AN ESKIMO VILLAGE

LITTLE JOHN.

Frontispiece

AN ESKIMO VILLAGE

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ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS
BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C. 2
NEW YORK AND TORONTO : THE MACMILLAN CO.

TO

M. H.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFACE

LITTLE John is a middle-aged Eskimo ; a squarely built, shaggy-headed little man, a clever hunter, and hard enough to be well and happy among all the hard weather and rough raw food of an Eskimo village. John drove my dog-sledge in the winter ; he was a famous builder of snow houses, and the most wonderful pathfinder I ever saw.

Once upon a time we were camped in a tiny snow house of his building, and with much labour because of the frosty air and the thick gloves I wore I was writing with my pencil in a notebook. John puffed at his pipe and watched me.

"What are you writing?" said he.

"I am writing about this journey," said I.

"Why do you not write about our village?" said John.

And so, because of what little John said, I have taken my pen and am writing about our village.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

AN ESKIMO VILLAGE

CHAPTER I

THE BROOK

FROM the window of the room where the first jottings for this book were written I could see the Eskimo women doing their laundry. And the Eskimo women have a queer way of washing clothes.

But let me explain, first, that I was sitting in my room in the hospital at Okak, on the island of Kivalek, off the coast of Labrador, in latitude 57° 40′. Not many yards away stood the church, and between the hospital wall and the tower of the church ran the brook. That is to say, it ran in the summertime ; and in a flat rock-pool outside my window the women used to do their washing. Their way of doing it, as I said, was queer. They wetted the clothes, spread them on a rock, and rubbed them over with soap, rolled them into a bundle, dropped them into the pool—and trampled on them.

And so I could see them from my window. A strange sight : women standing ankle-deep in a pool, tramping, swaying from one foot to the other, tramping, tramping, tramping. Oh, the queer sight ! Some of them are smoking pipes and look anything but lovely ; some of them carry babies in their hoods, and lull them to sleep with the tramp-

ling. Watch that fat little fellow. How he loves it! His sleepy head nods from side to side, he nestles deeper in the deep, snug hood, and his mother goes on with her trampling.

And the women are talking. Eh, how they chatter! Their tongues go a-clacketting outside my window—chatter, chatter, chatter—loud and shrill, with many a burst of laughter.

They are happy at their washing are those women.

Sometimes they sing and sway to the singing—tramp, tramp, tramp—to Sankey's tunes and harsh, long Eskimo words; but the thought of it brings a lump to the throat, does it not? For the old forbears of those women, those women singing Sankey's hymns, were heathen and wild, the mothers and wives of murderers! And so the women go on with their washing, singing, chattering, swaying, trampling, and the brook rustled and tumbled outside my window, and by day and by night I could hear the sound of the water among the rocks and the stones.

But the brook does not always run; it freezes in October, or even sooner. Already in September it is trickling and splashing between icy banks, and in October it comes oozing over a deep bed of ice. In November it is frozen solid, and instead of bringing buckets for water, the women come with sacks and carry home chopped ice. Long after the brook had ceased to rustle, and long after the women had given up their trampling in the rock-pool—driven away by

the ice—I could hear the sound of chopping. Chopping and chattering, for the sight of a boy with a hatchet would bring the women scattering from their doorways, like a flock of hens at feeding-time. The boy chopped and the women chattered, and I used to see them from my window filling their sacks and kettles with the broken ice; never in a great hurry, for the Eskimos are a leisurely folk.

The brook is a tame little thing in the summertime, when the women trample at their washing; but in the spring, when the snows begin to melt, and the sunshine warms the poor, frozen earth a little, that same brook is a raging torrent. One year it burst its banks on a Sunday afternoon, as little John, my sledge-driver, could tell you. John was enjoying a Sunday afternoon snooze; lying on his bed in his shirt sleeves, digesting, I have no doubt, a very good dinner of raw seal-meat. He was awakened, all of a sudden, by a thunderous roar; the water was cascading down the hillside and beating on the back wall of his hut, flinging stones and lumps of frozen snow, and making the house shake. The little man must have rubbed his eyes as he awoke, for the furniture was all afloat. The house was half full of water, wavelets were lapping the legs of the high bedstead, boxes, stools, pots, and pans, were careering around in a whirlpool, and the rattle and the clatter must have been outrageous.

That was the time when the avalanche came. Each year, as the springtime came, we used to call

as many of the Eskimos as could be spared from the hunting and set them to digging out the brook. With spades and hatchets and great snow-knives they dug a channel for the stream, sometimes thirty feet down from the top of the drift; they loaded their sledges with the blocks that they were chopping, and sent them sailing away to the beach where the tides were beginning to creep and rustle under the thick sea ice. All this was a costly business; and we thought, with an eye to economy, to give the brook its way, and let it make a channel for itself. So we did; and day by day I watched the water trickling over the edge of the drift; and day by day I saw the people come with their kettles and their buckets to catch the running water. We forgot that the stream was boring a way beneath the drift. On that Sunday afternoon a little Eskimo boy was seated on the top of the drift, scooping for himself a drink of water; there came a great roar of sound, and with a whirl of snow the great drift went raging down to the frozen beach. It passed my window; the walls shook, the railings were torn from their sockets, and water was splashing and foaming about the tower of the church. We rushed out; nobody was hurt, but there, away on the beach, sat a bewildered small boy, looking around him, and groping with his tin mug for a drink.

So much for the brook. I seem to have said a good deal about it; you might even think that I am wasting your time, but the brook is the very heart of this story.

Now let me tell you how that is.

DIGGING OUT OUR SNOW DRIFT.

Facing p. 14

By the side of the stream a little path goes winding up the hillside. Away behind the houses it goes, towards the swampy ground that fills the uplands. I was always fascinated by that little path. Where was the end of it? That seemed a proper question to put to little John, the sledge-driver; so I put it to him. His answer was about as satisfying as an answer may well be—no long, wordy explanations, no "ifs" and "buts" and "perhapses" and "might-bes."

"Come and see," said little John.

So I put on my blanket smock, or dickey, or jumper—or whatever you may care to call the Eskimo garment—for the wind was keen, even on a summer afternoon when the women were trampling at their washing, and I followed little John.

But, oh, for a pair of Eskimo legs! The little man went trotting on, sure-footed among the stones, while I came following after, stumbling and panting. We climbed the hillside, and the deep-worn little path led us beside the swamp.

That swamp was the home of the gnats; their buzzing sounded like the sighing of the wind, and but for my veil I should have been eaten alive. John had a short, black pipe in his mouth, and was surrounded by a barrage of tobacco smoke through which no gnat could go. We trotted on.

We crossed the top of the island and began to go down towards the sea; a gentle breeze from the west met us, and the gnats fell back before it. Our well-worn path went winding on and lost itself before us in the shingly beach of a lovely little bay. John

is no poet : "Fine place for seals," said he, as he waved his stumpy pipe towards the view.

As for myself, I was entranced with the beauty of the scene : the sloping hillside, the gentle curve of the bay, the waves lapping and foaming on the beach, the snow-capped mountains of the mainland in the distance, and the sunshine on the blue water. It was a lovely scene. You hardly think, perhaps, of loveliness in Labrador, but there it was, for God, the great Artist, can make beauty of mere rocks and water, ice and sky and sunshine.

But there was more than beauty in the scene ; there was something that seemed strange. The hillside was strewn with mounds, as though some army had made an old encampment there.

Right down to the pebbly beach the mounds seemed to straggle—square heaps of turf much of a size and scattered here and there. I made to go towards them, but John would have none of it. "Iglovinit," he said ; "old ruined houses, those," and set his course towards the sea. He would not go among the heaps ; he seemed half-frightened ; they were eerie, uncanny. He did not like the place. "Come and see the beach," he said, "where the skin canoes are launched and where we bring the seals" ; and would have led me away. But I went wandering among the heaps, in spite of John ; "old ruined houses," were they ? then I wanted to see them. They seemed to be square mounds of turf, all overgrown with coarse grass and weeds. Some had the shape of huts ; there was a hollow in the middle where the floor had been, but the snows and

the rains had washed the walls down, and they were mostly filled. In some I could see a gap where the door had been. Here and there were bits of flint, old broken knives, and tools ; on one floor there was a litter of shells, the relics of some long-forgotten feast. Fragments of rotten driftwood were bedded in the walls, marking the place where old rafters had held the heavy roofs of turf. I could picture the mounds as homes. It was a long-deserted village.

I turned and followed John again ; our backs were to the crumbling village, and our faces set for home, but in my mind there was a picture.

CHAPTER II

THE HEATHEN VILLAGE

A HUNDRED and fifty years ago that hillside strewn with mounds was an Eskimo village; those heaps were homes, homes where real people lived, people whose bones you might see under the stones in the ancient graveyard near by. Up that sloping, pebbly beach the hunters carried their canoes and dragged their catch of seals. There was feasting in those mound-like huts. There, of an evening, the people squatted in a ring, with the pot of meat or the freshly killed seal in the middle. They hacked the meat with knives of flint; they talked of the doings of the day, and the hunter told of the catching of the seal. With graphic gestures and flowing words he pictured the dancing waves, the tumbling canoe, the sleek head peering, the sudden swift harpoon, the tussle, and the triumphant home-coming.

The villagers crowded in until the hut was filled to overflowing. With a nod of thanks they fed and went away, only to make room for more and more comers, until the meat was done.

The little children crouched against the wall, chewing such morsels as their parents might fling. And in the midst the dreaded sorcerer stalked in, a weird and filthy fellow, bedaubed and betasselled. A silence fell upon the company; they made a place for him beside the bowl of meat. The host chose

out the choicest bits, for this awesome being must be fed and pampered—and woe betide the unhappy hunter who did not treat him well. The feasting over, the people sit around in the dim and smoking light of a seal-oil lamp, talking in undertones. The sorcerer speaks ; a silence falls.

The little children shudder ; they sob and whimper in their terror, until their mother smacks them into quietness.

Perhaps a wind is rising, a storm is brewing. The sorcerer thumps his seal-hide drum and begins to chant in a nasal voice. Maybe he has a grudge against some unhappy fellow. He points to him with a grimy finger and chants and points again.

"There is the fellow," he sings, "who is making the storm. He forgot to give me meat when he caught a seal, and the Spirit of the Storm is angry. There will be bad weather, bad weather ; no more seals for many days. You will be hungry—hungry—hungry"—and he thumps his drum and howls aloud, and at the pointing finger the unlucky man accused betakes himself slinkingly into the night. The little children whine and shiver, the strong hunters tremble, and with a final scowl at the company in general the sorcerer gathers up his bones and his drum and stalks majestically away to his own abode.

There were dismal doings in that heathen village. True, there was a rude hospitality ; the hungry were fed. Any who had not might freely eat with those who had, but beyond this there was little that savoured of love or kindliness.

There was a grim honesty. Each man's tools and weapons and canoe were sacred to his own use, but there was lust, and greed, and hatred. There were bitter feuds and no forgiveness. There was murder, too.

One man in that ancient village took a dislike to his wife; he threatened her, he followed her with eyes in which she could read the will to kill her. She lived in daily terror, but she served him in her strange, devoted way.

There came a day when the weather seemed good. "Come," said the man, "we will hunt together." The woman gathered a morsel of food, and between them they dragged their little sledge over the snow-covered land into the wilds of the island, where the land was all strewn with boulders and birds were to be found. "Wait," he said, "and sit upon this stone, and I will hunt birds with my bow and arrow." But he took his heavy harpoon with him, the harpoon that is only used for seals and walrus, and the woman knew that she was doomed.

She sat upon the boulder stone, and the man went away to look for birds. As soon as he was out of sight she took off her smock, with its great drooping hood, and set it on the stone where she had sat. She stuffed it with snow to make it keep its shape, and then she hid behind a rock to watch. Presently the husband came creeping up, sly and furtive, dodging from one boulder to the next; slowly, slowly coming nearer, until he was within range of the fling of a harpoon. He raised the weapon to his shoulder,

poised it, and with a mighty thrust sent it whizzing through the air. It struck the sitting figure straight between the shoulders and bowled it over.

The man fled ; he dared not come nearer to see what he had done. It was enough for him ; he had slain his wife. Back to the village he went, taking his time, and hunting birds upon the way.

No sooner was he out of sight than the woman gathered up her fallen smock, shook the snow from it, and put it on ; and, with the harpoon upon her shoulder, ran at the top of her speed to her home. There she told her story, showed the hole in the back of her smock, showed the harpoon, and then, with the house full of neighbours, sat waiting. It was late in the evening when the man returned, and at the sound of his footsteps the woman crept into the darkness under the wall and crouched hiding behind the others. The man came in and flung upon the floor the birds which he had caught. Nobody moved.

"Where is your wife?" said one.

"Ai, ai" (Alas !), said the man, "this is an unhappy day, for my wife is lost. We had hunted together and eaten together, when there came a storm and she lost her footing in the darkness of it and fell over a precipice and was killed. I have spent much time looking for her, but darkness came, and I was weary and cold and could do no more, and my wife is lost. Alas, my poor wife !"

With this he broke into loud and violent lamentations, while the company sat around in stony silence. He rocked his body to and fro and wailed, but, rais-

ing his head, he suddenly caught sight of the woman, who had crept from her hiding-place to confront him. The neighbours waited. With a yell of terror—for he thought he saw a ghost—the wretched man fled into the night and was seen no more.

This is one of the stories Juliana told me, gathered from the lore of her father and grandfather ; Juliana, the schoolmistress of our village and nurse in the little mission hospital that stands by the brookside and under the shadow of the church tower ; Juliana, a Christian woman and a leader of her people, but a descendant of the folk who lived in that heathen village, and carrying in her memory some of the lore of those old times. You shall meet Juliana again, my reader, and I have told the story to give you a glimpse of the sort of life that was lived in that old heathen village, that village that is to-day no more than a rocky hillside dotted with grass-grown mounds.

Many a time did I wander among those mounds and dig in their crumbling walls. They seemed quiet and strange, with their reminders of olden times, but stranger still was the old burying-place of the people of that village, hard by upon a stony waste, hidden behind a wall or rock. There you may see the stony heaps, under which the bones of those forgotten people lie. You may peer between the chinks and see them, moss-grown and bleached, and close beside are the heaps of stones that cover the belongings of the dead. Here a hunter's tomb, with arrows and harpoon ; here a woman's bones are laid, with

cooking pot and knives, and scraper for skins, near to her ghostly hand; there the burying-place of a little child, with childish toys piled up—toy spears and lamp and cooking pot—with which the little one had played long years ago. A strange, sad sight, but it seems that those old heathen folk believed in a future life, for they thought that the hunter would like his tools close by him where he lay, and the woman her pots and the little child his toys. And they still believe, do some of the people, that the hunter hunts and the housewife cooks, and the child plays when none are near. I asked one weird old man about it; did he really believe it?

He stared at me aghast! "Hush!" he said, and held a warning finger and shook a reproving head. "Hush! I have heard them hunting in the night! Hush! I have seen their footprints in the snow!"

CHAPTER III

THE FOUR YOUNG MEN

IF it had been your fortune to live in the year 1752 and to be at the London Docks on the morning of the 17th of May, you might have seen a strange and moving sight. You might, indeed, have witnessed the beginning of a great adventure.

Picture the scene.

A small schooner lies against the wall, swaying gently with the tide. You can see the name, "Hope," painted on the bow, and "Hope of London" on the stern. Decks are all a-bustle, sails are being shaken loose, busy hands are making ready for the loosing of ropes and casting off of moorings.

Farewells are being said; there seems to be a moment of prayer, for heads are bared and rough hands folded. A party of gentlemen and ladies, clad in the garments of the city folk of two hundred years ago, step across from schooner to quay and wave "God-speed" to those on board. The *Hope* moves slowly down the dock, aided by much hauling of ropes and pushing of boat-hooks, and aided, too, by not a little shouting.

The schooner glides into the river and the wind fills her sails; her journey is begun. Look! A little group of four is gathered on the deck, waving farewell; the little knot of city folk stand watching. The

Hope glides slowly out of sight; the watchers on the wharf turn homewards. The great adventure has begun.

All this may seem a little mysterious, but there is no need for mystery. The explanation is this:

The schooner *Hope* was under the care of a Christian captain. He was a hardy seafaring man who had travelled deep waters and had seen much of the world. In the course of his journeyings he had been upon a trading voyage to Greenland, and his heart had been touched by the sight of the patient missionaries and their little gatherings of rough Eskimo Christians.

He had seen for himself some of the great things that God was doing for the heathen there; he had talked with the missionaries, and he had said: "There are other Eskimos, people like these Greenlanders, living farther off still, upon the frozen coast of Labrador; surely they should hear the Gospel too."

In due time his ship came to the Port of London, and there he spoke his mind among the Christian folk whom he met. "Can we not," he said, "charter a ship to go upon a voyage to Labrador? We could trade in oil and furs, and we could carry missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Eskimos. It is a good work, and no one could lose anything by it."

Three Christian merchants put their heads together; they talked the thing over; they put their hands into their pockets; and so it came about that the *Hope* was chartered, and so it was that she

sailed from London on that bright May morning in the year 1752.

And the four who waved from the deck? They were the four young men who had come forward as volunteers to be the first missionaries to the Eskimos of Labrador.

Their great adventure had begun.

If you have crossed the North Atlantic Ocean, and particularly if you have made that crossing in a small ship, you may have some idea, perhaps, of the experiences of those four young men.

Myself, I have made the passage in the *Harmony*, a tiny ship of two hundred and twenty tons, and have spent three-and-twenty days upon the way, and have known what it means to be storm-tossed and weary, and day by day to see nothing but tumbling waters high as houses, and to lie awake at night and listen to the weird cries of the sailors as they hauled upon the ropes. I thought it long that I should be three-and-twenty days upon the sea, but the *Hope* was only a little schooner, and it was on the 11th of July, all but eight weeks after leaving London, that the coast of Labrador was sighted. Eight weeks of the trackless ocean, with sometimes storm and tossing, and sometimes, maybe, anxiety and peril! Can you wonder that those four young men were glad to see the bleak and rocky land?

On the 31st of July the schooner came to anchor in a sheltered cove; high hills, patched with snow on their upper slopes, rose to west and north. The lower hillsides were green with grass and trees, and, best of all, the beach showed marks of camping-

places and posts where boats had been moored. The young men were full of delight at this pleasant scene, for pleasant it was in the pure, clear air and the morning sunshine, and, maybe, it was the hope that beat in their breasts, and, maybe, it was the thought of the stout little schooner *Hope* which had brought them safely to the land of their choice. Whatever the reason, "'Hopedale,'" they said, "shall be the name of this place."

But there was no time for sentiment. The summer, they knew, would be short; the ship must be unloaded and the goods and chattels unpacked, for the four young men had reached their journey's end, and this pleasant place in which the schooner had cast anchor was to be the scene of their life's work. They had reached their destination, the first missionaries to the Eskimos of Labrador. "Many hands make light work." The season was late, and all hands turned to the task. Boxes, barrels, planks, and bricks, all were hauled ashore in the schooner's boat. Sailors and missionaries alike took a hand in the work of unloading.

Day by day, as the *Hope* lay at anchor, bands of Eskimos came in their skin canoes, offering skins and furs and oil in barter; and "Alas!" said those four young men, "if only we could speak the Eskimo tongue, so as to tell these poor wild Eskimos of a Saviour's love. But we will learn; we will learn!"

You may like to know what sort of things those four young men had brought with them.

Well, first, a little flour and ship's biscuit and salted pork for food; but also muskets and powder

and shot and fishing lines, "for," said they, "surely we can hunt and fish for our food and save expense to those at home who send us." Clothing, too, they had brought, but not much of that to spare; "for," said they, "we will dress like the Eskimos, in skins and furs."

Then, bricks and mortar and joists and planks, with tools and nails for building. Yes, they would build a little house to live in, for they wanted some fixed dwelling-place; and you may imagine them happily sawing and hammering at their planks and joists, and laying the bricks of their chimneys; for, let me tell you, that only a little while ago I held reverently in my hand a brick from the ruins of that house, the house built on the shore of the little bay at Hopedale by those four young men.

