is already under water, who can tell? Suffice it to say that there are

such folk, and among these Paddy, as they called him, was always a ringleader. The charm of life seemed to him to lie in taking chances, and the loss of an eye by a misadventure in one of these wild escapades scarcely seemed to sober him up a whit.

Then like a bolt from the blue came that which would be sufficient to drive courage and hope from the hearts of the best of men. In a trifling mimic battle with nothing more dangerous than snowballs, one containing something sharp, possibly a bit of ice, caught him full on his sound eye, and in a few seconds he could see nothing at all. His terrified companions led him instantly to his home, and the advice and skill of all the elderly ladies of Peace Haven were sought. But after tansy poultices, electric oil, green worsted tied round his wrist, shark's oil, and all the potions and pills of the harbor's pharmacopœia had been tried, Paddy had still to grope his way about without a glimmer of light to help him.

It is barely possible that had Pat at once come to the little mission hospital, just established on the coast, he might still have saved

some useful quota of his sight, but, just as previously he had always been foremost in every adventure without a care for consequences, he was now absolutely the reverse. Apparently nothing would induce him to allow his friends to carry him a yard from his home. No remedy was too foolish or too painful for him to try, at the hands of these perfectly unskilled local advisers. Granulated sugar and salt, pressed up under the lid of the eye, pained him like a red-hot knife, and probably sealed the last chance of saving any remnant of sight, but he bore it all like a martyr. He seemed perfectly terrified at the thought of leaving home, preferring, like a frightened rabbit, to stay in his hole and perish.

It was almost exactly a year later that a komatik and dogs brought up at our little hospital door, and a blind man was led in by two of his friends to seek treatment. His changed attitude had been induced by a visit of the hospital steamer, during the summer previous, to that part of the coast on which he lived, when, hearing of his sad condition, we had gone ashore to look him up. An hour or two spent visiting among the sick, and we had gone

off again, having been able to do practically nothing for Paddy's blindness, which examination made very obvious was beyond human remedy. But it so happened that the other sick in his harbor had received undoubted help from the treatment given from the steamer, and as soon as winter came on, and the "going" was good, nothing would satisfy poor Pat but that he must go to the hospital, and have his eye taken out and cleaned. Accordingly, just before Christmas, after a long journey occupying three days and involving camping in the small tilts here and there provided for the use of passing travelers, as full of faith and hope as a child, I found the poor fellow sitting one morning, waiting in the surgery for the miracle which he was certain we were about to perform upon him.

It was easy to realize that practically the man's whole joy in life lay in his inextinguishable optimism, and blankly to inform him that there was no hope whatever would very probably cause a reaction similar to the one which had previously cost him so much; and we feared that a second such shock might have permanent results, and the poor lad's mind

made melancholic for life. So, after much ritual expended on his examination, and all our ingenuity devoted to delphic utterances, we advised him to stay for a while and see what could be done.

Here, however, was a dilemma which had never occurred to us. Pat wanted a miracle performed upon him in true Biblical fashion — a few words, and possibly time for an anointing would not have been amiss; or some trifling task like washing in the Jordan he might have been prepared for; but to stay alone with strangers, with folk of a different creed, while his friends were sent home, was a shock for which he had not been prepared. It took all the nurse's gentle art and possibly the assistance of the merry talk of half a dozen convalescents with whom he had dinner to woo him into a state of mind in which he would listen to advice. But at length his fixed idea that the performance of a miracle was only a matter of willingness on our part prevailed, and he went out and communicated to his two friends his conclusion — that he might be able to persuade us to perform it only if he stayed. "T' Doctor says, Tim, as he can't do me no

good if I goes back with youse. But he 'lows if I stays, he'll have a chance anyhow. 'T is best for me to stay, I 'lows."

"I think 't is as you says, Pat; and if you be goin' to stay, us 'll get back as far as Pigeon Cove to-night, so as to get t' daylight to cross t' neck."

Men of few words, they were soon harnessing in their dogs, though Pat still clung to them like a leech. He had begged me to come down with him and see them off. You cannot get too close to a man if you want him to see with your eyes, and in a matter of the heart like this, no opportunity is too trifling, for the very reason that it is the inside man who is in evidence.

With a good bag of non-freezable pork buns from our cook, and a large sack of dry capelin for their dogs at night, and a specially designed hearty send-off from our boys, the friends not only left in high spirits, but, as Pat put it, "I never seed the like of it in my life before, Doctor" — already a confession of another road to the visual centers than through the optic nerves.

Week follows week quickly when the hand and mind are busy, and from the very first no

effort was spared to exercise and train the available faculties of our friend. He had already learned to make baskets, and was toiling like a Titan with the intricacies of the Braille system, before we thought wise to let him know that it was probably only through these and other such channels that he must expect in future to correspond with the world outside.

Already, however, a new capacity for understanding was developing in him, and he was able now to realize that it was well worth while to be "biding with us awhile," away from his home and friends, and that he need have none of the vague fears, so common to many, of the things of which they know nothing. By open water Pat knew every one in our harbor; he was a welcome visitor in every home, for he possessed in unstinted measure that cheery optimism of the blind; and the natural kindliness of our folk was in any case intensified by his disability. "He ruleth by the right divine of helplessness." Never content to be idle, he was always about with some one mending nets, chopping wood, or doing some of the odd work about the little cottages. In spite of their differing tenets, this

realization of unfeigned kindliness was an evidence of Christianity, and yet another revelation to him.

Loaded with many small tokens of affection, poor in value so far as money goes, but rich in the truest sense to him, Pat left us early in May. Uncle 'Lige from the Bight took him along the first twenty miles of his journey in his large trap boat, a service for which he would not even accept thanks — "he would just go for a cruise, anyhow, he reckoned."

With the exception of a very occasional note or rumor passed along the coast, we heard little of Pat for the next two years. The family was much reduced in circumstances, for though Pat fished all the season with a young brother, he was seriously handicapped. Moreover, they were lean years on that section of the coast, the fish not striking home to the shore. Fur-trapping and deer-hunting Pat was cut off from, and work about the house brought him no money.

Notwithstanding their extreme poverty, the custom of the coast and the long distances between the scattered houses brought belated travelers now and again for a night's lodging

to Pat's home, where they not only received free lodging, but also, with open hand, a share in such food as the larder could offer. From one of these visitors one night Pat heard a marvelous story. "'Way up on the north side of the St. Lawrence," said the stranger, "is a won'erful place, where they does terrible cures. They calls un 'Beaupry.' They says St. Anne, the Mother of the Virgin, came there once, so they put up a fine church for her. Seems she come again, too, for soon after that those who were sick what went and prayed at her altar got cured. When folks got to hear of this, they started in coming from every place around, and now there be hundreds — and they says thousands — what goes there all the while to get healed up."

As Paddy realized the utter impossibility of ever getting there himself, the story made little impression on him at the time. Quebec was as far as Timbuctoo to a man who never left Peace Haven. Some months later they were pouring the tale into the sympathetic ear of the priest, who was again making his annual round of the coast, and asking him if he had ever heard it. Why, of course he had. All the

world knew of the famous shrine. Were not pilgrimages being made to it all the while from every part of the world? "Would 'em fix me up, Father, think you, if I could get there?" broke in poor Pat. "Sure I'd crawl there on my knees if I thought so."

"There's no knowing," answered the kindly man. "They do say many get their sight there. I'll tell you what I'll do, Pat. I'll see if I can get a little money together to start you off there after next fishing, and we'll all pray she may grant you what you want."

So the shrine, never before thought of on our coast, became the talk of the fireside. "They say blind Pat is going to Canady to get his sight cured t' fall," was the word in many a cottage, and was uttered with faith enough to make a wooden image see, if mental attitude alone were the gauge of potency. The poor attempts at modern surgery at the mission hospital, or anywhere else, evaporated, something like Alice after swallowing the White Rabbit's potion.

With Pat the months of the fishing-season sped like a dream, though they contributed little enough, over the amount needed by the

family, toward the expenses of the coming pilgrimage. To all hands it was just a venture into the great unknown, and when at length the steamer lay at anchor in the harbor and the poor lad had to set out friendless, blind, and alone, with passage-money for only half the journey and no provision beyond, it took the best spirit of the crusader of old to hold him to his resolution.

Every one within reach had chipped in with his mite. The good priest had not only sent a most helpful contribution, but as Paddy passed south, he boarded the steamer and commended his case to his fellow passengers. Every one became interested in so cheerful, so hopeful, and so uncomplaining a man, irrespective of theories as to the outcome of the venture, and a collection taken up for him gave him transportation to his destination. But even then he had to go almost without food in order to eke out the residue to last till his journey's end.

Here, however, his upbringing stood him in good stead, as he had tackled many a harder job on one meal a day at home, and his inward vision of what it would all mean to him dispelled any clouds of doubt with which his

physical disabilities might have overwhelmed him. As with the old Knights of the Holy Grail such trifles passed almost unnoticed. Soon the tedious journey was drawing to a close. From the crowded train and the conversation going on around him Pat had gathered that there was a special pilgrimage on its way to the famous shrine. Shy from the isolation of his life, his infirmity made him strive all the more to pass as much as possible unnoticed. Soon he would be able to see, and then he would hold up his head with the best of them. The very crowd made his isolation all the greater. Moreover, every one was absorbed with his own business; every one who was not himself ill had some sick person belonging to him on whom he must attend. So when at length the train stopped at its destination, and people began to get out, Pat found himself with nothing in his pocket and not a friend in the world near enough to help him. He had been told by the priest exactly what to do; he was to go to the church, pray at the shrine of the saint, and wait for the grace which was to open his eyes.

In Pat's mind there was never a moment's doubt as to what he should do first. Of course

he must go up and get his sight. Hunger and sleep and such trifles were all forgotten. He was as one possessed. Even as his feet touched the ground he felt like another man; his shyness instantly disappeared, and his tongue at least was restored to its natural function. Seizing the first passer-by on the platform, he inquired, eagerly, "Where is it to?"

"Where is what '*to*'?"

"Why, where un goes t' be cured."

"Follow the crowd." And the stranger, shaking off the detaining hand, pushed hastily on, eager evidently on some quest of his own.

It was a rebuff none the less keen because unmerited. Several people jolted against him, and once or twice Pat was nearly knocked over. To him it seemed as if out of so many people, surely some one would help him; till he suddenly realized that he was actually all the more alone because of the crowd. At home every one's business was his neighbor's; here no one seemed to have time enough even for his own. Once or twice he tried to speak to people, but they could not, and he thought would not, understand him. He had never known that the world could be so thoughtless of others,

though he remembered what an enormous expense a single meal seemed to him to be, and he thought perhaps they could n't afford to add to their burdens by giving meals to a stranger. In that short half-hour at the station he had learned many things, and as the crowd melted away and left him, a great yearning to be back at Peace Haven overwhelmed him. But he got up and followed the crowd, and shortly found they were stopping near a church, into which they were slowly filing. Not knowing what to do, he just stood still and waited.

Seeing him standing there hesitating, a child asked him what he was looking for.

"The altar," he replied, "the altar of St. Anne."

Instinctively the little fellow seemed to know that Pat was blind, and, taking his hand, he led him, not only into the church, but up to the very steps of the altar itself, where many others were already kneeling, and which most assuredly otherwise Pat could never have found.

Poor Pat. It was no fault of his if he did not get his prayer answered. Certainly his faith had never been excelled. He had the most

absolute belief that in an hour or so at most he would be cured. At first the hours seemed as nothing. He merely thought that the petitions of the many others were occupying the saint's attention. Then at last he became physically weary, and the first shadow of doubt crossed his mind, and the recollection of the words he had heard at the hospital — that nothing could restore his sight — came back to him. Still, there were others coming and going, and he would hold on till the last moment.

The church was getting quieter now; the rush of people had almost ceased, and silence reigned at last so completely that he could hear his own heart beating, he thought. He knew it was dark, and that he was nearly alone, and for the first time the lessening preoccupation of his mind left room for the appreciation of physical hunger. What must he do? He had no money for the saint. He had offered her all he had to offer. His past experience of almost universal human sympathy would not let him believe that a saint could be really obdurate. He had prayed with all the words he knew how to use. What was now left to him to do?

Doubt soon began to be fear in his mind.

Could it be possible that she would not help? or that men had deceived him on purpose, and that she could not help him in his trouble? They had given money; surely that meant that they too believed in her power. He was getting cold and miserable, and had neither friends nor money nor knowledge of what to do.

Time now seemed endless, and as his fears began to be realized, and everything everywhere grew darker to him, fear gave place to anger. Rising from his knees in a storm of passion, he flung himself out of the church. Somehow he got outside, and even down the steps without accident. Now the cool evening air sobered him up. He had come back to the world of facts, and the magnitude of the problems before him overwhelmed even his self-possession. He could have cried aloud for help, regardless of the fact that he expected no one to pay any attention to him. The thoughtlessness and selfishness of the crowd had given him an altogether new view of the world. Here were supposedly the best of men, Christian men full of faith, and yet he could not bring himself to ask help from any

of them, fearing to face another rebuff in his present state of mind. Oh, to be back home again! seeing or blind, he did not care. He would have given his hearing as well if he could only have tasted again the feeling that men sympathized with him and loved him.

Suddenly the unexpected happened. A hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice said to him in the most kindly tone, "Well, Paddy, where are you going for the night?" It was the voice of one of his fellow passengers on the train. The poor fellow was speechless, but silence was golden this time. The stranger in the train had learned his story, and then lost sight of him in the crowd, busy with his own affairs. However, he was able to read the conflicting emotions, culminating in despair, which were so plainly written on Pat's features. So he did not wait for an answer, but locking his arm in Paddy's, he just said, "Come along; I'll give you a bed to-night."

The reaction was marvelous, and no doubt was Pat's salvation. It was exactly what folk would do at Peace Haven. He almost fancied that he was at home again, and when at length the supper was served, and he was told to "sit

right in," — the very words with which he was so familiar at home, — the awful feeling of loneliness left him, and he broke down and cried like a child.

The unknown friend proved to be "only a laboring man," a man with a family of his own; but he took interest enough in poor Paddy to straighten out all his difficulties, and eventually to see him off safely for his long journey back, and that not without something with which to buy a bit of food on the way.

In due course of time Pat reached home again. His friends have not yet agreed on any interpretation of the strange events, except that, having no theoretical faith in saints anyhow, unfortunately, in their intellectual self-satisfaction, they know that Paddy just wasted his time and money.

A strange change had come over Pat, however, and no one was more conscious of it than was he himself. With physical eyes he still cannot see physical things, or even the physical faces of those he loves. But for all that his eyes had been opened, yes, very widely opened, and he saw life and its true values in altogether new lights. With possibly less trust in

saints in heaven, he had learned to have more use for saints on earth. Not St. Anne, but the unknown laborer had been the means of a better eye-opening than he had ever hoped to receive. "Paddy is as blind as a bat," men will tell you in Peace Haven, but his unselfish life, his happy face and uncomplaining nature, and his humble services, gladly rendered to any and every man, have done more in these past few years to sweeten Peace Haven than Peace Haven knows — and there are some of us who still believe that Paddy did after all receive his sight at Sainte Anne de Beaupré.

THE CHRISTMAS VOYAGE OF THE HANDY LASS

THE good schooner Handy Lass had sailed once more for the Labrador, taking with her all the hopes, and most of the possessions, of Uncle Solomon Anstey. The bread and butter for his whole large family depended on this annual venture. The ice this spring had been the latest on record. The very oldest resident "had never even heard from his grandfather of the Straits being blocked in August." There had not been twenty-four hours clear of drift ice since Skipper Solomon left Icy Tickle.

With him, for their first long trip, were his two oldest boys, 'Lige and Ben. Each was to have half a man's share out of the voyage; and big indeed they had felt, as in their new blue guernseys and sea-boots they had waved good-bye to the "children," left with their mother to tend the garden and home.

Week after week the ice held on. The time for the capelin school had come and gone, and when one day we happened to board the Handy Lass, we almost believed Uncle Solomon was discouraged.

"No, Doctor, believe me. We've ne'er a fish under salt yet, and t' time nearly runned up for trapping already. — But the good Lord knows best for we," he added guiltily, and I caught his eye as he looked round to see if I had noticed the nearest approach to quarreling with the Almighty's dealings that I had ever seen him display.

"You'll have to go farther north and stay later, Uncle Solomon," I replied. "But you don't mind the ice. I've seen you hauling the anchor chain without a mitt on, long after the harbor had been 'caught over.'"

"That's right enough, Doctor. It's them at home I'm thinkin' on. There's five little ones besides 'Lige and Ben, and them do eat a power of vittles."

Three months afterward, our own hospital steamer had gone into winter quarters. The ice was already making in all the coves; and the fleet had gone south. Late one evening a belated vessel, flying no less than three somewhat tattered flags, anchored in the roadstead. She was veritably "bringing up the keel of the Labrador." It did not take us long, with the glasses from the balcony of our house, to make

out the lines and rigging of the Handy Lass. She was log-loaded, and, being driven in for shelter on her way south, had hoisted all her bunting to emphasize that fact for our information.

"Well, Uncle Solomon," I exclaimed, as the radiant features of my old friend welcomed me over the rail. "So you've done it after all."

"Yes, t'ank God," he answered. "'Ask and it shall be given; seek and ye shall find'; and we found 'em north of Gulch Cave, when the ice was already making on the meshes at night. But we'm in some trouble, Doctor, and I'm real glad it was fixed for we to call in and see you. Ben here has been ailin' the last month, and us can see nothin' t' matter. I'd just like to have you look at him."

An examination made even in the deep, dark bunk of a small schooner revealed the need for immediate operation.

"There's trouble in his appendix. That's his stomach, you know. You should have him taken right up to the hospital for operation. We can send him home by the last mail-boat. She runs from here till January; and if she

does n't get along that trip, we'll keep him till spring."

"It's as you says, Doctor."

So the following morning the schooner sailed away, leaving the veritable Benjamin of the crew in our hands. Fortunately, things went well. Ben made a good recovery, and it was only the early ice preventing the steamer getting into our harbor that was keeping him with us.

Day by day slipped by, and no westerly gale came to clear the coast of the young "slob." Our older patients took little notice of the fact that the steamer had failed to "reach North" on her second fortnightly December trip. The vagaries of our weather had made *them* stoical. But Ben was like the master watch who cannot find the seal-patch in March. Nothing would satisfy him that he could exist away from home for Christmas, especially with that "half-share" awaiting him.

At last came Christmas Eve, and with it all the preparations the good nurses always make for that occasion. Ben was mystified at the "spruce boughs being brought right into the house." The gay bunting in all the wards was

a new experience to him. It fairly forced him to be interested. "What's un for, Miss?" he asked the nurse many times, as he gazed at the various decorations. To his utilitarian mind money spent, except for necessities, was wasted on "that which profiteth not." The feeling of secrecy that pervaded the whole atmosphere so fascinated him that he forgot his troubles; and when Christmas Day was over, and all its festivities, including the fun of a real Santa Claus, who had brought him a beautiful pocket knife, he caught the spirit of the rest, and gave himself up to a very riot of enjoyment.

At length, however, the long-expected westerly gales came. All but the standing ice was scattered over the ocean's face, and the plucky little mail-boat once more forced a passage to our doors and Ben at last betook himself to the bosom of his family.

It was not till the following fall that I again met with Uncle Solomon. The fleet is large, the fishing-grounds scattered, and somehow, in the journeys of the earlier summer, we failed to run across the Handy Lass. So when one day we descried her working north among

half a dozen other craft, we steamed up under her lee, and hailed the watch.

Uncle was summoned on deck, and when he saw us alongside, he at once hove his vessel to the wind and invited us to drop a boat to come aboard. We were keen enough to catch a glimpse of our last winter's patient, but more so to hear what Uncle Solomon's views were on the saving of his boy's life.

It was Ben himself, strong and hearty, who was standing watch, and he literally fell all over us, as we climbed aboard. It would have done any landsman good to have felt the grip which Uncle Solomon always gives either friend or stranger.

"So you got your Benjamin back safely, Skipper?"

"Why, yes, t'ank God, Doctor. He done a good winter's work."

I was wondering how a modern surgical operation had impressed him, and so asked, "Don't you find it strange that we were able to cut him open and put our hands right into him?"

"Well, I've been splittin' codfish these forty years now, Doctor, and sometimes I mostly

thinks I could split a man. But you's right about the sewing up. Doctor, there be one thing that Ben never stops talkin' about, and that be's the times they had at Christmas. An old spruce all ablaze, he says, like t' burnin' bush, and presents on it for every one. You can't stop him, Doctor, and nothin' will satisfy him now but us must have one like it come Christmas."

The dream seemed destined to be realized. Once again the old skipper "struck t' fish." "Got right in among 'em," as he informed me later. And so, reaching home with a "bumper voyage," he reckoned "he'd carry it to St. John's himself, and sell it straight to the big merchants." "They gives more'n the small peddlers," he explained as an excuse for this departure from the time-immemorial custom of bartering it with a trader.

Uncle Solomon's judgment was more than justified by his experiences in St. John's. "Why, they'd as soon give cash as trade," he reported. "And it is beyond all, the way them peddlers in the shops looks at a bit o' cash." His earnings, to his surprise and joy, reached far beyond the mere common "heavy stuffs"

that form the staples of life in most of the fishermen's cottages. Some cocoa and milk were added, and then "some of that American tinned meat," which they adore, and a few other small luxuries. Even then, Uncle Solomon was not easy, for there lay still in his unaccustomed pocket — a bag of dollars "that be no use in t' winter in Icy Tickle."

