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IN LONELY LABRADOR.

An Unknown Country with A Fringe of Civilization.

Labrador is a country but little known, located somewhere in the far North, but exactly where most people have but little idea. If we follow the seacoast from the Gulf of St. Lawrence about 1,000 miles to Hudson's Strait we have seen the best part of Labrador, for it is only a line, a strip of land bordering the ocean. It is true Labrador nominally extends some distance inland, but how far no one knows. When the Hudson Bay Co. was formed to hunt and trade with the natives around that great inland sea their charter granted them privileges on all streams running into the bay from the east as well as from the west. The western boundary of Labrador is therefore at the head waters of these streams, but as the interior is as unknown as the centre of Africa the line is of necessity very indefinite.

Labrador is a dependency of Great Britain, and has never had a separate government. It was at first under the jurisdiction of Canada, then of Newfoundland, then of Quebec, and since 1809 it has been the ward of Newfoundland. The interior is said to be an impenetrable wilderness of swamps and forests of a stunted growth, but its shores abound with fish remarkable for their number and flavour, which are a source of great revenue. Did it ever occur to the reader that, while we are sending exploring expeditions to the uttermost parts of the earth, a large part of North America is wholly unknown; that over a great part of the country lying north of Canada and extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, no white man has ever wandered?

Last month the newspapers reported the discovery by the Geological Survey of a river 500 miles long and averaging two miles in width, emptying into the James Bay, and last summer a noted scientist of Pittsburg, with a map of the northlands before him, asked my opinion of an expedition to the unexplored region between the James Bay and Montreal, only a few miles beyond the borders of civilization.

Labrador may be said to lie between the fiftieth and sixtieth degrees of north latitude. The British Isles are within the same degrees but what a contrast! One a cold, bleak, uninhabitable coast; the other with a pleasant climate, with large and prosperous cities, and undoubtedly one of the most powerful nations on the face of the globe. Each is acted upon by a great river in the ocean, which materially affects the land near which it passes. The gulf stream brings warm water from the tropics, raising the temperature of Western Europe, while on the opposite side of the Atlantic an ice stream from the Arctic Ocean flows along the coast, cooling the land and enveloping it in fogs. The prevailing winds of the British Isles and of Labrador are from the same direction. Warmed by the ocean, they reach the former; cooled by the frozen land, they chill the latter, making the contrast even more striking. In the summer of 1894 the writer spent nearly two weeks on the coast of Southern Labrador, landing at many places and passing a few miles inland. The coast of Labrador and Greenland, when seen at the distance of a few miles at sea, presents striking contrasts. Each shows an abrupt shore with projecting headlands and indented with fjords; but the former has no glaciers, its rocks are not as steep, and the height of its coast line is uniformly from 200 to 500 feet from the water, while the shores of Greenland are nearly perpendicular, and the height of the rocky peaks near the coast varies from a few hundred to a few thousand feet.

The whole coast of Labrador is fringed with barren islands of naked rock, while between them and the shore are deep and wide waterways. Laurentian slates and shales seem to form the framework of the coast. They are much bent, showing enormous anticlines and synclines as the perpendicular cliffs are viewed at a little distance from the shore. Ofttimes great layers of quartz and felspar were interbedded between the sandstones and slates, or gathered in masses a dozen or more feet in diameter, the snow-white colour strikingly contrasting with the general dark colour of the adjoining rocks. Frequently great masses of granite and gneiss were seen interspersed with the sandstone and shale, and in some places basalt and trap had been injected in great quantities completely covering the bedrock. This

was particularly the case at Henley harbour. When miles at sea we saw the long cliffs of basalt. One by its peculiarity of position was quite conspicuous, and for some good reason, I suppose, was called the Devil's Dining Table. These cliffs which surround the harbour were about 300 feet in height, with very abrupt sides and nearly level tops. We found many groups of basaltic columns standing erect twenty feet in height, nearly as perfect as those of the Giant's Causeway in Ireland. With difficulty we reached the tops of these cliffs and scanned their surface for miles. They were much cracked by the winter's frost, strewed with large angular blocks of granite, schist, and other foreign material, and well grooved and scratched. At the base of one set of cliffs we found four distinct lines of sea beaches, which were of particular interest, as the boulders of each beach differed from the boulders of other beaches in size, form, and general appearance.