Remember, all this is in the summer days of 1752. The shores of that little bay are now deserted, and the house has fallen in ruins and crumbled away, but this one brick was brought home by the captain of the mission ship a few years ago—perhaps the last remaining relic of this great adventure.

And another thing those four young men had brought—a parcel of garden seeds. "Surely," said they, "this land of Labrador is not all rocks and ice; there must be soil there, and maybe the good God will cause His sun to shine even there, and maybe He will cause our garden seeds to grow. We will take seeds—lettuce and turnips and cabbages." Strange act of faith and common sense! Sure enough, they found soil upon the sloping hillside, and there they planted the seeds. I almost think

they planted them on the very first day, so as to make the most of the bleak, short summer ; for very soon, we read, the seeds began to grow. But, alas, the night frost came and nipped the tender shoots ; and so the first planting of a garden on the barren Labrador was a failure.

But this act of faith, this planting of a garden in so unpromising a land, was a good example for later comers.

Nowadays every mission station has its garden, and you may see, if you have the good fortune to be there, potatoes and cabbages and lettuce and turnips all flourishing with amazing hardihood. True, you might also see the aged Eskimo widows earning an honest wage by covering the potato plants with sacks in the cool of the evening, and uncovering them again when the morning sun begins to shine, you might see the grave and bearded missionary putting empty tins over his cabbage shoots, for the plants must be nursed if they are to escape the frosts.

But the four young men had set the example, and others have reaped the benefit. My own lot was cast in this village of ours—a favoured place, where the gardens are sheltered by steep rocks from the worst of the winds. But even in the far north, where no trees grow, the indefatigable missionary has got a garden. I was walking with the missionary at Chidley, the northernmost tip of Labrador. We came upon a little railed space, not much bigger than a child's cot. In all seriousness I asked, as I pointed to it : " Is this the grave of your favourite

dog?" "No," said the missionary, "that is my garden; come and see it." I went, and I stood beside the little palings and looked upon the wizened turnip-tops and the pale, anæmic rhubarb, and I wondered at the faith of the man who could set Nature such a task as to raise garden plants in such a place as Chidley. "I could only scrape together a very little earth," said the missionary, "but if, when you get back to your village, you could send me one or two barrels full of earth, I think we could do better!"

But this is a digression. Let us get back to the four young men and their great adventure.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITTLE CARPENTER

We left our four young men busy at the building of their house ; taking turns, no doubt, to fish from the rocks, or to go hunting for a chance hare or ptarmigan or even a seal or bear.

We can imagine them waking in the morning, and running eagerly to the garden patch to see how the seeds were faring. We can picture them sitting in the evenings, talking of friends and of home, and planning their future work among the Eskimos, or chatting with the good people of the schooner over the doings of the voyage. Days passed, the house was nearly finished, the night frosts were keen, and summer was drawing to a close, and the captain of the *Hope* felt that it was time for him to set his course for home.

Accordingly, good-byes were said ; and the four young men stood upon the hill and watched the *Hope* slide slowly out of sight.

Like the practical men that they were, they settled to the finishing of their house ; they turned again to their fishing and hunting, replenishing their scanty larder and laying in provisions for the winter.

And again we can imagine them sitting round their stove in the evenings, reading their Bible by

the dim light of a seal-oil lamp, offering their simple prayer to God, and commending to Him themselves and their future. With hope in their hearts and singleness of mind they made ready for the winter, talking of how they would learn the Eskimo language and go in and out among the natives when the time came for them to settle in their winter houses of snow. They were proud and glad of this great adventure.

And then, to their amazement, the *Hope* came sailing back into the bay !

The story of the *Hope* is soon told.

After leaving Hopedale the captain cruised northward, intending by trading to increase his cargo of furs and oil and so repay the London merchants for their venture. Two days after setting forth, a band of Eskimos met them in their skin canoes and besought them to come on shore for further trade.

The captain and five others went ashore in the ship's only boat ; the *Hope* lay at anchor.

Hours passed, and the shore party did not return.

The mate fired guns for a signal, in case the captain had missed his way. No answer.

Days passed. No sight or sound of Eskimos or Europeans.

Snow began to fall. The mate, in despair, drew up the anchor and returned to Hopedale.

What had happened ?

Long years afterwards the truth came out ; the Eskimos had lured the men ashore and then had murdered them for the sake of the goods they

brought. Erhard, the man who had seen Greenland, and whose thought for the Eskimos had brought about this expedition; Erhard, whose one thought was to bring the Gospel to this forsaken land, and who had said, "This is a good work, no one can be the loser by it"; Erhard had lost his life, and with him the captain and four sailors had been treacherously slain.

Imagine the consternation of those four young men at Hopedale. "Six of us," said the mate, "are murdered by the Eskimos. I have not enough men to work the vessel home. You must return with me or the ship will be lost."

Sad at heart, the four young missionaries talked it over; they prayed it over. They chose the greater duty; theirs was the sacrifice of hopes and longings; their duty was to man the ship and see her safely home to London.

They went on board, and with the autumn gales beginning and the autumn sea all coated with frost, they took their turn at the sails and the steering and all the rough work of the schooner, and at last the little *Hope* came into London Docks again. Six lives had been lost, and the first missionary journey to Labrador had proved, it seemed, a failure.

News soon spreads, and even in 1752 there were missionary meetings; and it came about, I know not exactly in what manner, that the story of this great adventure reached the ears of a squarely built little carpenter in a village in Saxony.

The story fired his soul; it filled him with en-

thusiasm. "If God wills," he said, "I will go as a missionary to those same Eskimos."

But the time had not come; he must possess his soul. Six years he waited, working at his carpentry; but through all the waiting his zeal was unquenched.

At last, in the year 1758, Count Zinzendorf, the head of the Moravian Church, suggested that this little man should go to Greenland. Our little carpenter may have been downcast at this. But he was a hero; he went to Greenland. Now, see the hand of God in all this. Jens Haven—this was the little carpenter's name—went to Greenland and became a missionary there. He learnt to know the Eskimos and their ways; he learnt their language, which, after all, is very like the language of the Eskimos of Labrador. If the call should come for Jens to go to Labrador, he was in every way fitted. After four or five years in Greenland he returned home, and after a while the call came. The little carpenter's dream was coming true; to Labrador he went, with the Eskimo language on the tip of his tongue and a suit of Greenland Eskimo clothes in his box.

There was a wonderful scene when Labrador was reached. The sight of an Eskimo paddling about in his skin canoe gave Jens the idea of dressing in his Greenland clothes; a sturdy, square-shouldered little man, he looked every inch an Eskimo. He went ashore, and greeted the folk in their own language. "Aksuse," he said. "Be strong, every one of you"—the real Eskimo greeting of friendliness and brotherhood. The people were delighted; they

shouted for joy. "Our friend is come," they said. "Aksunai."

They thronged about Jens, feeling him, stroking him, peering in his face; and all the while he spoke to them in words they understood. The ice was broken; the mission to the Eskimos of Labrador was begun.

Would the greeting have been like this if Jens had never been to Greenland? We cannot know, but we may doubt it. The hand of God was in this. Jens had learnt the language, he knew the Eskimos and their ways, his very dress and appearance made for confidence; the people loved him from the first.

Our village was not the first that Jens and his companions built. They began their labours at Nain, ninety miles south of the place where I had seen the mounds upon the slope; but I have seen that first mission station which Jens Haven helped to build; I have trodden the paths on which Jens walked a hundred and fifty years ago; nay, I believe I have eaten of vegetables from the garden that Jens helped to make. His is the great name in the Labrador Mission. Jensingoak, "Our little Jens," the people called him.

And is he forgotten?

Not many years ago there came a man to our village, a heathen man from a tribe in the north. Like many another Eskimo, he had wandered southwards in the hope of meeting lost relatives who had moved towards the south long years before. He stayed in our village through the winter; he went to the meetings in the church; he said that he, too,

would like to be a Christian. In the little village church he was baptised. I was present at that solemn and moving service.

"What name," said the missionary, "what name do you choose?"

"I will be called Jens," said the Eskimo; and Jens he was named.

CHAPTER V

CHOOSING A HOME

So it came about that in the days when those mounds on the hillside slope were homes, and when the old ruined houses were a heathen village, the missionaries had come to Labrador.

Seven years after their first landing at Nain they found their way to that little bay ; they drew their boat up that shingly beach ; they walked among the huts of the village ; they talked to the people who crowded, half in fear, about them. "We are your friends," said Jens, "we are your friends." The rough folk made the missionaries welcome ; they haled them to their huts and fed them on their choicest. Think of that feasting ! Poor missionaries ! Imagine yourself sitting on the floor of a badly lit and worse ventilated Eskimo turf-house, eating the fishy-flavoured meat handed to you by fingers innocent of washing excepting the dippings in the sea at the hunting of seals ! But this was Eskimo friendliness, and in the name of friendship —nay, rather, for the sake of the Master they served—those early missionaries would endure all things, not alone the greater things of pain and hardship and terrible climates, but the lesser things of dirt and vermin and nauseous food.

"All honour to the pioneers," say I ; "all honour to the pioneers in whatsoever land ; they endured

hardness as good soldiers ; they suffered things that we know not of."

So the missionaries made friends with the Eskimos, and knew that their labour would not be in vain.

Followed by a gaping crowd they wandered among the huts, seeking for a place on which to build their dwelling-house and some day their church. Four things they looked for ; four things they had been taught to look for by the counsel of seafarers and the wise thought of Mission Board.

First, a safe anchorage for the ship.

They went in faith, those early pioneers, but in their hearts they hoped that a ship would be found each year to come and bring them news from home and some supply of food. They would do their best to live as the Eskimos lived ; they would learn to eat seal's flesh and whale and dried fish ; they would hunt for their own larder, and so save buying ; they would read and live by the light of seal-oil lamps ; they would make their own furniture ; they would trust for warmth to a little iron stove, burning such drift-wood and branches as they could gather. Even to-day you may catch glimpses of the thrifty ways of the pioneers. The first night that I slept ashore in Labrador I had in my bedroom—the guest-room in a mission-house—a wooden bedstead, a wooden washstand, and a wooden chair with a leathern seat —home-made and solid, all of them.

I turned the chair upside down out of curiosity, and on the framework I found carved the letter "K" and the date "1804." So I knew that the

SEAL-HUNTERS AT THE SLOPING BEACH.

Facing p. 38

chair had been made by old Kohlmeister, who made a famous journey to the heathen of the north in 1809. I was sleeping in Kohlmeister's room, and sitting on the chair of his making, a chair sound and strong after a hundred years. When I asked about it all, I was shown a tin mould ; and I was told that in the olden days the missionaries used to get deer's fat and make candles for themselves !

Yes, the sacrifice, the unselfishness, the frugal-mindedness, the simplicity of purpose ; these things are something to admire. They took but little thought for clothing ; they would dress like the Eskimos, in sealskins and furs ; but I have been told that one year at least the ship took out a bale of cloth as a gift, and every missionary had a cut of it to make him a suit of clothes. Up and down the coast, all dressed alike ! Laughable, maybe, but almost sad—for those old pioneers worked without pay ; their reward was that they should have food and shelter—and the joy of preaching the Gospel to the Eskimos.

So they hoped that a ship would come, at least once a year ; and they must have a safe anchorage.

A second thing was a beach for the boats, for the ship could not anchor off a rocky coast where landing was unsafe ; there must be sand or shingle for the safe beaching of boats.

Well, the old heathen village offered that, though a ship's captain might prefer a better anchorage for his vessel.

And a third thing, a shelter from the north-west wind.

Those old missionaries had heard of the north-west wind. It is almost a proverb ; "Attuarnek," the Eskimos call it.

It is an inconceivable thing ; to imagine it is impossible ; you must see it, hear it, feel it. It comes from the frozen plains and valleys of the north-west, storming along with one ceaseless roar and filling the world with snow. No living thing can face it. Wooden buildings shake and sway, and even move from their foundations ; snow houses quiver and are frayed thin ; travellers are lost. I journeyed by sledge one day after such a storm, in freezing, bracing, sunlit air, under a cloudless blue sky. The snowy floor was driven hard as stone, and the village we reached was lamenting the loss of one of its young men. Man, sledge, dogs, all were lost ; not a sign could be found, though search-parties were everywhere. Weeks later, when the snows began to melt, a chance traveller saw a poor, pathetic hand above the snow ; and there, beneath the frozen floor, lay the man with his sledge and his dogs—caught and buried by the awful storm.

So, if life was to be possible, a sheltered spot must be found. Again, the old heathen village-slope would do, for it lay beneath the shelter of a rocky wall.

And a fourth thing, a stream of running water.

This was, above all things, necessary, for while Eskimos seem able to drink melted snow, fresh spring water is necessary for the health of folks from other lands. But the heathen village on the hillside had no running stream ; nothing other than the snow or

the stagnant water from the moorland pools. So the missionaries talked it over. This will not do," they said. "However much we would like to live among these heathen folk, it will not do. We must have running water, and we must find a safer anchorage for the ship."

They climbed to the height of the island, and, like the great man of old, they viewed the landscape o'er. It seemed but a sorry sort of promised land on which they gazed—rocks and swamps, stunted and bewizened trees, grey rocks patched with snow, a sullen sea strewn with icebergs—no crops, no flocks, a bare, bleak land. But below them lay a deep, small bay, sheltered by massive hills, a stony beach circled it, and the missionaries, as they stood, could see the glint of running water as the brook went tumbling down to the sea.

Now at last our brook comes into its own.

"That is the place," they said; "there let us build our house and church, by the side of the brook. It is but two or three miles from the heathen village; we can go to and fro and preach to these poor folk." And the captain of the ship agreed. "It is a good anchorage, and well sheltered," he said.

So there, by the banks of the brook in that sheltered bay, they laid the foundations of their home, and the sound of saw and hammer rang among the silent rocks.

They found fish in the deep waters—great fine cod and fat sea-trout. There were birds and hares upon the hillsides; there were eatable berries among the stunted scrub upon the slopes. They did not

know that for seven weeks in the heart of the winter the high hill on the south would keep the sun away ; they did not find it out till winter came, and then they made a joke of it, a joke that has lasted a hundred and fifty years !

For the one on whose window the sun first shines after the seven weeks of gloom must find a meal of tea and cake for all the others—and I, among others, have had to provide that tea-party for the dwellers in the mission-house, because the hospital was a tall building and its windows caught the sun before the others.

So the pioneer missionaries digged and built and hammered by the side of our brook—the same brook in which we see the women trampling and chattering over the washing of clothes.

They made haste to get their house built ; but every day they found time to climb the hill by the track beside the brook, and walk by the side of the swamp to the heathen village, there to sit in stuffy, heathen huts and talk to the people about God and Christ and slowly to bring the Bible to them in their own strange dialect. And thus the brook was the beginning of the new village, and the feet of the early missionaries were the first to tread the little path along which John the Driver led me on that summer afternoon.

Curiosity played its part, for surely there was much talk at night-time in the heathen huts about the strange doings over by the brook. "What queer things are the strangers doing," said the heathen folk ; "they are building a great house—a mighty

iglo—such as was never seen in our land before. Let us go and see this great sight." So the heathen people trudged over the narrow path and watched the missionaries at work. Wide-eyed with wonder they saw the buildings grow—and as they worked the missionaries talked to the folk. A friendliness sprang up. "The strangers are good folk," said the Eskimos; "they are our friends." The brook was coming into its own. And the path? First one, and then another, of those dwellers in the old-time heathen village across the swamp would say: "Let us move our homes and live on Okak Bay, where the strangers are with their mighty house." And you may see in your mind a picture of the people marching in single file—father, mother, sons and daughters, little toddlers, burdened with weapons and household goods, making their way along the path by the side of the brook to build new homes on the Okak beach.

So the little path was the beginning of our village. A Christian village grew, and the old heathen homes were deserted, and the little track, now grass-grown and almost forgotten, has been the hallowed way by which the heathen people found Christ.

CHAPTER VI

A WELCOME

So the village grew. Close to the brook, and all along the line of the beach, the Eskimos built their huts; and when all the line of the beach was filled they straggled up the hillside. First they were huts of turf, like the old heathen homes; but as years passed little homes of wood sprang up, with boarded floors and windows to let the sunshine in, and cleanliness began to take the place of the gloom and filth of heathen days. And this was the village, this village of Okak, in which I set foot more than a hundred and thirty years after the first villagers had trodden the path across the ridge of the island to build their homes by the brook.

I was sitting in my little room on one of my first days there when there came a timid tap at the door. A very timid tap it was, hardly enough to rouse me from my writing, and I had to pause and listen awhile before I was sure that there had been a tap at all. It came again, the gentle tapping of fingers, and this time the door slowly opened and a wrinkled old face came peeping round. A pair of old eyes blinked a little at the sudden light; then the door opened a little wider, and in came Ruth.

Although I was a newcomer I knew her well. She had stood among the crowd upon the jetty to meet the boat when I landed; she had pressed for-

ward to shake my hand, and here she was in my room. Can you imagine her? A little, square, squat figure of a woman, with a broad face and a few wisps of grey hair straggling from under the checked handkerchief that covered her head. She was wearing a fine calico smock, with hood and long tails gorgeously embroidered in wools, and a black skirt reaching to the tops of her boots. The boots deserve a line to themselves—white bottoms, black tongues and leggings, stitched together by those nimble old fingers with incredible neatness.

And this was Ruth, this quaint figure that stood in the doorway of my room on that autumn afternoon. She reached for her handkerchief and mopped her face; she looked rather flustered, as though she had something of importance on her mind. She stuffed the handkerchief back into the wide leg of her boot, and when I caught sight of the assortment of matches and and patchwork and tape there, I knew that Ruth used the leg of her boot as a pocket in the true Eskimo fashion. I am afraid, just a little afraid, that as she pulled up her skirt to fumble in this mysterious pocket I had a glimpse of a well-used tobacco pipe peeping furtively out of the other boot. But, as I say, I will not commit myself to that; it was only a passing glimpse, and, besides, it is a good many years ago now, so we will let the pipe go.

When the handkerchief was safely in its place, Ruth straightened herself up and smoothed her skirt. "Aksunai" (Be strong), she said. "Ahaila" (Yes, the same to you), said I. That

is the proper Eskimo greeting for all times of day; and now that the preliminaries were over, I expected Ruth to sit down and get to business. So many of the people had come with baskets to sell, or with skin purses and gloves and queer wall-pockets all decorated with bead work, and native dolls and little models of sledges, and all manner of things to "truckey" (trade) for stockings or skirts or anything wearable, that I fully expected Ruth to produce something of the same sort. And, true enough, Ruth was fishing in her hood, as though some saleable trifle were nestling in its depths; but the catch that she made was a surprise to me, for after a good deal of hunching of shoulders, and screwing around, and stretching of arms to fish a little deeper, she brought out a well-thumbed Eskimo hymn-book.

She rearranged her hood before going any further, putting her book carefully on the bench meanwhile; then she opened the pages with much deliberation and produced a scrap of paper. This she handed to me with an air of great consequence, and straightway walked out of the room without a word.

"The plot thickens," thought I; "this is something strange." I could not help smiling at the little play; old Ruth was so serious about it all, and so evidently in earnest, that I wondered what it could all mean. The quaint little figure moved slowly and with the utmost dignity out of the doorway, and I, standing bewildered at the table, unfolded the scrap of paper and read: "Ruth wants to sing

a hymn for you." The handwriting was that of the missionary. Evidently Ruth had thought that I might not understand her if she spoke Eskimo, so she had got her message written down.

While I was studying the paper the door opened again, and I looked for Ruth. But there was a pause in the proceedings, and a queer sound of whispering and scuffling and scraping of feet on the boards; then in came old Jafet. Jafet is Ruth's husband. And in he came, a feeble old man, peering and blinking, and obviously propelled from the rear by Ruth's encouraging hand. He seemed very nervous and perhaps a trifle awed; but in he came, with a grunt in acknowledgment to my "aksunai," and after him came Ruth.