So a consultation was held with the "officers" on board the Handy Lass, among whom 'Lige and Ben were privileged to sit. The presumptive problem was, "What shall us do with t' balance comin' to we?" but the real question at issue in Uncle Solomon's mind was, "Should they have a Christmas tree?" It is wonderful how strongly one determined member can swing a jury. It is true, Ben was the junior member. But with him conviction was so strong, and the rest were so undecided as to what was best, that a serious effort for a combined Christmas tree, the first ever held in Icy Tickle, was finally agreed upon.

Weird packages, assorted and numerous, soon crowded the small storage space in the Handy Lass's after cupboards, for the ship was log-loaded, both below and on deck. Private

corners, long hallowed by custom for tobacco tins and special oddments, were cheerfully resigned for mysterious paper bags. No spot was sacred, and Uncle Solomon was once very near to complaining when he reached out and found his little pet store of smoking-materials had been "tidied up," and only a soft, pudgy bag greeted his anticipatory fingers.

"A southerly wind and a cloudless sky betokened a sailing morning," and it was with hearts as light as their pockets that they at last let go their shore hawsers, swung off into the stream, cat-headed the anchor, and steered out into the open, with the Handy Lass's jibboom pointing "northward ho."

Uncle Solomon told me later, "Boys will be boys, but them lads was fair beyond all." Ben was for hanging some of the packages on the cross-trees, and even the sober-minded mate, Uriah, seriously considered 'Lige's suggestion to call into Sleepy Cove on the way "down North" and get some spruce boughs to fix on the mainmast. "Why, folks would have thought us was ruined, and the ship were for sale," said Uncle Solomon, "or else that us was over-proud and thought us could

sweep t' seas. But still, Doctor, you knows there be them in Icy Tickle what has never seed St. John's, and they old folks be easy upset, when 'em has n't seed t' world. There'd have been talk enough about we as it were, for Ben had lashed a large animal they calls a 'Steady Bear' onto the bobstay, unbeknownst to us, in St. John's harbor."

The dog watch was over — the first watch was set for the night. The schooner was just airing along on her voyage north over an almost oily sea, and all hands were sitting on the rail yarning about the great time they would have at Christmas. They were keeping it up so long that Skipper Solomon had just come up on deck to order the watch below to turn in, fearing that they would sleep on their watch — a real danger on these moonless nights in December with the ice about.

Suddenly, without any warning, like a bolt from the blue, something struck the vessel, as if it had been the hammer of Thor. Like a wild animal taken unawares, the Handy Lass seemed to make one great leap in the air, throwing every man off his feet. There followed a terrible moment of horror, and yet of

hope. The men by the lee bulwarks were already in the water, but the skipper grasped the mainsheet block as he fell, and was holding on for dear life. Against the clear sky he could see the weather rail rising up and up and up, as the ship canted more and more over. Under the fearful pressure of the wind, she was being slowly driven down, much as the giant Gaul forced the bull to earth with his mighty strength. The brave little vessel was like a live thing, fighting for every inch. She seemed to be making one supreme struggle for life, and now it almost looked as if she were gaining; so much so that though the deck was already nearly perpendicular, the skipper, clinging to the block, had time to get out his jack-knife, hoping to cut the main sheet, and so ease the pressure from the mainsail. Could he have done it, the ship might still have been saved. But it was not so ordained. Before he could sever a single strand, a second blow struck the vessel. She reeled, staggered, hung for one brief moment — and then fell over.

How it all happened, and how any one ever managed to escape from beneath the ruin, no one will ever be able to explain. There was an

awful crash, a roar of falling cargo, a fearful moment of utter black darkness below the cold waters, a struggle to get clear of wreckage, and then each man, grasping some hatch or board or loose case, found himself floating in the darkness in that frigid sea. It has often been said that our fishermen are like limpets, such is their power of clinging on. All their lives they are grasping and hauling; and, shaking hands in the dark, you can easily recognize a fisherman, by his heavy, bent hand, which never straightens quite out as does a landlubber's.

There is no need to make apologies, however, for their strength and endurance and courage now served each man well. The Handy Lass was lying flat on her side, unable to rise owing to her shifted cargo, and the sea was pouring into her hatches. Uncle Solomon was the first to get clear of the water. He had crawled up on the vessel's side like a cat, going hand over hand along the lanyards, and was now lying out on the starboard bilge, clinging fast to the after channel plates. Instinctively he at once began calling out to his men, and as he told me himself, was more than

surprised to hear so many answering. An awful sense of utter loneliness had gripped him like a vice, but it was soon all forgotten as he worked his way fore and aft to help his struggling lads into temporary safety.

Almost before they all had assembled on the boat's bottom, the cyclone had vanished. There was scarcely a cloud in the sky and hardly a wave on the sea; only a sullen, resentful roll, as if Father Neptune himself was growling because old Boreas had played him so scurvy a trick.

"Keep up your hearts, lads," said Uncle Solomon. "The Lord has brought us through so far. Maybe He'll save us out of this yet." Every man in the crew acquits him of even a trace of complaining this time. "Keep up your hearts. T' boat seems gone, but I 'lows we can make shift for a raft, if she floats long enough." With that, he started crawling out along the rigging, hoping he might cut loose the main gaff from the sail, and so have something to start on. Meanwhile the mate did the same along the mizzen.

To the shivering lads on the vessel's side it seemed ages, but Solomon says it was n't two

minutes, as he groped his way out over the water, before he discovered that the ship's dory had broken from her lashings, and was floating upside down under the mainsail. To how many men, at such a time, and in such a plight, would this have meant anything? It did not take Uncle Solomon long to see its possibilities. With his clasp-knife, fast now to his wrist with a piece of spunyarn for fear it might be knocked from his grasp, he began his perilous task. Abandoning his hold on the more solid rigging, he flung himself into the half-sunken body of the sail, and half-swimming and half-wading, he succeeded in crawling up and lying out on the dory's bottom. By clever maneuvering, he managed to cut away the canvas all along the dory, which eventually bobbed up through, and as dories will, immediately turned right over, and lay there, full to the brim of water.

All hands knew from his constant calling what he was doing, and long before he had finished, the boys had cut and undone a halyard and flung one end for him to make fast by.

To bail her out was now the only difficulty. Once that could be done, there remained at

least a chance for their lives. But one thing they had already realized, and that was that there was not much time left them. The water was fast reaching up the side of their brave little craft, and they all knew well that a few minutes more, and her efforts to help them in their need must come to an end forever.

"Quick, Ri! Quick, boys!" fairly yelled Uncle Solomon, who had already hauled off his big sea-boots, and forced one into the mate's hands. "Bail for your lives. We must get clear before the ship sinks, or she'll carry us all with her."

Now began a veritable race for life. There in the dark, in that sunken dory which was only kept upright by a fast-settling vessel, were five men bailing out water with their sea-boots, working with all their might, for life itself hung on the issue.

"You're gainin' on her, boys; you're gainin'! Let her have it! T' seats only is awash now; t' rail's free! She'll float us in another minute! Keep at it; it'll keep you from freezin'! Bail away!" And suchlike encouragements slipped off Uncle Solomon's tongue, as if he had been

born to the rôle of orator. In the face of real danger he had neither desire nor time for complaints. Suddenly like thunder, "Leave it to the boys, Ri!" he shouted. "Cut the oars loose: they're lashed under the thwarts! Push off! Push off! We're all safe now; but keep bailin', boys! keep bailin'!" Then, so that only the mate could hear, "She'll be gone in a second, Ri. Push, as you love your life."

Even as he spoke something came up from the sea beneath, and lifted the boat they were in almost out of water. Had she not still been partly waterlogged, Uncle Solomon says they must all have capsized again. As it was, the after leach rope of the mainsail scraped all along the bottom, and, lifting their bow, as they finally slipped off into clear water, it nearly sent them all down stern foremost.

Then for a moment, though it might have cost them their lives, every man stopped bailing. For slowly the Handy Lass righted herself for the last time. Mizzen and mainmast, with all canvas set, were uncannily carried up into the sky out of that horrible darkness, and the great gap in the mainsail through which the dory had come grinned at them all, just for

one moment, like the evil eye. As they looked, the stern went down deeper and deeper, and kept throwing the jib-boom more and more vertically upright, till at last nothing was visible above the surface but the bowsprit and its rigging. Then slowly and stubbornly that sank, too, and vanished out of sight beneath the icy waters.

"Ben, did you see it?" cried 'Lige.

"'Deed I did. It was grinnin' like Satan."

"Sure; it seemed to put up its hand to wave good-bye to us."

"Put up its finger to its nose," answered Ben.

They had completely forgotten the danger, the fact that they were still up to their knees in water, and that they might go down any minute.

"Quit foolin', boys, and bail as hard as you can!" shouted Uncle Solomon, as he worked unceasingly himself. "What did you see, anyhow? There was nothing but the old ship."

"Sure there was," answered 'Lige, though he was now keeping time with his father as they worked at the water in the boat. "Sure, Ben's 'Steady Bear' climbed right out and sat on the

end of the bobstay, as the Handy Lass went down."

Steering by the stars, which seemed to be friendly watchers of their efforts, and continually bailing and rowing to keep all hands occupied, they made good progress, so that before the day broke, the land loomed up only some four or five miles distant. Fearing that any minute a breeze of wind might spring up, they never slacked for a second, and an hour or two later they landed in a little cove at the bottom of a bay quite strange to them, and with no inhabitants. A blazing fire was soon under way, for Uncle Solomon's water-tight matchbox was the only rival in his affections of his pocket Bible. Then a few miles of following the coast-line brought them to a lonely house.

A whole week elapsed before they succeeded in reaching a port where they could find a chance to get passage for Icy Tickle, and long before they finally arrived, the "mothers and wives were 'most despairing."

No, there was no Christmas tree, either that year or the next at Icy Tickle. They had lost too much in the wreck to let them think of

more than bread and butter for many a day. "But," said Uncle Solomon, "Doctor, my missis says she got a Christmas present all right. It was me and t' boys that t' Lord give her back. And with that He taught me, too, not to have a complainin' mind because us did n't have all t' things t' others has. 'T is a grand thing to be alive; better 'n havin' things. And us has nearly finished the new Handy Lass now, Doctor."

I could n't help smiling as he finished his tale, for after a short pause he added, "But we 'm be goin' to have a Christmas tree one o' them days, all t' same."

THE GIFTS OF POVERTY

It was as wonderful a day as ever the old earth sees, —a cloudless sky, a glorious sun, a light offshore wind, and our ship lolling lazily on the deepest of deep-blue waters. The supreme sense of joy at being alive, characteristic of the sub-arctic, was at its summit. There was a brisk tang in the air which forbade lassitude, either of mind or body. Ashore the marshes were stiffened up with young frost, and the fresh-water lakes had just "caught over."

The annual exodus from Labrador which characterizes the approach of winter had begun, as some willow grouse, in their exquisite fall plumage, and a brace of fine fat geese hanging in our rigging testified.

On every hand it was written that Dame Nature was busy with her winter preparations. She had posted her order to us to "get out quick," in brilliant and insistent letters of salt-water ice on our freeboard. She had added a glittering, new, white "Plimsoll mark" right round our water-line, and had attached large white traveling-tags to the links of our anchor

chain. The whirring wings of large companies of sea-birds, "southward-bound," kept sounding a curfew to us to follow. Even our cod-fish were forsaking the shallows, and seeking the deeper and darker waters at the word of Her-who-must-be-obeyed. The mate, sitting on the rail, had apparently been reading my thoughts, for he suddenly broke in, "'T is getting on time, Doctor, to be thinkin' of them poor underwriters, ain't it?"

A little later, if a land-lubber had not noticed the square blue flag with its white center at our masthead, he would have wondered what gave such spring to the heels of our sailors, who, to look at, were far from being fairies.

A ship half the size of Columbus's, the Atlantic still farther north and grown no more docile with age, the winter equinox past, long nights, heavy winds, and high seas expected, not a little forbidding ice dotted about the horizon — all these together cannot stop men who have a vision of home from whistling at their work. Indeed, the only additional tonic to be desired by a healthy soul was just a good, keen problem.

At these times the responsive nature of our men of the sea simply overflows with kindness. A company of our Labrador friends, warned of our departure by the blue peter at our main, had swarmed aboard to bid us "au revoir." Yet, in spite of all, and of many little souvenirs which we saw passing from our seamen's kit-bags to those of their friends, to whom even such small gifts were of no mean value, an air of gloom hung over the section of the little world on deck — a tinge of the sorrow which eternally hangs over things human and transient.

Among the group on deck we found two of our oldest friends. They were of a more reserved type than a lonely environment usually produces, but they were known as bosom companions, first-class workmen, and excellent neighbors in time of need. When we wished a hospital completed, when one of our boats had been injured and needed repairing, — indeed, whenever any difficulty overtook any one, — it was always to Uncle Ben and Uncle Abe that our little world turned; and when it did so, it never found them wanting.

We knew that all our friends were suffering

from a particularly poor fishing season, and we who were bound for home and plenty could not but feel a soft spot for those left to face what might turn out to be the hard hand of hunger.

"Are you going to meet your debts and have anything coming to you this winter, Uncle Abe?" I queried.

"When my father died, Doctor," he replied, "he left me in debt to the traders. I just turns in all I gets — they knows I do — so they keeps me along. But it will be a bit hard this time, I knows. You can't expect them to feed folks for nothin'. There won't be no luxuries, I'm 'lowing," he laughed.

"That was a bad heritage. I should hate to leave it to any son of mine."

"Bad enough, Doctor, but I'm gettin' on in life, and the Lord has n't given us ne'er a child — and" — he turned his head away, as he said it, though I knew of what he was thinking — "well, something may come along yet."

It is hard that the necessities of one's life should depend on the whim of another, and that the dreadful cloud of want should hang over the old age of men, who, at great risk to life and with hard labor, have spent all their

active years toiling as producers for their country.

Now, years after the event told in this story, an old-age pension has been granted them.

There were tears on Uncle Abe's weather-beaten cheeks as he turned round again. They were not for himself, but I knew it was of the beloved partner of his life that he was thinking.

"How about you, Uncle Ben? They tell me you have been meeting some head winds these past two years."

"There was never a truer word, Doctor. What wi' losin' nets in the ice last fall, and then t' schooner on Deadman's Rocks this spring, there won't be much left to fill the bread-box, come settlin' day."

"Oh, I'm sure the trader will do as well by you as by Uncle Abe," I answered. "Only yesterday he was telling me you were the best dealer he had. He said you had never been in debt yet."

"Maybe he would, and maybe he would n't," was the reply. "But I've never owed a man a cent yet, and it will be a dry diet for us before I gets into any man's hands."

"You don't mean that you were born and bred in Labrador, and were never in debt?"

"That 's what I does, Doctor. I settles accounts every October-end these forty years since I fended for myself, and the Lord's been that good to me that I've come out square every time. Yes, and had enough not to be hungry either, thank God," he said fervently.

"I don't know many other men on the coast who could say that, Uncle Ben."

"Maybe there are n't many, but there are n't many like my Mary, either. She's been better than another half of any voyage I ever made. If she had n't, there 'd have been many a hungry mouth beyond mine, when them who is run out has to take to the komatik trail for a meal in winter. Why, she found something for every soul of twenty-odd folk what brought up for a week at our house one time this spring, and over fifty dogs ate what they left behind them."

When I thought of his meager stock, it sounded like the old story of the widow's cruse, only here it was the woman who was the "window from heaven." If I had to guess, I should say that that widow of Sarepta was

from Labrador, for her heart, like those in Labrador, was so much larger than her pocket.

Before sailing we slipped ashore, and the merchant's agent kindly let me see the books, which loom up like the one mentioned in Revelation, to our imagination in Labrador. It was all true — Uncle Ben had never once failed to meet his score; and moreover, there was a real chance to give Uncle Abe a hand. Both families "tided out" that winter.

Ten years slipped away. We had sold our little sailing hospital boat, and in the steamer which replaced her were running into the same harbor near Capelin Cove. Suddenly a flag floating at half-mast on the hilltop caught my eye.

"What's wrong ashore?" I shouted to a group of men hauling a herring-net which lay almost in the fairway.

"Uncle Abe's missus be gone. They 're burying her to-night."

An hour later, sorrowful enough at heart for my poor friend, I found my way to the little wooden church where Uncle Abe, for many years, had been so familiar as perpetual warden. Not wishing to intrude at so sad a

moment, I waited at the door, while the little cortège wended its way up the hillside.

With bared head bowed low, Uncle Abe was following the humble coffin, but as he passed me, he stepped aside, and shook me so warmly by the hand that he left me wondering at his buoyant spirit in the face of such trouble.

The ceremony over, I ventured to call in at the now deserted cottage, only to find Uncle Abe home before me. The look of quiet joy in his eyes amazed me. Something in his throat, however, kept him from speaking, so when he motioned me to the chair which his partner had so long occupied, I waited for him to break the silence.

"The Lord's ever been good to me," he began at last. "Ben helped us through that bad winter you minds of, and now, she'll never want, whatever happens. I never prayed much 'bout particular things, Doctor, 'cept that. But I used to be askin' every day that she might be took first when the time come; I could n't bear to think of her left to fend for herself, and now the good Lord's fixed it that way."

A little later, when I stepped out of that

lonely cottage, I realized that I owed this man a debt which money could not purchase — the assurance that even we can contribute something is one of the durable treasures of life.

Ten more years had passed away. Uncle Abe had joined his devoted partner shortly after she left him, joyfully looking forward to that reunion with her without whom life was a blank to him. Our work had grown so much, and its cares and problems made such increasing demands on our time, that we had imperceptibly been losing touch with some of our fishermen friends, that personal touch which had been of such value to us. The vital channel through which one's life can best bless others had been almost choked with anxieties and "things." The advent of a wireless telegraph station had not been altogether an unmixed blessing, as it summoned one hither and thither, often on trivial quests. Even as our chains ran out through the hawse-pipes a messenger had rowed out to us with an imperious summons to hurry south, and settle some problems which the lateness of the season appeared to render immediately important.

This summer our boilers had blown out, and as we were unable to replace them for lack of the necessary funds, we had been obliged to cruise the coast in a small yawl. It had seemed an unmitigated catastrophe, for we had been delayed again and again by the fitfulness of seas and storms. But these very delays had given us time once again to visit round the houses, as in the old days. As we had flitted north, we had been detained at Capelin Cove for a couple of days, and had found the last of the old brigade, Uncle Ben, on his beam-ends. A severe stroke, twelve months previous, had incapacitated him for any sort of work, and now, as he put it, he lay "a helpless hulk," dependent on his poor old wife and only daughter to feed, clothe, and nurse him. As of old, he was too independent to ask aid from strangers, and his little stock had dwindled to the vanishing point. His wife, still "better to him than half a voyage," confessed that during the winter just passed they had been short of both fire and light. "Susie saws t' wood up when t' neighbors brings it out for us; but she is n't strong enough to go into the woods and haul any herself," her mother explained.

"Ben has to be turned over a dozen times in the night, Doctor, and when it's below zero outside, and no fire or light, it do come a bit hard on an old woman, night after night. No, we have n't money any longer to reach to oil or coal."

Yet the whole atmosphere of the tiny cottage was infectiously cheerful. Uncle Ben lay beaming in his bed like a full moon at harvest. I was bidden to "sit right in," and share a cup of tea, the absence of sugar or tinned milk passing unnoticed in the genuine joy of the occasion.

Only as I rose to leave could I get a word in private with the women as to the ways and means for the future. "I suppose Uncle Ben's in debt at last?" I ventured, feeling certain he must have been obliged to abandon the old rigid law he had laid down for himself.

"No, no, Doctor. He'll never allow us to borrow a thing. You see he has no prospect of paying back."

"I see. If you could afford it you would buy some coal, oil, bedclothing, milk, flour, butter, a jacket, and — Oh, never mind making a list, now. I'm short of time, and I must say

good-bye to Uncle Ben." Owing to his malady his speech was unintelligible; but there are other senses to come to one's aid, and the look in his eyes was full of peace and joy as he nodded "adieu." It sent me away grateful that a man with "nothing," had yet so much to give.

Mother Nature's arguments in Labrador are just as imperious as are those of Father Time with mortality, and three months later, once more, together with the fishing fleets of schooners, the birds, the beasts, and the fishes, we were migrating south at her bidding. It had been a troublesome summer. On some sections of the northern coast the fishery had been almost a blank, and we had left many friends anxious for the winter. A number of craft had been lost, in an unusually violent storm. The expenses of our own work had been heavy, and there were troubles in the outside world which seemed to render the raising of money for it particularly difficult. Telegraphic news from the home far away was disturbing, and we were being pressed to hasten on with all speed. We met nothing but head winds and high seas, and now the violence of the waves

had forced us to run back on our course and seek a temporary shelter. So we were glad enough once more to drop our anchors in Capelin Cove.

It was already late, indeed quite dark, before we had secured mooring-ropes to the land, to enable us to ride out the storm in safety. Even now our little craft was rushing on the seas at the ropes, threatening, every time she came up short, to tear everything away with the jerk. Having done our best to make her safe, experience told us we had better get ashore while we could, in case worse came to the worst. It was much too dark to do anything more, and, worried and anxious as we were, patrolling the cliffs, with the rain beating its way up under our oilskins, only helped to add to the general sense of melancholy. So, telling the men to find quarters for themselves, but to keep watch, and call me if anything happened, I began to wonder how best to kill the hours which would hold no sleep for me. Suddenly my eye caught the glint of a tiny light on the hillside. It was Uncle Ben's cottage, and like a flash I realized that there lay the best source of comfort possible. Stumbling

up the slippery rocks, I was soon tapping at the door of the familiar little cottage.

His good wife bade me a hearty welcome, though my dripping clothing and a howling blast of icy wind and rain greeted the opened door, tearing it from her feeble grasp. No sooner was it safely secured, however, than in her cheery way she led me to the old armchair by the bedside, for night and day were all alike to Uncle Ben.

