

# ROYCE MAURICE

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## Writings of my Grandfather: ROYCE MAURICE

A Glimpse into the life of  
OUR HERO  
Sir Wilfred Grenfell.

Labrador situated on the East coast of Canada is a bleak, frozen country where blizzards constantly rage making travelling both difficult and dangerous for those who venture forth in winter. This is the little corner in our great Empire chosen by our hero Sir Wilfred Grenfell to carry his good work of teaching the word of God as well as caring for the sick and suffering.

When returning to the hospital from church on Easter Sunday morning 21 April 1908 Sir Wilfred was startled by seeing a boy come racing across the snow. He ran up to Sir Wilfred and gasped out that some men had arrived from a 60 mile sleigh trip and wanted him to return with them as a man was gravely ill and may die.

Our hero lost no time and immediately harnessed his dogs to a sleigh. As Sir Wilfred had the stronger team he soon drew away from the other team and by the end of the day was approximately 20 miles ahead.

The following day Sir Wilfred gave the other men with their team 2 hours start, agreeing to meet them at a small village on the bank of a large river which our hero had to cross. Unluckily the wind started to blow from the sea and the first rain of the season fell and the ice began to melt and break. Suddenly Sir Wilfred discovered that he was adrift on an island of ice. He did not give way to fear but calmly surveyed the situation, and on seeing a larger island some few yards distant made that his objective. He unharnessed the dogs and tying the traces of the leader around his right wrist plunged into the ice-cold water with his dogs and all reached the island safely with the exception of one unfortunate dog which drowned. He grieved the loss of this dog, as a dog means much to a man travelling in these lonely lands where they are the only means of transport for so many months of the year but Sir Wilfred could not dwell on the loss of this dog for long as he had other things to think about.

He make a hasty inspection of this island to find that it was not as solid ice but only snow and may break up any moment. He made up his mind that he must as soon as possible get off that island and reach a safe one. Calling his little black spaniel a very intelligent dog to him he threw a piece of ice on to a much smaller island but safer looking. The brave spaniel seeing what was wanted of him dived into the water and safely reached the island where it lay exhausted on the ice. The other dogs seeing the spaniel reach safety they too dived in and also reached the island and Sir Wilfred followed but to his dismay found that he had left his coat, cap and gloves in fact everything that means warmth and comfort including flask, matches and wood behind him. He cut up his boots to put across his back to protect him from freezing and killed three of his beloved dogs to have their skins for a coat.

As night was coming on. He forced the biggest one of the few remaining dogs to lie down while Sir Wilfred lay as close as possible against it to keep himself warm and in this position he went to sleep. Sir Wilfred woke up at midnight to find the moon just rising and the ice-floe that was his temporary home drifting quickly towards the open sea. This stout hearted man did not get afraid but prayed and as he prayed, the words of a beautiful old hymn came again and again into his mind. These are the words.

My God, my father while I stray  
Far from my home on life's rough way  
Oh teach me from my heart to say  
Thy will be done.

It seems his prayer was heard as the wind changed and there was a dead calm. Our hero trusting in his Great Father in Heaven to keep him safe lay down again and slept for a short time. By this time another day was breaking and Sir Wilfred cut the legs off the dead dogs and tied them together to make a pole he next took of his shirt and tied it to one end of the pole and commenced waving it as a flag and all the time he waved it he prayed and the words of that hymn kept coming into his mind especially the last line.

"Thy will be done."

It seemed that he would be waving the flag forever without hope of anyone seeing him. Suddenly he saw something back among the ice-floes and it seemed to move and come closer. To Sir Wilfred's relief it was a boat with some fishermen in it. They were overjoyed to find their beloved doctor alive and well. They hoisted Sir Wilfred and his faithful dogs into the boat and when they reached shore a great cheer was heard from the people clustered there. These people on hearing earlier in the day of a person having been seen on an ice-floe fearing that it may be this man they all loved so well and who loved them all had gathered there to welcome him as he was brought ashore. They now all rushed to shake his hand, the hands that were so cruelly frost-bitten. He was so taken home and placed in a nice cosy bed. Just as he was dropping off to sleep he may have been heard to say

**THY WILL BE DONE.**

In the hall of the hospital to this day stands a Tablet with these words engraved on it.

**'To the  
memory  
of three noble  
dogs whose lives were  
given for mine'**

Written by Royce Maurice, 49 Hill St, Onehunga. S.E.5  
Age 12 years.