The two old people sat down, and Ruth opened her hymn-book. She licked her thumb and turned the pages, and held the book to the light to see the better, and wiped her spectacles with the tail of her smock, and turned more pages. She knew what she wanted, and with a "h'm" to clear her throat she thrust a share of the book into Jafet's trembling hand and began to sing. An energetic nudge from Ruth's elbow, and Jafet joined in with his quavering baritone; and there I sat, listening to a hymn of welcome and encouragement from an Eskimo Darby and Joan. Can you imagine anything more touching? I was new to Labrador; I could speak no more Eskimo than the mere words of greeting; I had, so far, met but few of the people; but there sat the old couple, grasping each a corner of the book, bending their heads low to see the words,

and singing in perfect tune. Poor old Jafet soon broke down. He just sat and sobbed, wiping his eyes with the sleeve of his calico smock ; but Ruth sang on, clear and true, though her eyes were wet and her old hands trembled. When the hymn was finished she said, "Nakomêk" (I am thankful), and shook my hand ; then she nudged her husband and led him quietly home.

Such was my welcome. Old Ruth was a good hardy type of Eskimo ; for years after this little scene she lived on, eking out an honest living by plaiting straw mats and baskets, and even in her old age she was one of the best of the basket workers. Many a home in England contains specimens of her work, for she used to send a big boxful to market by the *Harmony* (the mission ship) each year.

The great satisfaction of her latter days was that her son Jeremias is a credit to her : she had brought him up to be a good and useful man. And her one trouble was that her eyesight began to fail ; she could no longer see to do that wonderful stitching that gave her the reputation of being one of the best boot-makers in our village. And so, when I called in her little hut to pass the time of day, she would say to me : "I cannot work as I used to do ; my eyes are too old for medicine to cure. Soon, I think, my Father will call me home."

"Aksunai, Ruth."

CHAPTER VII

ZAKKI—THE ISLAND

THIS is the chronicle of a visitor to our village, a man who had ambition in his soul. His name was Zakki—short, I suppose, for Zacchaeus, for most of the Eskimos have Biblical names—and his ambition was to better himself. He was a clever hunter, was Zakki, and he thought to himself that if he lived away from other folk he would have things all to himself and do better. There would be no competition in the hunting and the fishing, said he ; he would have a piece of the lonely Labrador all to himself. So he gathered his belongings together and made his way to a tiny island. There he built a wooden hut, and with just his wife and little son for company he lived the life of a hunter. I am bound to say that he lived very well. He hunted the seals with his long harpoon ; he sometimes surprised a white hare ; he caught the gentle ptarmigan that came to feed upon the berries—in fact, in one way or another he kept the larder well stocked. There were times, too, when he found a fox in one of his traps on the hillside. Those were times of rejoicing, for an Eskimo family is not above making a dinner of fox flesh, and Zakki's wife would stretch and dry the lovely fur, ready for one of the rare visits to the trading station.

I suppose you might call Zakki's island a desert

island, for anything more bare and bleak you could hardly imagine. It was nothing like the desert islands that boys are wont to fancy—coral reefs and sands, and palm-trees and glorious sunshine. No, Zakki's island was only a monster heap of dull, grey rocks, patched here and there with stunted brushwood. But Zakki was well content with his island, for the seals loved to swim in the shelter of those rocks, and the brushwood was loaded with wholesome berries in the autumn. So Zakki was well off.

But there came a time when Zakki lost his wife. She caught a cold, and was delirious with lung trouble before they realised that anything was amiss ; and she was gone before they could get help. So Zakki was left with his little son, a child of six years, and in his loneliness the poor man's fatherly heart warmed to his son. All the love of his nature centred on the boy.

And little Zakki was a real Eskimo boy. Even at six years old he could manage a boat, or set a fox-trap, or use a gun. If the father was busy about the house the child would wander off with a home-made cross-bow, and likely enough come home in an hour or two brandishing a couple of little birds which he had shot. Such rewards of his prowess were, I must say, not very frequent, for a cross-bow made from a stave of the household flour barrel is not a very deadly weapon. However, little Zakki was all the time unconsciously training himself for the life of a hunter. His father made a constant companion of him ; they went to the hunt together.

When his little legs would not carry him fast enough, the child used to sit on the sledge, perched on the top of a load of firewood or astride the body of a big seal, whooping and chirruping to the dogs. Zakki watched him tenderly, teaching him all a hunter's tricks, and dreaming, no doubt, of a day when little Zakki would grow up to be a clever hunter himself, and be the stay and companion of his father's old age.

So the days passed, and these two, wrapped up in one another, lived their simple life ; they camped together, slept together, they did their own plain cookery, and they had no other company. When the day's work was done, big Zakki used to sit puffing at his pipe, seeing visions of days to be, while little Zakki sang and whistled and made toy boats and sledges. The child was happy, and the father, wrapped up in his hunting and in the happiness of his son, began to forget his own loneliness. The little island began to be a land of happiness, for in the simple round of Eskimo life Zakki was finding comfort. Maybe his thoughts strayed at times to the mound on the hillside, where, beneath a heap of stones, he had laid his wife to rest ; but his mind was on his boy, and though the child was but a little lad of six, he was a clever lad. And what better can an Eskimo father have than to see his son a handy fellow, quick to all the ways of the hunt ?

One evening they came in after a long day's fishing, and the boy threw himself on the rough bed of deer-skins. He watched his father kindle the fire and set the pot upon the stove ; he listlessly followed

with his eyes the humble preparations for the evening meal.

"Come, Zakki, let us have supper," said his father.

"No," said the boy; "I am tired—too tired to eat."

The father was troubled; a chill came over him. He looked at his son, and realised suddenly how pale and ill the child was. He picked the tenderest morsels from the juicy seal-meat stew. "Eat this," he said, "and then you shall go to bed; you will be quite rested in the morning."

But morning came, and the little fellow still seemed tired. He bravely tried to brighten up as his father talked cheerily of trying a new place for the cod-fishing, and of a stream away up in the woods of the mainland where the trout were so plentiful that little Zakki could catch them with his hands.

Night after night brought the same perplexity into the father's heart: little Zakki was always tired; his cheeks were growing hollow and his eyes seemed big, and he had a strange way of waking up in the night to cough.

The autumn storms began; it was time for the seal hunt, but little Zakki was too weak to go. He stayed at home while the father went out day by day to his lonely task. And then the truth dawned: little Zakki was failing; he was ill with some subtle sickness beyond the reach of Eskimo home remedies.

Zakki's mind was made up at once: he must take

his son to the doctor. There was a doctor in the village of Okak, a hundred and forty miles away ; there they would go as soon as the sea should freeze and make the journey possible. To go by boat was out of the question ; the north-east storms were blowing, and to venture a small boat upon the fringe of the Atlantic where it laps the coast of Labrador is a risky thing even in the calm days of August. It was now late in October, and the swell was roaring over the frosted rocks ; the only hope was that the sea ice would form early. So the father set himself to wait, with anxiety gnawing at his heart ; and the days crawled slowly by.

It was hard to leave the child ; he could scarcely get out of bed now, but the work must be done. There was the winter's food to be thought of—food for themselves and food for the hungry dogs ; and day by day the father went out to the seal net, and hauled it inshore with his own unaided strength, hoping and praying for the time to pass.

At last December came, and in the early days the sea began to smoke. A fine white haze lay upon the water, drifting like a mist before the wind ; and Zakki knew that the time of ice was near. The haze lasted for three or four days. There came a keen, calm moonlight night, and Zakki slept with a lighter heart, for he had seen the sea setting in an oily scum. His instinctive knowledge of Nature's signs had told him truly, for in the morning there was no more sea—only a wide stretch of dull grey ice, tough and elastic. He tried it with his foot, but it was not yet safe to venture far from shore ;

he dared not risk little Zakki upon it until another three or four days had passed.

He spent those days in getting ready for the journey. He planed and smoothed the runners of his long sledge, and polished them until they shone; he bound up the slack joints, he tapered anew the lash of his walrus-hide whip; he strengthened and patched the dogs' harness; and, finally, with little Zakki's comfort in his mind, he made a box big enough for the child to sit in, and lashed a sail to the four corners to keep out the wind.

CHAPTER VIII

ZAKKI—THE JOURNEY

NOW hope beat high in Zakki's heart.

The ice was firm and smooth; the long sledge was ready, with its canvas shelter firmly upon it; the dogs were keen for work. And little Zakki seemed brighter too. He seemed to listen keenly to his father's chatter as the work went on; he watched the packing of the food for the journey—dried fish and queer hard dough-cakes of Zakki's baking for themselves, and a bottle of cod-liver oil for a relish, and for the dogs a bag of hard dry seal-meat, chopped into proper pieces and as hard as stone; he even laughed when Zakki told him how he should travel in his own bed upon the sledge lying snug on the deer-skins in his canvas shelter. "But," said the father, "when we come home you shall run beside the sledge like a man, for you will be well and strong; and I will teach you how to drive the dogs and how to build a house of snow."

It was a bright, cold winter's morning when the little party started. The child was too weak to walk, so Zakki carried him to the sledge and placed him tenderly in the box, and wrapped him well with dry, warm skins. Then Zakki took the whip, and with a crack of the long lash and a shrill "Hoo-

eet !'' he started the dogs on their long trail northwards. The going was good ; the ice was new and hard ; the sledge rumbled merrily as the dogs, all fresh and frisky, trotted on ; and with the dawn breaking grey upon the hills they left their island behind them.

Zakki did not ride much himself. There were only seven dogs, and though, alas ! little Zakki did not weigh much, there were other things—clothing and food and the meat for the dogs—that made the sledge heavy enough.

So, like a true driver, Zakki trotted beside, cheering the dogs, and now and again pulling the canvas aside to speak to little Zakki. They ran forty miles on the first day, and camped near a snowdrift on the shore. The snow at the foot of the drift was deep and hard. Zakki plunged his great snow-knife in it, as far as the blade would go, and judged it good hard snow for cutting blocks for building. He cut and builded, and within two hours he had made a tiny bee-hive hut for shelter. He spread the dogs' harness on the floor, and over all he laid the skins ; then he carried little Zakki in, away from the keen night wind, and wrapped him snug and warm. Then he built a fire of brushwood in a niche of the rock and boiled the kettle. And as he sat in the tiny snow house and munched his simple meal, while his son, a very wan and listless little Zakki, sipped the warm sweet tea, he chattered on about the splendid run they had made. Forty miles ! And the dogs in harness for the first time since the spring ! It was fine ! The ice was safe

and smooth ; there was no snow to clog the runners. To-morrow, perhaps, they would run fifty miles !

The night fell clear and keen ; but before dawn a powdery snow began to fall, and the going was slower than on the first day. Zakki toiled and trudged, and at nightfall they reached the foot of the mountain pass, with another forty miles accomplished. The poor man was up most of that night, pushing his hand through the ventilation hole at the top of the snow house to try the wind, or peering through it in a vain search for the stars. When daylight came it was snowing fast ; but Zakki knew the way, and decided to push on, for the child would be quite safe in his canvas tent. The wind was blowing against them as they faced the mountain pass ; but they crossed the summit in a blinding, freezing snowstorm, and camped on the ice below.

On the evening of the fourth day the dogs raced across the last bay towards the twinkling lights of our village. Zakki was tired, but he was smiling. His weary waiting was over ; he had crossed the trackless bays and the mountain solitudes of his long trail alone, travelling through the storm, because he simply would not be delayed, helping the dogs to haul their load uphill, and dragging on it as they rushed down, guiding and heartening them, with his own heart nearly breaking, buoyed up through it all with a great hope—he was taking little Zakki to the doctor.

I think the doctor never had a harder task than the one he found that night—the task of breaking

the truth to Zakki. The child was in the last stage of consumption; it was a miracle that he had survived the journey. And as the doctor raised his troubled face to look at Zakki, he met the hope of a father's soul gleaming from a father's smiling eyes. And Zakki asked: "How long will it be before he is better and I can take him home again?"

* * * * *

The father's smile did not change, but his eyes were full of tears. He simply said, "It is the Lord's will; let Him do as seemeth Him good"; but he said it with the earnestness of a simple soul that trusts and knows.

It seemed as though he lavished the pent-up love of a lifetime on the child during those last few days. The boy liked best to lie in his father's arms; and hour after hour Zakki would hold him, and though his arms were often cramped and his eyes heavy from lack of sleep, he smiled—just smiled because he loved. He brought all kinds of Eskimo dainties to tempt the poor flickering appetite; he told scraps of news from the village; he read words of comfort from God's Book. "Shall I read?" he would say. "Yes, read," said little Zakki; and the father would open the Book and read about the wonderful city, where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

And as little Zakki slept, God took him, the little

Eskimo boy, to that great city of His, where shall be gathered the redeemed of every nation.

And Zakki, calm with the peace of God which passes understanding, alone yet not alone, called his dogs together and turned his face towards his solitary home.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY OF AN OIL-STAINED BIBLE

It may seem a strange thing to say, but it is true, that the bleak and bare coast of Labrador has spots of unsurpassed beauty. Labrador is a desolate land ; it boasts but little green ; its sombre rocks are brightened only by the tawny moss and lichen and the silver threads of numberless water-courses ; and yet its gaunt rocks, its lofty cliffs, its magnificent ranges of jagged peaks, have a grandeur and a beauty all their own. Perhaps the most unforgettable sight that I have ever seen is the light of the sunrise on the dented summit of the Kiglapeit range ; the silence of the early morning and the loneliness of the wide and frozen sea make the vision of that saw-tooth row of peaks, brightly pink against the dark blue sky, capped and patched with snow, and seared with lines of black where the rock is too steep for the snow to cling, a picture of bleak nature that only the strange land of Labrador can show.

But I have in mind a summer scene : the mighty head of Cape Mugford, with the shining snowy tops of the Kaumajat range stretching twenty miles towards the west—a scene in which mere rocks and water and sea and sunshine combine to make a picture of outstanding beauty and grandeur.

My Eskimo neighbours were less concerned with

the beauty of the scenery than with the fact that Mugford is a famous place for codfish and seals ; and the seals and the fish are the reason why some of the families used to leave the village in the early summer and spend the fishing season on the Mugford shore. My little motor-boat puffed lustily beside the rocky wall ; in a tiny bay on the shore I could see the home of the campers. Children and dogs were romping on the beach ; on the rocks that shelved steeply to the water lay the family's washing, drying in the sunshine ; and as we slid gently to our anchorage we could see a woman lighting a fire outside the house and setting a kettle of water to boil.

Old Friedrik came down to the beach to meet us ; a fine type of the Northern Eskimo, sturdy and squat, with a great mane of shaggy grey hair and a pair of keen brown eyes. He chatted of his fishing and of the seals he had seen, and it was plain to me that his hand had not yet begun to fail nor his endurance to slacken. We sat upon the rocks, drinking the warm sweet tea that the Eskimos love, and munching bread and meat. The old man was at my elbow, voicing fervent "nakomêks" (thanks) between the mouthfuls. When all had eaten, and each with a mutter of thanks had set his cup aside, I said to old Friedrik : "If you will bring me a Bible I will read to you all." "Illale" (By all means), said he, and rose to fetch his Bible. He shouted a command that brought the people thronging closer, then he stooped and passed through the porch into the house, and soon came back carrying a book. It

was his New Testament. He passed it to me, and as I took it into my hands I thought to myself: "Never have I seen a more ragged, tattered, battered, oil-stained copy of the Holy Scriptures than this." Its covers were blackened and its pages yellow; but as I held that battered book a picture came into my mind—a picture that showed me that those stains and sears are honourable scars, and that the pages so frayed and sodden with oil have become so with much using.

And so, as I took that trusted Book in my hand, I pictured old Friedrik at his daily work.

The daily work of an Eskimo is a hard battle with Nature for the daily food. In the summer, when the ice that has covered the sea for seven months has broken and gone, when the trout are down to the sea from their winter home in the fresh-water ponds, and the codfish are thronging the deep channels among the islands, the Eskimo goes a-fishing. He rises with the sun, or sooner; as the grey light of the breaking day is showing in the sky and the rocks stand black and bare, he wends his way to the beach where his boat lies. With dogged strength he shoves the little craft into the water; he clambers nimbly in and takes the oars, and while the sun is tinting the hill-tops he is rowing towards his chosen fishing-place.

Hour after hour he jerks his jigger up and down. On what he calls a good day he pulls the fish up in goodly numbers; on bad days he may jig for hours without a catch. He seldom fails to pull at

least one or two fish into his boat—his tireless perseverance almost insures him some reward—but it is a test of his quality of patience that he will toil on hour after hour though his catch be small, moving his little boat from place to place in search of a shoal of fish. There come stormy times when he is forced to make a dash for shelter, and then he plies his oars with real Eskimo skill. Storms are part of his life ; he knows Nature at her sternest and when her mood seems most pitiless, and he faces whatever the day may bring with unfailing good humour.

When the autumn days come, and the codfish are moving away to the deeper water, he spends his days on the watch for seals. He takes his skin canoe down from its scaffolding of poles or from its place on the roof of the porch, and carries it to the water. Seated on a piece of dog-skin in the well of the canoe, with the weight of his body below the water-line, he paddles away to the hunting place, and there he stops. Hour after hour he sits like a man of stone, braving the chill of the air, and careless of the water all around him on the point of freezing, warm with the inner warmth of the true Eskimo constitution, waiting with gun in hand or harpoon half poised, waiting for the wary seals. He likes a skin canoe, if he can get one, because it is so much more manageable than a boat in a rough sea. It is buoyant and light, easy to turn this way and that, riding the waves like a cork, but stable because the hunter sits low. But nowadays these "kajaks" are not easy to get—for the one reason that it takes

many seal-skins to make a kajak, and seals are scarce. The hunter who has not a kajak must, perforce, make use of a boat; but a boat is heavy, it is soon crusted with ice on those bitter November days, and it is more than one man's strength can do to haul any but the lightest boat up the beach above the water-line after the day's hunting is done. There is often danger on these autumn days; there are many hardships in the hunter's life, but the Eskimo meets danger and hardship alike with his characteristic smile.

I met one of the cleverest of the men of our village coming home from the hunt early in the day. It was a fine day, and he had no seals, so I wondered what the reason could be. He explained very simply, and with the deliberate speech that is so attractive. "The bay is frozen far out," he said, "and the ice is thick. I left my kajak on the ice yesterday, near the edge, because I would hunt again to-day. And the storm and the wind that came in the night have broken the ice, and my kajak is gone."

Yes, some of the men know what it is to wait for seals at the edge of the ice, and to turn homewards and find that the ice has cracked away from the shore and is bearing them out to sea. Then the light and handy kajak saves them—unless they are separated from the piece of ice on which their kajak lies, and it may be theirs to face the grim likelihood of drifting away to the ocean, as has been the fate of some.

So it is that the Eskimo plies his dangerous

calling ; so it is that by sheer skill and mastery of the elements he wrests his food from the sea.

And so I pictured old Friedrik at his hunting.

I pictured the old man turning homewards, tired with the day's toil in boat or kajak. He drags the day's catch up the rocks to his home. It may be a bundle of codfish : he flings them on the floor. It may be a seal : and the children's eyes glisten as they watch the sleek carcass flop over the doorstep into the room ; their mouths water as they think of the juicy meat and blubber they will so soon be tasting. Friedrik throws his workaday smock into a corner and sits down ; the others quickly group themselves on the floor around what he has brought—old folks and young folks, squatting on their heels, and each ready with a knife. The baby peers over its mother's shoulder, and kicks its chubby legs in the depths of her hood, crowing and stretching its arms for a morsel. With good appetite and enjoyment the people take their food, cutting the raw, red meat from the half-warm carcass, or pulling strips of raw fish from the heads of the cod. It is a true Eskimo supper-table, and the food is the food which the people love. No delicacy, served with all the art of a city chef, could compete, in Eskimo opinion, with the raw flesh of a plump young seal, and no sauce could better the flavour of a raw fish-head fresh from the sea.