I found the old man as usual, beaming all over with smiles. Suddenly a most unusual cloud spread over his features, as if he, of all men, was seized with anxiety about something. On returning to his bedside, I found him fumbling with his least useless hand in the bedclothing, and shortly he pushed over to me a bundle of dollar-bills. Not realizing his meaning, I counted them and handed them back to him, telling him the amount. He at once signaled that this was wrong. So his wife was summoned to translate. It appeared that a few "things," like coal and sugar, had arrived for Uncle Ben while I was North; and he had at once suspected me.

His daughter, as teacher in the village

school, was to receive forty dollars at the end of November. Uncle Ben had induced her to discount that sum, so that if I called in again and proved to be the guilty party, he at least need not be accessory to the crime of indiscriminate charity.

Uncle Ben's smile was radiant again, and he was trying to speak. "He says he don't want to go home owing anything," his wife explained. "He says you must have lots of others worse off than he this year."

I protested that it was merely a case of the windows of heaven being opened, and that the Lord had as much right to feed Benjamin free, as Elijah, or any other prophet.

Uncle Ben's physical eyes were dim, and I had taken care that the tiny oil lamp should throw no light on my features, but his soul was not to be deceived, and at the bidding of his eyes I submissively picked up the bills and ostentatiously put them in my pocket. The moments passed quickly as we talked of the old days, of the good times we had had together hunting, of Uncle Abe's discomfiture the day my retriever stole all his pile of ducks at Gunning Point and carried them to the

hospital. Then we spoke of the future, till the old man grew as gay and blithesome, even in that sorry physical environment, as a boy of twenty.

There was a twinkle in Uncle Ben's eye when at last I moved to go that I could not quite understand. He seemed to be enjoying some joke all to himself. "He is n't satisfied about those bills, Doctor," his wife hastened to explain, as she saw my puzzled look. He says that you have got to let him see you carry them away. Guiltily, I felt about for the bills, to satisfy him that I had no evil intentions, and was fortunate enough to find them under the chair-cushion without his apparently detecting me.

I often picture myself now, like a whipped schoolboy, with my oilskins and seaboots turned into Etons and polished shoes, shamefacedly walking out of a master's study, parading the evidences of my guilt between my fingers.

On the verge of a long Labrador winter, from the threadbare cottage of a defenseless woman and a dying man, I was carrying all their material wealth. It seemed to stick to my

fingers, and the synonym "filthy lucre," for the first time in Labrador seemed appropriate to it. For I was again realizing that I came away the debtor, and that this man who had "nothing" had still so many things to offer me.

Fortunately for my self-respect, there are more ways than one to Rome, and before we got our anchors for the home run, we had found a subterfuge which enabled us to circumvent even our friend's scruples, and yet make our message to him speak in those material terms which alone we felt qualified to use when dealing with Uncle Ben.

PAINGO, THE LONELY ONE

ATTATAKSUAK was, though a young man, well known all along that marvelously beautiful part of the northern Labrador coast where the great Tongak, or Devil's, Mountains abut on the Atlantic seaboard. There the eternal forces of ice and ocean have cut away moraines and foothills, till all along the coast for many miles huge cliffs two thousand feet in height frown at the approaching stranger, striking terror into the heart of any one not accustomed to find such deep water running home to the land, so that only in places many miles apart can bottom be found in water shallow enough for a vessel to drop an anchor and find safety in time of stress.

Such natural conditions produce, in those who have to wrest a living from their environment, similar characteristics, and among a really courageous people Attataksuak had already attained an enviable position as a leader among his fellows.

Women are scarce in Labrador. There ap-

pears to be an unusual difficulty in, or possibly less earnest attention paid to, the rearing of female children, and it is by no means easy, nay, by no means possible always, to secure a wife. In spite of this fact, it was not at all unusual or considered strange that the chief men should annex more than one lady partner. The Moravians, indeed, have a rule that a widow shall not remarry for a fortnight — to avoid the rush. Among the Eskimo, women are most rightly esteemed as a valuable adjunct to everyday life, and the modern woman, suffragette or otherwise, would always secure all her rights in an Eskimo family. These rights they seldom or never refuse to accept, and I have seen the women more than once do all the rowing while the husband steered and cheered them on; or carrying all the weights when the almost continual peregrinations of this nomadic race made it necessary for a house to be moved, or other heavy manual work to be done. The women have accorded them many other privileges of developing and occupying their energies, as the cooking, clothes-making, skin-dressing; and indeed everything except the actual hunting has long

ago been handed over to them by their gallant and up-to-date husbands.

In the year 1890 Attataksuak found himself in a dilemma. He had arrived at that period of life at which the Eskimo brave is expected to take a wife, and set up for himself. The keen delights of hunting and fishing, and a good nature which made him loath to deprive his parents of the support which he brought into their igloo, had, indeed, led him to delay that momentous event longer than most young men — a fact which unfortunately reflected on his acceptability among the ladies of his tribe. Added to this, there had been of late some little trouble in his own family circle as to the use of certain boats and weapons he considered his own. Moreover, there were other sons now old enough to fill his place, and altogether things had come to such a state that the natural desire in every man for a home of his own was fiercely kindled, and his nature, like most of his race, was such that the desire became a passion over which he had no control. A wife he must have, and that at once.

Fortunately for him, in the very best igloo in Nakvak Bay was a most desirable daughter.

Oddly enough, her name, Paingo, signified "the lonely one," a description which singularly ill characterized her experiences up to date. But in spite of many suitors she was not yet irrevocably attached. Courtship with Attataksuak was carried on with the same impetuosity as hunting — a policy which apparently answers well in Eskimo-land. For in a short while "the lonely one" had yielded to his assaults and had become his affianced bride. There is, as a rule, no further trouble "down North." The parents are almost always willing to part with their daughters, recognizing, no doubt, the futility of withholding their consent. Tribal customs, however, are often stronger than force of arms, and, Attataksuak being extremely *persona grata*, everything was soon settled except the *quid pro quo*.

Eskimo women, endowed with such privileges as I have suggested, are commercial asséts of no mean value, and the only question which worried Attataksuak was what would be demanded from him in return for Paingo.

Ooavigoo, his prospective mother-in-law, from every point of view was a most desirable family connection. For the almost universal

kindly good nature and hospitality of the Eskimo was simply personified in her. On one point only was she well known to take a possibly unreasonable position. For some reason or other, when her own time had come to leave home, a high price had been demanded for her, and even among an almost communistic people she had never failed to impress upon succeeding *débutantes* the social distinction which that equivalent signified.

So when poor Attataksuak at last arrived at the fateful question, he was not surprised to hear old Ooavigoo embark on the oft-repeated story. "For me in my day a full oomiavik was paid. My father would not hear of his daughter leaving the igloo at a lower cost. Takollik [Four-eyed Dog] was glad enough to get me at that price. He must, indeed, ask a price for our daughter which is comparable to what he paid."

Attataksuak's worst fears were realized. Even his courage received a shock, for he at once recognized that it would mean his having to return to his igloo and swallow the first setback he had ever received in his life. Such experiences are far from trifling to a race who

never seem to us to grow out of boys and girls; and Attataksuak, crestfallen and heartbroken, spent the succeeding night on a lonely rock buttress halfway up the steep cliffs, chafing over his cruel misfortunes.

True, it was only five sealskins Takollik was demanding, in order that he might finish covering his kayak for the walrus-hunting in the spring. But it might just as well have been five hundred so far as Attataksuak was concerned, for he had only recently given the last of his own catch to his parents, and he knew now he would never be able to get them back again.

Eskimo do not commit suicide so readily as Christians, though to poor Attataksuak the world looked black enough to make him wish he could incontinently depart for happier hunting-grounds, and escape the humiliation and disappointment which overhung him so heavily. The dawn of a Labrador day, however, is a stimulant which no one can resist, and it found Attataksuak breakfastless, with a mind intent only on sealskins, overhauling the only kayak still at his command. It was one which had been laid aside by the family

before he had announced his intention of leaving home, and therefore had definitely made over almost all his possessions to the brother who was to fill his place. Alas, that kayak also was short of nearly half its coverings, and would be useless without at least three sealskins more. Eight sealskins he needed now to get his wife! It seemed again as if Paingo must remain "the lonely one," so far as he was concerned, for many a day to come. Then there was always the haunting fear that some other suitor with many sealskins might dispossess him. Indeed, he was already suspicious that there might be something of that kind strengthening the old man Takollik in withholding the hand of his sweetheart. For he had secretly inspected the kayak for which Takollik had stated he required five sealskins, and was absolutely convinced that no more than two were necessary.

It is easy to find friends when all the world smiles on one, and Attataksuak had never yet known the meaning of the cold shoulder. He was astounded beyond measure when, after explaining his real reason for asking the loan of a kayak to his bosom friend, Pikulluk, that

brave had made many specious excuses why he could not lend his. He was luckier, however, in a second venture, and with a kayak, itself not in the best condition, but hired on credit that he would contribute a sealskin for its repair, he was soon far out with lance and dart, hoping that yet he might somehow come by the nine sealskins that he now knew he must get before the fiords froze over, and the seals left for the sunnier South, if first of all he was to obtain his bride, then pay his debt, and have a kayak of his own in a fit condition to fend for her when he got her.

He had no luck the first day, and little better the next, so it was no wonder that his sleep was disturbed by visions of seals' tails vanishing through holes in the ice, and that the lack of his usual caution exercised in approaching his quarry near enough to make sure of it with his rudimentary weapons was time and again his own undoing. He had not been forbidden to visit the igloo of his loved one, and when he ventured to spare a moment from the rigors of the chase, he was able to go up and get a word of cheer from the lonely maiden, who showed as much preference for him — or for his repu-

tation — as it was customary or natural for any Eskimo girl to possess or evince. Moreover, he was able to learn a fact of which he was already suspicious. He had a rival, a very serious one. His very friend Pikulluk, to whom he had so sedulously and secretly explained the reason for his stern necessity for a kayak, was himself an ardent suitor for the maiden of his choice.

Attataksuak's pluck, however, did not desert him, and day after day, and almost night after night, till the slob ice made, and the "sish" actually cut holes through the skin covering of his borrowed kayak, he unflaggingly maintained his quest. He had actually secured three fine skins, and hope loomed large in his optimistic soul, when the owner of the borrowed boat, noticing the damage accruing to his property from the contact with the fast-making ice, and seeing also a very visionary chance of his ever getting even the hire agreed on, much less the half-dozen extra skins which would soon be needed to make good the wear and tear, called a halt.

Now the ice was in. No more skins were obtainable in that district for some months at

least, and poor Attataksuak was fairly on his beam-ends. He was forced to go and confess it to his fiancée and plead for time, which he had very little hope of ever having extended to him.

Every Eskimo in the community seemed now also to know of his difficulty. Takollik was obdurate. He had spoken, and that was the end to parleying. It was five skins, or no wife-giving for him. For his views on the advantages of early marriage were not consonant with the maxims of a former President. There was no mercy either with old Ooavigoo. If, for her benefit, Attataksuak were to relate the whole gamut of his woes, he knew he had nothing to expect of that elderly party but a reiteration of the old, old story; which was enough to make any warrior of spirit unpremeditatedly transfix her own skin with that very seal dart which was now his inseparable companion.

It was Paingo herself who at last came to the rescue, and persuaded him to pocket his constitutional pride and to adopt the last resort of the destitute — go about and beg sealskins from the neighbors, to whom formerly he would have despised to admit that they were

capable of killing a seal, anyhow, when he was about. Swallowing his pride, he at last yielded to her importunity, and started off on his sorry quest. It was galling enough to have to ask, but to be refused at igloo after igloo, and tubik after tubik, was more than he could bear. For to him the many specious excuses with which he was greeted at every attempt were just so many dagger-thrusts into his very soul. When he learned later that his now hated rival had adopted the methods of more civilized countries, and literally cornered the market on the few remaining skins which had not already been exchanged at the Hudson's Bay Company post, he felt once more like climbing the cliff as he had done the first night, and ending his misery by jumping off, the "hari-kari" of Eskimo-land.

The last straw seemed now to have been piled on his already straining back. The only remaining question was whether it would not be permissible to make one last visit to the Takollik igloo, and bid a fond farewell to the object of his devotions. This time his good genius favored him, and with a sad and now hopeless heart he once more wended his way

thither. And now the phenomenon not unknown in civilization proved to be as universal as the human race. The very circumstances which defeated and foiled the man had only served to set the woman's wits a-working — and once more "the lonely one" came to the rescue. Where had all the sealskins gone? Pikulluk she knew was not the man ordinarily to store away his acquisitions. Surely he must have taken them to that great fathomless repository of all skins, to the storehouse of the Hudson's Bay Company. Well she knew that once a skin passed those acquisitive portals, the laws of the great Company, like those of the Medes and Persians, could not be broken, and none could be sold by the agent, whether he wished to do so or not. Nay, if the local factor himself shot or trapped a skin, it was well known that even that skin was not his to do with as he wished. It was no sooner stretched and dried than it became the irredeemable property of the great white men over the waters — or rather, of the great white Queen herself, so Paingo thought.

Yet she knew the agent was a kindly man. Had not he and his wife many times visited

their igloo? Had he not, more than once, brought food and medicine to their family when they were ill? And, indeed, had he not, on one occasion, himself borne his large boat, lashed upon two sledges, over twenty miles across the ice and snow of those terrible hills in winter, that he might risk his own life endeavoring to save a poor Eskimo who had been carried off to sea on the running ice?

Already Attataksuak had swallowed his pride once. Would he not be willing to go yet one step farther? It was the only possible chance which remained untried. Should they not go hand in hand, and, explaining all cruel circumstances of the case, throw themselves entirely on the great white man's mercy?

Long and earnestly that fateful night the lovers discussed and rediscussed every possible and probable outcome of such a step, and already the dawning of the final day had come before Attataksuak had once more yielded to the importunities of the maiden, which were now nothing less than abject entreaties; and had agreed that, although he would not permit her to risk the criticism resulting from a possible refusal, he would himself face the

hardest test that he had ever felt called upon to meet, and go alone and appeal to the Company's agent to break the unbreakable laws.

Though with the diffidence of his race he would face single-handed a bull walrus in the roughest sea, with only his skin boat and hand dart, it was an unstrung and panic-stricken man who might have been seen that morning hesitatingly waiting, half-hidden behind the well-known storehouse. He realized, however, that thinking and hoping there was of little avail, and at last the requisite courage came, and he boldly faced the implacable person who was to decide his fate.

Once inside the door, that courage again evaporated, and, when asked in the most kindly manner what it was that had brought him there, he could not force himself to ask for more than the price of some trifling commodity which he caught sight of on a store shelf. Fortunately the agent was a man of no little perspicacity, and, though never intruding upon the love affairs of the people among whom he lived, he at once noticed the unusual sadness in a man whom he had always known as the sunniest of his sunny customers.

"What's the matter [*ochautelaunga*], Attataksuak? It is n't duffel you came after, I know. If there is anything on your mind that I can help you with [*kailligit*], come right in, and let me know what your trouble is. I'm only too glad to do anything I can to serve you."

It was n't the correct language, — which the agent had learned to speak when he was a little boy, — but the genuine sympathy expressed in his speech and the genial smile, which served to unlock the floodgates of even a stolid Eskimo's emotions; and Attataksuak, in a very brief space of time, had laid bare his inmost secrets, but even then without one word of suggestion that the agent should come to his rescue. It was too much to expect that the windows of heaven should open and shower ready-dressed sealskins on an insignificant "Innuk." The little things of life are often enough really the large ones. A sealskin is worth at Nakvak about sixty cents. After all, the price of "the lonely one" represented only about one dollar and eighty cents of our money. Yet to Attataksuak it was more than a royal ransom.

Lindsey as a judge, Worcester as a clergyman, Cabot as a doctor, are impressing on the world that it is not physical but spiritual levers which stir deepest the hearts of men and affect most materially the forces which make men into men. Experience has taught us that this truth is also a universal one. The annual visit of the great Company's steamer, collecting her load of furs for the March sales in England, had as usual been made just before the ice closed in. Everything had been packed and sent off; not a pelt remained from the last year's hunt. Nor had the new collection begun. Not a single skin was in the store. Pikulluk had been farther-sighted than Paingo had anticipated, and was holding tight to every skin he had gathered.

It was, indeed, an anxious time for Attataksuak, when, after the explanation of the dilemma, the kindly agent told him to wait while he went inside and consulted his better half — a proceeding which, judging from his own experience, Attataksuak had no reason to discredit. After a short absence, the good fellow returned, bearing in his arms a large bundle, which he proceeded to unwrap on the

floor of the store. As they unrolled, in his usual methodical manner he counted them aloud — one, two, three, four, five, six; just like the momentous seconds before the start of some exciting race.

It was positively all there were, and well Attataksuak knew they were the private store which the agent had reserved for his own clothing and boots during the winter. If only he owned them, he could put two to complete the quota to pay for Paingo, one for his friend of the borrowed kayak, and three to put his own boat into hunting order. It may well be imagined, therefore, that his heart almost kept time to the counting, and sometimes very nearly stood still, as he waited to hear the wife's decision.

With that genial smile which has helped to win this man so firm a place in the confidence and love of his people, the agent looked up, and then, laying his hand on Attataksuak's shoulder, said simply, "My wife bids me let you have them all [*aippara ochamat*]."

It is not in the power of my pen to describe the extent of the reaction in poor Attataksuak's heart. Eskimo do not cry. This Eskimo could

not speak. He just lifted the roll in silence, and walked out of the store, almost as dazed as if the factor had struck him on the head with a heavy maul.

Nor, oddly enough, did he for many days return to the store to try and give expression to his gratitude. To that the passing years have affixed a seal which needed no conventional emphasis. But a week later, as the agent was sitting at breakfast, he looked out of his little window and saw two persons coming up over the already hard-trodden snow pathway leading to his door. They were only an Eskimo hunter, radiant with joy, and an Eskimo girl, her face alight with that expression which it is the supreme delight of a real man to have kindled in the heart of his "neighbor."

They had no money to pay; they made no loud-sounding promises for the future. As I have said, the Innuit are a people of few words. But as they bade good-bye, using the Eskimo word, *acksunai*, which, being interpreted, is "Be ye both strong," my friend assures me that the hand-grip meant even then more to him than the temporary inconvenience of a

shortage of protection on his long winter rounds, which he realized the sacrifice of his stock of skins must cost him before Attataksuak and his bride would have a chance of repaying him in material coin.

THE NORTHERN CHIEF

THE approach to Katatallik in North Labrador is guarded by gigantic cliffs which tower away up into the sky and suggest the great gateway of a Titan's fortress. The fiord runs in nearly straight for twenty-five miles, with just one deep, lateral cut, called the "Tallik." This branches off at right angles between two huge precipices, which are said to be four thousand feet high. The dark water is practically bottomless, while the entrance to this Giant's Causeway is guarded by three large reefs lying across its mouth out in the open bay, by the icebergs and growling ice-floes which haunt it all the year, and by the impenetrable fog which almost perpetually hangs over the cliffs.

When my old friend George Davis was sent there thirty years ago by the Hudson's Bay Company, to open a trading-post for them, the Eskimo were all about in that region; and for many years after Davis lived there with his

wife, far north of any of the white English settlers of the Labrador coast.

Davis's wife died many years ago, and his three children have all gone away into the service of the same great Hudson's Bay Company, carrying on the ideals of their father for faithfulness to their employers and kindly good-fellowship with the little people among whom their lives are spent. Davis himself has come South to spend the remaining years of his life nearer to his own folk, but his heart still remains away "down North," where his wife lies buried. He is the cheeriest of companions, full of reminiscences of the old life, with loyalty to the Northland and its people simply tingling in his heart and overflowing in every other word he says.

One evening we had the good fortune to have him drop in for a chat. As usual, the talk reverted to the days at Katatallik.

"Doctor," he began, "did I ever tell you about Kaiachuouk?"

"No," I hazarded, for though all Eskimo names are nearly equally unpronounceable, even if I had heard of this one before, I felt sure the story would bear retelling.

"Well, no one ever need tell me you have to look beyond the Eskimo if you want to find some of the best traits a man can have. Kaiachuouk was one of the finest sorts you would ever find. When I went to Katatallik, thirty-odd years ago, I was just a raw lad, and I remember thinking that I should like to meet this man, after the story some of the Moravians told me about him, when I stopped at one of their stations on the way down."

"I remember now," said I; "you have told me about him. He was the little chap who stood and guarded the entrance to the bear's cave for hours, while his father ran home for his gun."

"Yes, that's so, but that's not what I was going to tell you," rejoined my friend, not to be cheated out of relating the exploits of the local hero.

"That's right, don't you be put off. I've never heard it anyway," chimed in my wife.

Thus fortified, George went on.

"Well, you know the Moravian records of temperatures are about the best ever. They've kept them ever since they came on the Coast, a hundred and thirty years ago, and they

report that the winter of 18— was the severest known. What made it all the worse was that the Eskimo had had a mighty poor season with cod and trout; and then, to cap the climax, if the deer did n't go inland, instead of coming out to the landwash after fawning. Next thing they knew the seal-fishery was cut off, because the sea froze solid, and the seals had to move South pretty lively. I can mind" — Davis occasionally lapses into the vernacular of the Coast when he becomes ruminative, — "yes, that was the year when even the Nascopee Indians had to come out of the country because they were starving."

"You're right, Davis. It was that year that I can remember, steaming up the fiord, seeing the bones of forty of them lying on the beach. It looked like the Valley of the Shadow of Death."

