



Grenfell of Labrador: A Biography

Ronald Rompkey

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When British doctor Wilfred Grenfell arrived in Newfoundland in 1892 to provide medical service to migrant fisherman, he had no clear sense of who his patients were or how they lived - a few weeks on the Labrador coast changed that. Struck by both the rugged beauty of the place and the difficulties faced by those who lived there, Grenfell devoted the rest of his life to improving theirs.

At first an evangelical missionary of the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fisherman, Grenfell became part of philanthropic movements on both sides of the Atlantic. Raising funds in Canada and the United States, he founded a network of hospitals, nursing stations, schools, and home industries that exists in a modified form to this day. In 1908, the story of his survival after a night marooned on a drifting patch of ice transformed him into a popular hero. He eventually became one of the most successful lecturers of his time.

Ronald Rompkey tells the story of Grenfell's education, his Anglo-Saxonism, and his devotion to broader issues of hygiene and public health. Above all, Rompkey shows that Grenfell went beyond being a doctor or a missionary to become a cultural politician who intervened in a colonial culture. Grenfell of Labrador provides a vivid picture of the man himself and the social movements through which he worked.

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