As the meal proceeds, the old man is telling of his day's adventures ; he describes the sheltered spot where he found the codfish ; he shows, with graphic

gestures and wavings of his knife, how the seal rose and plunged again, moving from place to place until it came within range of his gun. He talks of his plans for the morrow, how he will try that fishing place again, or how he will go round that rock where he saw a group of seals at play ; and as he talks first one and then another utters a sigh of "Nakomêk" (thanks), and wipes his knife, finishing the meal with a draught of water, lukewarm from the kettle, or a mug of weak sweet tea.

When all have finished, old Friedrik rises and goes to the table ; he takes the New Testament and sits down again. He finds his spectacles between the pages, where he left them last night, and settles them upon his nose, for, though his eyes are still keen for the hunting, old age needs some help to read. Carefully he thumbs the pages, and, pointing with his finger, he reads with a slow, impressive utterance. The other members of the household—his own wife, motherly and plump, his well-built son, on whose shoulders the brunt of the hunting is beginning to fall, the fine buxom daughter-in-law, nursing a fat and sleepy baby, the several happy-faced and bright-eyed children sitting so demurely —listen eagerly and reverently to the well-loved Word of God. It is their favourite book, and they never tire of the sound of its words ; they seem, indeed, to be drinking in the message ; it is very real, very precious to them. I seem to see them as they sit, and as I watch them there comes to me the real meaning of that oil-stained, battered Bible. It is no irreverent using, but the old man's daily read-

ing that has left its marks upon the book. Evening by evening he reads ; evening by evening he takes that well-worn book and cons its pages, learning more and more of the great love of God, and teaching his little household, not alone by the reading of the Word, but by the unthought example of his own true life, that Christ the Lord is indeed a Saviour unto all mankind.

CHAPTER X

MY OLD BOAT

THE village was in the grip of a real August day—a damp, dreary, drizzling August day, bleak and raw; just the sort of August day we often see in Labrador.

I stood at my window, and looked out upon the sullen sky and the dull grey sea. It was a cheerless picture: a soaking mist hung over the water, and the bare black rocks on the shore looked cold and dismal; they would look less cold even in the frozen winter-time, when their blackness would at least be relieved by the sparkle of snow and the glint of a crusting of ice. A depressing picture; but as I looked a touch of life came into the scene.

A little knot of men walked across the beach to where my old boat lay upon the shingle. They were clad in the usual hooded smock of calico that the Eskimos wear, and I knew them for some of my Eskimo neighbours. They cared nothing for the weather; they were used to it. Some of them were soaked with the wet, as if they had been out all day; others seemed to have come but lately out of doors, for their smocks were pulled over their shoulders and arms like sacks, and the sleeves hung loosely at their sides.

The sight of that group of men set me a-thinking. They were neighbours of mine. Their homes were close by—mere huts of rough-sawn boards, built up

"OUR VILLAGE."

Facing p. 65

on stones away from the damp ground, and piled round with sods of earth to keep the wind out. They were rough Eskimo hunters and fishermen, used to raw food and rough weather, but I knew them as friends. Yes, in the solitudes of the snow-covered mountains, in the desolation of the wide sea ice, on sledges by winter and in boats by summer, in the homes of the people, in tents and huts and houses built of snow, I have known the kindness of the Eskimo. And it was with a strange feeling of happiness that I watched the little group cross the foreshore and gather round the ruins of my boat. They were talking, for I could see them point and nod their heads ; and I smiled to myself as I thought how Eskimos would interest themselves in trifling things on days when the weather forbids them to hunt. For half an hour or more they argued over my old boat, and then they made their way gravely back to their homes. All but one. One old man stayed to take a further look. He tapped the timbers with his fist ; he stooped and peered ; he stepped back a pace and studied ; he walked around the boat and stooped to peer again, and then came trudging up the beach. As he came nearer I knew him for old Kornelius, who lived with his wife in a little hut up the hill. I thought that he was making his way home ; but no, he left the path and crossed the bridge towards the hospital. I heard his slow foot-steps climbing to the porch ; the door creaked, and in he came. No need for him to knock and wait ; that is not the way in Labrador. The old man followed the hospitable Eskimo custom ; he gently

turned the latch and pushed open the door, and his wrinkled face came peering into the room.

"Aksunai" (Be strong), he said, in his deep bass voice.

"Aksunai," said I.

"Ah," said old Kornelius, "ah, but I have weighty words to say."

"Sit down," said I, "and you shall speak;" and the old man sat on the little bench by the door.

"Weighty words," he said, "weighty words. But if it is impossible, kujanna (never mind)—if my words do not please you I will not be annoyed—but, if it is not impossible—may I have your old boat?"

And then old Kornelius told his story, sitting at first on the little green bench, but soon standing before me and looking in my face—a story of a summer day, and of the life that the Eskimos live in the summer-time.

"I had a boat," he said, "a good boat, but it was lost. Many times did I go to the fishing in my boat, for it was a good boat and small, such as I could row with ease, and it was enough for the two of us, myself and Maria my wife; and we fished together many days. But it was three days ago, when the big storm blew. I knew that it would blow, for my bones ached that morning; but the morning was calm and the sea was still, and I knew that there would be many codfish on such a day. So I said to my wife, 'Maria, let us fish,' and Maria said, 'Ahaila' (Yes); and we took the two lines with their jiggers (weighted hooks), and we un-

fastened the rope that binds our boat to the jetty by the store-house, and I rowed out past Sungolik to the bank where the codfish feed, the place which I know, and where I have seen the codfish gathered thickly together, deep down through the clear water. And while I rowed, old Maria, that wife of mine, was scraping the jiggers to make them bright, so that the codfish might see them easily ; and there, by Sungolik, we fished. And the fish were much to be thankful for, for they were many ; and we caught them faster than we could pull them into the boat. Often they rushed to meet the bright hook before it could reach the bottom of the sea, and we were very happy to get so many fish. We were thinking of how we would salt them and dry them to sell, and how we would buy new blankets and attigeks (smocks) and many other things ; and Maria would dry some without salt, on the poles outside our door, and make pipse, which tastes so good. And so we fished ; but we did not see that the tide was angry and the wind was wild. And suddenly it was a storm, and we were only two old people in a little boat."

Kornelius paused ; he seemed to be picturing the scene again in his mind, and the pathos of the old man's simple tale brought a picture to my mind too. I seemed to see that little boat tossing on the angry water, with a brave old man tugging at the oars and a brave old woman baling.

The Eskimo is a wonderfully strong oarsman ; he can row on for hours without resting ; he does not

easily tire, for the rowing of a boat is one of his ordinary duties from his earliest years ; he knows, too, how to make a boat travel fast through the water, whether there be choppy sea or rising wind, by dint of the short, sharp strokes of the oars which he favours. And in his day Kornelius had been one of the strongest men in Okak village. And now in his old age, though his arm was feeble, his heart was stout ; he had all the grit and simple perseverance of the Eskimo hunter. So Kornelius toiled on, steadily and calmly, while Maria plied her wooden dipper in a vain struggle to keep pace with the water that was all the time splashing into the boat.

It was a hard fight ; the sea seemed too strong for the old people, but they toiled on. Many times they must have been overwhelmed as the waves broke over them, but still they toiled, and at last, with a boat half full of water, in which the fish and the fishing lines slid to and fro in a tangle, the old couple won. The keel grated on the shelving rock, then banged and pounded as the waves lifted it and let it fall ; and the two old people clambered out and stood in the swirling water clinging to their boat. With every incoming wave they tried afresh to drag it up the slope, but the suck of the retreating water bore them down again. The sea was stronger than they, but still they clung and tussled. They clung until their hands were numb, but at last they could cling no longer ; the bounding, twisting water wrenched the boat from their feeble grasp, and all that they could do was to save themselves and vainly watch their precious boat, the thing they needed

most, swept out to sea in the grip of the gale. They watched it out of sight, then, soaked to the skin but heeding not, they turned to walk along the rocks to their home.

And old Kornelius was telling me the story. "Our boat is lost," he said; "we cannot fish"; and again he turned his pleading eyes upon me. "If it is impossible," he said, "we will not mind, but—if it is not impossible—may I have your old boat?"

My old boat! What a simple request, but how important to old Kornelius! He had said truly when he told me that he had weighty words to say, for though that battered old punt meant little to me, it meant much to old Kornelius. My old boat! There she lay upon the beach, judged unfit for further mending. I had thought her work was done, and had planned her, in my mind, to be chopped into kindling wood for our fires on the cold winter mornings. But it would seem that her days were not yet done; she was to see a further term of service before ending her days as firewood. "May you have my old boat? Yes, old friend, if you think you can patch her up and make her seaworthy, and if you deem her worth the trouble you will spend upon her."

Kornelius overflowed with thanks. "Nakomêk," he said—"nakomêk" (how thankful); and it was with a brighter face and a brisker step that he left my room that morning to climb the hill to his own little hut and break the good news to Maria.

And so it came about that day by day as I sat at work I could hear the old man with his hammer tap-tap-tapping, patching up my old boat. He came to beg discarded packing-cases. He knocked them to pieces with his hammer and carefully saved up every nail. He came back to borrow my saw, and when I strolled down the beach to watch him at work I found him filling the worst holes with wooden patches. Then Maria began to hover about the kitchen door on the look-out for empty meat cans. These the old man flattened out to make tin patches for gaping seams and bulging joints. Altogether my old boat provided scope for some wonderful work, and old Kornelius and his daily doings became a centre of attraction for the village. Passers-by turned from the pathway to give a look, and many a man paused on his way home from the fishing to offer a word of advice. And, to give Kornelius his due, I must say that the old man did his work well. He set about it with true Eskimo thoroughness, and stuck to it with untiring perseverance. He was never idle—and he was never alone. From morning till night his faithful old Maria hobbled about, holding nails, fetching tools, steadying a board for the saw, and doubtless criticising in a wifely sort of way. The patches multiplied amazingly; the old boat began to look quite staunch again.

At last there came a day when Kornelius, for all his searching, could find no other place to patch, and then he spent a morning in coating the piebald hulk with tar. That was a great day for Maria. She beamed with pride as she turned to her share of the

tar boiling. She built a fireplace of stones beside the boat, she lit the fire of twigs and set the tar-pot on it, and scrambled up the hill to gather fuel, and scrambled down again with brushwood packed in the hood of her smock and broken branches clasped in her arms ; she stirred the tar with a barrel-stave ; she even helped to smear it on the seams.

The smoke of the fire came drifting past my window ; the smell of tar was everywhere, both in the house and out. The whole village seemed to be collecting on the beach, and I joined the crowd that had gathered and watched the old people plastering. Kornelius had a tar-brush, borrowed from the storekeeper ; Maria plied a barrel-stave ; and we all stood gravely watching. Within an hour the patchwork boat was shining all over with its new black coat, and the proud owners were at the brook, with soap and sand and oil, scraping some of the stains from their hands and clothes.

Later in the day, when the tide was rising, a knot of men and boys, with shouts of "Atte, aksuse" (Be strong, all together), dragged the old boat down the beach to the water ; and in the morning I watched old Kornelius and his devoted Maria making ready for another raid upon the codfish on the banks by Sungolik.

And so my old boat went back to the fishing.

CHAPTER XI

AN ESKIMO BROTHER

If you were to go into an Eskimo hut in the summer time you would see strips or slabs of black, leathery-looking dried meat lying in a corner or hanging from the roof.

I am bound to introduce the dried meat to your notice because this little story bears upon the subject; indeed, I might have called my chapter "A Piece of Dried Meat" if I had not thought such a title would suggest dry reading.

Nevertheless, the dried meat—nipko, the Eskimos call it—is the important thing in the story, and so, by way of a beginning, I must say something about the making of it.

When an Eskimo kills a seal or a deer, he sets to work, all unwittingly, to give a fine illustration of the proverb "Waste not, want not." The meat, of course, is the nicest thing he knows for breakfast and dinner and supper; the skin becomes clothing or boots or bedding; the sinews make thread for sewing; the bowel can be split and stitched for window-panes; even the bones have their use, for a shoulder-bone makes a handy scraper for skins; and, after all this, whatever is left can be used as food for the dogs. So, you see, a seal or a deer is a very fine thing to have, and an Eskimo feels well repaid for his long, cold wait at the edge of the ice, or his toilsome trail up the valleys of the mainland, if

he has a load of meat on his sledge at the end of the day.

He is a happy man as he comes across the frozen bay to his home, and many are the willing hands that help his sledge up the slope to the door. There is a meal of fresh meat for all the neighbours. Likely enough there is a fine joint set aside as a present for the missionary, and the hunter remembers the sick girl on the sea-front or the lame man in the hut on the hillside, and sends off a toothsome knuckle-bone by the hand of a small boy. Outside the hut the dogs will be busy demolishing their share, and last, but far from least, parts of the best of the meat are set apart for drying. This—the making of nipko—is woman's work, and the housewife has a busy time on the morning after the hunt. She cuts the meat into strips and slabs of the right thickness and hangs them out of doors. The dogs watch with greedy eyes; they whine and slink, but the housewife outwits them. She hangs the meat on poles, out of climbing reach, and there, on the end of an oar or a tent-pole, it dangles in the wind—a sight to make a dog's teeth water. There it hangs, exposed to all weathers, blown about by the wind, scorched by the sun, washed by the rain, but all the time drying slowly in the clear sharp air. It shrivels and blackens, and looks anything but appetising to the unaccustomed, and, sooner or later, when she thinks it black enough and hard enough and dry enough, the good wife takes it down and pronounces it "good nipko," and forthwith it takes its place upon the dinner-table.

Such is nipko, the real Eskimo dainty, dried without salt. It needs no cooking, and I know that it is a very sustaining food. And such is the nipko that figures in our story. It lies in a corner or hangs from the rafters, and there you might see it if you went into a hut. I cannot tell you the taste of it; I only know that it is nearly as tough and hard as boot leather. I tried to eat some once; I cut a piece for myself, and chawed and gnawed, but the nipko got the better of me. It was still hard and tough when my teeth were sore, and I had not yet discovered the taste of it. The Eskimos laughed at me, and well they might, for their teeth are made for chewing tough things. "Splendid nipko, this," they said, and bit new pieces for themselves.

Now, for the purpose of our story, I have introduced you to the dried meat, let us turn to the people concerned. They are the old Eskimo couple, Kornelius and Maria, whom you met in the last chapter.

The manner of their wedding was rather comical. This is the way it came about. Kornelius was a widower; he was an old man, living alone in a tiny hut; he wanted a wife for company and to see to all those little duties that fall within the province of an Eskimo wife—drying the meat, sewing the boots, cleaning the house, mending the clothes—in fact, the old man wanted a wife to look after him.

There were quite a number of widows in our village at the time, and Kornelius proposed to them all in turn.

They all said no.

No, they thought, he is an old man ; he cannot hunt or earn much of a living ; we are better off as we are.

Finally, Kornelius bethought himself of old Maria. She was in some ways a queer old soul, and lame as well, but she would be company in the house, so he would ask Maria.

On the day of the proposal Maria was working in the hospital wood-room—she used to help in the piling of the winter's stock of firewood. She could not do much, but she felt that she was earning something, and that was a satisfaction to her. The first news I had of the coming wedding was from Maria herself. She burst into my room with face aglow :

"Doctor," she said, "the old man has fallen in love with me."

Do you want a sequel? Well, the marriage turned out quite a happy one. Maria was a cripple, but she was up to all the tricks of Eskimo cookery—if drying the meat comes under that heading—and so she used to make nipko for herself and her husband. He, poor old man, was too feeble to go to the hunting any more ; his eyes were growing dim and his arm had lost its cunning. In a way he was enjoying a hunter's leisure, for he was relying on a sort of co-operative system that is very popular among the Eskimos.

Kornelius had a net, but he was too old to use it, so he lent his net to one of the younger men, and the two of them shared the seals which the net caught. The young man took the half as payment for his trouble and handed the rest over as hire for

the net. Sometimes you may find a man tending another's net without payment, doing it just as an act of brotherly kindness. There was a crippled man in the village who made quite a good living at the trout-fishing. He, poor fellow, was bedridden, but his friends looked after the nets for him and set the fish apart as his catch. It is one of the ways in which the Eskimo shows the charitable spirit that is in him.

And now, in order to make the real acquaintance of old Kornelius, you must come into his house. It is only a little hut, a real Eskimo iglo, built of wood and turf, and you must stoop very low in order to get through the porch and doorway. There are often a couple of dogs sunning themselves outside, or sheltering from the wind under the shadow of the porch ; they are the relics of Kornelius's team, and are useful for lending to neighbours. Indeed, this is the way in which the old man keeps up a supply of firewood for his stove, for the borrower is always willing to pay for the use of the dogs by giving a couple of logs from the load that they have helped to haul from the woods.

This explains the dogs in the porchway.

Once inside the hut your eyes must get used to the gloom, for the window over the door is not of glass, but of a membrane made by stitching seal's bowel together in strips. Such a window has its uses : it allows a certain amount of fresh air to pass in as it flaps to and fro in the wind ; it also lets a little light into the hut, though you cannot see through it, and the sunshine only filters in very

dimly. Kornelius is most likely sitting on a box against the wall puffing at his pipe, while Maria crouches over the stove, stirring a pot of simmering seal-meat. The air of the house is steamy and heavy and warm, and a tremendously fishy smell is coming from the cookery. In one corner is a big home-made bedstead of rough boards, spread with deer-skins and a patchwork counterpane, in another stands a tiny table, strewn with cups and spoons and knives and fishing tackle. A few cheap ornaments rear their heads among the litter, and a loudly ticking clock stands boldly in the midst. There are several well-thumbed books. If you pick them up you will see that they are different parts of the Eskimo Bible, for the long Eskimo words make the Bible a bulky book. Maria and her cooking-stove fill a third corner, and, sure enough, in the fourth corner there is a heap of nets—nets torn at the sealing, no doubt, and waiting for the old man's fingers to mend them—and above the nets hang the black slabs of dried meat. That is the dried meat that figures in this little story. So, having made the proper acquaintance of Kornelius and Maria and their little home, and of the nipko, let us plunge into the real tale.

It is not a very long time now since old Kornelius died. He was slowly getting feebler, and at last there came a day when his strength failed him, and he had to take to his bed. He knew that he was on his death-bed ; his Eskimo instinct told him so, and Eskimo instinct is rarely at fault.

But old Kornelius was not troubled ; he was at

peace with his fellow-men; he had made provision for his wife; he was at peace with his Maker; in fact, he was just waiting, as he himself told me, waiting to be called home to his Father's House. Day by day he grew more feeble. He lay on his bed almost helpless, and as he lay, he could all the time see the nipko. And there came an inspiration to old Kornelius. "Maria," he said, in his deliberate Eskimo way, "Maria"—and the old woman turned from her work and hobbled to the bedside—"Maria," said old Kornelius, "sit by my side, for I have many words to say to you. When I am gone you are to go and live in Josef's house. He is a clever hunter, and you will always have plenty to eat. Josef has promised to give you a home, and you can help his wife with the work; you will be happy and comfortable there. I am looking at the nipko over there in the corner. We do not need it. I shall not be here very long now, and my teeth are too weak to bite it. It is very good nipko, and you have dried it well. Let us give it to somebody who needs it. There is that poor boy who broke his leg; he would be glad to have it; it would make his bones strong again. And I should like to give it to him, because his name is Kornelius, too. Take it to him, and say that it is a present from his namesake."

Maria obediently filled her hood with the dried meat and carried her bulging bundle to the hospital on the sea front, where young Kornelius lay.

"This," she said, "is a present from old Kornelius, your namesake."

How that boy's eyes glistened! Here was a surprise. Here was a real treat! What is there more tasty than nipko, especially to an Eskimo boy!

"Nakomêk, nakomêk" (How thankful, how thankful), said young Kornelius. And day by day he lived on that splendid Eskimo food, gaining strength fast, for maybe the Lord, who blessed the loaves and fishes long ago, had blessed the old man's kindly gift.