"At that time Kaiachuouk was not much more than a lad, but he showed then he was worth twenty Semijaks as a chief. Things were coming to a pretty pass. Poor old Kavanga and his family were all found lying dead at the bottom of Suksulliuk Bay. To-day you can see the bones of Tellegauiak, Kaiachuouk's

uncle, lying just above the landwash at Naksauliuk. It was enough to make any one lose hope. But Kaiachuouk was made of better stuff than that. He could hardly stand, and he looked like such a skeleton that his best friend would n't have known him, but one bitter morning he started out alone just to see if there was one last chance of getting food for his people. I can remember, as if it was yesterday, how Mr. Riecman (you know him, the Moravian missionary) told me that Kaiachuouk had n't had a thing to eat for forty-eight hours, but he just kept on munching at his skin gloves. I guess it must have been to keep him from thinking about killing himself, for those gloves were pretty well chewed out already.

"When he got to the ice-edge, the first thing he saw was a seal's blow-hole. He was so afraid of moving that he tied his legs together, and there he sat, hour after hour, and chewed away at those skin mittens and held on to his harpoon. Some time after noon, — must have been two o'clock or so, — he heard the scratching of the seal coming back. He only stuck his head up above the ice one second, but that was time enough for Kaiachuouk. He drove his

harpoon right through to his throat. He dragged that seal back himself; then he boiled it, so they should n't lose any of the nourishment, and he divided up the whole lot equally among those poor creatures.

"The next day another young fellow felt strong enough to go out to the ice with Kaiachuouk. You know the rocks there at Naksauliuk. They are so exposed to the wind that the snow never lies on them. Sure enough, when those two came along what should they see but an old square-flipper, lying out and sunning himself. Well, if the beast had been a few yards nearer, Kaiachuouk would have risked a shot at him with his harpoon and line, but as it was he did n't dare. It was just as well for the whole lot of them then that the lad knew about seals and their ways. He lay out in full view and called softly, till he caught the seal's attention. Then he began to shift about, and changed his call from the 'poo-yee' that the creatures use to salute each other to as near an imitation as he could make of a female in distress. The old bull got mighty uneasy at that, and reared up and exposed his whole neck and chest."

"What a shot! " I interrupted. "You don't mean to say that the man had to let that go by?"

"Yes, he did. He had to lie and watch that seal glide off into the water, and disappear in the swell that was rolling up on to the cliffs. The splash had told him that this was a frightened dive and that the old square-flipper was approaching under water. He knew just what curious beasts seals are, and he felt sure that in a minute he would stick his head out of the water, to see what all the fuss was about. The next second, up came the huge, hairless head, and the walrus-tusk on the end of Kaiachuouk's spear went straight home to the animal's throat. But one thing he had n't been able to estimate, and that was the strength of the creature. His line was not long enough for him to take a hitch round a rock with it, but it was a matter of life and death to him and his people that he should get that seal. He just took the near end and tied it round his own body. Though he was braced for the shock, he was whipped off his feet at the first rush of the beast."

"I should have thought he would have been

beaten to pieces against the rocks on the landwash?" I hazarded.

"He very nearly was, for he did n't have any idea of what happened for the next few minutes. He felt as if he was being cut in half, as the monster leaped into the air. But fortunately for the lad, a throat wound is soon fatal, and about as soon as he was able to get up, he knew he had rolling in the surf at the end of his line that which meant so much to them all.

"It must have been after this that his people decided he was the best man for their chief, for always after that, they used to refer really important matters to him, and not to Semijak."

The Hudson's Bay Company agent at Katatallik post, before Davis went there, had had many troubles with his people, and his policy of submission to their encroachments, instead of dealing firmly with them, had only succeeded in making them bolder in their demands. So it was with an anxious mind that my friend looked forward to the first long winter in a place without any possibility of support from other white men.

He did not have long to wait for trouble. Brought up with decided views as to the keep-

ing of Sunday, combined with a determination not to be imposed upon, and speaking the language fluently, he had no difficulty in making it perfectly clear to the local Innuit that he did not intend to open the store on the first day of the week. He was not a little surprised, therefore, the very next Sunday morning, to see a number of persons gathering about the door, carrying bundles of furs for trade, evidently intending that he should notice them.

It was a dirty morning, and very unpleasant standing outside, but, as he told me, he said to himself, "It's their funeral, so I'll pretend not to notice them, and just let them go on enjoying themselves." They pretty soon got tired of that, however, and the tramp of feet and hum of voices informed the agent, even before they knocked at the door of his house, that they, at least, had no compunction about breaking the day of rest. Led by Semijak, a number of men forced themselves into Davis's little kitchen.

"What do you want [*Sunamik peumavit*]?" he demanded sternly.

"We want to trade [*Neuvingaomavunga*]."

"I told you I do not trade on Sundays."

"But the store was always open every day. All days are alike to the Innuit. You must open the store."

Argument, explanation, and kindness proved to be not without avail, and most of the men, who had no real desire to trade, anyhow, went off, not in the least resentful. Only Semijak, who with one or two others had carried loaded guns, seemed bent on mischief. Taking matters into his own hands, the agent moved, and made as if he would go to the store, the others preceding him. He had, however, no sooner reached the porch and closed the inner door behind him than he announced to the chief that he might just as well go home, as he had decided not to go a step farther. Without a moment's warning, Semijak fired off both barrels of his big gun. The charge went through the roof, making a large hole, while the noise of the explosion in that small enclosure was perfectly deafening. Fortunately, my friend was prepared, and, summoning all his strength, he struck the unsuspecting chief full in the face, and sent him sprawling on the floor, and then promptly proceeded to kick him under the settle. Meantime his friends unconcernedly

went on their way, without even trying to find out what had happened.

When Semijak emerged, he was considerably less offensive, and he took himself off quietly, except for a few muttered threats as to the nature of his plans for the next day.

Though nothing occurred then, the young agent was on the watch for weeks. Semijak and the two other recalcitrants, however, never turned up, and if they did trade, they managed it by proxy.

When the winter mail of the Company arrived, and it became essential for Davis to close up everything while he covered a round of four hundred miles with his dogs, he left the post with considerable apprehension. Youth and open air, however, and the physical perils such as inevitably attend a long dog trip over the high barren precipices of the Far North are almost unfailing remedies for mental worries. So it was not until three weeks later, when the good dogs had again struggled to the top of the craggy pass over the Tongak Mountains, and he was able to make out the dark line where the weird fissure of Katatallik lay, that his trouble came back to him, and he realized a

feeling of anxiety as to what might await him on his arrival home.

It was a beautiful winter's evening, quiet and almost awe-inspiring as the coming-on of the night seems ever to be in the Northland, with the deep dark-blue shadows in the lonely valleys, the air so clear that one can almost feel it tingle, and the early-setting sun turning the tops of the distant hills into glittering crimson. Yet Davis's feeling was one almost of exasperation that the daylight should have gone so soon and made it necessary for him to camp for another night, as he thought it unwise to arrive at nightfall.

"Look sharp there, Paingo," he called out to his clever little leader, as early next morning they shot away down the mighty ravine. Davis lay flat out on the komatik, using his own feet for brakes; the runners shrieked as they grated over a bare rock in the middle of the descent, and the dogs, clever beasts that they are, leaped out of the path of the rushing sledge, and scuttled beside it down to the bottom of the Tallik.

This was the last precipice to descend on the homeward journey, so in spite of the dozen

miles which had yet remained when he made his little snow house the night before, the very first streak of dawn found the agent examining the locks and shutters which he had so carefully barred up before leaving.

There could be no doubt about it: the building had been entered during his absence, though the windows had been all boarded up again, and the heavy hasp, which had been unscrewed from the door-post, had been carefully replaced. At any rate, there would be a roof to cover his head, and food enough remaining to enable him to journey south to the next post. In case of accidents he always kept a month's supply in his underground cellar.

As for the Innuit, there was n't a sign of them. All the same, he made sure that they had n't laid a trap for him. He was glad he had arrived before sunrise and taken them by surprise, though there was not a track on the snow nor a sign of old marks to indicate the direction the marauders had taken in their flight. Not a tree, not a sparrow to keep him company, with a temperature of thirty below zero, in the half-darkness before the dawn, which was all the more gloomy and

desolate at the bottom of the ravine into which the winter sun so seldom penetrates! It was the loneliest home-coming he had ever known. Whatever happened, however, he must make a fire and boil his kettle. His hunger was imperious.

Suddenly his eye fell on his faithful dogs. Poor beasts, his extra camp on the Tallik had left them now two days without food, and after the hard work and bitter cold they were looking to him for a long-deserved breakfast. Their mute appeal went right to his heart. They should have a hot meal, and that before anything else. In them, at least, he had true and loving friends that had proved their staunch loyalty in many a close call. The dogs, wistfully watching him, seemed to read at once the resolution in his eyes. Pingasut, a perfectly splendid black and white specimen of his race, stood up and put his paws with ease on my friend's shoulders and licked his face; while Paingo, his clever little leader, rubbed her soft, furry side against his leg. The others gave that peculiarly pathetic cry, which, without exception, they never make except for old friends. They seemed to realize that he

was in trouble, and to feel that they were the only living creatures to comfort their master.

There is nothing like love in the world, even if it is only a dog's love. Davis was master of himself and the situation again in a moment. After all, it was a good thing there were no Innuit around. He would have plenty of time to prepare himself. He had good guns, was the best shot in the Bay; and, anyway, he felt that a determined man had little to fear. Then he remembered that this was the time for his people to be on their walrus-grounds. That must explain the absence of some of them, for he would n't believe that they were all mixed up in the trouble.

After breakfast he went to estimate his losses. No doubt about it, a considerable amount of goods had been removed. He never had had any experience with thieves before, and he was struck with the thoughtfulness with which they had left things in such good order. The loss would be heavy, and would greatly injure his prestige with the Company.

Trading in the Company's stores is not done with a cash medium. It is less expensive to use

symbols which bear no interest, and, if lost, have no intrinsic value. So bone counters are usually employed, unless the still older and more remunerative plan has managed to survive of piling up the skins on the floor till they reach the level of the object desired. In this case, it happened to be counters; and a horrible sensation swept over Davis as he remembered that he had left the counter-box in its place in his desk. It was locked, but what was that to desperate men. He rushed to his desk and dragged out the little box. Yes, it had been opened. Those counters stood for the pledges of the great Company's absolute reliability: perhaps it was the thieves' refinement of cruelty to force him day after day to go on practically robbing himself and his masters by paying out every bit of stock in the little store, in order to redeem them.

The lock of the little box was rusty, and Davis's hand trembled so that he could hardly jerk it open. Inside was a rude scrap of paper lying on the top of the counters, which were, he was instantly certain, untouched. He raised the bit of paper to the window, trying to decipher the runic characters by the light of

the sun which was just now beginning to illuminate the valley; and a great wave of joy swept over him as he recognized the sign manual of the Northern chief, Kaiachuouk.

At first he was puzzled as to what it all could mean. Then like a flash the solution leaped into his mind. The chief had not come in for his winter's trade before the agent had left, and Kaiachuouk must have arrived just after his own departure with the mails. As he was unable to wait, he had helped himself to what he needed, and intended to bring his furs on his next visit.

Just as Davis started to take a careful account of what was missing, he stumbled over a carefully tied-up package, which was stowed in a box and placed under the counter. He dragged it out into the center of the floor, certain that it was not a box he could have overlooked. When he finally got the bundle untied, he was dumbfounded to find the number of skins of bear, otter, ermine, and foxes which it contained. Kaiachuouk, unwilling to be even temporarily in debt, had left at least twice the value of the goods he had taken.

It was not until many days later, when his

own local Innuit came in to trade, and gave him the message the Northern chief had left, that he learned the exact details. Meantime, he was able to work on his own fur-path with a light heart, leaving the store unprotected.

Kaiachuouk's party had arrived the very day that he left. The whole story of the trouble with Semijak had been referred to him, and he had spoken in no uncertain accents. Semijak had been what we call "hauled," and cautioned to behave himself in future as became one of "*the* people." No one was allowed to enter the store but Kaiachuouk and two of his best Northern men.

Kaiachuouk, though at that time a comparatively young man himself, was happy in the possession of no less than four wives, whom his prowess had induced to trust to his ability to provide for them. Thus it was that his arrival nearly twelve months after the incident at the Katatallik Post, as he steered his large oomiavik, or flat-bottomed skin boat, up to the station, while his lusty better four-fifths cheerily worked at the sweeps with his eldest sons, was almost a regal procession. In spite of all the miles of open sea that he had to

cover, as a rule he brought all his possessions in his boat, and topped the whole with his dog-team.

His first question on entering the store was, "How much do I owe you for the goods I took last year [*Akeleksakakunga tegulautangut*]?"

"You owe me nothing [*Akeleksakangilatik*]," said the agent. "I owe you two hundred dollars [*Peuteksakakputit*]."

"I am glad [*Kugana*]," rejoined Kaiachuouk. "I did not wish to seem to cheat the white man.

It is six years since I last visited Katatallik. The sky was black with an ominous bank of cloud as we anchored, but suddenly a brilliant ray of sunlight shot through a rift and illuminated the spot where the old post had stood for so many years. For Katatallik is deserted now, the buildings pulled down, and the station moved to a better trading district.

That night as we lay under the forbidding shadow of the great precipice, the Northern lights flashed across the heavens like gleaming banners — banners which always remind me of the standards of the gods entering Valhalla.

The little people of the North, however, call them "the spirits of the dead at play." I remembered that many years ago the spirit of Kaiachuouk went to join those hosts, but the memory of his honor and bravery and kindly affection still lives among his people. What matter that he was "only an Eskimo"?

To me it seemed the worst blizzard of the winter. I had not thought it worth while even to look out of doors. The shivering of the very house, under the wind-pressure of the furious blasts which swept like successive avalanches over the ice-polished surface of the snow-covered hills, made one rejoice that there seemed no immediate need even to try to put one's nose outside.

There had been a "mild" the day before, and the unusual occurrence of a heavy fall of rain in the middle of winter. Now Jack Frost had leaped out on the intruder like a hungry sledge dog at something he can eat, and, having congealed him with terror, had covered everything with a glorious ice coating which promised to our dogs five miles an hour in time, and nine tenths of the weight of a load less in hauling. As soon as one could get foothold enough to stem the wind, like birds on the wing we looked to start on our Northern trip. But so fierce was the storm that, although there could be no loose snow to drift, one could not

see five yards from the window, against which innumerable pieces of tiny ice were cannonading as the wind tore them loose and hurled them with such energy that the glass seemed a mighty poor protection against their onslaught.

Naturally, therefore, one was not a little surprised to hear announced, "Two men to see you, Doctor." Yet real men, indeed, they looked, when, on their removing their simple but effective canvas "dickeys," I got a view of their keen tanned faces — the ideal of perfectly healthy young manhood.

While the maid hammered out and hung up their ice-caked clothing, I had to give them time to clear enough ice from their faces to enable them to open their mouths and eyes; for from eyebrows to chin every hair had a crystal candle hanging to it.

"Where are you from, and whatever brought you out on a day like this?" I asked.

"From Wild Bight. Uncle 'Lige sent us to get youse, Doctor, if youse can bring it to bear anyhow."

"I guessed you were from the South, for you could have only run before this gale."

"That's just what us did, and had to crawl down the hills or we'd have broken our necks." And then after a pause, "Is you going to come, Doctor?"

Our men are utilitarians of few words, and after all that was what they had come to find out. For my part I knew Skipper 'Lige well enough to be certain he was no squealer. If he had sent these men a hundred miles to fetch a doctor, something serious must be the matter. Besides that, he was a landmark which, for many reasons, the Coast could ill afford to lose.

My mind wasted no time debating the issue.

"All right: I'll come. Sit down and get some food. We'll go as soon as the weather breaks."

It was not altogether the weather which made it a full four days before we reached Wild Bight. News that a komatik had gone down for "t' doctor" for Uncle 'Lige spread like grapevine news in the South in wartime, and petitions "just to come in for a minute and see the baby," or to tell them "whether Aunt Jane was doing right by this sufferer and that," intercepted us all along the road, and cut up the journey in spite of our haste.

When at last we tied up our dogs on the top of the precipice which overhangs the approach by land to Wild Bight, and, partly by the aid of trees as brakes, had swung ourselves down into the cove itself, it was only our faith in the toughness of Uncle 'Lige's well-seasoned timbers that gave us any hope that we should be in time to render any real service.

But as fortune would have it, we were still shaking the snow off our clothing and cracking the icicles from our faces, when the cheery voice of this old sea-warrior from his bunk overhead bade us a hearty welcome. At first one hardly knew whether to feel annoyed that we had come so far to no purpose or to be glad that there was, as it turned out, little to be done but leave Uncle 'Lige's constitution, unhandicapped by past indulgences common to civilization, to work out its own salvation.

He evidently guessed what had been passing in my mind, and was fretting over it. For he suddenly interrupted my meditations by calling out: "I was on a dead lee shore, and no mistake, when I sent the boys for youse, Doctor. But I suppose I clawed off somehow. I shall weather her this time, shan't I, Doctor?"

Fortunately I found no difficulty in assuring him that I was glad I had come; for my examination of him had somewhat reconciled me to having made the effort. It had, indeed, been a close call, and to avoid the aftermath there were quite a few things which could be done. My good humor was augmented, moreover, by the pleasurable aroma which was rising up through the floor, suggesting that preparations were in progress to satisfy a hunger which was honestly come by.

There was only one other house in Wild Bight; there is only room in its small and almost unprotected cleft in the cliffs for a couple of boats to find anchor. So Uncle 'Lige and his five lads practically had the place to themselves. The deep water at the foot of the perpendicular cliffs brought the fish almost to their door, and as a result they always did well. Even now they had nearly ten tons of codfish under salt in their stages, left over and above all that they had dried and sold before winter overtook them; besides all the many tierce of spring salmon, which last year had commanded "a lusty price." So all the perquisites of comfort were easily within his reach, and his

clean, bright little home showed how well what some call "a mere fisherman" knows how to use such returns for his labor as fate allows him.

When the time arrived to bid my hospitable old friend farewell, I told him to run no more such risks, and remarked that, in spite even of his adventurous life, this must surely have been his closest call to leave us.

"No, no, Doctor," he answered. "Some years agone I had liked to have saved you any trouble wi' me."

"How was that, Uncle 'Lige?"

"Well, we lived out on the Seal Islands in them days. Them's a dozen miles or so out to sea, as you knows, and all winter long there be no chance to get any word from t' land. When the sea freezes over, come November, you may say they be's cut off altogether till June. There was only five families there them days, but with the islands bein' out among the seal-patches, us did well with the young fat and skins us got in spring.

"Skipper Jim went South with his voyage that fall for t' first time, and us had a better chance to get a fair price, and he brought us

our winter's diet for cash. 'T was a wonderful sight cheaper in them days."

I could see that the old man was in for a yarn, so I sat down on the foot of his bed to hear it out.

"Well," he continued, "that winter Skipper Jim brought back a young maid, about seventeen years, from a place somewhere in Shark's Bay, called Peace Haven. Seems her father had done bad wi' t' fish, and there were a big crowd of them to feed home, and she were t' eldest maid, so she had to go away first to help out. Uncle Jim took her for nurse-girl — as he'd lost his own missus — and a good little nursemaid she were. Us all called her Mamie.

"Skipper Jim's was a good house, and I won't say they was n't kind to her. At first she were happy as a lark, singin' all about, but come New Year, somehow, she started frettin'. She got that quiet and silent you would never 'a' know'd she was worritin'. Skipper Jim, he give her a good name for workin', but she never went nowhere after Old Christmas Day, 'cept now and again she'd come over and sit, without sayin' ne'er a word, on that very old settle over there, while them young men, who was

just boys them days, played around. My missus used to give her a word o' cheer now and again, and try and do little things for her to hearten her up a bit.

"But it did n't seem to do no good. She had no bodily sickness far as we knew, but she just pined away that quick that by St. Patrick's Day, it was most certain she would n't live to see open water. We was always minded that there was more in it than us could see — for whenever she did say a word, it always was that us was to be sure to send her back to Peace Haven. No one never got t' secret from her, Doctor, but I learned years after it was as us had feared. One of our harbor lads had first won her heart and then betrayed her — and then left her for another girl. No, Doctor, I never told no one who 't was, and I think I never will now.

"It were a lovely spring t' year, and afore t' ice opened the poor maid passed away. I minds well she sent for the missus to go over, and the last words she said were the same ones, 'You 'll promise to send me back to father's?' It so happened it were more than a month at least afore us could launch, so us laid her into

two coffins filled with good sawdust. It seemed as if t' ice would never go t' year, and us that anxious to go gettin' longers and lumber for t' fishery. But the missus had given her word for it, so at t' last moment, as us were starting in for t' mainland, I 'lowed us 'd take the maid along with us for some schooner to pick her up and take her South later.

"It were only a fishing-jack, t' old Dayspring, us had, and the double coffin filled her up amidships so you could n't get forward and back. It were blowin' a nice breeze when us left, but us had t' sheets belayed, and I was forward myself on the cuddy. We were bowling along, I suppose a good eight knots, and I had almost dozed off myself, when without a sign o' warning the tail end of a cyclone or some kind of a heavy squall struck us, and she were upside down and us in the water in a moment. Ne'er a one of us could swim, and when I came up I grabbed hold o' the first thing I could and found it were t' coffin. I slid her along under me, and managed at last to lie out on her. She kept me well afloat that way. Archie Jarvis — he were a married man — had been steerin' when she went over, and was clingin' to the

stern end of the keel, half on the boat's bottom. Will Hawkins, he was holdin' on the foremast, which had just got loose, and the waves were goin' over he every now and again. I was to windward o' the boat, but gradually drivin' nearer on the wind and sea. While I had all I could do to hold on, I could see that the Dayspring was settlin' by the stern, and Arch was crawlin' forward to keep his head above water. It was bitter cold, for there were still lots of ice about, and as no vessel was in sight and we some eight miles off t' land, there seemed little enough hope of our bein' picked up. When at last the coffin bumped into the old Dayspring, I found she were standin' straight up on her end. Her little bowsprit was stickin' right out o' water, and she only kept afloat by the air in her fore cuddy.

