

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT.

middle of August. Met a little ice about a day and a half sail after entering the Straits. We were not detained by it, although in consequence of a head wind we had to tack through it. We also met ice at N.E. end of Mansfield Island, and were detained for two hours by the wind failing us; when the tide set out the ice opened and we got through without difficulty. This was somewhere about 1st August. Kept no record and quote from memory. Saw no icebergs. The ice was pretty well broken and rotted at the time we passed through. Was whaling in Davis' Straits in 1867. Reached Davis' Straits in April. The vessel I was in was the "Wildfire," of Dundee, a propeller of about 600 tons burthen. We were seven months and three days on voyage; our trip back only occupied about eight days. Was not in sight of Hudson's Strait going or returning. We had no difficulty or delay in ice on our outward voyage, and only six days detention on our homeward voyage. Were jammed in by ice closing around us when going about half-steam in a sound, through which there was a narrow channel of open water. There were four or five vessels ahead of us, which all got through, but the one immediately ahead was very slow and blocked us.

Our rule was in going through ice, if it was in large floes to pass round it, sometimes anchoring until the pack opened,—if loose pack ice we ran right through it. We did not turn out of our course for any ordinary ice. Did not meet very much ice in going up Davis' Straits and when we returned we found no loose ice at all except in the sound where we were detained. Saw about 20 or 30 icebergs but we could always keep clear of them. When going up the Straits we encountered a strip of ice that seemed fast at both ends and was about 300 yards in width. There were eight steamers in our fleet; while the others made fast to the ice the largest vessel backed up and ran at the ice at full steam, shutting off steam just as it reached the ice. Her bows were forced up on the ice by the impetus and her weight broke a channel through. Think the ice was about six feet thick.

The mate of the "Lady Head" told me that the captains of Hudson's Bay vessels would not go out of their usual tack, even if they sighted open water in other channels if they had no charts of them. I saw no fog during my passage through the Straits and Bay. The conditions for producing fog do not exist in those waters. When in the ice we were detained a short time by the vapor from the ice. From my knowledge and from what I have heard from experienced persons, I think the navigation of Hudson's Straits and Bay is open to ordinary vessels for four months certainly, and in most years five months in every season.

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