I have watched young Kornelius at his meals, and I wish you could have seen him, too. He handled the black and leathery stuff with a loving hand; he turned it over and over, and pointed out the most tempting parts to the nurse. He besought her to bring him a cup of cod-liver oil. "Fresh oil," he said, "new from the codfish—not oil from the bottle. No, let it be thick, and with a proper flavour."

His way of eating was truly Eskimo. He would cut strips from his queer-looking nipko with a well-worn pocket-knife and chew them with immense satisfaction. He poked the end of a strip between his teeth, gripped it tightly, and sawed it off at the proper place with his precious knife. He held the knife edge uppermost and sawed from below upwards, and many a time as I watched him I feared for his nose, but Korni was doing a real Eskimo trick, and his nose was safe. Sometimes, between the bites, he would dip the strips in his cup of cod-liver oil: that made them taste especially good, that gave the meat a proper flavour. It pleased young Korni's palate; his face wrinkled with pleasure. His

hollow cheeks began to fill out, his spirits rose as his health came back, he sang as he lay alone.

Yes, old Kornelius, I believe that your gift was reckoned to you as given to the Master Himself. He was hungry, and you gave Him meat, for inasmuch as you did it to one of the least, you did it to the Lord.

CHAPTER XII

YOUNG KORNELIUS

It seems fitting, after the story of the nipko or dried meat in our last chapter, to make further acquaintance with the boy, young Kornelius, whom we saw eating that same meat.

As for myself, my real knowledge of the Eskimo boy began when I met Kornelius. Before that interesting time I had seen something of the boys of our village : I had watched them at their wild and dangerous games on the water and in the snow and among the breaking ice ; I had spent hours among them at the hunting places and the fishing camps, and had seen them learning to be men and hunters like their fathers ; I had heard their odd remarks as they sat looking at picture books in my room ; I had sat facing them in church, and had heard their gruff young voices sing, but I did not know the Eskimo boy until I learnt to know young Korni.

Kornelius was an Eskimo boy, a particularly bright sample of his kind, twelve years old, and as full of mischief and fun as it is possible for a boy to be. If you, my reader, had enjoyed the good fortune to visit Labrador, I could have told you an easy way of finding Kornelius.

Look for the ringleader in every boyish game ; look for the most daring of all : that is Kornelius.

In winter the boys have a way of sliding down the hills and snowdrifts on wooden runners something like very short skis. Korni was always at the steepest and roughest places, taking the most appalling turns and leaps at a breakneck speed.

In the spring you might see the boys paddling about in the sea on broken pieces of ice. Korni's piece was usually under water, being too small to bear his weight in a reasonable way, and as often as not he would be standing on it, keeping a precarious balance by prodding at the water with a broken oar. And as for the summer time, I warrant your heart would stand still if you could see Kornelius in a boat —alone in a boat, I mean, for he can be very subdued and quiet when his uncle is about. He delights to borrow some tiny skiff, with or without the owner's permission, and to hoist an amateur mast and sail. Then he will fare forth on some gusty afternoon for the sheer joy of beating back against the wind.

You watch him as a squall strikes him. "He's over," you say, and look wildly around for a rescuer. But no, with a pull or a twist he rights the boat—the more it heels over the more delighted he is—and home he comes with beaming face twinkling with pride as his last long tack sends the boat sweeping alongside the steps at the end of the jetty.

Korni's life was full of escapades. He had the knack of turning the most ordinary errands into adventures. The mere fetching of a bucket of water would lead him into a splashing contest with half the children of the village, so that his aunt had

much ado to get the water she wanted for her wash-tub. And as for walking anywhere, if it were possible to reach the desired place by sliding or rolling—well Korni would slide or roll or tumble just for the joy of doing it.

It was one of these adventures that began our acquaintanceship, and this is the way of it. Korni was out for a ramble on the hills when he saw a hare. A moment's thought would have told him that he could not possibly catch it, but Korni was not the boy to stand thinking when there was something to be chased. After the hare he went, helter-skelter among the rocks, hallo-ing and throwing stones as he ran.

This was an ordinary, everyday sort of adventure, but it ended seriously. Korni, in full flight among the grass and the stones, caught his foot and fell. He tried to get up, but no—his leg was broken.

So he lay and shouted, and presently a party of Eskimos heard him and came to see what was the matter. They fetched a sledge, and took Kornelius back to his uncle's hut, and thence to hospital.

At this point his name enters not only into the hospital case-book, but also into the memories of all who came in touch with him. Give Kornelius his due : he was a good boy, with never a scrap of malice in him, and a fund of good humour that never failed.

So long as his leg was painful he was as quiet as a boy can be, looking at picture books most of the time and writing queer letters to himself and to all of us. The margins of the picture books bear the

marks of his writings ; queer ideas, clothed in quaint words. And not all in Eskimo, though Eskimo was Korni's native language. No, so bright a boy was certainly a favourite on the fishing schooners, and there he had picked up some English, so English he would write.

"Korni," he wrote, "no good ; broken leg." "Nis, very good." "Nis" being his way of spelling "nurse."

And Korni took to art ; the books are decorated with his pictures. Himself, his friends—especially Edua and Timmo, two cronies only second to himself in mischief—the nurse, the spectacled doctor, all are there, labelled so that all who see may know them. True, the faces are of Eskimo type, the type that comes naturally to Kornelius. Noses are flat ; too flat for our ideas of beauty, but charming to the eyes of Korni ; too flat, indeed, to be a resting-place for spectacles. Cheeks are broad and eyes are small, but the names are underneath—and what more could you want ?

These books, with their writings and their portraits, call back the days when Korni lay in bed and his leg was painful, but as time passed the pain grew less, and the subdued and quiet Korni began to bubble over. The boyish mischief came to the surface.

Korni, like most boys, had a taste for exploring. This, added to the fact that he was naturally bright and quick to learn, gave him the courage to do anything.

The beginnings were mild ; Korni wanted to "see

the works." The clock in the ward refused to go. Korni offered to mend it. He spent a quiet day in taking the clock to pieces—his bed was strewn with wheels and amateur tools. He must needs have his dinner in the midst of the litter, for no hand must disturb the arrangement of the fragments. It was only a cheap clock, but by dint of much fitting and trying and wrinkling of brows young Korni put it together again, and for a time it did its duties.

"Not much good," said Korni, jerking a scornful thumb at the clock, "sick insides."

Now followed a time of tinkering with any clock upon which he could lay his hands, and so long as clock-mending was enough to hold his fancy, he would sit quiet for hours.

But one day a creaking noise told us that the bed was on the move. Korni had discovered that it ran on castors.

This was a new joy—to wheel himself about the ward when we were not looking. But Korni was never to be caught in full career. However suddenly anyone went into the ward the bed was standing still, maybe over by the window, with a meek and proper Kornelius sitting in it looking at a picture book, and no signs of any means of propulsion to be seen. For this reason I am unable to tell you how that boy with his helpless leg managed to travel as he did. I suppose that Korni illustrates the proverb, "Where there's a will there's a way." And then his tin whistle! Somebody gave Korni a tin whistle. Hour after hour he whiled away the tedium with shrill melodies. He mostly chose the solemn kind

of hymn-tunes, played slowly; and there he used to lie, blowing, oblivious of all else, absorbed in his music.

In due time, Korni was well enough to be up on crutches. I called the village carpenter—a solid and elderly Eskimo—and after many explainings and showings of pictures on my part, and noddings and shakings of the head on his, the old man went home. He came back the next day with a very respectable pair of crutches, but Korni would have nothing to do with them. He eyed such supports with disfavour, and there had to be a practical demonstration of crutch-walking before he could be persuaded. But when once he had tried! It was difficult to get the boy to bed at all. His continual cry was, "May I get up now?" "May I have my crutches now?" "Need I go to bed yet?"—all rendered the more beseeching by his big, limpid eyes. The crutches widened Korni's field; he could visit all corners of the ward, and, best of all, he could look out of the window. He liked to look out of the window; he could see the boys at play in the village, and they would look up and catch his eye and wave messages to him. Sometimes he would beckon for his friend Timmo to come and visit him, and the two would sit doing puzzles, or exchanging news, or looking at pictures.

So long as Korni remained in the ward we felt that he was safe. But his adventurous soul was bursting with curiosity, and he started to explore the corridors.

"Kornelius," said I, when I found him stumping

round the top passages, "you must not go outside the door of your room, you might fall downstairs and break your leg again, and that would be dreadful."

Korni gazed at me with his big eyes, and settled to his picture book again, and presently took to staring out of the window. But before he had been left for ten minutes, the crutches would be tap-tap-tapping along the passages again!

At last I caught Kornelius on the stairs with his crutches, laboriously climbing downwards. This was too much.

"Kornelius," I said, "if I catch you out here again, I will have to make you stay in bed."

This threat produced an expression of horror in Korni's face, which gradually changed to a look in which penitence seemed to combine with half a dozen other emotions—a look to melt the stoniest heart.

With a mournful air Korni turned to the window and tapped for his friend Timmo, and in a few minutes the two of them were looking at pictures in the most earnest manner imaginable—a subdued and exemplary pair of Eskimo boys.

I had hardly left them when there came the tap of the crutches again!

The time had come for me to be cross with Kornelius! I marched upstairs, practising a suitable frown, and stringing together in my mind some suitable Eskimo syllables for the reprimanding of Korni. To the best of my ability I would make him a speech. The tap-tapping grew all the more

vigorous as I came the nearer. Korni would seem to be in defiant mood. At last, in the top passage, I met the culprit face to face—and it was not Kornelius at all. A smothered sound of laughter told me that he was safe where I had left him. The boy with the crutches was Timmo, Korni's bosom friend and disciple in mischief. Timmo had been stalking up and down in obedience to Korni—the chief plotter in this little play—Korni, the general commanding the operations from the base. Timmo stood anxiously waiting. He rather feared that he might get into trouble over this little prank, but when he saw an amused look dawning—for who could help laughing? —he grinned all over his face, and followed readily enough, chuckling and expectant, to see what treatment Korni would receive.

We walked into the room. There sat Korni, quietly turning the pages of his book, and seeming absorbed in the pictures. But his eyes told their own tale; he could not resist a furtive look, to see how his little hoax had succeeded. He twinkled up at me, and we all burst into laughter. Their joy was complete—Korni and Timmo had succeeded in "having me on."

Kornelius was soon able to be out of doors, and his delight was a pleasure to see. But great as it was, it was no greater than the delight of Timmo and the others at the return of their leader. Korni was the moving spirit in all the games; he was the genius, ever on the search for some new escapade. Timmo and Edua and the others had missed him sadly; they were strangely quiet while he was away.

They wandered among the rocks, or sat whittling with their pocket knives, or threw stones into the sea ; but now that Korni was among them again all was changed.

Their spirits rose, their shouts grew loud again. Korni had come back.

CHAPTER XIII

A MEMORY OF SLEDGE-DOGS

I WONDER is there a place in all the world where you may see more dogs gathered together than in an Eskimo village! Go where you will among the huts, you find dogs. They sleep in the porchways of the huts; they wander aimlessly about; they slink out of your way as you come along the path; they snarl at you from a distance. They wrangle in great multitudes over scraps of food flung from doorways; they are everywhere. It is a poor house that has only two or three dogs; most men seem to like a team of from seven to fifteen. Why, even old Henrietta has one dog, and you may see that black and woolly fellow hauling home a bundle of sticks, and helped manfully by young Benjie the grandson.

So ours is a village of dogs, and you must learn to walk warily, for, when not on duty with the sledge, dogs sleep outside the door, all powdered and frosted with snow, and ready to snap hastily at the visitor who chances to break their slumbers. As for the puppies, the air is filled with their shrill whinings as they learn—at the hands of some not-too-gentle urchin—to drag a toy sledge or a lump of frozen snow. Doggy families nestle in corners of huts. You may only know of their presence by the quiet whimper of hungry little things, and the rustle of straw as the mother gathers her brood to her.

Those are the newly born. In a few days they will rough it with the others outside. The porch is the home of the dogs.

I even kept a team myself, because I wanted to have strong dogs for the sledge journeys. Handsome fellows they were, well fed and well cared for; but little John liked his own dogs best.

"Dogs that work every day," he said, "are more used to the pulling and do not tire. Your dogs only work sometimes, and on other days they are fed without working. It is not good for dogs."

So whenever there came a travelling time little John brought a few of his own dogs along and harnessed them with mine. Lean, hungry-looking things they were, that toiled with noses down, and set a rare example of pace and staying power to the others. They were workers, those dogs of little John's. They ran all day with traces tight. They seemed to know John's voice and did what he bid them without complaint. They swallowed their food when the day was done, and curled themselves to sleep in the snow. They moved away and shivered if I tried to pet them.

On one of our journeys, John brought a special dog—a great, gaunt brute with yellow coat, a strange, uncanny creature that ever and again raised its head to give a weird half human yell. "Mauja," it shrilled, "mauja, maujârluk" (soft snow, soft snow); and always came this howl of distress when the way was toilsome. As I sat upon the sledge the cry came to me, above the creaking of the runners and above the panting of the toiling team. The

snow was soft, and the great yellow dog was giving voice.

It sank its shoulders in the powdery sea ; it swam and floundered in the yielding, clinging snow. "Mauja," it whined, "soft snow, soft snow."

Many are the memories of travelling times ; of nights in snow huts, built on mountain passes or in some gully near the frozen sea ; of comings to villages in the dark of the evenings, when the people had settled themselves to sleep, and only came tumbling out of their doorways when the howling of their dogs told them that something new was in the air ; of turnings aside from our track to see some lonely household dwelling in the utmost solitude.

It was in the afternoon of a spring day that we swung round the bend of a frozen channel and came in sight of a queer little hut.

The dogs pricked up their ears and tugged at their traces, and, with never a thought of the track that we were following, they galloped along in a mad scramble, dragging the heavy travelling sledge with many a jolt and bump towards the hummocks that fringed the shore. We had hardly time to turn aside if we wanted to reach home that night ; but the dogs had seen the little hut, with its thin wreath of blue smoke curling upwards, and their minds were full of doggy visions of food and rest and shelter from the frost. So little John smiled and shrugged his shoulders, and the dogs had their way.

"We cannot stop them if we would," he said, "but we must not linger—only half an hour." And he jumped from the sledge to guide it through the

rough pathway among the boulders, and in scarcely the time it takes to tell we had drawn up beside the little hut, and the dogs had lain them down to rest.

Well, maybe, the dogs had done right in taking us away from our track, for it would seem a pity to pass anyone by in lonely Labrador ; and here on this lonely beach was the chosen dwelling-place of a family of hunters. At the sound of the padding of the dogs and the rumble of the runners on the ice, the family came out to see, and we found ourselves shaking hands with some of our own village folk, and hearing how they were faring at the hunt. But we must go into the little hut ; no Eskimo welcome would be complete without that. So in we went, climbing down the pit-like entrance-way, and shaking hands again and being bidden welcome.

It was a queer little hut. At one time, not many weeks before, it had been a house of snow, built in the proper beehive shape ; but the warmth of the stove inside had melted some of it, and the sun had softened the outside of it, until the roof was gone and nothing but the wall was left. So there it stood, like a mixture of summer and winter, a broken-down snow house with a sail for a roof. There was no need to spend much time inside ; indeed, there was not room for all of us. But why stay in the house in the daytime, when the sun shines bright and the wind is not too cold ? And, besides, the kettle will boil just as well out of doors as in.

So out we went again, out from the gloomy little hut, with its queer canvas roof, to the glorious vision of frozen sea and snow-covered mountains. The

kettle was already on the boil, so the Eskimo housewife dropped in more handfuls of snow, and stuffed more dry twigs into the fire that blazed in the shelter of a snow fireplace, while I stood by the travelling box groping for tea and meat and bread among the snow that had drifted through the chinks beneath the cover. Little John touched me gently on the shoulder.

"They ask," he said, "will you please read?"

"By all means," said I—and I took the New Testament from its snug place among the clothing —"by all means. Let them sit down and we will read while we wait for the kettle."

Little John was a man of invention. He tumbled the box off the sledge and wiped the snow away with his sealskin glove, and there he had a bench all ready—my big travelling sledge, sixteen feet and four inches long.

So they sat themselves down in a row. And I could not help the quaint thought coming to me as I watched them. What a tumble there would be if the dogs were to rise up suddenly and drag the sledge away! But the dogs were happy to lie still and lick the frozen snow from the pads of their feet, too weary to think of such a thing as rising up and running. So the listeners sat secure and safe.

We read from the Book, and ever and anon the housewife rose quietly to mend the fire or to raise the lid of the steaming kettle; we sang our hymn together, and our voices rang in the sharp, clear air and echoed from the rocky walls behind us; we bowed our heads in prayer, and surely God, who

watches over His children everywhere, heard us there in the frozen wilderness.

And afterwards, as we sat together in friendly talk and drank our tea, and I heard of the doings of little Emilia, the cripple—how plump and strong and rosy she was getting !—once again the quiet hand of little John fell upon my shoulder ; the half-hour was past, and we must be on our way again.

We bundled our boxes on the sledge ; we shouted to the sleepy dogs, and with a cheery wave of the hand and a cheery call of " Aksuse. Be ye strong ! the Lord be with you," we rumbled down the slope to our track once more.

CHAPTER XIV

A SNOW HOUSE STORY

OUTSIDE my window the boys were building houses of snow, cutting blocks from the frozen drift, piling them up in spiral fashion, and shouting and hurrying in a scramble to be ready first. They built like real men, one boy inside the circle, armed with a great snow-knife, cutting shapely slabs of frozen snow, piling them one against the other spiral-wise, working from left to right as the Eskimo manner is, the other boy outside, patting the blocks into place and stuffing the cracks with powdery snow, taunting the builder with his slowness and urging him to greater hurry. The little playtime houses grew ; it was some competition that the boys were holding, and no doubt Benjie would crow loudly over Jako and the others if he could manage to wall himself in the soonest and cut his way out of the finished beehive, to jeer at the unfinished labours of his rivals.

I thought of the pictures I had seen—of villages of tidy snow huts, like so many beehives all ranged in rows, all white and glistening. But our village is not like that ; our huts are all of wood ; our snow is all soiled and trodden with the tramping of many feet, and even the drifts that rear against the walls are patched and blackened with the smoke from many chimney pipes. And here outside my window were the only snow huts I had seen in all the village,

A SNOW HOUSE.

Facing p. 100

and the boys—Benjie and Jako and Rena and the others—were shouting and laughing as they crawled in and out.

In the north, where wood cannot be found, there are villages of snow; but on most of the coast of Labrador the Eskimos have learnt a liking for houses more secure and lasting, and so they dwell in homes of wood and turf—walled round, maybe, with snow for warmth—and leave the building of real snow houses for the travelling times, when shelter is wanted on journeys.

I have many memories of old travelling times, when we camped on mountain passes or on the shores of the frozen sea; but perhaps the most real memory of all is of the time when a great procession of sledges, headed by the proud and happy little John, came to a halt with the waning of daylight on the summit of the Kiglapeit Pass, and there in the wilderness we built our houses of snow and laid us down to rest. Surely of all strange places the strangest in which to worship God. But here is the story of it.

All day long we had toiled through the snow and the driving wind, and only the Labrador traveller can know the weariness of such a toiling. We had reached our looked-for camping place; men and dogs had struggled bravely up the pass in the gathering gloom, and we were on the summit of the Kiglapeit. The wind had fallen with the waning daylight, and happy little John, the best of drivers, was hoping for a fine day and a quick run to-morrow. As soon as the sledges had come to a

standstill he had bustled away on his usual errand of "finding snow," prodding and searching with his great snow-knife for the proper sort of snow for building; and now the men were busy cutting circles in the hard drift, and the spiral walls of the houses were growing in a magical way. Tired and cold, I turned to my usual task of making tea, and the reader may imagine me, a padded, fur-clad figure with frosted face, bending over a fire which crackled in a hole in the snow, stuffing handfuls of broken ice into the blackened kettle that swung upon a stick. So I crouched over the blaze, trying, like the little match-girl in the story, to imagine myself warm in the bitter cold, until the kettle spluttered and the tea was made, and I went stumbling over the snow in the twilight to see how John was faring with his building. I found the little man strewing the dog's harness on the floor for his bed, mainly, as he told me, to keep the dogs from eating it in the night. He had spread my sleeping-bag across the middle of the house, and so we were ready for the passing of the night. But close beside us the other men were finishing a noble house, a great snow hut fully ten feet across, and high enough for me to stand without stooping. "Let us take our tea together in that great house," said I. "Piovok" (It is good), said John, and in we went with our kettle.