"As I caught hold of the bowsprit, I called to Arch to see if he were all right. But I could see that we must get Will in towards the bow, or he'd be drowned with the water goin' over him. I got un at last, but odd enough he did n't seem to want to be saved. I kept sayin', 'Keep up heart, Will, boy. T' Lord can save we if He likes.' But all he would say was, 'Good-bye,

'Lige, I'm goin', I knows. I know'd it when we started.' He did n't seem even to shut his mouth as the combers came along over us, and though we had him held on for I reckon three or four hours, he were stark dead long before that, and then he got washed out of our hands at last and sank like a stone.

"The Dayspring neither turned over nor sunk down any more. Youse see t' mainmast and sail were still standin', and served her for a sea-anchor. Us could keep only just our heads and shoulders out o' water. Twice a lop hit the coffin I was lyin' on, and slung me off it, but I managed to climb back on her again, though, bein' light, she drove quite fast to leeward, while the poor Dayspring scarcely moved.

"I was minded several times to bide on the coffin and let her go. But t' wind were along shore, and it just meant being drowned alone, while, myself, I had all the time a mistrust we would be saved. I don't know why it were: whether it was 'cos I knew t' missus and my lads needed me, or whether it was 'cos us were tryin' to do what t' maid what caused all the trouble had asked. Anyhow, I kept tellin'

Arch to keep his courage up, as I 'lowed help was comin'. It seemed a strange thing to me, Doctor," he broke off, "when they told me after on the Island that Will had said just before us left that he know'd he'd never come back no more alive."

"Faith does a lot of things we don't count on," I answered, thinking of many of my past patients, whose marvelous faith in the almost magical power of medicines had been no small factor in winning them back to health, and life itself.

"Well, seein' Will was gone, Doctor, I just got hold o' the mainsprit, which was still tangled with the sail, and somehow got my neck scarf fast to it, and stood her up alongside the bowsprit. It must have been six hours since we capsized, for the sun was passed high.

"All of a sudden I heard a shout, and there, sure enough, was Charlie Sampson's bully, luffin' to leeward of us. To tell the truth, Doctor, I was nigh gone myself when they lugged me out of t' water, but it were an hour or more afore we were sure there were any life left in Arch. Charlie and his lads had been in

to the mainland rindin', and were beatin' out to the Islands. They had just got round t' heads, and in five minutes more would have shot into t' harbor, when a squall off the cliff took both their sails away, and they had nothin' to do but put her before t' wind for the mainland, as there were no chance of reachin' to windward with the oars.

"The very moment they lifted me off the Dayspring, she rose right up, the air all rushed out of the cuddy, and with a dive she went straight to the bottom. Seems it was only our weight had kept her steady. The coffin had gone long before, drifting to the south'ard with the wind and current.

"Many a day after that we talked of the little maid, and how sorry we was we could n't have done for her what we promised, and what she'd set her heart on so much. But it were nigh a hundred and fifty miles straight over the open sea to Peace Haven, and us had done our best, and that were all there could be to it. If wishin' could have done it, she'd 'a' surely gone there by herself, and I think us wished it nearly as much as she.

"And then, Doctor, there came the wonder-

ful part of all the trouble. Us had gone over to the mainland to set our cod nets on the back cove of Black Duck Bay about a month later, when a Shark's Bay schooner came in and anchored right off our berth. She threw out her boat and her lads came ashore to cut a bit o' firewood. Esau here and 'Lige went out to them to get the news, and by'meby, when they gets to yarnin', one of the schooner boys up and says: 'A queer thing happened to we, no doubt, this trip. Us had n't left home an hour, and were just three miles outside t' heads, when t' watch saw somethin' black bobbin' up and down. It looked all the more black as there were a lot of slob about. Well, Bill here, he called t' skipper, and he sent un aloft to make it out if he could. He could n't make nothin' of it, save it were a long black box, so the old man put t' helm down to go round and make it out. Sure enough, it were a black box. Mighty like a coffin it seemed to we, and us scarcely know'd what to make of it. But there, you never can tell what some folks hides things in, so the skipper hove the schooner in the wind alongside, while us hoisted t' box aboard. She was that like a coffin, us did n't at first like to

open her. But us were that curious to know what was in her that at last us got leave from t' skipper to start t' cover — and then, sure enough, inside were another strong box. That made us think it was all the more as if queer doin's had been going on. So it were n't long before us had the rest of the screws took out — and it was a coffin all right, and there were nought but a little maid inside. Then one of our lads, he gave a kind of shout, and said he know'd for sure who it was. She were Mamie Sparks from Peace Haven, or he was n't in his right senses.

"'When the skipper heard that he did n't know what to do, for us was racing North to get a good fishing-berth, and every hour meant money to all of us. But Joe, he were that sure he know'd t' maid that at last the skipper promised to run for Peace Haven, and as us had t' wind free, it were n't long afore us had t' hook down in t' harbor.

"'It did n't take no time to get to Skipper Ned's house, but all he know'd was that his maid had gone North in t' fall, and he were as sure 's certain it could n't be her. But by'meby he came off aboard, and the way he carried on

when he found it were really Mamie were cruel enough.'

"It were n't for some weeks after," Uncle 'Lige went on, "that the poor fellow learned how it all happened, and then he did n't carry on so about it, for though it did look like bad doin's, it were much better when he knew the whole truth.

"So that were the nearest call, Doctor, I ever had, and the nearest I hopes to have, till I hears t' last call. Don't you think, Doctor, there's more in wishing than what us knows of? You sees the maid got home at last."

UNCLE IKE WILSON was a born rover. In his early days he ran away from his father's farm in England, being possessed by that inborn desire of so many English lads to go to sea. It was the same spirit which led Captain Cook to leave a comfortable position in a grocer's business for the 'fo'c's'le of a collier schooner at Whitby, and even in the days of press-gangs and continual war, to set out on the adventurous life which has made him famous for all ages. When Major George Cartwright, the great hunter and trapper of Labrador, and also its historian, was retired from the army as being too old for service, he wrote: "London is no place for a man like me. So, hearing that bears and deer were plentiful in Newfoundland, I felt so strong an inclination to go there that I accompanied my brother on his next voyage to that country." There he fell in with the Indians and Eskimo, and nothing would satisfy him but to remain in that then wild land, for which he always afterwards professed so warm a love. Such a spirit, the desire to get

out of the ordinary rut of life, the contempt for prosaic routine even though it brought ease and plenty, and the determination to "do something," carried Uncle Ike, over sixty years ago, first as general scrub on a small, square-rigged "windjammer," and later almost all over the world. At length, as many another has done before him, he grew tired of the fo'c's'le, but nowhere did he find a place where it seemed possible to obtain a position on the land with sufficient freedom to suit him.

Finally, having sailed from Spain with a cargo of salt for Labrador, whence his captain intended to bring fish for the West Indies, he thought he had found the poor man's paradise. Here was all the land he wanted, free to all comers. Here were fish in the sea and rivers, birds and bear and deer for food and furs; no taxes to pay, no social inequalities to remind him of his humble origin. Here men seemed free and equal, simple-minded, hospitable, while their livelihood depended only on their own resourcefulness, and not on the whims and oscillations of the labor market. So it happened that when the time came for the ship to sail, Uncle Ike was nowhere to be found, as he

had taken care to remove himself far into the forest, where searching for him would be like hunting a needle in a haystack.

I do not propose to follow his fortunes here. In due time he married, though somewhat late in life, and had one son. In order to have "plenty of room," such as he needed for his trapping, he had made his winter home far up beyond the head of one of the many long inlets of the Coast; and as he was exceedingly clever at all kinds of woodcraft and animal lore, he had done remarkably well. His house, isolated though it was, had become proverbial for its generous hospitality. The numerous komatik teams which "cruise" the Coast in winter — dogs being our only power for traction — never failed to make a little extra détour, sure of a good meal and a warm corner under Uncle Ike's hospitable roof.

It is not remarkable, therefore, as his wife was the daughter of an old settler on the Coast, that their son Jim should possess more than the usual quota of those natural abilities that go to make a valuable scout, and which we, brought up in civilization, have so often to acquire by painful and tedious work.

At the time of this story, Jim was still only fourteen years old. His hardy physical life had toughened his muscles, and already inured him to endure circumstances under which a "softy" would be about as useful as a piece of blotting-paper. From his sailor father he had learned those practical handicrafts which help out so invaluably in a tight corner. It was no trouble to him to hit the same spot twice with his axe, or tie a knot that would neither come loose nor jam.

It was the very middle of winter. The snow lay deep on the ground, and everything, everywhere, except the tops of the trees, was buried out of sight. On the barrens, wind-swept and hard-packed, the least mark on the surface might be visible for days; but in the woods the drift only left light snow many feet deep, where any mark, or even an object, became buried in a few minutes. On the long lakes the same thing happens. Many times I have myself crossed them on a visit to a patient, and laboriously tramped ahead of the dogs through the deep drift on my snowshoes, so as to make a path for them, which at least would not be entirely obliterated; saying to myself all the

while, "We will anyhow have a good road back." Yet, on returning, not a vestige of the trail could be discerned and the same old process must be undertaken all over again.

On the days between his long rounds over his fur-path, it was Uncle Ike's custom to go into the woods and "spell" out such firewood as was necessary to keep the stove going for his old wife.

This incident occurred on just one of these occasions. The old man had started at the first streak of dawn, as was his invariable habit, and had taken with him his team of six as stout dogs as ever helped to haul a sledge over ice. It was a glorious morning, and Jim had been allowed to go off on his little fur-round of some half-dozen traps — all his own. The price of whatever pelts he got was placed in his special stocking, that he might learn the value of things when he came to have a rifle and hunting-kit of his own.

Sundown is early in a Labrador winter, and Jim did not get home till so late that, with all his knowledge of the country, he was glad enough to see the twinkle of the cottage light through the darkness, as he sturdily trudged

along the last mile homeward. For it had "turned nasty," the wind had shifted to the east, and it was snowing hard, which added greatly to the darkness of the evening. But that night Jim noticed neither weariness nor difficulty, nor did he feel the extra weight of the burden he was carrying on his back. Two days previously he had found a queer, gouged-looking mark on the snow near the "rattle," or running water, on the river that crossed his fur-path, and it was not necessary for him to look twice to see that it was the rub of a big otter. To-day success had crowned his skill, and he was dragging home on his back the first otter he had ever caught all by himself. What a surprise it would be for mother and father! What a good time would be his by the crackling fire, as the storm raged outside and he sat toasting his legs and telling of his adventures!

As he expected, a truly rapturous greeting awaited him, when at length he entered the door, additionally demonstrative, he thought at first, because of his large otter. Soon he found, however, it was because mother had been anxious, as neither of "her men" had returned, and now she had one wanderer anyhow.

Aunt Rachel was no longer a strong woman physically. Of late a weakness, strange altogether to her younger days, had forced her unwillingly to recognize that only by much resting between "spells" could she keep pace even with the few domestic duties which her small house made necessary.

"Get your things, Jim, and we'll have tea on the table by the time dad comes. You can cut up a bit more wood, and we will have an extra large fire to-night. Dad'll be cold after his long day's work."

"Right you are, mother," said the tired Jim, forgetting his aching bones in the excitement of the occasion. He was outside in a minute, axe in hand, looking for another log or two.

Now another hour had passed by. Still no sign of Uncle Ike. Everything stood ready, and the kettle was just puffing out greetings from the hob.

"Better get tea, Jim. Dad may be kept by something. But he's always home before now."

The wind was howling outside, and Aunt Rachel's face was paler than usual in spite of the firelight. Something must be wrong with Ike. The house was miles away from any

neighbor, and it was utterly impossible on a night like this to seek help that way. Yet if anything had happened to her husband, he would certainly be dead before daybreak.

"What's that, Jim?" she suddenly cried out. "Surely that's a dog outside." Jim, whose ears had not been so spry just for the moment, owing to his being in the midst of his long-delayed supper, listened a second. "That's White Fox's whine, mother. I'd know it anywhere." And, jumping up, he ran to the door, as he supposed, to welcome his father. But no father answered his call from the darkness, only a great snow-covered furry animal that leaped up and kissed his face. "Down, Fox, down. Where's dad?" But for answer all he got was a whine, and what he took to be an invitation to follow her, White Fox being the trusted leader of their team for three years now.

"Mother, it's White Fox all right. She's got no harness on. I'll go and see if the others are back too."

A moment later, and Jim was in from the dog pen. "They're all home but one, mother. There's Jess and Snowball and Spry and Watch, all of them with their harnesses on,

and their traces chewed through. Father must be in the woods somewhere. But where's Curly, and how did they come to leave her behind?"

The anxiety was becoming almost too much for the poor woman to bear. No help could be got from outside, and she could n't travel fifty yards in that snow herself, with the thermometer at twenty below zero. Jim was tired and young, ever so young to go out into the dark and storm, and be of any use. She had him safe, anyhow. Surely it would only make matters worse to send him out again.

Jim had fed the dogs, and by all the laws of dogdom they should now be curled up and fast asleep in their cozy little house. But he had hardly closed the door when a scratching and the familiar whine outside said plainly that White Fox was not satisfied, and wanted something which they had failed to give her.

Again Jim went to the doorway. The bitter blast and snow drove into the porch and through it into the house. But the great woolly figure of the dog showed in the light which streamed from the cottage. As Jim looked into the eyes of almost his only real chum, he could

plainly understand her meaning, reading the message as well as if it were written.

"She wants me to go out with her, mother," he called from the porch. "What shall I do? I'm almost sure she has left father somewhere, and wants me to go and help her fetch him home."

"Shut the door and come in, Jim. I don't think I dare let you go. You and your father are all I have on earth, and if you got lost, too, I should never live through it."

There was a momentary silence, as the boy, with thoughtfulness beyond his years, stood listening.

Then once again came the familiar whine, ringing through the darkness of the night. White Fox had not given up her attempt to convey her message because she had met with two rebuffs. She knew well enough that the team would follow her if only she could persuade Jim to answer her call.

Still absolute silence reigned in the cottage. Neither mother nor son spoke. Then again came the long, piteous wail of the dog, and it seemed to the alert ears of the woman that now there was a tinge of disappointment in it.

It was she who broke the silence. "You must go, Jim. There is no help for it. That call would haunt me to my dying day if I left undone anything that could be done. God knows best, and it is He surely, and not White Fox who is calling. Get on your things, boy. Take your father's lantern, and God help you. I shan't have long to wait anyhow, without you two, if you never come back again."

Jim was already half into his little oilskin suit, his storm-cap, skin mitts, and moccasins, while his mother packed up a few little things which might be necessary in case an accident had happened. Indeed, he was already moving to the door when she called him back again. "Jim," she said, "kiss me once more. It may be the last time I'll ever see you alive. And then we'll just kneel down and ask God, who loves you better than I can, to be with you to-night and bring you safe back with father." It was no set prayer that welled up from the soul of the poor woman; whether, indeed, it even took the form of words she has long since forgotten. All she does know is that it was the first time she had ever prayed "in public." All that Jim remembers is that for some minutes

he of all people actually cried, though he did n't exactly know why.

At last the door had closed behind him, and, marvel of marvels, Aunt Rachel, weary and exhausted, fell asleep in her chair, and in the God-given rest was able to economize her store of strength to meet the ordeal she had yet to go through.

Jim meanwhile had found a spare harness, and put it on White Fox, tying the trace around his waist. Then he called out the rest of the team, tying their traces together and hitching them on his arm. Since he had no idea of where he was going, there was only one thing he could do, and that was to follow the dog. So, closing his eyes, as seeing was out of the question, and they were safer anyhow that way from twigs and branches after they got among the woods, he ploughed his way as rapidly as he could, following all the time the tugging of White Fox's trace by keeping his right hand on the line.

Fortunately for all concerned, the spot of woods which Uncle Ike had selected for his winter's cutting was less than two miles from the house, and of that one mile was over a

frozen lake, where, although the full blast of the storm made the cold more bitter and harder to stem, yet the drift was packed or altogether cleared away by the violence of the wind. Through the drogues of woods in the narrow gulches the young snow was so soft that the boy had almost to swim, and but for the tug, tug, of White Fox's trace he could never for an instant have kept his direction, or even made progress. But White Fox scaled nearly a hundred pounds, and stood twenty-seven inches to the shoulder, and was actually heavier than the boy himself; while every ounce of her was made up of bone and iron muscles.

One other element told strongly in the boy's favor and enabled him to accomplish what must otherwise have been an almost impossible task. It never entered his head that the dog could be mistaken. He trusted White Fox as implicitly as he would his mother. Of course his chum knew better than any one else on earth what to do, and if he could only last out and do his part, he knew well it was a mere piece of child's play to the dog.

Once and again, as he floundered through a deeper drift than usual, he became completely

stalled, and it seemed impossible ever to extricate himself. He was nearly played out, and the cold and dark made the temptation to rest just for a minute almost irresistible. The excitement of the first hour had enabled him to call into play at once all his reserve strength, but now he felt he must sleep — only a moment, of course, but just a minute's nap. In those deep drifts, not even White Fox could have hauled so heavy a load. All she could do was to employ her powers of suggestion. She returned to her lagging master, and kissed his face, incidentally running to and fro and hardening a path for him on which he could crawl out of the bog of snow.

Once more they ploughed along on their way. Scarcely a sound was audible; just the moaning of the storm, and now and again a rare whimper or snarl from one of the dogs as one of the others got in his road. Indeed, the silence and darkness were almost visible. Suddenly, quite close at hand, a dog's call resounded from the bush, and White Fox leaped in the direction with such violence as to fling the boy clean off his feet, rolling him over once more in the deep snow.

But that he no longer noticed: it was Curly's sharp bark. Picking himself up, and bracing himself for the effort, Jim shouted with all his might. "Father! Father! Father!" But the only answer was a howl in unison from all the dogs, and the soughing of the storm through the firs and spruces of the grove they had entered.

Only for a moment, however, was there any doubt what to do; and again it was White Fox who brought the solution. For she hauled off into the bush at the side of the path, and began burrowing down into the snow. Jim followed, not without a sinking feeling at heart, and in less than a minute was kneeling over the prostrate body of his father.

"Father! Father! It's me—Jim." But no answer still. Yes, he was breathing, breathing loudly. And warm, too, where Curly had evidently been cuddled up against him. There was only one chance. Could he find the wood sledge? For if so he might be able to save his father's life.

Curly was bubbling over with joy, and probably connecting Jim's arrival with the chance for some supper after all. She was

dancing all about, entangling her trace around Jim's legs, and positively forcing him to notice it. Seizing it with his hands, he followed it along. It seemed never to end, though really it was only thirty feet long, but it was entangled again and again in the bushes, and over it all the deep snow had fallen. He had guessed that the dog was still fast to the sledge, and so he found it at last, the sharp upturned prow of the komatik jabbing right into his hand from the drift as he groped after it in the dark.

It must have taken another full hour to dig the sledge out, and haul it alongside Uncle Ike, to drag the limp and helpless body upon it, and then so to fix it with lashings that his father could not fall off on the journey home.

A team of dogs going home on a night of that kind is almost as irresistible as a traction engine, and Jim's only trouble was to keep the sledge right side up. That he somehow succeeded is actually certain, for in the early hours of the morning, Aunt Rachel was roused by the sound of the dogs outside, and, positively rushing into the night, she fell on the pitiful burden they had brought to her little cottage.

It was now her chance to call on her reserve strength, and that she certainly must have done. Buoyed up by his success, Jim's endurance did not fail him either, and, guided by the intuitive knowledge of a good housewife, the two were soon chafing Uncle Ike's half-frozen limbs, as he lay before a gorgeous fire, rolled in warm Hudson's Bay "four-point" blankets.

It was not long before a little hot nourishment was successfully forced between his lips, and he was able to open his eyes and give the anxious watchers a smile of recognition.

Uncle Ike was never quite able to remember how it all happened. He had reached the clump, tied up his team, and was cutting away, when suddenly he felt odd, dropped his axe, and could no longer stand upright. However, he had sufficient mental power left to reason that his only chance lay in reaching his sledge. The dogs instantly answered his call, but they were all fast to the komatik, and were unable to reach him, as that was purposely tied to a stump. That was all he knew, except that one dog at last got near him as he lay, and cuddling up close to him, kept him from freezing

to death. The others in their excitement had chewed through their traces or, as White Fox had done, succeeded in slipping their harnesses.

Then White Fox must have hurried home for help, and the other dogs that could get loose had followed her — as they were always used to do.

No, White Fox was not forgotten. Jim says before he lay down to sleep he could not help just going out to give Curly some supper, and a few extra little titbits for White Fox, but he found her as peacefully asleep as if she had done nothing unusual. She slept that night as many a "better-off" being has never known how to.

"It's no good, master. If you don't go ahead and break the path with your long legs, I can't go a step farther" — and my beautiful leading dog Snowball fairly sat down on her haunches and faced me. It was her appealing eyes that spoke, of course, but their "say-so" means more than any amount of talk does. Truth to say, I was not surprised, for the bottomless light snow had compelled us to walk ahead on our racquets since dawn, the heavy sleigh had completely beaten out the dogs, and we were all of us about "all in," as they say on the Coast.

Bidding the team sit down, I climbed through the wood on one side of the hill which we were skirting, so as to try and make out our position. Soon, to my infinite satisfaction, I found that we were on the bluff of the sea-cliffs, and that away below us the sparkle of a small light was visible.