The whole coast is grand and impressive presenting miles and miles of perpendicular rock "split and blasted" by frost and beaten by the waves. Nowhere did we see "grand mountains of Labradorite," though we found isolated masses of this beautiful mineral. A short distance from the shore were many small ponds and countless erratics were seen in every direction. No wonder Lief in 990 called it Helluland, or the land of stones.

The flora of Southern Labrador is of special interest, as it is a commingling of Arctic and sub-Arctic plants. Our botanists were very active, and gathered several thousand specimens, which they dried, pressed, and packed, and a month after saw them descend to the bottom of the ocean. No trees grow on the coast, but small shrubs, mosses, and flowers are in abundance. The wild flowers are of the most delicate colours, the mosses of many hues, and in damp places form a carpet a foot or more in thickness.

At Punch Bowl Harbour I dined with a fisherman. The dinner was not particularly to my liking, though he gave me the best he had, but there I saw for the first time the gorgeous baked apple. This berry is indigenous to Labrador, and found nowhere else except as a few scattering plants in Canada and Newfoundland. Those served at our table were half an inch in diameter, golden yellow in colour slightly acid, and quite juicy.

The permanent settlements are few and small. The residents of Southern Labrador are mostly French and British Canadians, while the Eskimos live farther north. On our boat we had six natives returning from the World's Fair to their home at Cape Chudleigh. They were dressed in civilized costume, though they had their pelts, sledges, etc., with them. They longed to be at home, seeming to prefer their land to ours. The villages along the coast are located in cover sheltered from the wind, and consist generally of eight or ten dwelling-houses and a dozen sheds, where the fish are prepared for market. Owing to the steep shore the houses are very often supported by props in front, and reached by steps. The houses are primitive structures, made of stone and wood, and often covered with sods, which in summer produce a veritable roof garden. Their dwellings were quite clean, and in some of them rude attempts at comfort had been made, but in the vicinity of the curing-houses there were many ancient and fish-like smells. As 25,000 fishermen from Newfoundland and Canada visit these shores, sometimes bringing their wives and children, the permanent inhabitants do not lack for company during the busy season. Vessels of different capacity and at varying distance from the shore are constantly in view, the small, ugly boats of the natives with their low masts and heavy, dirty sails, presenting a striking contrast to the beautiful, well-rigged craft of the stranger.

In Labrador we saw a great number of dogs—some Eskimo and some Newfoundland—which are used in winter for drawing burdens over the ice up the bays and along the shore. In Greenland we saw very few dogs, as the fjords are open for kayakers during the winter, and the country is too rough for overland travel. North of the Arctic Circle, where the winters are longer and more severe, dogs are said to be a necessity.

Battle Harbour is the largest town on the coast. It is compactly built on a small island and separated from Great Caribou island by a wide and deep channel, which affords an excellent harbour for the largest vessels that visit this coast. It contains fifteen dwellings, a church, a school-house, a store, a marine hospital, and a dozen fish-houses. The hospital contained a dozen beds, was scrupulously clean, and provided with an English doctor and two trained nurses from England. The Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen is doing a splendid work, not only in providing free treatment to disabled fishermen in its hospitals at Battle Harbour and at the mouth of Hamilton inlet, but also in supplying religious instruction to the fishing fleets. Twice a month a steamer runs between Newfoundland and Battle Harbour and twice a month another large and powerful vessel ploughs through the flow-ice and dodges the icebergs on its way to Cape Chudleigh.

The northern trip is a particularly dangerous one, as it is in opposition to the Arctic current, which sometimes prevents the vessel from accomplishing half its jour-

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ney. The number of icebergs brought down by the Arctic current seems almost incredible. One of our party undertook to count the number of icebergs seen while moving in this stream, and he reported 150 between 6 a. m. and 8 p. m. One morning I counted 58 icebergs in sight from a highland on shore, and Prof. Dycke from another point counted 72. One day we entered St. Charles harbour by a narrow channel between two islands. The next day an enormous berg floated in, completely blocking the channel and cutting off all hope of escape. Two days after a stiff breeze arose from the right direction, and with joy we saw our iceberg sail away.

Judging from appearances, the residents of Labrador are quite religious. In every settlement we visited we found a public place of worship, not a churchly building with a steeple and furnished with all the accessories found in other lands; but a plain building conforming to its surroundings. In every case but one the interior was neat and clean, and generally a few home-made rugs lay around the chancel and communion table. Two of the churches I found belonged to the Methodists, but the English Church predominated. The church services are usually conducted by a lay reader, the missionary appearing about three times a year and the bishop once for confirmation. In every house I entered I found a Bible and usually one or two religious works.

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