The house was full of people, although the snow was still powdering down from the roof as the men put the finishing touches to their work. We sat around the wall, on boxes, on coils of harness, on bags of dogs' food, and we passed the steaming

kettle from hand to hand. The cold air froze our breath on our lips and noses as we munched our frozen bread and meat and drank our warm tea, but the spirit of content and happiness was among us. "Nakomêk, nakomêk" (Thanks, thanks), said the Eskimos, as one by one they laid their cups aside and settled themselves to listen. This was always a part of our campings. The New Testament or the Book of Psalms always found a place in the travelling box, and in our lonely snow houses the drivers liked to sit and listen to the Word of God. We were used to a tiny hut to hold the three of us, two Eskimos and myself, with hardly room to stretch our legs ; we were used to the quiet of such nights, when we read our chapter and said our prayer and laid us down to rest before the toil of another day's travelling. But this was something special. Here was a great snow house, roomy and tall, with a dozen and more of people in it, joining with quiet reverence in the evening prayer.

"Sing," said somebody, and in a moment they were singing, first the old hymns, "Jesus, day by day" and "Now thank we all our God," then the favourite translations from Sankey, "Saviour like a shepherd lead us," "I will guide thee with Mine eye," and many another, all sung to the tunes that we know so well.

I wish you had been there to hear it. The Eskimos can always sing, but the memory of the singing in the snow house on the Kiglapeit is a wonderful thing to me.

I left them singing and went out into the night.

I climbed the slope of the river bank and looked down into the pass. There in the hollow stood the snow house, all lined with light where the candle shone through the crevices in the wall, and the night air was filled with the music of the singing.

And so I look back on one of the most wonderful memories of life in Labrador : the snow house on the mountain pass, with its little gathering of fur-clad Eskimos singing praise to God in their own tongue ; and that strange and frozen place, which knew no other sound but the howling of the wind and the cry of the hungry wolf, echoing with the name of Christ the Lord.

CHAPTER XV

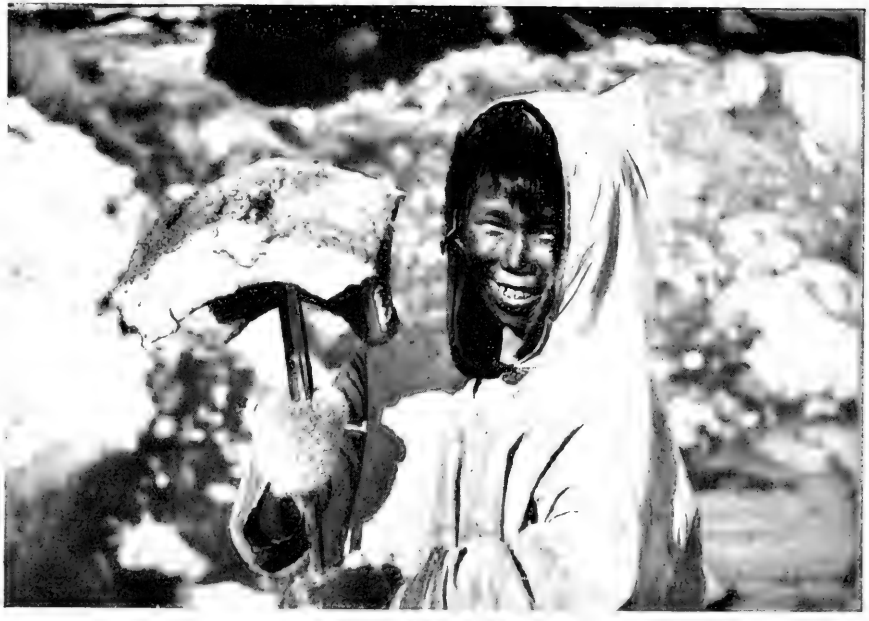
THE WONDERFUL COLLECTION

THIS is the tale of the time when the shadow of famine lay upon our village. It was the winter of 1911 ; the sledges were coming home from the sealing places, home for Christmas, and day by day as the sledges came we heard the same story, "No seals." Day by day we saw the trotting dogs come round the point, dragging the sledges along the smooth track that crossed our bay ; day by day the eager people rushed from the village to meet the newcomers, and always with the question, "Have you seals?" But always the same answer, always the same shake of the head, whether the sledges came from the islands by the ocean's edge or from the sheltered channels of the mainland : "No seals at all—puijekarungnaipok, tava."

In spite of toilsome hauling of nets, in spite of daily watching in skin canoes upon the icy water, the seal-hunt was a failure. And now the autumn hunting was over : the sea was frozen. One seal was caught, and only one ; it was found in the net that belonged to the storekeeper. He, good man, had been thinking of food for his team of dogs, but he handed that seal over to the elders of the village, telling them to share it among the people as a Christmas dinner for the village, and so the folk got their one square meal of the food they loved.

Now my story leads me to the bitter weeks of January, when the storms raged and the snow lay deep and hard. It was a trying time for the people, but they were not cast down; with all the good humour of the real Eskimo they sought their daily food. They drove their dog-teams to the woods and fetched back trees, and the frozen beach became a vast field of sawing and chopping. Piles of planks and mounds of firewood lay upon the snow, and while the men sawed and chopped the boys and women dragged heaped sledges to the store and sold their wood for food and clothing. But in spite of all that the store-house and the Mission could provide, the people lacked their native food. There were no seals, no skins for boots and clothing, and, worst of all, no blubber to be eaten on those bitter days.

The men began to feel the cold—men who were used to sleeping in the snow and driving dogs through blizzards, and to whom the winter cold of Labrador had never before brought a shiver—but still there were brave fellows who went out in the bleak hours of the dawn to spy for seals at the edge of the ocean ice. But, alas! the seals had flocked some other way; in the wonted channels there were none. I warrant that the dogs eyed the sea with hungry looks on those cold mornings; poor things, they looked in vain for proper food to keep them strong. They grew gaunt and pinched, and had much ado to haul their daily sledges. And sometimes, alas! one dog must be killed to make a meal for the rest! Those were hard times for the village, and yet, you know, the Eskimo is a cheery soul.



BLUBBER: HIS SHARE OF THE WONDERFUL COLLECTION.

Facing p. 106

In spite of all their hardships, the people worked on with indomitable will, and looked forward to better times.

It came about in the later days of January that the news of the hard plight of the folk in our village of Okak came to the ears of the people of Nain, just ninety miles away. A chance traveller, maybe, had carried the story ; no seals at Okak, no seals at all. At once there was a great mass meeting of the men of Nain.

"We are sorry for our neighbours at Okak," they said ; "they have no seals. As for ourselves, we men of Nain have fared better ; we have not plenty, yet we have some seals, and so we are better off. Let us make a collection to help our brethren."

"Taimak" (It is good), said the people, "so let it be."

So the leaders of the men in the village of Nain took up a collection, surely the queerest collection that ever was made. Not money—no ! There was something that was better than money to an Eskimo in those days of leanness. Each man as he was able brought a lump of blubber to this wonderful collection, and when all the men had given there were three great barrels full. They lashed the barrels upon sledges, they chose the strongest dogs, and three men of Nain drove the sledge-teams over the lonely mountain passes and across the frozen bays and rivers, ninety miles to Okak.

I remember the coming of those sledges. In the dark of the evening the dogs of the village began to

whine ; they smelt strangers, they heard the padding of feet across the sea-ice in the gloom, and soon a mighty shout went up as the people rushed to guide the sledges through the hummocks on the Okak beach.

"These," said the men of Nain, as they unlashed the barrels from the sledges—"these are a present from the people of Nain to all the people of Okak, to be given freely because of love and friendliness."

"Nakomêk" (How thankful), said the Okak folk—"Nakomêk ;" and they smiled and told the good news to one another, while the little children jumped and clapped their hands for very glee. Grave and worthy men, Eskimos all, stood by the barrels to divide the blubber, while the people waited with bowls and tubs and pitchforks.

And so we watched them trotting homewards, each with a lump of the precious blubber, every face smiling, and, I warrant you, every mouth a-watering for the thought of the luscious supper soon to come.

CHAPTER XVI

SOLVING A PROBLEM

THE peace of our village has been sadly disturbed. Now let me tell you that the keeping of peace and good order in the village is in the hands of four men —four solid and ordinary Eskimos, who are elected by the people themselves. Village elders, you might call them. "Angajokaukattiget" is the mouthful of the Eskimo language by which the people themselves know them, and if you pick that seven-syllabled appellation to pieces, you arrive at "the collection of great men," or, shall we say, "the band of leaders." Anyway, "elders" let it be, and know that the four are grave Eskimos of middle age, chosen, as you may well imagine, not alone for their own orderly way of living, but also for the respect they have earned by their prowess as hunters of seals and walruses.

The election is a great event. It happens about Christmas time, and as the church is the only room big enough to hold the people, in church the election is held. At the ringing of the bell, in flock the villagers ; the missionary is at the reading-desk, to see that all is done with due decorum, and a bit of paper is handed to every man over the age of twenty-one. They are the voters, the men of hunting age. Women's suffrage had not reached the

Eskimos in my day, but the women are in church all the same, sitting all on one side of the building, and keenly interested, in their stolid sort of way, to see who would be chosen.

Now comes the voting. Every man writes four names on his piece of paper. That is not quite so simple as it sounds. First there is a great deal of borrowing of pencils, with much sucking of the same ; then not a little whispering, and a scratching of tousled oily heads ; then the laborious writing, every man spelling names as he thinks best ; then a folding of the papers and the collecting of them in a box. Always a little waiting while someone, slower than the rest, pencils out his choice ; but at last the votes are gathered up—my task, that, the collecting and the telling of the votes.

The missionary solemnly unfolds each paper in turn and reads the names written there—a little tittering when some unlikely fellow gets a vote, the doing of his bosom chum, no doubt ; but on the whole the election is serious. I noticed a singular unanimity in the voting. Knowing the Eskimos as I do, I am quite sure that the whole thing had been well talked over for days beforehand ; next to the hunting, the election would be the chief topic over the pipes in the evening.

The votes are counted and the election is over. "Will you serve to keep peace and order in this village?" says the missionary, asking each man in turn. "Ahaila" (Yes), says each of the four ; and the people troop decorously home.

But all this is a digression, for this chapter

merely tells of the doings of the elders in a time of crisis.

The peace, as I have said, was sadly disturbed, and this is how it came about. Just how or when I cannot say, but true it is that some evil genius had taught the Eskimos to brew a vile concoction of treacle and mouldy biscuits, and the effect of this appalling stuff was that drunkenness began to be seen in our village.

The brewing was furtive, but it was going on in several huts. The Eskimos themselves recognised it as a deed of darkness, and in the dark of the evening the drinking was done. It was a dreadful pity to see strong drink taking hold of this simple people, from time immemorial a teetotal race ; but there the thing was.

My first knowledge of it came from a shouting outside, and when I opened the door there was a fine young hunter standing on the top of a little slope flinging stones at his wife, who was crouching below. The man could hardly stand upon his feet, so drunk was he. When the door opened in fled the frightened woman, while the man rolled shouting homewards. The terrified villagers were standing in a ring, keeping a safe distance ; they thought the man had a devil. It was the only way by which their simple minds could explain this roaring madness. Then we heard more of it. Somebody had pursued another over the hills with a gun ; there had been an old quarrel between neighbours about an axe, and one member in his drunkenness bethought himself of this, and went battering on his neighbour's

door with a hatchet. For the first time the Eskimos began to lock their doors. The thing was a terror. But the secret brewing went on.

Then the elders of the village took action. "This thing is bad," they said; "the Word is true, for strong drink is certainly raging. It will ruin the people; it must surely cease."

They called a mass meeting of the men in one of the huts, and if you can imagine a mass meeting of seventy or eighty Eskimos in a hut which would seem crowded with half the number, you may know a little of such a meeting as that. The men stood round the walls, they sat in a heap upon the bed, they crowded on the floor, standing, sitting on corners of boxes, leaning over one another; and you may conjure up that mob of faces, all browned with the winter air and the frost, lighted by the glimmer of a smoking seal-oil lamp, in an atmosphere stuffy with the smell of fish. But it was a mass meeting, a meeting of men in a good cause, and better work could not have been done in the widest amphitheatre or the most resplendent council chamber.

Big Josef took the lead—big Josef, the tallest of the Eskimos and a mighty hunter.

"The drinking is bad; it will spoil the people," he said; "our village cannot be if such things are allowed. There never was such among the Eskimos, never."

One after another spoke, asking, answering, calling up days gone by—for the Eskimos like to remember what their forefathers did. The palaver

went on into the night, but the end was certain; the mind of the people was made up.

"Kajusimavut" (It is decided), said the elders. "It is the mind of the people; the drinking shall cease."

Each man who was known to brew was then and there asked the question publicly: "Will you give up this evil thing?"

And one by one the men answered "Yes."

All but one—young Martine, Gustaf's servant, who lived in a little newly built house with his wife Tabea; young Martine, who seemed to us all to be the coming man, for was he not helper to the very cleverest of all the men who netted seals, and keeper of the finest team of dogs?

Young Martine said "No." He would not give it up; he liked the drink; it made him see strange things; he would not give it up.

"We will give you till to-morrow," said the elders; "you have heard the mind of the people."

The meeting broke up, and, true to their promise, the drinkers went home, and they smashed their tubs of liquor and poured the reeking stuff upon the refuse heaps.

To-morrow came, and as the afternoon was wearing on, and the men were home from the hunting, the four grave elders went to Martine's hut.

"How now, Martine," said they; "is your mind made up? Will you cease to brew and drink?"

"I will not cease," said the young man.

"But you know the mind of the people, of all the people of the village?"

"Illale" (But certainly), "yet I am going my own way; I will not cease my brewing."

"Ah, young Martine, and where is your keg of liquor?"

Martine sullenly pointed to a little black barrel that stood in the corner by the stove.

The four went in and solemnly took the keg; they rolled it to the door and set it upright on the snow. The young man stood sheepishly watching. Then the leader of the elders took young Martine's hatchet, where it stood beside the wood pile, and with slow and heavy strokes he smashed the keg to bits. Brown rivers trickled over the snow, and soaked their way beneath the surface, a witness until the next snowstorm should come and cover all with white again.

The elders pulled the hoods of their smocks over their heads, and made ready to go. They laid the hatchet in its place beside the wood pile.

"Brew no more, Martine," they said.

They solemnly turned and walked to their several homes. The drink evil was abolished, and ours was once more a teetotal village.

CHAPTER XVII

BLIND JULIANA GOES TO CHURCH

At this stage in our story I think the reader should be introduced to Juliana. Inasmuch as she was well content with a dinner of raw fish or seal-meat and blubber, and wore the usual long-tailed smock with its trimming of dog-fur and its embroidery in gorgeous wools, Juliana was just an ordinary Eskimo woman. But Juliana was something more. A pure-bred Eskimo, and daughter of old Abia, the headman of the village, she was learned and gifted beyond the usual. That is, she was teacher in the village school, tailor, and bootmaker in the Eskimo style for a succession of missionaries and missionaries' wives, well able to play the harmonium, and alto soloist in the choir. Also she was for some years night nurse in our little hospital. So Juliana was a woman of parts. And, withal, a simple, sensible Eskimo woman.

Now this chapter finds her in her later years, when she was blind—blind and feeble. The burden of age was on her shoulders ; long illness had left its mark upon her ; there was little that she could do.

The services in the church were her chief delight, and Sunday by Sunday Juliana was there, sitting on the bench by the door, where she had sat for so many years as one of the helpers. I can remember her sprinkling the floor with sand on wet days, so

that muddy and snowy boots might not spoil the boards. I have seen her on a snowy morning clearing the flakes from the window-panes with a raven's wing tied to the end of a stick. She was a useful soul in her day, was Juliana. And now she was blind—blind and old.

Blind though she was, where going to church was concerned weather seemed to make no difference to her. In snowstorms and rainstorms, and on bright and sunny days alike, Juliana was in her usual place, with her sightless eyes turned towards the missionary at his reading desk, and a smile of contentment and peace upon her placid face.

I wondered sometimes how she came there, for well I knew the slippery path and the narrow bridge that led to the village ; well I knew it for the tumbles I had had. I asked Juliana about it.

"How do you manage to get to church?" said I.

"Father leads me," said blind Juliana.

"Father?" I asked ; for I knew that Juliana's father had died in the big sickness of 1904.

"Yes," she said, "little father—little Abia, the namesake of my father. I call him 'father,' for such is the custom of the people, and he is the son of my brother and my father's namesake. He it is who comes each Sunday and leads me so that I do not stumble and fall ; and I am thankful, for without him I could not venture."

So that was the explanation. And, as a matter of fact, a few Sundays later I caught a glimpse of blind Juliana on her way to church. The bell had not yet begun to ring, but Juliana always liked to

be in good time. She was crossing the bridge by the side of the hospital, holding a very small boy by the hand ; and as the pathetic couple passed—the blind woman with her gentle face, and the small fur-clad Eskimo boy tugging at her outstretched hand —and I caught a glimpse of a stolid, chubby face, the face of small Abia, the son of Matthew, I knew that I was watching 'father' lead his Aunt Juliana to church.

But there came a day when Matthew and his family went away to the hunting-place, and small Abia was carried off on the long dog-sledge, with its load of bedding and crockery, to learn something of the harpooning of seals or the catching of trout —and Juliana's guide was gone.

And on the next Sunday blind Juliana was in church as before !

Now there lived in our village a heathen woman. She was the widow of a famous old chief of the northern heathen, old Tuglavi of Killinek, and had come south because her brother had wandered southward long years before, and she hoped to find a home with him. First one village and then another she tried, but her brother was farther still ; and when she reached us the heathen woman was weary of travelling. She had no relatives among our folk ; but in the hospitable way that the Eskimos have, one of the families had offered her a home. So the heathen woman settled for a time in the Christian village of Okak.

And it came about one day that she was in

Juliana's hut. Maybe she had called for a chat as she passed on her way to the brook for water; maybe she had been bidden to share a scrap of food, for there is much kindliness among those simple folk. However it be, the heathen woman was seated in Juliana's hut, and the two were chatting over the doings of the day. Juliana was rather downcast.

"My brother," she said, "has gone away to-day; my house will be very quiet; even my little father is gone, who used to lead me to church. I shall not be able to go to church again, because the path is narrow and rough and covered with ice, and I should fall and be torn by the dogs."

Then the heathen woman proved herself a neighbour.

"I will come," she said—"I will come and lead you to church."

"Nakomêk" (I am thankful), said Juliana.

So we had the wonderful sight of the heathen woman leading blind Juliana to church.

If you were out of doors when the bell began to tinkle, you might see a bedraggled figure in oil-stained clothes carefully leading the blind woman —neatly clad, by contrast, in an embroidered blanket smock—along the bumpy, icy, slippery path, holding her by the arm where the worst places came, pausing to tell her of crevices and lumps and turns, leading blind Juliana to church. And if you were in your place when this strange pair arrived, you would hear a shuffling sound in the porch, with

THE HEATHEN WOMAN.

Facing p. 118

a stamping of feet on the sanded floor—stamping to shake off the frozen snow; then hand in hand the two came in.