"Surely, that's Jerry Scanlan's cottage just below us, Snowball," I said on returning to the team. "Pull yourselves together for the last bit. We can almost roll on to it from the bluff."

Without a word of remonstrance, she uncurled herself from the hole she had made in the snow, snapped out a call to the team, and waded off once more chest-high through the endless drift.

"A day's rest won't hurt 'em," said Jerry to me the next morning, as I stood on the porch receiving the morning salutations of my dogs. "Nor you either," he added. "There be plenty of good herrin' for the dogs, and you and me can have a day's swatchin'" — which means trying to shoot old seals in the holes of water among the pack ice. "I'll give 'em two feeds to-day, if you'll stay," he went on, seeing me hesitate, "and they'll do two days' work in one to-morrow."

"There's more logic than there sounds in that," I mused, as I noted how my dogs, well nourished when winter work began, now showed the anatomy of their ribs.

"Very well, feed 'em now, Jerry," I answered, which of course meant that you could not drive them any more that day.

As we started out on the floe, I was surprised to find a large white, gray-whiskered dog, with a single rakish black patch over one

eye, which had earned him the sobriquet of "Three Eyes," following us. He had on his harness, with a long trace trailing behind.

"Frighten the seals, won't he, Jerry?" I called out, thinking he had not noticed the dog.

"Don't you believe it, Doctor. I would n't go without him for fifty dollars."

After a long and unsuccessful day on the ice, the wind being too much on shore, and the "swatches," or open water, being mostly closed, as we sat before the crackling log fire I suddenly became aware that the big white dog was stretched out under the table. I had never seen a sledge dog inside a house before.

"Is Three Eyes allowed in the house?" I asked; "because he's under the table."

"That's his right, Doctor," said Jerry, "ever since he saved my life."

You can generally tell something about a man himself if you know his dog, and I was sure that if Three Eyes was a reflection of Jerry, he was worth closer acquaintance.

"Tell me something about the dog, Jerry. How did he save your life?"

"I'm reckonin' he's done it more than once, Doctor. He's a traveled dog, is Three Eyes.

He's been to France, too. One of them Frenchmen that comes out in the summer fishin' heard about the dog, and one day I could n't find him anywhere. After two or three days I started out to look for him, but he was nowhere to be found, and it was n't till some of the ships had left that a man up and told me he'd seen Three Eyes on the Belle Marie, when he was aboard getting a bottle of wine for his wife. Brother Jim was just going South in our schooner for supplies, and I sent a telegram by him, to be sent to France to ask them to look out for the dog. Well, sir, I heard no more about it till one day just about a year later, when in walks Three Eyes all by himself, waggin' his tail, as if he'd just been for a little walk round the house, instead of halfway round the world. A French captain told me after that the customs officer had seized the dog when the Belle Marie came to Havre, and had sent him back by my old friend Captain Denis. The skipper had landed him about four miles from home as he passed along the Coast, and Three Eyes had just walked home by himself.

"Them was the days of my poverty, Doctor.

Three Eyes

Us had a hard family, six boys and four girls, and all small, too. The traders had it all their own way them times. Provisions was that high that us was on a dry diet more than once by New Year's. And clothin' — well, that was mostly beyond reach altogether. The only chance us had for fresh food before t' fish set in in June was seals and ducks, and they don't come down till late in April; so you may believe that Three Eyes knew all about swiles. He'd dive down in three fathoms o' water for a cent any time, and more than one was the swile that he brought me up from the bottom in t' fall before they gets fat enough to float by theirselves. I've had many dogs in my time, — good dogs, mind you, too, — but none quite like Three Eyes. If you loses your way in a blizzard, you can just leave it to Three Eyes, and he'll take you right home. If you shoots anything in the water, never mind how rough, you can bet Three Eyes'll bring it. If you drops anything off the komatik, you can just send him back, and he'll find it for you if 't is a mile behind. I takes him fishin' because if I lose a fish off t' hook, Three Eyes'll go in after it, and mostly get him too. 'Deed,

I would n't be here yarnin' to-night if it was n't for that great white brute there under the table."

At this remark the dog's eyes looked up, though his chin remained glued to the floor between his great furry paws, and he seemed to smile as he pretended to sleep again.

"Come New Year there was nothin' in the cupboard, and for tea us was drinkin' the spruce-tops and boilin' water. When March came in, flour was scarce enough, too, and if us could n't get swiles it looked like starvation. February had gone out blustersome, and there was nothin' but the open water left — not a whelpin'-pan to hold e'er an old harp to have her young on, however much she might ha' wanted it. At last, however, the winds shifted, and the ice began to run in. It was long before dawnin' next day when me and Three Eyes was out lookin' for swiles. The wind had pinned the runnin' ice ag'in' the standin' edge, and it looked good swilin' ice, too. I thought it was as well to die one way as another, and so here goes — and we started out across the floe.

"As luck would have it, there was n't a

sign o' swiles near to, but Three Eyes was rangin' ahead and searchin' everywhere. When he was about three miles out he gave tongue, and soon I had a dozen fine old fellows, and two or three white-coats killed, close to the outer edge.

"I did n't like t' look o' things too well, for I felt sure t' wind had veered by the feelin' in the air. So I laced up one for Three Eyes, and started off as hard as I could go, haulin' one myself. I knew right then t' wind had really changed, for it were right ahead again, and what's more I knew that if it shifted the ice off even a few yards, us 'd have little chance of ever seein' home again. I reckon that must have made me careless, for I had barely time to see us was on black ice before in she goes, and I was strugglin' in the water. I can't swim, Doctor; t' water 's too cold down here to learn, but somehow I got hold of t' edge and hung on. But there was no gettin' out for me; t' heavy pans is far too high out o' water — and so I thought t' end had come, and I tell you I thought of the wife and children. It so happened Three Eyes had better sense, and had gone round the young ice. He must

have missed me right off, for though he was haulin' a heavy old dog harp, he was on the nearest pan starin' right at me when I got my eyes clear o' water. As I minds it now, he must have done his thinkin' quick, knowin' I could n't last many seconds in that water. For almost before I knew what had happened, he had heaved me the line that was fast to the swile, mind you, and as soon as he felt me catch hold, he started to haul me out o' t' water. What he really done was to run round and round t' hole quite quick like, and t' line which was fast to t' old harp at t' other end, just had to come into my hands.

"I thinks still, Doctor, he thought it out hisself, for he is n't much of a dog for talk and show, as you knows, but that time he fairly let hisself go. Well, us was hurryin' all we knowed how before that happened, but now I had to cut the swile loose and run for my life. My clothes was freezin' like boards, and even that little time lost might mean that we would n't be able to land. And land us did only by God's mercy. For instead of the whole floe goin' straight off, it had wheeled round, and though there was open water all round when us

reached t' edge, by runnin' along us just got a corner that touched t' shore ice as it wheeled, and so got home safe, glad enough, even though us had no swile, and only dry flour again that night for supper. Only Three Eyes seemed unhappy, somehow, though you may be sure he got all I had to give him to eat, but I guess he was wishin' he had had his supper before he left those swiles.

"Well, sir, t' next day, and t' next day, and t' day after that, Three Eyes and me was out from daylight till dark lookin' for them swiles, or any others that we could find. But no luck came along, and I was so sure that that ice had gone that I had given up hope altogether. So the next day I never went out at all. I never mistrusted either but that Three Eyes was home, too, that morning, till just about mid-day, when I called, but could n't find a sign of him. No one had seen him goin' out, and if he left that day he must have started before daylight.

"Anyhow, when I went out on t' cliff to look for him, I saw him gallopin' home along t' edge, just as hard as he could come. Of course you may say that dogs can't talk,

Doctor, but that's just the difference, — Three Eyes can mostly make you understand what it is he wants. He soon told me, anyhow, that he wanted me to come along. So I gets my gun right off, and away I goes after him, runnin' just all I could to keep up, too.

"There's a small island that's little better than a lot of cobbly rocks off t' south end o' t' main island — lyin' out, I guess, some few hundred yards from the beach. That was all I could see besides ice when we got at last to t' land's end. But Three Eyes did n't stop there — down he goes, jumps right in off t' edge, and swims off to t' rocks. Well, sir, when he came back, all I knew was that he had had his supper, and it had been swile-meat, too.

"That's how he told me where those swiles had gone. Next day me and all the boys hauled t' punt down to t' edge, and went off in her. Sure enough, there were our swiles. When that floe wheeled, t' outer edge must have stuck right on the point of the island, and then gone on, leavin' the pans with our swiles jammed against the little island. Anyhow, there was six old harps and four whitecoats. I minds t' number as if it was yester-

day; and that was meat enough for our crowd, whatever else happened, to tide us till t' fish struck in, or t' traders came back with summer supplies.

"Lie down, there, Three Eyes," he added in the same breath; and I noticed for the first time that the dog had got up while he was finishing the story, and was pressing his chin down on Jerry's knee to attract his attention, while his bright eyes were fixed motionlessly on Jerry's. They said, quite intelligently, "That's all right, master. I only wish I had the chance to do it all over again."

I noticed also that Jerry rubbed the dog's head even while he pretended to scold him. And I don't think tears were far from Jerry's eyes either. But then, the logs were burning a little low, and he was n't looking my way.

Our Northern Hospital has a mission room attached to it — a most humble affair with a plain board interior. The innumerable knots in the bare wood show clearly that the timber has been cut from the gnarled spruces of our North country.

One Sunday afternoon, when the service was over and the little congregation was straggling out, one of the men stopped behind to talk to me. He was a born sailor, quiet, self-confident, and with no end of initiative. He was carrying on a fishery near by, which, when we first built the hospital, had been his father's, who also in his day was a brave and successful fisherman.

During the twenty years past, when any help had been needed in that district, it had always been to their house that we had first gone to seek it, and it was invariably rendered without charge or delay. The best of neighbors and a trusted friend, he had been through deep waters since we parted in the fall of last year; and we were anxious to hear the story of it, though we feared to recall it unnecessarily to his mind.

With the energy characteristic of the man, when the fall of winter had driven him forth from his Labrador station, he had speedily settled up his accounts and gone on freighting trips on the north coast in his vessel, the Little Rover, long after most of the schooners had retired to winter quarters. The long, dark nights and heavy ground seas that characterize the last months of the year, and the bitter cold which freezes the running rigging stiff and makes the sails like wooden boards, had at length convinced him that even he could no longer venture to keep the seas. So when he got a fair wind, with a free sheet and an extra large load of lumber, they went spinning homeward with glad hearts. His crew were his two brothers, a brother-in-law, and two hired men, making a total of six. Loaded as they were, it was not wise at any time, and at this season of year it would have been criminal folly, to risk a bad night at sea. So when suddenly, just at nightfall, the wind veered to dead ahead, and the barometer made a sharp corresponding drop, as the vessel was then many miles from any shelter, it was decided to run back for the port which they had left, a

matter of some thirty miles. Many islands and sunken rocks lie off that section of coast, and the water runs off everywhere shallow for many miles, so that heavy seas make quickly with the least bit of wind. To find any anchorage it was essential to run in between some large reefs, which, like most of our dangers, are neither lighted nor buoyed. It was dark when the first group was reached, but they were soon safely passed. With a lookout man on the bow, and himself astride the main cross-trees, the skipper had managed to make out bearings sufficiently well to avoid the rocks on one side, without running into those on the other. For a brief moment there was comparative safety, and then again another set of ugly dangers had to be passed close by. It was now pitch-dark and snowing heavily, and the wind had risen to a howling gale of winter. With mainsail doused and reefed foresail, the schooner drove before it. The master as before placed himself on the cross-trees, in the vain hope that he might thence possibly get a glimpse of something to guide him on his course, especially as he neared the Narrows. At length the log showed that

their distance was run down; also, to judge by the time when they had started to run, they must be past the last danger and safe to make the harbor light within a few minutes anyhow.

Except for the hoarse roar of the storm no sound was heard, — it was far too exciting a moment for conversation. Suddenly, from his perch aloft the skipper's horrified gaze fell on a long line of rocks and breakers right below him, looking almost as if he could jump directly down upon them. With every ounce of strength in him he shouted to the helmsman: "Hard up! Hard up, or she's ashore!" There was still then probably just time to save her. But the shrieking of the wind through the cordage made his voice inaudible; the helmsman put the helm the wrong way, and with a frightful concussion the heavily loaded vessel crashed into those adamantine rocks. Instantly she was overwhelmed by heavy seas. Mountainous breakers poured over her doomed bulwarks from all sides at once. It was only a few moments before the mainmast had gone by the board with a crash, and the stern of the vessel, battered by the thundering

surf, soon broke up to matchwood and went after it.

All six men had, however, succeeded in getting to the foremast rigging, and soon were clinging for dear life to the shrouds. The fore part of the wreck, still surging as the gigantic breakers struck her, threatened every moment to go to pieces, and all hands knew that that would spell immediate death. The mast rolled and swayed to and fro before the force of the seas. The snow and spray drove through the men's clothing just as if they had been naked. It froze in icicles on their faces, and at times made their clothes as stiff as boards. So miserable was their plight that they hardly knew whether to pray that the mast might soon go and mercifully end their misery quickly, or that it might stand long enough so that after hours of agony they might have a chance of being seen from the land, which was about two miles away. All anticipated the worst, and each bade farewell to the others. One of the men, older than the rest, soon began to show signs of giving out, and so, to keep the others in heart, the skipper proposed that they should sing a hymn.

The whole scene was to me the more realistic from the quiet way in which he pictured it. Think of that long winter night, six men clinging to the sorry remnant of a vessel in the boiling surf of a reef far out in the ocean. They were buried in snow and sea and darkness, with death looming ahead any moment. Yet, in spite of the war of surf and tempest, they were calmly singing the old familiar strains of "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee"; and then, when that had died away: —

> "Jesus, Lover of my soul,
> Let me to Thy Bosom fly;
> While the nearer waters roll,
> While the tempest still is high."

Surely there, if anywhere, the Almighty was in touch with the souls of men.

"You prayed also, I suppose, Skipper, did you not?" I interposed.

"No, Doctor; I'm not a Christian, you know," was his amazing reply.

"Whatever do you mean by that?" I asked.

"Why, I can never testify in the meeting, or even pray," he answered.

"But it gave you comfort to sing, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; it cheered us a lot, and we began to hope and even think that the mast might hold on till daylight."

"The vessel's bow," continued the skipper, "must have been jammed in between boulders. Perhaps the seas had driven her up farther among the cliffs. Anyhow, the waves now swept over her somewhat less. Perhaps the wind and the tide were going down — we could n't tell. It seemed ages since we had struck, when suddenly I noticed that a large part of our deckload of lumber had been washed for'ard by the seas, and was jammed in one huge pile between the rigging and the mast. It struck me at once that if only we could get some rope to lash it together, we might yet have another chance for our lives, even if the mast should go before daylight. I was able, by clinging to the spars, to crawl out on what was left of the boom and catch hold of a line, which proved to be one of the reef-lacings. The outer end had come loose when the canvas went, so I hauled it in and cut it off as low as I could reach. Everything else had gone. When I came to look for'ard of the mast I caught hold of a jib-stopper, and managed

to haul it up and cut off a long piece of that as well. Yet, after all, in the darkness and cold, we could do nothing worth while with such short pieces; though a little later I did manage to get one of the lanyards.

"It must have been about four o'clock — anyhow it was a long while before the day broke — that the mast began gradually to cant over more and more; and then suddenly it snapped off close to the gammon and went over the side. The sea had meanwhile grown a little quieter, and the wind had veered to the west'ard. This enabled us to cling better to the mass of lumber which was tangled with the rigging. But to our dismay we found that now the wind was off from the island on the end of which we had struck, and on to which we had hoped to escape at daylight. We could see that there was no longer any chance whatever of our getting on to that, although it seemed only a few yards from us. Plainly there was no chance for any swimmer to get through the surf alive.

"We just lay there waiting events, stretched out on the lumber, with first one piece and then another washing away from us. Every now

and again the mast, which was still fast by the wire shrouds of the rigging, would rush into the raft on a sea, like a huge battering-ram, almost knocking it to pieces. Though we badly wanted to keep the spar to float us as our last chance, if the worst came to the worst, there was no hope of holding the lumber together if we did; so I made up my mind to cut her away if I could and let her go. It was still inky dark and bitterly cold, and it was no easy task to get down to the lanyards without being washed away. To cut the wire shrouds was out of the question: we had neither axe nor chisel; only our small jack-knives. Yet to get free from that mast was our only chance.

"Once more I crawled along, half under water this time, and somehow managed to get at the ropes long enough to cut them one by one from the dead-eyes. Tangled as the rigging was, with the lumber washed criss-cross and every way as the sea drove the spar to leeward, it seemed as if the raft must still, in a few moments at best, go to pieces. But somehow through God's Providence the whole mass of it worked loose together, was lifted by a big sea right clear of the wreck, and we shortly

found ourselves, all six of us, lying out on loose boards, and driving in the darkness toward the open ocean, with neither the schooner nor anything else visible any longer.

"No, we did n't speak much, only just enough to make sure every now and again that we were all there. Each man who could was fully occupied trying to catch and haul back and push under the rest again the pieces of loose plank, as the sea kept tearing them from the raft. Ages seemed to go by. But at last daylight began to come, and we could see the mainland and houses almost three miles away, looming up large every time we rose on a wave. Also out to seaward we could make out a low island on which we knew a lighthouse had recently been built.

"Hope revived with the daylight, and, finding that we could stand on the raft, we piled several boards on end, and hoisted first a piece of canvas that had been torn from the foresail and got tangled in the lumber, and then articles of our own saturated clothing — though we could ill afford to spare it even for that purpose. We all felt now that any one looking out would be sure to see us. It was Sunday morning

and bright and clear overhead; certainly the men would not be working, but would be about their houses outside. For a time we felt as if we were actually safe. The houses, which were entirely clear to view now, were all those of fishermen. Without a shadow of doubt they would notice such a strange-looking object as we were. But we forgot, I suppose, how low we were in the water, and how much smaller one or two floating boards are than a house raised on the beach above the landwash.

"As the day wore on, hope once more began to fail us. No sign of help showed from the shore, and though we only drifted slowly, every hour drove us farther and farther off. And then all of a sudden we became aware of a new danger — a line of breakers lay dead to leeward, in the very direction in which we were driving, and warned us that if help did not come soon it would be too late. Mustering all our strength we tried all we could to change the course of our raft. We tried to row, and then to paddle, using boards as oars. We tried to steer her and swing her with our longest planks as rudders. We made sails of some of the boards on one corner of the raft, or again

pushed them into the sea, first at one end and then at the other. But all our efforts failed to alter our direction one iota. Nearer and nearer we drove to the shoals, absolutely helpless to save ourselves.

"Yes, we looked many times toward the houses and the land where were boats and men in plenty. But we knew at heart that they had not seen us. Then the sea rose under us. The breakers crashed into our crazy craft again, and once more we bade one another good-bye, as it seemed as if the raft were all in pieces, and death only a matter of moments.

"But somehow we were again able to grab and hold on to projecting pieces, and when we had once more driven clear, — passing right over the reef, — we found that the raft was in two pieces which were only a dozen yards apart. My brother and brother-in-law were lying out flat on a few planks; the rest of us were clinging to the other remnant. Scattered boards were washing around everywhere, but we could only get hold of a very few. So with the inevitable end seeming to get nearer and nearer, we once again began our long drift seaward.

"Soon it became apparent to our dismay

that the larger raft was leaving the other behind. I kept calling to my brother to try and keep together, and to hold up the planks to catch the wind, but they appeared to have none to spare. We ourselves forced several boards straight down into the sea through our own pile, holding them there fast so that they might act as drags. But we had no control, and still continued to forge ahead.

"As the distance widened, we still shouted to them occasionally to keep up their courage, and at last we had to bid them good-bye, for fear we might drift out of ear-shot, and then it would be too late.

"Just at that moment another wonderful thing happened. The wind veered again, bringing the low island more to leeward of us, and at once we realized that there was still another chance to be saved. We could see that it would only be by a few yards at best, but it was at least possible. Anyhow, it again gave us new pluck, and though we didn't pray out loud about it, or perhaps in words, I guess we all did pray somehow. I know I did. And we doubled our efforts to attract the attention of the men on the island.

"By balancing carefully, we could still stand upright on the raft, though the planks were all the time getting fewer. No one could possibly have heard us, and no one appeared to see us, but we kept shouting and waving all we could. Meanwhile we still worked our hardest to try and turn the raft, so that she might slew as much as possible to windward.

"Already the daylight was beginning to go again. It must have been about four in the afternoon when we made out two men moving on the island, which was then not more than half a mile distant from us. It was n't long before we knew that they had seen us. Meanwhile, the wind had increased again considerably in the new direction, and everywhere there was white water on the wave-crests. Much more came over us on our poor raft. But, cold as it must have been, we no longer even noticed it. Our whole minds were occupied with watching the surf-line of the island. It seemed strange to us that no boat came out to meet us. For we drifted so terribly slowly, and it was getting darker and darker all the time. We might have known, however, that no boat could possibly have lived through such a sea.

"At last we were really close in, and we were driving so close to the point that one minute we were sure we should drive ashore and be saved, and the next we were equally positive that we should miss the island and all perish together. The minutes went like hours: the cold and wet and hunger were all forgotten. The old man was now lying just stretched out on the boards, and it was all we could do to keep him from being washed away. Now the surf on the point was roaring so loud that we could no longer hear one another speak, but as the raft rose and fell on the sea we could make out the men on the land beckoning, and evidently shouting. We could hear nothing that they said, and could have done nothing to help, anyway.