Blind Juliana was at home now; she knew her way about the church, for in the days before her blindness she had dusted the benches and set them straight, and sanded the floor, and lighted the stove, and stacked the hymn-books all tidily. She walked to her seat with a confident tread, dragging by the hand this strange, furtive, peering sister from the north. They sat there side by side, the heathen woman staring with open mouth while the missionary read and prayed and spoke. And when the hymns were sung, blind Juliana stood with beaming face, joining in the well-known tunes with her strong contralto voice, and maybe thinking of the time when she led the altos in the choir and even sang solos on special days. And the heathen woman: while they sang she sat huddled, awed by the strange sound, and looking around in a frightened way, waiting for the time when she might lead Juliana home again.

And that is how blind Juliana went to church.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN ESKIMO ROMANCE

THE heathen woman was homesick.

It had been a great adventure for her, this journey from the north. She had left her native village and her friends, and had turned her back upon the old turf hut, where her husband, old Tuglavi, the famous chief of the northern heathen, had breathed his last. She was a widow. And she was not old Tuglavi's only widow! The old man had a wife, the wife of his youth, grown old with him, and too old and feeble to do the work of an Eskimo household; so old Tuglavi had taken this poor woman for his other wife, so that there might be someone in the house to do the work.

Now she was a widow, and she would travel southward. Her brother had gone south long years before, and she would go to find him. Distance had no meaning for her; south he had gone, and southward she would go as well. It would be better for her, she thought, to find a shelter under her brother's roof than to live as a widow in the north; she would have food and a home, and her boys would learn to be hunters and to help her brother in his work; and, above all, she would be with her relatives again—and what tie is stronger, especially in the mind of an Eskimo, than the tie of blood?

So the heathen woman had set out upon her journeyings. The way had been long and wearisome. She moved from village to village, always seeking news of her brother, and always with the same answer to her questionings: her brother had gone farther south, farther south.

In the course of her travellings she came to our village of Okak, and she was very weary. She would stay among the hospitable folk of Okak for a while and rest herself before she took up the trail again; and so, in the kind and simple way that the Eskimos have, she was made welcome. And thus it came about that the heathen woman lived and walked and worked among the Okak people for many weeks.

The winter was nearly over; the worst of the storms were gone; the milder days of spring-time were coming; and the heathen woman was homesick.

She had been happy in our village; the people had shown kindness to her, they had given her a roof over her head and a bed to lie upon, they had fed her even to the sharing of their last bite, but, after all, our village was not her home.

If you, my reader, were to go to Killinek, which was "home" to that heathen woman, you would wonder that anyone could love so bare and dreary a spot. Bleak and dismal, raining and snowing by turns in the height of the summer, misty and raw even in August, with scarcely a blade of grass to relieve the sullen greyness of the rocks, Killinek is surely of all the villages of Labrador, the most forbidding.

But here was a Killinek woman who had lived for years as one of the wives of old Tuglavi the chief in a hideous turf hut on the sodden slope of the hill ; and even among the neat wooden homes of the village of Okak, and amid all the hospitality of a well-ordered Eskimo community, this poor woman was homesick. She made up her mind that she would go back to the north, to see her native village once more, and her children seemed to pine just as eagerly for their home as she herself.

Now it came about in the spring-time that one of the Okak missionaries set out on a visit to Hebron, the next village north, and the heathen woman begged a lift upon his sledge. She felt that if she could reach Hebron she would at least have made a step upon her journey ; and she was content to trust to a chance sledge, or to wait until the ice should break and a boat be able to travel, and so by one means or another she would reach her well-loved Killinek.

I watched the little party set out upon their way. The woman and her sturdy boys walked ahead along the track, for they would not weary the dogs by riding more than they needed ; beside them trooped the usual bevy of friends and well-wishers, " seeing them off " in Eskimo style by going the first mile with them. And so they left the village of Okak, with their faces toward the north ; the sledge with its bunch of trotting dogs turned out of the bay on to the wide sea ice and was lost to sight behind the headland, and the crowd that stood watching on the

beach and on the jetty went home to breakfast and to work.

So the heathen woman began her journey home.

There were adventures on the road.

Spring was well advanced, and the day was warm ; the sea ice was slushy and soft, and in many places the necks of land were almost bare of snow. It was a bad day for the dogs ; they, poor things, were heavy with their winter coats, and the toiling in the sodden track under the warm spring sun soon wearied them to a mere crawl. At last, halfway to Hebron, the little caravan came to a river, a winding, whirling barrier of water that no dog or sledge could cross. The road was closed, and the only thing possible was to return to Okak.

But the heathen woman had set her face towards her own village, and was not to be turned. The missionary argued with her and entreated her. But no, in spite of the river she would push on ; she would find a crossing place ; she could, she said, walk along the rocks and across the steep slopes where a sledge could not travel ; she knew the direction, and before long she hoped to reach the settlers' houses at Nappartok, twenty miles south of Hebron.

So she bade good-bye to the missionary, and with packs upon their shoulders and a good supply of food in the hoods of their smocks, she and her boys trudged out of sight along the river bank.

The missionary felt uncomfortable at letting them go ; it seemed to him that he ought rather to have compelled them to return with him. But the sledge-

driver, a sensible, middle-aged Eskimo, had no such misgivings. "Let them go," he said; "they will find their way." And he was right. The native gift for path-finding is a wonderful thing, and it was with a mind free from doubt as to the outcome that the heathen woman pursued her way on foot.

The missionary turned his sledge homeward again, and came to Okak in the small hours of the morning. And in the meantime the heathen woman and her boys, after hours of rough tramping, had sighted the Nappartok houses. There, after a rest, they found a sledge to take them to Hebron.

The rest of the story reads like a romance; but none the less it is true, and a delightful bit of Eskimo history. Wonder of wonders, a Killinek sledge was waiting at Hebron. A belated mail-bag had been sent south in the care of two of the Killinek Eskimos, and the sledge was waiting for a possible return post from the south.

It was like a glimpse of home to the heathen woman to see a face from her own village. But more than that, for before many days were past there was a wedding at Hebron, when one of the sledge-drivers, a middle-aged man and a Christian, made the heathen widow his wife; and it was a wedding party that drove away from the village in the cold air of the morning.

Could anyone imagine a stranger honeymoon?

The newly married couple spent the cooler hours of dawn and dusk in toiling and plodding through the melting snow of the mountain passes; they rested

during storms and midday warmth in such shelter as they could find. It was a week's hard travelling to cover that last long stage ; but the heathen woman was happy, for to her it was the last stage of her long journey homewards, for in the bleak village of Killinek home and comfort awaited her.

And there I saw her in the following summer, living with her husband in a hut on the sea beach, and in the hospitality of her heart giving a home to a poor old woman, bent and crippled with age—*old Tuglavi's other widow*.

But the story is not yet ended.

Strangely enough, at the same time that I was writing the story of how this heathen woman led blind Juliana to church, the missionary at Killinek was drawing up his annual report and all unwittingly telling us the sequel ; for in that report we read that this same woman has lately been baptised a Christian, and is now no longer a heathen, but a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, by a long and winding road, the heathen woman has found her home.

CHAPTER XIX

ERNESTINA

I WONDER how she got her name? I can imagine that her father was hoping for a son, and had promised some fond uncle to call the boy Ernest; he did the best he could by calling his daughter Ernestina.

That is the best explanation that I can suggest, and very likely it is the right one. But however it came about, Ernestina is her name, and it is quite a popular name among the Eskimos. They always like a name if they can pronounce it easily; that is one reason why they like Bible names. Mostly they take Bible names because they are names out of God's Book—a witness, as it were, to their change from heathenism to the worship of the true God; but they like the short Bible names for the very good and very Eskimo reason that they are easy to say and to remember. They alter them just enough to make them sound pleasant and musical to Eskimo ears. It does not seem to suit their ears to have a name ending in a consonant; so they either take away the last letter, and talk of Abraha, Isa, and Jako, or they put on a vowel at the end, and say Davide and Samuele. They have a queer weakness for names with a *k* in them—in fact, nearly every Eskimo name has some *k*'s in it somewhere.

When we started a printing press at the hospital

at Okak, although we had an ordinary fount of type, we had to write for an extra supply of *k*'s before we could print any of the hymns and pamphlets which we had in view! *K* abounds everywhere on an Eskimo page. "Kanga kainiarkorka?" (When will he be likely to come?) says the Eskimo, or he talks about making a new "kakkivak" (trout spear).

But so much for Eskimo names. We are talking of a poor girl who has a name that is not a Bible name, nor has it a *k* in it; I suppose that she is called after somebody who was called after one of the old missionaries as a compliment. She is Ernestina, and she lives at Okak in Labrador.

The Ernestina I have in my mind is a cripple girl, and added to her lameness she suffers from an incurable form of nerve disease which has affected her speech. The doctor has told her friends plainly that there is no medicine that can cure her; she will always be defective. Something can be done to ease the pains, and that is all, and her friends must be very kind and patient with her.

She lives with her grandmother in a little house on the Okak sea front. She minds the house and mends the fire, and sometimes on her bright days she is well enough to play the harmonium. What wonderful things harmoniums are! I asked Ernestina where it came from. The old grandmother answered: "It was a present from an old missionary who lived in Labrador." After a long pause she found herself unable to count the years, but she was able to tell me his name—and I know that he died before ever I was born! In spite of its many years

of service the old harmonium is still in good order; it is black with oil and smoke, but Ernestina gets music out of it, and although it has seen rough usage it bids fair to see a riper old age yet.

I wish you could look in some day and see Ernestina; you might find her at that old harmonium. Of course she stops playing and bashfully comes down from her stool; she is very much awed by your visit, and needs a lot of coaxing before she will go back to her music. If you sit down on the stool and try over a tune for her she is in a transport of delight. She stands shyly by your side, breathless and beaming with pleasure, drinking in the music. No matter that you are not an accomplished player; Bach's fugues would be lost on Ernestina. She would rather hear a simple Sankey hymn-tune; her poor, voiceless lips would follow the melody. She would be singing and making music in her heart to the Lord—sweeter music, far, to Him than much fine singing that comes not from the heart.

I once found Ernestina in a very proud frame of mind. Some good friend had lent her a sewing machine, and she was making a dress! Her own fingers would not serve to cut out the pattern, so the same kind friend had done the cutting for her; but Ernestina could fit the pieces together and stitch them with the sewing machine. I found her with the pieces all spread out upon the floor, and she was full of eagerness to show me how well she could manage this new accomplishment. Quivering with pride, she turned the handle, looking up now and again with the smile of a conqueror and finally dis-

playing the finished seam with a sort of subdued triumph. That was on one of her best days.

Poor soul! She has her bad days too—days when she can only lie in bed, when the pain is bad, and all the little occupations must be put on one side; days which only lifelong sufferers can understand; days which make those who do not suffer marvel at the patience and refinement and beauty of character which suffering so often brings.

Poor Ernestina! I believe she makes nearly all her own clothes; and though her skirts are of patchwork, she manages to be wonderfully neat. Often on Saturdays you might see her washing her long-tailed Sunday "sillapak." I must use the Eskimo word and call it "sillapak," for there is no English word that describes it. "Sillapak" means "the outside thing of all"; it is made of white calico, with a short tail in front and a long tail behind.

Ernestina washes her sillapak in the real Eskimo way. She takes it to the brook and dips it in the water; next she spreads it on the rocks and soaps it well; then she folds it up, drops it into the brook again, and tramples on it until she is satisfied that it is clean. And so you might see Ernestina on a Saturday afternoon in the short summer, standing in the middle of the brook and trampling.

The sillapak has a big hood in which the mother carries her baby; and sometimes I have seen Ernestina acting nursemaid, shuffling along with a big bundle on her back—somebody's little brother fast asleep in her hood!

Poor Ernestina! Her friends told her about a

surgeon who could cure sick people by taking the sickness out with a knife. Their ideas were primitive, as Eskimo ideas are apt to be. The art of the surgeon was new to them, and the stories they told Ernestina must have been quaint and queer. Ernestina came the next day, dressed in her Sunday sillapak. She was very self-possessed, and straightway sat down in a chair, and took off the red bandanna handkerchief which covered her head. There she sat, smoothing her nicely parted hair, and gazing with big, pleading eyes. The young girl who had come to keep her company stood near the door, giggling with nervousness. "What is it that Ernestina wants?" "Oh," said the girl, "she has been told that sickness can be cut out of people with a knife, and she has come to have the sickness taken out of her head. Please do it now, so that we can go home!"

Poor Ernestina! Her case is beyond the reach of any surgeon. It was piteous to see the look of expectation in her limpid eyes change to the old dull hopelessness as her fond hope faded from her. She bears her sad affliction bravely. As she says, in those poor halting words that only her nearest friends can understand: "It is the Lord's will; I am His."

I remember the time when Ernestina was received as a member of the Christian Church. It was at a confirmation service at the Moravian Mission Station at Okak, when quite a number of young Eskimo men and women came forward. Ernestina hobbled bravely in with the rest, and seated herself

upon a stool just opposite the table where the missionary sat. When the others answered the questions put to them, and made their public confession of faith in Jesus Christ, Ernestina made her meaning plain with nods, and the happy tears flowed down her cheeks. What a testimony it is to the reality of Christianity that these simple-minded Eskimos, and even the simplest of them, can take God at His word, and receive inward assurance of salvation, and show the results of the Spirit working in their lives !

There is one little anecdote that I must still tell about Ernestina. She came one day, smiling and shaking with excitement, and handed over a small package. Inside the parcel was a sum of forty cents (one and eightpence) in money. "What is this, Ernestina?" And Ernestina pointed to the paper. She wanted to make sure of being understood, so she had got somebody to write on the paper : "She wants to give this to the Mission." Poor Ernestina ! She cannot earn much. She helps to pile the damp firewood to dry in the summer sun, and this brings her in a little ; but forty cents is a big sum for her, and she must have saved and saved to bring so much.

And every year since then Ernestina brings forty cents "to help the Mission." We have all read about the widow's mite ; and here it is, in our own day, in real life, among a people once spoken of as degraded and savage.

Yes, Ernestina's sacrifice is not forgotten ; she does much, just because she does what she can. The love of God shines on her life, warming it as

that love does ; and just because the Gospel of the love of God has taken hold upon the Eskimos of Labrador, their whole race has been lifted to a higher plane of living than was possible in heathen days.

CHAPTER XX

JULIANA'S HOUSE

THE first house in the long line that winds along the water front after the hospital wood-shed is Juliana's. As a matter of fact, the last house, at the far end of the line, is no house at all. A queer thing to say, perhaps, but this is the way of it. You see, our line of shingly beach comes to an end where the rocks begin, and there, too, the line of houses ends. Every inch of the beach is faced by that long front line of huts—and yet not every inch, for at the far end there stands a square foundation of stones, a place for a hut with no hut upon it.

"Why is there no hut here?" I said to little John.

"Snow," said John; and with a sweep of his hand he showed how the west wind sweeps along the beach and turns at the towering rocks to fling its snow upon that last small corner.

Many young couples have learnt the secret of that neglected building spot. However much they may be told by the wiseacres of the village, they still come along and look at it, and say to themselves: "Here is a fine place, foundation all ready; let us build our home here."

I have seen them at work. The young man fetches trees from the woods; the young wife helps him to saw them into beams and rafters. He is top sawyer, of course, at the saw-pit, because that is

the hardest place and needs the most skill; she is bottom sawyer down below. Soon a neat little hut is standing on that square foundation, and a neat little newly made housewife is cooking by the doorstep, or hanging the skins and the codfish to dry above the porch.

But with the first storm of winter the little hut is buried. The young couple dig their window clear, and make a snow porch to the doorway. Another storm, and the hut is gone again, buried under a mighty drift. More toilsome digging. Another storm, and the young people move their bedding and their cooking pots, their dogs and all their hunting gear, and beg a corner in the house of some better-placed neighbour. In the summer they return, with the careless smile of the Eskimo, and take their little hut away and build it again on the hillside. And that is how the last hut in the line is no hut at all.

But Juliana's house. I call it Juliana's house because blind Juliana is the most important person there; the hut belongs to her brother Benjamin, who is by no means a clever hunter, but is nevertheless head helper in the church, and teacher in the day-school, and also tenor soloist in the choir.

Now this was a very ordinary Eskimo house, showing signs of much patching, so that while most of the boards are grey and weatherworn, some are new—signs of pieces added on. Benjamin had evidently made his house grow in the usual way of Eskimo houses. I never saw the house in the process of growing; it had finished most of its ex-

pansions before ever I crossed its doorstep; but I have watched other houses in the making, and have chatted with their owners as they went about their work.

"Hai, Jonas, are you house-building?"

"No," says Jonas, "but my house is too small; my children are now three, and last winter I had not room for the skinning of my seals, so I am making my house larger."

And Jonas would tear the back wall out of his house, and lay a fresh foundation of stones beyond it, and raise a few new uprights, and nail his planks to them, and fashion a roof to the extension; and so the house would seem to have an outgrowth, proudly referred to by Jonas as his bedroom.

And Benjamin's house was of this sort. In course of time it had lost its individuality; the original hut was represented by four smoke-blackened uprights, very convenient for folk to lean against while they talked or while they waited on a stormy day for the church bell to ring. The four old uprights stood in the midst of the floor-space, but on all sides the walls had been pushed back to meet the needs of a growing family. The porch had edged its way so close to the path that the steps up to the door had lost all dignity, and were no better than a little ladder; and the back wall was so close to the rocks that rose steeply behind it that the roof became part of the hillside when the winter snow had fallen, and the boys of the village were wont to go tobogganing over it for the sheer fun of the thing.

And this was the hut where blind Juliana lived—the hut where she was sitting when the heathen woman offered to lead her to church ; the hut where the poor and the feeble were used to come to find a scrap of food and hear the wisdom of blind Juliana's talk.

Juliana was one of the people who always stayed in the village. The news of codfish in the bay sent most of the people post-haste to the fishing ; there were but very few who stayed at home. But the ones who stayed were well worth meeting ; you could almost count them on your hand. First, the old widows who hammered the blubber to make oil for the market and who packed the trout in brine. You might have met one or the other of them on the village path, smiling-faced old people, dressed in sacks all smeared with grease, going to and fro in their workaday garb, and perfectly happy in their queer task. One is old Karitas, who blows the organ in church, for which occasion she changes her sack-cloth for a fine white smock all fringed with embroidery ; another is old Henrietta, who stacks the firewood and waters the gardens, and covers up the potato plants from the ever ready frosts and the marauding mice ; another is old Verona, the mother of a family of fine and handsome daughters. And then there are the two who are too feeble to go : poor Ernestina, the cripple girl, and my old friend Juliana.

I opened the door of Juliana's house one morning in the early summer, and I heard the sound of someone reading. I could not see at first, for the hut

was dark. In spite of the sunny morning the place was dull and gloomy, because the window is only small, and what window there is is not of glass, but made of a membrane sewn from seal's bowel, a queer and creaky substitute that flaps to and fro with the wind, letting in a little light but no real sunshine. I made my way across the floor towards the crackling stove and towards the sound of the reading. It was Juliana's voice that I heard. But reading, no. It was blind Juliana's voice, saying first one and then another well-known piece of scripture—snatches from the Psalms, bits from the Gospels and the Revelation, all the familiar verses, easy for me to know although said in the long, strange words of the Eskimo tongue. And Juliana was saying them over, rolling them on her tongue, verily tasting them, it seemed to me; and I could not help thinking of the old phrase which tells us that His words are as honey to our taste and sweet in our mouths, for so it was with Juliana.

"No," said Juliana, "I can no longer read; I am blind; but I like to say over the verses I learnt at school and in the church, and Ernestina likes it too."

"So Ernestina is here," said I. "I had thought to go and visit her, but here she is. Aksunai, Ernestina."

"Yes," said Juliana, "poor Ernestina is often here. When her grandmother Henrietta goes to her work in the blubber yard she leads Ernestina to my house and leaves her here to help me."

"To help you!" said I; and I looked at the pot

bubbling over the stove and at the crackling fire that the blind woman was mending with sticks. And I looked at the poor crouching figure of the paralysed girl, and I thought to myself: "Surely Juliana is helping this afflicted one, and not she helping Juliana." "To help you!" said I.

"Yes," said Juliana, "for Ernestina is my eyes."