"The other raft was about three hundred or four hundred yards away from us, and was just that much nearer the end of the island. They were still all right aboard her, and we could see now and again that they were doing their best to claw her to windward. Once in a while we waved to them to keep on trying. Then suddenly without any warning, our own raft rose on the top of a huge breaker, a sea rushed

all over us, and our crazy bunch of boards struck the bottom with a furious crash. We had washed right into the line of huge boulders, which the floe ice drops everywhere in the spring around the landwash. Fortunately for us, the tide was at half-flood, so that sea after sea washed us farther in over the outermost rocks, till I suppose we were more or less protected from the heaviest combers of the deep water outside. But even now we knew that without help none of us could hope to reach the shore alive. Indeed, we could not have done so, if the men on the shore had not been there. There were only two of them, but they roped themselves together, and we could see that one of them was beginning to work himself out into the sea as far as he dared. He had brought with him a light line, which with the aid of a stone and stick he at last succeeded in flinging over us.

"How the boards had kept together all this time no man on earth can say, but as soon as I caught the line I hauled in as much of it as I could, and lashed to it the old man and another who had now nearly gone also. We other two clung to the long end and also to the raft.

We soon found, however, that they were not strong enough on the land to drag two helpless bodies through the surf, so we lashed ourselves on to the end as best we could, and jumped clear of the boards into the breakers. Though we were washed over and knocked about badly, we were able to find bottom somehow, and just held on tight when the backwash came sweeping out. Then between the seas we could shove and help a little with what strength there was left in us. So when the sea began to rush in again we were all huddled together, and thrown up nearer to the shore, and at last, more dead than alive, we were all four dragged out on the beach.

"Meanwhile the two men had seen the second raft, and without any delay rushed off to the point to see if they could save the others. I was myself just able to follow them, but that was all. Their boat was small and her oars were useless. It was absolutely impossible to launch her through the breakers, so as to try and cut off the raft as she came along. Yes, if they had thought earlier of dragging her to the other side of the island they might have got clear, but then they certainly would never have

got back in such a sea and wind. All we could do was to stand there, watching the other raft. It was just off the point now. We could plainly see my brother and my sister's husband, and we saw that they could see us, for they waved to us and we to them. But we knew that this time it was really a last good-bye. Their raft missed the point by a hundred yards, and drifted slowly on out to sea. Again and again we saw them waving. Those were the most awful moments of my life, for I knew then that they knew they were lost men. So they passed out of sight and we never saw them again. We started at once to make bonfires on the island to attract attention, and, indeed, it was by that they learned the same night on the mainland that help was needed on the island. But it was two days before a schooner could get to us, and then, though they searched the sea for miles, nothing was found but a few sorry remains of lumber all scattered on the water. That night, while we were warm and dry and had hot food and shelter for our own bodies, our minds were away out on that other raft with those who were perishing. There was no rest or sleep for us. There was nothing —

nothing — nothing which we would not have done or given up to save them.

"We had been through it ourselves, you see, and then they were our brothers. To think of them perishing while we could do nothing nearly drove us crazy. The keeper of the lighthouse never got over it. He had to resign and leave. He could n't endure the constant reminders — well, they might have seen us earlier in the day, or the boat might have been in good order, or they might have thought of carrying her to the lee side of the island, or if they had gone out they might have lived through the night, and fetched up at one solitary rock ten miles out to sea which has a light on it — well, they might have done anything. He'd have cut off his right hand willingly if it would have done any good. It was like the curse of hell. Yes, Doctor, we miss sometimes the little that we can do, because we don't look out for chances."

There was a brief silence as I suddenly remembered that we were standing in the chapel and that "divine service," so called, was just over. Revolving in my mind was the question whether the mysticism of worship or the ex-

periences of life offer the soundest guide-marks to the highest truths. The story cut so much deeper into my consciousness than the exposition to which we had just listened.

We moved outside without speaking, and from the platform my eyes at once fell on a schooner that was lying in the harbor.

"What did you do, skipper, when the steamer at last took you from the island?"

"Why, I just went and got that schooner on credit," he replied, as he noticed the direction in which I was looking. "You can't afford to be idle, and it's no good to keep looking back, is it?"

KOMMAK THE INNUK

THE brief summer of Northern Labrador was already drawing to its close. The little people who alone are able to wrest a living from its churlish hospitality had just finished their trading at Fort Chime Post, and were once more preparing to wander back to their own districts over the wastes and barrens of their rocky northern peninsula, which juts out between Hudson Bay and the equally frigid waters of the North Atlantic. Being a purely predatory people, they must follow everywhere the animals off which they make their living, and which in their turn are but little less wonderful in their ability to live under adverse circumstances.

There deer and oxen can graze in the eternal night of winter on the reluctant shores of the Arctic Ocean. There foxes and bears can eke out a living on the shelterless, lifeless ice-floes which ceaselessly drive to and fro on the sullen polar sea. There one may see seals and whales, warm-blooded animals, displaying the wild *joie de vivre* in water almost solid with ice,

and a temperature of forty below zero, the former giving birth to, and actually suckling, their babies on a floating ice-pan; the latter, in the open sea itself, in defiance of gigantic combers, north of the "roaring forties." Even the birds can swim well enough to catch a fish in fair chase under water, and are wise enough and fly well enough to come thousands of miles every year to nest in safety in No Man's Land, while others can see well enough to drop out of the sky, as they range over a rough sea, and catch their prey unerringly a fathom below water. The salmon trout can be happy living during the greater part of the year in the dark and cold, under endless feet of impenetrable ice, quite content to wait till the brief season of open water shall return again. There is no doubt about it, nature has no room for fools, north of '53. The incompetent are destroyed remorselessly, and the bare narration of the physical achievements and endurance of the little people "away down North" come as refreshing and almost inspiring stimulants to us in the *ennui* of the civilized South.

This year, 1903, the hunt had been a good one. The bags of white foxes had been well

filled. The "civil" spring had enabled even the most distant trappers to haul or boat their packs of heavy bear and deer skins safely over the long hundreds of miles to the nearest white man's post. There had been no need even to cache the seal and walrus hides. Migrating geese had landed in myriads on the Northern Coast.

The little people were fat as well as rich, and were facing the approaching winter with light hearts, having all the earthly possessions that a man sound in body and mind really needs for existence. They had found the Hudson's Bay Company post well stocked in food and hunting necessities. The world lay before them, and it was the opportunity of a lifetime to break new ground — to venture out into the unknown solitudes and virgin wildernesses beyond, where game would be both more plentiful and less sophisticated. Their families were multiplying; there were more mouths to feed, while the old hunting-grounds were becoming overcrowded and the food-supply depleted.

Among the more venturesome spirits there had long been talk of some islands lying out in

the great ocean which no man had ever hunted, and of the possibility of getting out to them. They had dreamed of blubber in puncheons to be had for the asking, of fur that had never seen traps, and of birds which almost came when you called them. Now if ever was the chance to put their aspirations to the test. But "how" is still, as it must always be, the crucial question with primitive man. They had heard more in detail, from the white man, of an island out at sea, away below the horizon, where no Innuit dwelt and where no man hunted. Would it not be possible to reach it over the winter ice with dogs and sledges, and to store up enough food for the spring, in case they should be unable to escape to the mainland, until nature should once more build for them the mighty bridge of ice? With their good outfit they could risk the chance of trading fur for an extra year.

Six families decided that, at any rate, they would make the attempt. The leaders were named Bakshauk, a skillful young hunter of twenty, and Kommak, one of the most resourceful and successful of the tribe. It was decided that they should all start together, as

soon as the lengthening days made it possible to carry children safely. In order to make the passage over the sea as short as possible, they agreed to assemble near Icy Harbor, north of the big Kovik River, and then set out westward, following the setting sun, till they might possibly strike land again.

The five hundred long, trackless, and uninhabited miles which lay between their trading-post and the chosen rendezvous would alone seem insurmountable to many "family men" under the circumstances. To these little men, however, that was a bagatelle. Did they not travel full five hundred miles each way every journey from their hunting-grounds, as they carried their pelts to exchange for the white man's produce. The pleasures of a bargain counter are beyond the horizon of the Eskimo ladies' horoscopes, for it takes practically a year to make one visit to the shop.

To tell the truth, the thought of the great venture did not trouble them. Unlike the mighty Abraham waiting to fare forth to the Land of Promise, they were bound by no sentiment to any particular section of our little sphere. Time also is no object to the Eskimo.

If the true *Wanderlust* belongs to any human beings, these Innuit, or "the men," as they call themselves, may certainly be credited with it; though it is a physical rather than a spiritual stimulus which keeps them ever "on the move."

Bakshauk means "thinking" and Kammak a "worm," and long before this venture was over they needed to do much of the first and to realize the aptness of the second as man's most fitting title. Kamaksuak, Kuenaksaut, Novik, Ananak, while capable hunters, followed rather than led.

Christmas found all the families true to the tryst, and a jolly crowd they were, camped on the edge of the icy ocean with a good harbor below them. With powder and shot and good guns, food and clothing in the form of seals had fairly swum into their cooking-pots, and climbed into their wardrobes. Even the dogs were fat as butter-balls. Indeed, the only trouble was that they had more than they could carry, and yet there seemed little use in cacheing the supplies on the shore. Once again in the lives of Eskimo the old paradox came true, — they could eat all they liked, but, alas, they could not.

It was not till the days were lengthening in March that their trained senses assured them that the right moment had come to make a start. Then, without a vestige of fear, men, women, children, dogs, houses, food, and even boats, with every possible piece of paraphernalia stowed on the sledges, fared forth upon the growling, groaning, heaving pack ice, to cross the unknown sea, with the courage of a Columbus. It was running ice over which they had to journey, as the great tides of Hudson Bay never allow it to form solid to the land and it needed no small amount of courage and skill to keep safely in the right direction. The nights are still long and cold in those latitudes in that month, but they had no chance of delay, for only nature could even partially bridge the ocean for them. Their tiny skin boats, now lashed upon their sledges, were quite unfit for so long an exodus over open water. The Innuit are not troubled by trifles, however, nor has the speed mania yet cursed the serenity of the children of the Arctic night. If the day brought them on their journey, they thanked God and slept well; if they had drifted backward, or, because of an absolutely resistless storm, had

been unable to stir from their tiny snow huts, they again thanked God, and slept possibly even better. For oddly enough, all these six families held the inspiring faith of Christendom. True, none of them had ever seen or heard a preacher. But they had heard from those who had heard, and, as the sequel will show, they certainly deserved that highest of titles, "real Christian men," better than many a conventional church-attendant or professing assenter to any or all the creeds.

Progress was not rapid. The ice was rafted and hummocky, and even the moon was chary of her beams, though her "right to be shining" is at that time so generously prolonged. Yet there were no mutineers in this company of adventurers. The Bakshauk and not the Kommak spirit was very much in the ascendant as they pursued, day after day, as nearly as they could judge, the direction in which the sun ought to have set if it had been there. On the fifth day for a brief moment after midday it most graciously showed its face, and before it had sunk behind the icy pinnacles, the keen eyes of the leaders had seen the

loom of blue land above the horizon. All was well; there was no reason to hurry.

When at last they reached the foot of the cliffs, the ice was broken and heaved up by the pressure of the tides, surged, capsized, and rafted, till the mighty barricades formed by the débris might well have frightened any human being. But in spite of it everything was safely landed. The snow being still hard and the supply generous, in a few hours not only were good houses built on *terra firma*, and every piece of property safely stowed, but the men were gathered in the large igloo smoking their pipes around their oil lamp and plotting to set about exploring the island.

It is known on the chart as Mansfield Island, and was discovered by Sir Thomas Button in 1612, under commission from Prince Henry. It has very rarely seen a white man since that day, however. It is about sixty miles long and fifteen wide, and unlike our own mainland is built up of whitish rocks in gradually rising high terraces. For it is made up of a deposit of Cambro-Silurian limestone in the great basin of crystalline archaic rocks of which Labrador forms one side. The Eskimo described it as

"very bad for skin boots," and indeed they invented and used wooden-bottomed *sabots* while they were on the island.

In summer an abundant low green vegetation covers the flat terraces, but now nothing was visible in any direction but snow, ice, and rocks. When a suitable time for rest had elapsed, the men, dividing themselves into three parties, started off in different directions, to survey the island and to give them more chances of meeting game. Two facts very shortly became evident, — first, there were no trees whatever on the island, and no firewood except such as might drift up alongshore, and that was now well buried in snow and ice; secondly, there were no deer, which was a great disappointment. They had heard that the big island just to the north contained any number of them, and their skins, sinews, and fat, to say nothing of the meat, are what so frequently turn the balance in the struggle for existence in favor of a primitive people, and enable them to remain permanently in any district without recourse to the white man for help.

In this particular instance, however, there were many other things to make up the de-

ficiency. Luck befell them at once on the very first day. Kommak's dogs, harnessed into his sledge, caught the scent of a bear and bolted with the sledge. Before Kommak had time to unlash his rifle, the bear was actually on the komatik, the dogs having divided as they came upon him and the sledge having swept him off his feet. He soon recovered himself, however, and stood up on his hind legs. The surprised Kommak was entirely occupied in fending off the dogs, who were rushing and biting the hind quarters of the bear as soon as ever he turned his back. This gave Kommak a chance to get his weapon and put an end to him.

Bakshauk had had the same experience, only he caught sight of Bruin on the level ice, in time to slip his dogs, who gave chase and soon brought him to bay, when a long shot from the new rifle from the store gave the hunter a mountain of meat, and a skin such as even he had never seen before. Alas, however, he lost one precious dog in the encounter. Alluk, the boldest of the bold, had charged the bear in front and been caught in his great arms and his back broken with the hug which he received.

Bear tracks were, in fact, very plentiful, and when they all met again after a few days, each party had as much meat, fat, and skins as they cared to trouble with for the time.

With the advent of open water the salmon trout in the river-mouths were very plentiful, and the men were able to spear many seals and walrus. Such was the abundance of supplies that no thought of returning to the mainland even to trade once occurred to them. They were kept busy drying the fish for the winter for themselves and their dogs. The careful ones scarcely fired a cartridge, husbanding them for future need, and relying on their walrus-tusk harpoons and bird darts.

Whatever else may be said of the Eskimo, they can never be called mean. With all their physical strength, endurance, and marvelous ingenuity, they always suggest a whole race in its infancy; but this childlikeness, though affording many delightful characteristics, carries with it its disadvantages. Among these latter, thoughtlessness for the future costs them probably most dear.

Some of this particular party were undoubtedly more prodigal of their ammunition

and the supplies which they could not replace than they would have been had they been capable of considering a little what the womb of the future might hold for them. However, for the time, all went like a marriage bell. They had plenty of time and good spirits for play as well as work; which, as their play has its uses in developing the extraordinary accuracy of hand and eye, upon which their very lives often depend, was of peculiar value to these people, who, as the sequel proved, had to fall back upon native methods and arts. These very soon become lost capacities among those who are in constant contact with the white man.

One game played in the large common snow house during the winter consisted in suspending an ivory ring by a cord from the roof, with a weight attached to it below. It was then made to revolve rapidly by twisting the string, and the competitor won who first threw his dart through the ring. In another game they made the model of a deer and pierced it with holes, each of which had a number. The prize went to the man who made the highest score with a miniature dart.

Meanwhile the women found time and ma-

terial to do much beautiful skin work, and the children got all the roughly fashioned but beautifully dressed dolls which their hearts could possibly desire.

With the melting of the snow a great discovery had been made. While searching for firewood along the northeast coast, they came upon the bones of some long-ago wreck, thrown high up on the strand, to which place of safety it had evidently been carried by the pressure of the heavy ice-floes.

It is not difficult to imagine the excitement even of these unemotional people as they clambered up her sides, and explored the utmost recesses of her hold and cabins. The finds were not numerous, but were useful all the same. They discovered a good cooking-boiler, some plates and cups, a few remnants of cabin fittings, and some useful pieces of iron from the rigging. Who the unfortunates had been who had once manned her, when in youth and strength she had sailed the seas as a dainty craft only to meet her sorry fate in this desert solitude, did not trouble our friends. On the bluff close by were some old stones which marked the spot where tents had once

been pitched, and there were many signs indicating that the castaways had been some time on the island. A shrug of the shoulders, "Ajaunamat," the equivalent of "Kismet," and the happy little crowd returned to their friends, bubbling over with the great news, like the children of the Arctic which they always remain with their new trinkets.

In the wreck, too, they had a fresh source of fuel, and around its salt-soaked timbers, as they crackled and sputtered with the exquisite play of colors peculiar to such wood, the little people had many a merry hour as the long nights of the second winter stole over them. Above all, the wreck was a place where they could get bits of iron and even copper. Everything still went like a marriage bell.

When the sea-ice was frozen far out from the landwash in the fall, and the big seals were no longer able to get near the land, the bay seals in plenty kept bobbing holes open quite far inshore, and it was nothing but fun, with such good dogs as they had, to scent out a breathing-hole. These seals keep a chamber under the snow which collects on the rough ice, and a hole up from the water beneath leading into it.

The male seals scratch away with their fore flippers, working so assiduously that when many an old dog seal falls a victim to the Eskimo's spear, his "hands" are worn away right down to the flesh. In these chambers the young are born and the family sleep, only coming up through the surface in summer when the sun is warm enough for them to venture to bask in the open without risk of freezing their paws and flippers. Through an unbroken covering of snow a good dog will locate these holes, and the hunter will sit motionless for hours under a shelter built of ice blocks, waiting for the sound of breathing or scratching to assure him that he will be able to drive his spear straight down home to the heart or brain of the quarry which he cannot see.

Then came the winter ice block again, and its life of more or less enforced idleness, when the short days were enlivened by games of ball near the igloo, and the satisfaction of plenty of food and warmth around the oil lamps at night — till the lengthening days once more tempted the hunter to wander afield after game.

It was the month of March when Bakshauk

and Kommak were far out on the driving floe hunting seals and walrus. Bad weather had set in and the ice was getting dangerously loose, so that often a wide lead of open water would appear, to make it very hard for the men to keep together. Familiarity here, no less than elsewhere, leads to contempt, and the men took chances which no white man would dream of attempting. One day fortune deserted them.

The men had had a heavy day following the trail of a bear along the standing ice-edge, where he was earning a somewhat precarious living on seals, which were scanty enough at that. Suddenly they became aware of a movement in the mass of snow on which they were standing, indicating that it had broken loose from the shore and was driving off seaward. Shouting to one another, they at once beat a hasty retreat, only to find that they had a long edge to follow to reach the one and only place where there was a possible crossing to safety. By the time they had reached it, even that was not passable, and they had to take at once to loose pieces. By the best of good fortune Kommak and two others crossed to the land,

but Bakshauk, who as usual had been farthest off, was too late, and all the others could possibly do was to call good-bye to him as he slowly drifted from their sight on a solitary ice-pan from which there was now no chance whatever of escape.

With heavy hearts they returned to the igloos to tell the sad news, for Bakshauk left a wife and two children to mourn his loss.

Eskimo hospitality is a virtue almost unknown to Christendom. More than once, as in the marvelous story of the rescue of the crew of the Polaris, have Eskimo hunters accepted the enormous burden of supporting the helpless white men who have been wrecked and must otherwise perish. A consultation of the little community was held to discuss what must be done. It was a simple question. The helpless must be cared for; it was merely a matter of the best means of doing it. That, too, was soon settled, for Kommak generously offered to provide for them, together with his own family, and his offer was accepted just as naturally as it was made.

A woman is quite a necessity in an Eskimo household, and though not as a rule contribut-

ing to the actual game-killing, once it is killed, it is she who turns it into everything which is useful. Among the Innuit a plurality of wives has been the custom for all time. The position of a husbandless woman is anomalous in a community where the accommodation for protection for them is scarcely possible, in their necessarily open tents and snow houses. A very strong apology has been made for the custom by all who have visited them, and even by the Moravian missionaries it has been admitted that a dilemma arises when a hitherto heathen Eskimo for the first time learns of the custom of Christendom.

Kommak had found himself in just such a dilemma a few years previous to the time of their present adventure, and he had decided that he could not abandon his second wife with her one child, any more than now he could abandon this defenseless widow. Thus his burden became no light one. He must build bigger houses, kill more food, and, until such a time as his sons should grow up, he must, single-handed, support three women and six children. This task he most nobly undertook and successfully accomplished.

Since the people had been unable to transport their kayaks on their long emigration, they had been seriously handicapped in killing seals in open water, but out of the timbers of the old wreck and some pieces of driftwood Kommak succeeded in building one, while with his rifle he secured enough seals to keep it covered. Indeed, in this way his household was always better provided for than the others, in spite of the number of mouths he had to fill. Moreover, with far greater foresight than the rest showed, he at once renewed from the old wreck the weapons with which, before he ever saw a white man's store, he had been trained to hunt for a livelihood. His bow and arrows lie on the table beside me as I write. They are shaped out of drift juniper wood, the bow, skillfully strengthened by the twisted sinews from the seal back, will now shoot its arrows a hundred yards with ease. The arrows are tipped with ivory from walrus tusks, or with pieces of iron hammered out from the bolts and nails of the wreck. The barbed tips are attached to the shaft by copper rivets, also made from some of the old fastenings that in their journey from the unknown had enabled the

vessel once to sail so gayly across the great ocean, as she came to cast herself away where she might save the lives of so many. Kommak wasted no powder on ducks when they crowded into the open "swatches" (ponds of water left in the floe ice), or when they were fat and lazy in the summer time. His duck dart is really a sportman's weapon.

The hunter who can make a good bag with such an implement has a real claim to the title of a "crack shot." It is a simple piece of drift juniper, with a sharpened bolt in one end, while from the shaft there project, at angles of forty-five degrees, three barbed pieces of wood. If, when he flung his dart, he failed to pierce the back of the duck, the side pieces entangled the wings or neck.

This sport was the great joy of Semijak, Kommak's oldest boy. More than once he would aim well enough to get two ducks at one throw, and soon he could almost keep the family in fresh meat. It was the same with the seals in winter. With his keen ears he could hear a seal under the ice, scratching to keep his bobbing-hole open, long before most lads, while their leading dog Kopeak could always

scent it in time to warn them to creep quietly up to leeward. Then as a rule it was a short shrift for the seal, as the youthful hunter drove his long spear through its head, upturned to breathe. He could detach the handle from the barb so quickly that he could generally get a hitch around it, and fling the pole crosswise to help him when the strain came. More than once, however, he had a big fight to hold the larger seals till he could drown them, or till, chopping down through the ice with a chisel which was fixed in the other end of his spear, he could see to dispatch them with the point which was left when the barb was detached.

So it was that as year after year slipped by, while at first all had had plenty, eventually a small spirit of jealousy arose, one having more than another. Moreover, Kuenaksaut, the oldest of the party, died, and soon after him his good wife. This left only an ill-balanced son, Nannuk, to look after the family. The discord became intensified, and, factions having formed, the families divided, two of them moving permanently to the opposite end of the island.

Their ammunition had now given out, and

Kommak, hearing of their straits, with true Eskimo spirit, sent over some of his own dwindling stock. The roots of jealousy are deep, however, and its fruits are always bitter. As is so often the case with the little people, the girls are not so successfully reared as the boys, and already there were young men unable to get wives. This meant a very miserable home, with no one to sew and cook.

Nowhere was this lack more felt than in Nannuk's igloo, but that very poverty and meanness made the man a less eligible suitor, and he had to see the possible brides accepting the hands and hearts of younger rivals, while he dragged on in enforced celibacy.

Another year went by, and Kommak's generous help to his poor and disgruntled neighbors had to cease. His own supplies had run out, and at last the time came when even he could no longer get seals enough to keep his boat covered, and that again made it still harder to get the seals, and so a vicious circle was established.

At last things came to a crisis. Word came over that Nannuk had determined to murder Kommak, and take the second wife by force

unless he voluntarily relinquished her. At first no attention was paid to what was considered a mere idle threat. But one day, while hunting along the shore, the two men met, an altercation ensued, and the threat was made openly. Well able to take care of himself, Kommak thought little of it till one day he found that in his absence Nannuk had visited his igloo and actually threatened his wife with violence. Thus it became difficult for him to go far from the house; one of the men must always remain at home. Kommak was far too gentle to return threats with violence, which he recognized called more for pity, and so, though ten years had elapsed since his coming to the island of his adoption, he decided to set out again, and both families on the west side decided that they would leave also.

Had the group on the other side of the island been willing to accompany them, it would have been hard for them to do so. With the shortage of food for themselves in midwinter, it had been impossible to secure food for their dogs, and they had been obliged to kill, and as a matter of fact had eaten, all their teams during the last two or three hard seasons.

Though no deer live on the island, Kommak, when hunting on the northwest shore, had had the good fortune to strike the trails of two coming right in over the frozen sea almost to their door. With their trusty bows and arrows, he and his son soon accounted for both of them; one of the crude but truly marvelous arrows, quivering in the heart of the stag, brought him down almost in his tracks.

These deer seemed messengers from a land of promise still farther to the north and west, telling the doubting hunters the direction in which to travel. Kommak at once accepted the omen, and chose Netsialiut (our April), the moon when the jar seals breed, as the time to set out.

Returning to the settlement the matter was keenly debated in the large igloo — whether it would be better to return the way they had come or to make a still larger venture for the land which they had never found. Kamaksuak was at first for agreeing with Kommak.

"There was little for us around the Koitsaut. There are plenty who fish the Kovik River. Illukotat is hunted by many. What Kommak says seems wise."

But Kuanak was resolute to go no farther. "We did not starve at Sugluk. Birds were in plenty at Nuivuk. The rivers around Kingua have many trout. Who can say where the land of these tuktu [deer] may be? The ice is now moving to the eastward. The winds are coming westerly. If I cannot remain here I shall return the way I came."

"We have all heard of the big island where deer are plentiful," urged Kommak. "We thought to reach it when we started from the Icy River. This is a new land at which we stopped, and not the land we sought. It was to reach a land full of deer that we started. Shall we, Innuit, be beaten, and called Kulluk [no-good men] by our folk? For my part I will not return till I have tried again to find the land. Surely it cannot be far away. The deer we killed were fat, and yet they left their land. It must be overflowing. For my part I start over the western ocean to go north again."

The oil lamps had to be replenished many times before the matter was settled, and it was the early hours of morning before Kommak realized that he must make his pilgrimage alone. Kamaksuak's courage failed him at the

last, while Novik and Ananak said: "It is back to our own people we go. If we are lost on the way you shall one day tell of us; but if you are lost we will tell. Surely, if we all go together there will be no one to bear the news." And so it happened that Kommak set out alone.

There was one ceremony yet to be performed before leaving. The kettles, pots, and cups borrowed from the wreck were not their property, but the white man's. They felt entitled to the old bits of iron, copper, and timber from the useless wreck, but the spirits of the white men might need their private property. Had they not put old Kuenaksaut's belongings within the stones which guarded his body from the wolves and foxes, in order that their spirits might serve his spirit in the land of shadows? Had not Kommak himself, Christian though he was, left there one of his own last precious sticks of tobacco, seeing that the old man had none? Otherwise how could his old friend obtain in the place of bliss that pleasure so dear to the heart of every Eskimo? And now what good luck could they expect to meet with if they were to set out on their journey

with the proceeds of robbery among their possessions?

As on the previous venture so many years before, day after day they kept on, sometimes gaining and sometimes losing ground, but always pushing ahead again when the storm winds made it possible, with the same optimism and *sangfroid*, ever toward the setting sun. Once more, on the fifth day out a clear evening gave these veritable crusaders a glimpse of land ahead to the west, and with good heart they started next morning to push toward it. Like Moses of old, however, they were destined only once to see the Land of Promise. A whole succession of sou'westerly gales set in; the ice-floe, instead of merely drifting a mile or two a day, simply rushed before them, and when after another five days the travelers found that they were still losing ground, and were farther east than when they had started, they most wisely decided to abandon the attempt.

They realized that they were away north of their old island of Mansfield, but had little knowledge of anything beyond that. They had, indeed, heard of an island, north of Wolstenholme, in which deer, at least, were

plentiful, but it would be futile to spend energy in trying to travel when just as likely as not they were moving in the opposite direction to that in which they intended to go. So they decided simply to live on the floe and await events.

Fortune favored them. The winds held westerly with the current most of the time. The ice remained in large pans, and life was fairly comfortable, as the snow houses were not broken by the jarring and capsizing of the rafts — a common experience when the immense pressure gathered by the winds over a large icefield opposes the stream of ice running with a tide.

Tegedlulgut (May), when the square-flipper has his young, was now upon them. Days were warm and nights short, and the ice was getting much looser. Great openings of water appeared between the pans, and it became much harder to get near enough to seals and birds to use their simple weapons with effect. Food was very scarce and, indeed, all hands were on short rations when at last land loomed up once more ahead. This time it seemed to run all along the northern horizon, and at one time it appeared

to be almost certain that they would be able to reach it, as a long jam of ice formed a bridge from their floe to the land.

Without a moment's delay all movable goods were transferred to the sledges, and a real dash was made for the land, which was high and rugged (it was evidently Nottingham Island). They soon found that the bridge on which they were traveling was only held against the island by the projection of a cape in a southeast direction. As they drew near, they could make out that it was the end of the land, and thus everything depended upon the speed which they could make while the wind continued to hold the ice against the cliffs.

The sprint for the land of the heavily burdened little company might have served as an illustration of a mixed obstacle race in "Alice in Wonderland." Yet at night they seemed not one whit nearer their goal, and the wind, which was their sole dependence, fell away at sundown. Accustomed to the flat island, and the land around Wolstenholme, they had misjudged the high cliffs of Nottingham Island as being nearer than they really were. Yet, by the light of the young moon, when they realized

that once more they were doomed to disappointment, they built their snow houses, and, turning in, slept just as soundly as if they had really been once more on *terra firma*. As they were out of sight of land again by morning, they had almost forgotten that they had ever seen it.

It became harder and still harder every day to secure food, and at last it was no longer possible to save their dogs. One after another they met the fate of Nannuk's team and were killed and eaten, and their skins used for much-needed repairs to boots and clothing. By the middle of May only the faithful Kopeak was left, and he was a mere shadow of his former self, though by that time he combined in his own person the best part of the entire team which had left the island two months previously. Now for a time blank starvation faced the whole company. Spare pieces of skin from gloves and boots had to be soaked and eaten, in order to maintain strength enough to continue the unequal struggle.

The ice got looser and looser each day, and still no land came in sight. Kommak had rightly guessed that the western entrance to

Hudson Bay Straits had been passed, and that they were rapidly driving out into the ocean beyond, where all must inevitably be lost. Birds were beginning to pass north in greater numbers, and seals were seen continually, but each day it became harder to get near any game. Occasionally a walrus poked his nose out and blinked at them, but without a kayak it was impossible to secure him. It would almost have been better if they had not seen any.

June weather was upon them now, and there was daylight day and night. The weather was warm, really hot, indeed, with the reflection from the ice and the continual sunshine. But the snow houses would no longer hold together, so that they had no shelter in bad weather, even for the children. Yet at last, when the tide of fortune set in their direction, it was a spell of this very bad weather which eventually saved their lives.

The wind had chopped round to the north-east, and the moisture-laden warm air from over the Atlantic, chilled as it passed over the frigid polar stream which sweeps into the Straits out of Fox Channel, had for several days made an impenetrable fog. It was so

thick that even the rain which fell at night did not dispel it, nor did the fury of the high wind have any effect upon it. Before it the westward trend of the ice was checked even on the ebb tides, and when the flood tide banked up the water, whole fields were driven to the east and south.

In spite of the danger of wandering from the others in the fog, in spite of the fact that the whole floe would sometimes turn around on the current and so make bearings useless (for when you went westerly to hunt in the morning, you might, just as likely as not, have to go on walking in a westerly direction to get back again) — in spite of all these drawbacks, hunt they must, even if it might be supposed that to see game in such a fog was out of the question. Many a man from civilization would have accepted the apparently inevitable, and, at least temporarily, have abandoned the struggle. Had Kommak not been the Innuk, — the proud title they claim, — that is, the man, he was, all must have undoubtedly perished. Now once more that which had seemed to be against him turned out to be his best friend. As he crept along the rough ice in the thick fog,

he almost stumbled over a large polar bear. The surprise was mutual, and almost equal, but Kommak was the quicker of action and in an instant one of his nine arrows, all he had left, was actually quivering in the heart of the bear. It had really transfixed the one spot which could have killed the animal quickly enough to prevent his escape into the water, where, of course, he would have been lost.

No second shot was needed. Kommak found himself literally sitting on a veritable mountain of fresh food, which would last at least as long as the ice on which they were floating. A little later, when he stumbled into camp with as large a chunk of meat as he could carry, his was a joy which no purchased trinket could afford.

Meanwhile he fully appreciated the fact that nature was giving them what would probably be the last chance by driving them to the southeast. The whole company was hurrying in that direction with all the little strength which they had left them. Owing to the new meat-supply they were able to push ahead considerably the faster. Moreover, they were wise enough to abandon, not only the heavy skins,

but every other possession which they could possibly do without. The persistence of the fog and wind was more than remarkable, it became almost uncanny, but still they pushed on into the gloom, along a road which apparently led nowhere. Suddenly, without a minute's warning, round chopped the wind to the westward, and in a few moments not a vestige of fog was left, and right under the lee of the ice on which they were traveling was a group of three islands. They had passed close along beside them without seeing them at all.

Had the fog lasted a few hours more, they would have had scarcely any chance whatever of making a landing. As events turned out, they were soon clambering up the rocks of an island about nine miles long, one of a group called Digg's Islands, which Kommak at once recognized as lying out from Cape Wolstenholme about twelve or thirteen miles.

This passage is so often solid with ice that a continual watch was kept for a chance to cross to the mainland. The winter ice, however, had broken up a few days previously, and no solid jam of drift ever formed again to make the attempt to cross feasible. There was nothing

to do but make the best of it for the time. As a matter of fact, they were but little better off than before. No human being ever visited the island, and there were no trees on it; though they had plenty of moss for tinder with which to make fire with their fire-stones, there was practically no fuel obtainable. Every bit of driftwood was carefully collected by the women and carried in their hoods to the camp, while the arrows, spears, and darts were carefully repaired.

Some of the many birds arriving from the south were killed with stones, and some few near the shore with darts. Arrows were almost too valuable to risk, except at birds resting on the land. By means of splicing with thongs, a couple of trout-spears were obtained, and a sparkling rock dangled a fathom under water through the ice readily attracted the newly arrived salmon trout, while the deft hands of Kommak and Semijak speared many of these shining beauties. The eggs of gulls nesting in the faces of the cliffs were also secured, and it was July before the luxury of contrast allowed the shadow of the future again to stir them to serious efforts to reach

the land. In order to secure that end, seals were the one essential. They must have skins to cover a boat, but as they had nothing in which to hunt the animals, that seemed almost out of the question.

One day, however, a large ice-pan driving through the Straits stranded in a cove on the south side of the island, and Kommak, who was always prowling round the landwash in search of game, promptly spied it. Seals, though apparently asleep, have a habit of putting up their heads and spying around for danger. It was an easy matter to get to the ice-edge unseen, but the seal was on the outer edge, and had a full view of anything approaching over the white ice. Lying flat on his face, Kommak proceeded to crawl and wriggle over the surface so long as the seal's head was down, while the very instant that it raised it up, he lay still and called like a seal blowing after a dive, "Poo-yee, poo-yee." (*Poo-yee* is Eskimo for seal.) With its fears allayed, the seal would once more stretch itself out, and then after a few minutes would rise up and watch the approaching man. Kommak was himself clothed in sealskin from head to foot,

and he took good care to wriggle both legs together like a tail, and, indeed, waved them while the seal was looking on — as that form of salutation is very acceptable to seals. As he got nearer, he could see that the animal was almost on the ice-edge, and even a mortal wound might leave it able to slip off into the water and sink before he could seize it. With infinite patience he worked round down wind, till at last he was actually between his victim and its only chance of escape; and then once more his trusty arrow did its duty. The acquisition was only a small one, but it bred hope in the heart of so confirmed an optimist, and he and the women at once set to work to make a frame for an oomiak. The oomiak, or woman boat, is a perfectly flat-bottomed craft, with square corners and ends, and looks exactly like a magnified English pie-dish, cut to size, according to the amount to be floated. This one was seventeen feet by eleven. The remaining dog-traces, and every square inch of skin, including the dart-line, had to be split for thongs to fasten the little pieces of wood together. Still, something was accomplished, and bit by bit the framework of as wonderful a

craft as ever floated grew, as it were, cell by cell, just as a vegetable does. And then they waited for more "skin." The ice that came to the shore brought no more seals with it, and there was no good foreshore for basking on. At last, however, as in the case of Mr. Micawber, something turned up. Kommak saw a square-flipper seal climb out on a rock a few yards from the shore. With his harpoon and line, his inseparable companions, he clambered along the foot of the cliffs until he came near the spot. Sure enough, an old bull, almost as heavy as a real bull, was dozing on the rock. He was just out of range, but Kommak enticed him near enough to harpoon him and hauled him ashore after a hard fight.

The two skins were not sufficient, however, to cover any boat large enough to float all the party, and nothing was further from Kommak's mind than to desert some of them even temporarily while he crossed to look for help from the mainland. Well he knew that those left behind would perish without him to fend for them.

Another season of enforced waiting, and at last help came from a very unexpected quarter.

The wife of Bakshauk, searching for driftwood, saw something dark rolling in the surf. Gathering the other women, she waded out into the water, and together they were able to drag ashore the body of a large walrus half-eaten by bears. When the skin was removed and dragged to camp, it was found to be just half large enough to finish covering the oomiak. Kommak was as fortunate in the resourcefulness of his women as he was in his own, and before night they had so cleverly split the piece of skin they had recovered that all agreed that it would be better to risk a crossing now—as August had already come in — than to delay any longer on the island.

My friend the Hudson's Bay Company factor at the post newly established at Cape Wolstenholme, was out hunting geese down near the landwash at low water one Saturday evening when he became aware of a strange object approaching the land. With his pocket telescope he soon made it out to be an oomiak packed as full as it would hold of people. Some hours had gone by, and the tide was nearly full before he again thought of the

approaching Eskimo, and to his surprise he found that they were keeping offshore, evidently in doubt as to what to do. Going down to the water, he beckoned them to approach, giving them to understand that they were free to land, and would receive a friendly welcome, whereupon, with the queerest of patched-up paddles, women and men alike assisted in bringing the crazy bark to the beach. Their hesitation to land was explained by the fact that no white man had been at the Cape when they last saw it, and they were not sure what to expect.

The agent at once recognized the truth of their story, for it was well known that ten years previously several families had left the mainland for the island. Never a word had been heard of them since, though they had not actually been forgotten. Captain Murray, of a Scotch whaler, had steamed as close as he dared all along the eastern shore of Mansfield, blowing his whistle and showing flags to attract attention in case any Eskimo should happen to be stranded there, but he had not been able to make out any answering signals. Yet as a matter of fact the little people on the east side

had seen her pass in full view, but in their excitement they had forgotten to light a fire in order to signal back, and had confined their efforts to hoisting all their foxskins stretched out on a long line, hoping thereby to induce the vessel to call in for trade; but she had passed without seeing them.

The captain's report had confirmed the general opinion that they had never reached the island, and the whole company had long ago been given up for lost.

Though these poor folk had been obliged to leave behind them nearly all their bearskins, of which their tally showed twenty-seven, and also all their walrus and narwhal tusks, they had quite a number of good foxskins, and with these they at once requested permission to go into the store. They had been nearly ten years without tobacco, to say nothing of the countless other luxuries of a white man's store, and tobacco and matches, the universal *pourboire* of a Hudson's Bay Company store, were what they asked for first.

The trading was over, and the men had gone to fix up for the night a tent which the agent

had kindly lent them. It was getting dark, and my friend was entering the doorway of his house when he heard the patter of feet behind him. It was Mitteakuk, the oldest of the women, who had returned to ask him what seemed a most extraordinary question.

"Is it not to-morrow that is the day of no trade?"

"Yes, to-morrow is the day of rest," he answered.

"I am glad," she said. "We have kept count ever since we left, but we were afraid we had mistaken a day."

The following morning, as the factor was dressing, he was attracted by the sounds of singing outside. As he stopped to listen, the words of the Eskimo version of one of our most familiar hymns reached his ears — "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me."

Kairtok piulijauviksak
Mane oktortauvingme
Ijervigidlarlagit,
Piulijaunartogavit.
Jesus ungagivara,
Killangmut tessiormanga.

There was Kommak with all his little party gathered round him on the bare rocks outside

the tent holding morning prayers. An Episcopal prayer-book and hymnal were still among this unusual man's most cherished possessions. He concluded the service with an extempore expression of sincere gratitude to God for their safe return to the land which they looked upon as home. My friend assures me that never in all his life had he been a witness to a more impressive service.

There is yet one even more extraordinary chapter to the story. Even before the wanderers, well fitted out for another lease of life, left the Cape, a party from the eastward came in. Among them was a man who had crossed the Straits from Lake Harbor in Baffin Land, and who was returning to the district of his birth between Cape Smith and the Big River. He had with him his wife from the north side of the Straits, but no family.

Truth is stranger than fiction. This man proved to be none other than our old friend Bakshauk. When he was driven off on the ice he had built himself a snow house, in which in bad weather he had slept for days at a time with scarcely anything to eat. He had no fire

to warm himself or to cook food. With only his bow and arrow and spear he had killed game enough, alone on the drift ice, to keep life in him for three months, after which period he had escaped from the floe to the shore of Baffin Land, at a point about one hundred miles north of the whaling station at Lake Harbor. Traveling south along the land-wash, he had still continued to kill enough seals and birds to keep body and soul together, and he had at length actually reached the post after traveling a distance of certainly not less than a thousand miles from the place where he started. He was not one whit the worse for an experience which would have killed any ordinary man of the world. His main trouble had been boots, which he had never been able to repair, for he could never dry the skins of the animals which he killed, as they froze instantly, and he had no fire to thaw them out. Only by cutting pieces out of his other garments, and patching the holes as best he could, without needle or thread, was he able to travel over the ice without getting frost-bitten.

There was only one difficulty to be settled, and that was the question of the first wife.

Bakshauk had for several years been learning from the missionaries stationed at Lake Harbor that it was unlawful to have more than one wife. He had never expected to see his first wife alive, and she had long ago considered him as lost. At length a conference took place between all the parties on perfectly friendly terms, and the matter was settled by the first wife and her son remaining with Kommak, while the daughter and the second wife went with Bakshauk.

Novik and Ananak reached the Kovik River without more than the usual adventures incident to the wandering life of the little people. The same winds which had foiled Kommak's attempts favored them when they left the southern extremity of the island to go east.

"But what about Kuanak and Kamaksuak?" asked the agent.

"They could n't leave, having neither dogs nor outfit."

"Are they still on the island, then?"

"Indeed, they must be."

"Will they not perish during the winter?"

"I fear it will be even so."

"Can nothing be done to save them?"

"The Innuit can do nothing. Only an oomiavik of the Kablenaks [white men] can rescue them."

Alas, no ship has yet been able to go, and their fate still hangs in the balance.

Wonder has frequently been expressed as to how the Eskimo became a circumpolar race. This simple piece of history serves at least to indicate the way in which it may have occurred, and that it may well have been quite involuntary on their part.

THE END