CHAPTER XXI

HENRIETTA'S VISIT

I THINK that of all shy visitors, the shyest was the one who came up the front-door steps one moonlight January night. In England visitors knock at the door and wait, or, if they are on very friendly terms with the people of the house, tap at the door and walk in. In Labrador we dispense with all ceremony ; we follow the Eskimo custom in our visiting ; we open the door and walk in, with never a knock and no need of an apology.

But this was a shy somebody.

I heard the front steps creak, as front steps will creak on a frosty winter night in Labrador : somebody was climbing slowly to the door. It was quite a flight of steps that our visitors had to climb, six or seven, to be as accurate as may be ; it reminded me of the flights of steps up to the tall old town houses that I knew when I was a child, only in Labrador our steps are made of wood. Creak, creak, creak went the steps, and I waited for the opening of the door.

Nothing happened ; the creaking came to an end, and that was all. It was not that the door could be opened silently, for I knew well enough that it was stuck with the frost, as is the way with doors in Labrador ; and visitors have quite a habit of thrust-

ing open the door with a jerk, and stamping their feet in the porch to clear the snow from their boots. It would not do, you see, to tramp the passage and the floor of one's living-room with boots all caked with snow. And so on that frosty January night I had every reason to expect a noisy opening of the door with a stamping of feet to follow. But nothing happened; and yet I was quite sure of the creaking of the steps.

I opened the door of the room and peered into the passage. The passage was empty, and very cold. I pursued the matter further, and went into the porch. There was nothing in the porch but a very biting draught, and a powdering of snow that had drifted through the various crevices. The porch is always a cold place, and it was with a shiver that I turned the icy handle and pulled open the outer door. A draught of freezing night air was wafted in, chilling my ankles and nearly taking my breath away.

And then, at last, I found what I sought; my frozen pilgrimage to the door had not been in vain; my ears had not played me false; there was someone on the steps.

There, meekly waiting for the opening of the door, too shy to turn the handle for herself or even to knock, stood Henrietta. "Aksunai, Henrietta," said I. "Itterille" (Come in); and Henrietta came in. I thankfully closed the door and shut out the biting wind; then I retreated to the passage and left Henrietta the freedom of the porch. She stamped her feet, and slapped her skirt, and waved the hood of her smock; she took the bandanna handkerchief

from her grey old head and flapped the powdery snow out of its folds ; she smoothed her hair and put the handkerchief carefully in place again ; then she came blinking into the lamplight.

A queer little figure, this.

A very short, broad-shouldered woman, bent and wrinkled with age, with a pair of twinkling little eyes peering this way and that, and her wisp of grey hair tied at the back with the white ribbon that showed she was a widow. This was Henrietta, leading hand —foreman, I might almost say—in the blubber yard, skilled in the nauseous task of hammering the oil from the chopped-up fat ; and ready, when blubber work was lacking, to turn her hand to anything useful, and mend your boots and stack your firewood, or scrape the snow from your steps and windows, or fetch water, or ice, maybe, for your kitchen tank, or even, in the summer-time, to water your garden on a dry evening and carry seaweed from the shore for the better cultivation of your turnip patch. This was Henrietta.

I led her into the full glare of the lamplight ; and there, in the warmth of my room, she sat herself down on the little green bench by the door. Then came a pause. It was something new for Henrietta to come to my room at all ; I could not remember seeing her there before, though I had seen her many times out of doors, as she passed to and fro in the sackcloth overalls that she wore for her work.

And Henrietta was finding her visit somewhat new ; she sat peering about the room, fixing her gaze first on one thing and then on another, probably

wondering in her mind at the strange things we English folk had in our houses.

So I waited while Henrietta looked about her ; but I knew that there was cogitation going on in that old grey head ; no mere curiosity would have brought her so far afield on a bleak January night. Henrietta was collecting her thoughts, and presently she cast down her eyes and began to shake her head.

"Kappe, kappe !" (Alas !), she said.

"And why is it kappe?" I asked her.

"Ah, but I have sad words to tell you," said old Henrietta.

"Sad words," said I ; "but that is bad hearing."

"Ai, ai, sad words," said she, "and this is how it all was."

There was another pause, as if the old woman did not know how to begin ; then suddenly she looked up.

"You know Ernestina," she said.

Yes, of course, I knew Ernestina, the poor girl whose limbs are stiff and paralysed, Henrietta's granddaughter.

"Well," said Henrietta, "to-day I washed Ernestina's clothes. I washed them so that she might have clean clothes for church on Sunday. You know she still goes to church sometimes, for she can walk slowly if I lead her, and we start in good time so as to be there before the bell stops ringing. So I washed her clothes and hung them out to dry. And I heard a great noise, and I went out. And, ai, ai, there I saw that the dogs were eating Ernestina's clothes. Eh, the bad dogs ! I drove them away, though I am only a poor weak

old woman, but I only saved some rags. Most of the things were eaten, and now Ernestina has got nothing, and cannot go out and go to church. What shall I do?''

Looking back on it, I hardly know whether I ought to have been surprised or not, but surprised I was. Clothes fresh from the wash-tub seemed something quite new as a diet for dogs. But there is no apparent limit to the strange appetite of those queer beasts, and to travel on a sledge behind a team of Labrador dogs soon gives one some curious glimpses of their ways. One windy day, somewhere in the wilds of the Kiglapeit mountains, my fur cap blew off. I had hardly time to turn before it was engulfed ; the dogs of the sledge following were upon it with a pounce, and it would have been funny enough to make me laugh—if my head had not been freezing—to see the leading dog, the one on the longest trace and therefore first on the prey, making valiant efforts to swallow up my cap whole, ear-flaps, strings, and all. The brute raced on, with a great bulge slowly travelling along his neck as the unaccustomed morsel made its way into the interior ; and behind him panted the whole team, each straining to the utmost limit of its trace, and all snarling and wheezing and whining in the extremity of their desire for a taste.

I have seen gloves go the same way, carelessly laid down while I chatted with the drivers at a halting-place, and suddenly snatched away to be made the centre of a tearing, scrambling, fighting mass of dogs, all mixed up in a tangle ; and the driver has

hurled himself from the midst of his chat and the enjoyment of his pipe into the vortex, and the peace of the winter scene has been made a nightmare of shouts and howlings and lashing of whips.

And I have still a vision in my mind of the troubled face of a squat little Eskimo woman—the village bootmaker—as she came one evening to say: "What trouble, what trouble; your boots, your Sunday boots, the boots with the white soles. Ai, ai, but I had made them fine, and scraped them very white, and hung them on a pole outside the door to make them whiter with the cold, and, behold, the dogs have eaten them."

But all this is by the way; things made of skin may be all very well as food for hungry dogs, but here was old Henrietta sitting on the little green bench by the door, telling me with rueful face how the dogs—eh, those bad dogs!—had eaten Ernestina's clothes—clothes newly washed and hung on the poles to bleach, and asking me what she should do!

CHAPTER XXII

THE OLDEST CHAPEL SERVANT

WHEN I pulled aside the curtains on that stormy January morning, I saw the oldest chapel servant going to his work. It was a terrible morning, the sort of morning that only those who have lived a winter in such a land as Labrador can properly imagine ; indeed, terrible is the only word that seems at all suitable in speaking of it. The wind was swooping down from the west with a ceaseless roar, and the air was filled with powdery snow. When you have made all your plans for a journey by dog-sledge, and you wake to a morning like that, your driver will wave his hand to the west and say, "Ajornarpok" (It is impossible)—"pertok" ; and in that short and impressive word, one of the few short words in a language of long ones, he sums up the terrors of the weather. "Pertok" (drift), the weather that the dogs will not face ; the weather that freezes your nose and your cheeks ; the weather in which men get lost. And it was pertok on that January morning.

But the oldest chapel servant was at his work as usual. The wind had banked up a drift around the door of the church, and the old man was digging a path through it with a shovel. Sometimes as he turned I could see the frost upon his beard and eyebrows, but for the most of the time his back was

turned to me, and I watched his active old figure, clad in sealskins with a hood pulled down low over his forehead, as he plied his shovel with deliberate strokes. He was a real Eskimo ; he did not seem to mind the weather. At times he had to brace himself against the wind, and his smock flapped as the gusts caught it ; but he worked steadily on, making a way to the church.

Soon he had reached the door ; he banged it open and went into the porch, and I knew by the shovelfuls of snow that came flying out that he was clearing away what had blown in during the night. When his work was done he slammed the door again, shouldered his spade, and tramped off homeward.

I watched the people come along the newly cut path while the bell was ringing for the morning meeting ; then, muffled to the eyebrows, I braved the short passage myself.

Somewhere in the porch the oldest chapel servant was toiling at the bell-rope ; I could hear the measured scrape, scrape, scrape of the cord against the woodwork as I sat in my place in church. Presently the last straggler among the worshippers was seated, snow was wiped out of eyes and hair, and hymn-books were brought to light from pockets and the legs of boots and the hoods of sealskin smocks ; the brawny hunter at the organ cast a glance over his shoulder and began to bring his voluntary to an end ; the bell ceased its clanging, and the old man came in. He closed the door, stooping to clear away a wedge of snow that the passing

"THE OLDEST CHAPEL SERVANT."

Facing p. 146

of many feet had left ; then he walked across the church to the vestry and ushered in the preacher. A hush fell upon the crowded church, the last notes from the organ died away, the missionary announced the opening hymn, and the oldest chapel servant took his seat among the others on the chapel servant's bench. Five men there were, chapel servants all. They seemed just ordinary men, such men as you might see at any of the fishing camps or hunting grounds where the Eskimos are wont to gather, clad, all of them, in native garb of blanket or of spotted sealskin ; men with faces browned by constant wind and storm, and shaggy hair well streaked with grey ; men middle aged or elderly, with looks of dignity and thoughtfulness—these were the chapel servants.

Their duties ? They are the men who keep the house of God neat and tidy ; they sprinkle the sand upon the floor to save the well-scrubbed boards from the wetness of sodden and snow-covered boots ; they clear the path to the door, and brush away the snow that gathers on the window panes ; they ring the bell when the time for meeting comes ; they are the spokesmen for the people in the affairs of the church ; they are the right-hand men of the missionary in church and village ; they are the councillors in matters of difficulty and the advisers in disputes ; hunters and fishermen, all of them, they are an example respected of all. And there are women chapel servants too, quietly and meekly helping in the tidying of the church, and going to and fro as workers among the women and girls. And their

reward? Of payment none. To them it is enough that they are honoured by being chosen to serve the house of God, and with willingness and a cheerful mind they carry out their allotted task. Such are the chapel servants.

I was in church again for the closing meeting of the day. Another man was at the door, and the oldest chapel servant was behind the table, reading in his high-pitched voice the words of the hymn he had chosen to begin the worship. A fine old figure of a man, this. Though his day as a hunter was done, there was a hint of bygone power and prowess in eye and arm and shoulder. He had been a mighty hunter, and the boys of the village still whispered tales of his doings as he passed by them at their play.

There was a great dignity in the rugged face and the mass of hair now almost white; there was a great simplicity in the quiet, aged voice, and in the homely native smock of snow-white calico; there was a great and touching earnestness in the everyday words of the old man's prayer.

"Yes, Thou hast been my Father for many years, certainly a great many years—oh, how thankful!—yes, and I have been a weak child. Thou hast forgiven, for the sake of Jesus; Thou knowest that I am weak. And these little ones here, these boys, these girls, Thou art their Father; let Thy words come into their hearts, that they may grow up loving Jesus and serving God their Father. Yes, how thankful we all are for daily food; Thou

givest everything. And we are met at the end of the day to thank our Father. Care for us through the stormy night. Let the wind grow less that the edge of the ice may be safe and the hunters prosper. Let us not forget that Thou art watching over us, day and night, giving us food and clothing and leting us sleep in safety. Go with us to our homes and live among us there, for we are weak, and we do wrong so easily. Oh, how thankful we are, for the sake of Jesus, Who died for us all.''

The old man's gentle, quavering voice was lost in the murmur of many voices, as we joined with him in saying the Lord's Prayer. Missionaries and hunters, and buxom Eskimo mothers gently swaying their little ones in their hoods, and tiny children lisping out the long words that they had lately learnt in school, all of us together, we prayed to God and sang our evening hymn ; then at the words of benediction, spoken in the same quiet, shaking voice, we took our books and made our way homeward.

As I climbed the steps to the hospital the oldest chapel servant passed along the path below. His hood was pulled low over his forehead, his shoulders were bowed, and his smock drawn tightly round him for the piercing, whirling wind ; he plodded steadily on, sure-footed in the deepening snow that lay upon the slippery path, and I watched him pass out of my sight in the drift and the gathering darkness, going home to his supper of seal-meat.

It was summer-time. In the calm of the evening

a boat came beating into the bay—some fisher, I thought, home with his catch. With a last long tack it came beside the jetty, and I recognised the men from the camping ground where old Abia had his tent. I watched the steps for the old man's coming, but instead of the figure that I knew so well it was a limp and tragic blanket bundle that I saw, borne gently from the boat by four others from the fishing place; and as I watched the little group come up the pier, silent and slow, I knew that our oldest chapel servant was gone. And as I spoke to them they told me of his going; how he had passed away, as many old Eskimos do, working to the last, and falling asleep like a tired child, and with a child's trust in the love of the Father in heaven.

We shall miss the familiar figure of the old man passing to and fro amongst us; we shall miss the kindly, rugged face and the mop of snowy hair; we shall miss the quiet voice that never tired of speaking of the love of God.

As the missionary said at the meeting that night in the church, old Abia had served God with a whole heart for more years than he could remember. Here was a true Eskimo, a mighty hunter in his day, and a thorough Christian all the time; and such men as this are a living proof of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOME

THE tourists have been telling me that our village is a pretty place. And they are right.

It lies at the head of a little bay, nestling at the foot of the steep hills that make a half circle around. The tops of the hills are patched with snow, and the grey slopes are splashed with green, with here and there the colour of wild flowers. The trim white mission house and church, the long line of grey huts at the water's edge, the jetty, in spite of the way in which the freezing sea has bent it and heaved it out of shape—all these are very pleasing to the eye, and especially to the eye tired with much travelling. There are leaden days, when the sea is sullen and the air is bleak with rain, when the water drips from the corners of the huts and the village path is slippery with mire ; but I am pleased when the tourists come on a fine day, with a bright blue sky and a sparkling sea, so that they may carry away a happy memory of this simple little settlement.

The main "street" of the village winds along the water line. There is only a narrow path between the houses and the sea, and the tides wash the very doorsteps when the weather is rough. If you walk along the path you have the idea that some of the huts have been trying to elbow their way to the front between their neighbours, so close packed

they are, and so near are some of the disappointed ones that stand behind. It means much to an Eskimo to live on the front line. At high tide his boat can come to the door and save him much weary carrying; and in winter-time there is no hill up which his dogs must toil, for that great broad road from north to south, the frozen sea, lies flat before him.

The huts on the hillside seem a little more aloof; they have more room; they stand in solitary ones and twos; but then they get the full brunt of the storms, and are buried to the chimney-pipes in snow when winter comes. And so there is keen competition for the places on the sea front, and huts there are handed down from one generation to the next.

I thought that young Jako had come into good fortune one day, for as I walked one wintry day along the path between the houses and the beach I came upon him chopping wood. I stopped to pass the time of day and to ask about the hunting, for this young man was one of the handiest with the skin canoe and the long harpoon. And as he told me of the seals and the walrus, he went on chopping wood. I saw other men a-chopping, for this was winter weather. As he paused to roll another log beneath his foot, I could hear the sound of axes echoing among the huts; the men were chopping firewood for their stoves. And then it dawned upon me.

"My friend," I said, "surely this is not your house; you used to live upon the hillside. Have you moved and come to live upon the sea front?"

"No, no," he said, and laughed; "no, no, I have not moved. I still live up there"—and he waved his hand towards the slope of the hill.

"Then why——" said I.

He looked at me. "Well," he said, and pointed to the tumbledown hut half covered in snow, "Old Henrietta lives in this hut—and old Henrietta is a widow." And he fell to his chopping again.

But to come back to the tourists and the mail boat.

Our village is a pretty place, but whether the day be bright or dull, in sun and rain and snow and sleet alike, the Eskimos love their village; they love their barren frozen land. However pretty the village may look to the eyes of a traveller, the fact remains; there are no crops, no flocks in Labrador. But never mind; Labrador is the home of the Eskimos, and seems to be their chosen land.

I was watching the mail steamer get up her anchor, after one of her rare visits. The tourists had gone, the gangway steps were hoisted up, and there was a clanging of bells as the ship slowly turned her nose to the open.

But a little knot of folk still stood upon the jetty; and I saw people go carrying things. A man walked after the rest, and turned along the path towards me. He wore a blue suit, a straw hat, a collar and tie; and yet, as he came towards me there was something about the build of his figure, something in the lithe carriage and the square face, that made me say to myself: "This is an Eskimo; in spite of his clothes he is one of the People."

He drew nearer, and there was no mistaking the face, with its brown eyes and high cheek-bones; he was an Eskimo.

"Good-morning," said he; and "Aksunai," said I, giving him the fine old Eskimo greeting. His face lit up at the sound of it, and "Ahaila," he answered in proper Eskimo style; then we fell to chatting.

There we stood upon the stony path and talked, and I found myself listening to as strange a tale of wanderings as I have ever heard. First he spoke in English, for it seemed his native tongue was half-forgotten; but soon he fell back on Eskimo, speaking the words with a queer half-foreign accent.

"I was born in this village of Okak," said he; "maybe you knew my father; his name was Samuel. No? Well, they tell me he has been dead these many years, and I shall see his grave in God's garden. I went away on a ship when I was a young man, for I would see the world, and I had heard of much money to be earned. For many years I have sailed in ships, always working, and sometimes doing work on land. I have been to New York and London and Madrid and the towns of South America, and the cities are very fine, and the people are a great multitude. But I was always thinking of Labrador; and I was alone. Now I have come home, and I am thankful. Yes, the world is very great and the cities are very wonderful, but Labrador is the best land of all."

He gazed about him with a wistful smile on his bronzed face; he feasted his eyes once more upon

the bare scenery of his childhood—the circle of bleak hills, all sprinkled with snow ; the grey water and the stony beach ; the wooden huts on the hillside, so different from the tall buildings he had seen.

"Yes," he said—"yes, I have come home."

And so it was. This pathetic wanderer, this man on the verge of middle age, he had felt the call of his native land and had come home. His parents were dead, the playmates of his boyhood had grown to middle age like himself, but the call of home had gripped him. And so he settled down among the Okak folk ; he found food and shelter in their hospitable homes. With a smile upon his face he sat polishing his gun ; he bound his new harpoon with thongs ; he learnt to hunt again. In spite of all that he had tasted of civilised cookery during the years of his wanderings, the flavour of raw seal-meat was still pleasant to his palate. At heart he was an Eskimo. He made his way once more to the church where he had sat as a little child, and took his place humbly among the others. He drank in eagerly the Word of God. How long since he had heard it in his own tongue ! He sang again the old familiar hymns ; indeed, he was at home. Soon he married a sensible Eskimo girl, and the two of them set up their housekeeping in a little wooden hut that his own hands had built. And such is the story of a wanderer.

It seems a pity to end up these chronicles of our village on a note of sadness, but so it must be.

Since the days when I dwelt among these kindly

folk, and travelled and camped with them and had the freedom of their homes, first the measles, and then the dreaded influenza, has taken its heavy toll. Little John (the wonderful pathfinder and driver of sledges), Jako and Kornelius, Juliana, Ernestina, and the others that are named in these pages—they are gone, and the village is well-nigh forsaken. But perhaps it will come into its own again—who knows? I hear of families going back, because the hunting is so good; and maybe in days to come we shall see again the little children playing by the brook and the women trampling at their washing.

But to me the village will always live. The people there have left upon my mind a memory of kindliness that years cannot wipe out; and if I have given the reader the same impression of a hospitable, good-natured, easy-going folk, facing life with a smile, then I have given what I feel to be a true picture of those friends of mine, the Eskimos.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
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