

CLIMATES AND OUR WINTERS.

CLIMATE OF NEWFOUNDLAND.

As there are nearly five degrees of latitude between the southern and northern extremities of Newfoundland, there is of course a considerable difference in the severity and duration of the winter. The climate of Conception Bay, which is on the south coast, and to the eastward of St. John's, the capital of the colony, is considered to afford what may be deemed the mean temperature of the island. The weather there, although severe, is less fierce than in Lower Canada, and during winter the extraordinary brilliancy of the Aurora Borealis, and the splendid lustre of the moon and stars, give a rare and peculiar beauty to the atmosphere.

The eastern coast of Newfoundland is much more humid than the western, owing to the heavy fogs which are driven in from the "Grand Bank"; and it is also more subject to violent gales and storms, owing to its exposed position. On the west coast from Cape Ray to the north, and in the interior, the atmosphere is generally clear, and the climate is much the same as that of the district of Gaspé, in Lower Canada.

St. John's, Nfld., March 14.

The 10th of March is the date fixed by law as the earliest day for steamers to start for the icefields in pursuit of the seals. Sailing vessels are allowed to leave on the 1st March. This year has witnessed not only the heaviest snow-falls for the last thirty or forty years, but also the heaviest blockade of the coasts by ice which "the oldest inhabitant" can remember. The ice began to show itself about the middle of February. Easterly winds, blowing incessantly, forced it into all the bays and harbors, filling them up with heavy field ice, so that in many instances, arms of the sea, from twelve to fifteen miles in width, could be crossed safely by sleighs. The whole coast was completely beset and all vessels held in icy chains in the harbors. The ocean disappeared; and looking seaward the eye beheld one vast glittering field of ice, still as death, dazzlingly white, studded with icebergs (a most unusual occurrence so early in the season) and full of hummocks. At certain points along the coast, where the headlands projected, there were huge "jams" of ice—the pressure from behind piled sheet on sheet, till it rose thirty or forty feet. The scene from Signal Hill was marvellous, when a bright sun was shining. Far as the eye could reach, not a line of water could be seen—not a single sail—only hundreds of icebergs of all shapes and sizes, some of most fantastic form, all locked fast in a vast field of ice extending 200 miles from the shore, the rugged surface on which the snow had fallen, glittering with a dazzling brightness:

"And through the drifts the snowy cliffs
Did send a dismal shcen;
No shapes of men or beast we ken—
The ice was all between.

"The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a sround."

To all appearance the ice and the enclosed bergs were perfectly still, but this was a deception. Except where it clung to the shore, or was caught by the headlands, the ice was moving southward, in slow stately march, at the rate of a mile an hour, and every day presented a new panorama—new icebergs and a complete change of scenery—but the gloaming procession never came to an end. This year there must have been an unusual production of ice in the Arctic regions, and through the gateway of Davis' Strait, pours the southern current deeply laden with the mighty ice-argosy.

The grim north-easter continued to blow relentlessly. The six powerful Dundee sealing

steamers, making for our harbour, in order to get their crews and provisions on board, were caught in the pack, but bravely forced their way through till they got sight of the coast. Then they were caught in the running ice and carried away past the harbour, fast locked in the embrace of the ice and utterly powerless. It seemed as if nature had determined, this year, to protect the white coated darlings, the young seals from the deadly approach of the hunters. The time was getting critical—the 10th of March, the day for the start, was approaching, and there was no sign of change. From Cape Race to Cape John, the whole coast was beset with ice. But on the 7th the clouds began to gather in the south-west, and the grim nor'easter died away. The welcome sou'wester gathered courage and strength, and every one felt inclined to say with King Lear,

"Blow wind and crack your cheeks."

Higher and higher rose the gale; and under its pressure the mighty ice-field began to bend and sway off from the shore. Soon a narrow streak of dark water formed along the shore—a most welcome sight—gradually it widened until eight or ten miles of water severed the shore and the ice-field. The icy chains around the steamers were loosened, and one after the other they got into the open water and approached the harbour's mouth. There a great ice barrier obstructed their path, but the Arctic, Aurora, Narwhal and Thetis charged it boldly, each drawing back for a quarter of a mile, and in turn dashing at the ice-mass, rending and tearing it asunder, and thus slowly cleaving a path, after hours of labor, to their wharves. I should have mentioned by a lucky turn, the Esquimaux, one of the Dundee fleet, had managed to get in before the ice closed up so fast; but less fortunate was the Resolute. She was beset at the mouth of Conception Bay—a huge "raft" of ice having formed around her—and she has not yet got clear. Contrary to all expectation, when the 10th of March came, the ice in the harbor was broken by lanes of water and all of the sealing fleet that were ready got their crews on board and started. The Esquimaux led the way; the Merlin, Nimrod, Hector, Bear Wolf soon followed, and boldly dashed out into the ice-fields on the 10th. The other Dundee steamers were meantime getting coal and stores on board and shipping their crews. All this was done in a little over 24 hours, and at noon on the 11th they too steamed out. The others had gained an advantage, for the pertinacious northeastern had again set in, driven the ice once more near the shore and so barred the way northward, in which direction are the "seal meadows." On Monday the 13th the whole fleet were visible off the harbor fast in the ice which had again closed in. No change has yet taken place, and therefore the prospects are discouraging. The hope now is that a great gale from the southwest may come and break up the ice, liberate the steamers and enable them to go north. It is thought the seals cannot be far off this year, as the winds have been driving them in shore; so that a lucky chance may send the vessels right into the midst of them. But things are getting critical, the time for the seal hunt is brief, for after the 1st of April the young take to the water.

The steamers Greenland and Iceland, now owned by Messrs. John Munn & Co., Harbour Grace, have been here for some time getting new boilers. They were unable to return to Harbour Grace owing to the ice, and will have to fit out here. No steamers can at present get out of Harbour Grace. All now turns on the weather. If Vennor's predicted big storm on the 18th comes from the southward we will welcome it, for it would be worth gold to our bold seal hunters, and if it "blow great guns" all the better.—*Corr. Mont. Gazette.*

THE CLIMATE OF COLORADO.

(To the Editor of the Witness.)

Sir,—Seeing in the *Witness* some notes of a tour through the South, I thought you might be interested to know how the Western climate compares with the balmy winters of the "Sunny South." For the last four or five weeks we have had delightful weather almost continuously, only three or four days of high winds from the mountains breaking the pleasant monotony of sunny days and bright frosty nights. To day is one of those "perfect days" of which poets sing and for which washerwomen sigh—sunrise this morning was a perfect panorama of glowing clouds, fit emblem to many heavy hearts of a bright and happy new year after days of clouds and tears. The thermometer stood at 36 degrees at 7 a.m. and at 2 o'clock was 68 in the shade and 90 in the sunshine.

So far this has been a charming winter, especially pleasant for invalids, as any one able to walk could go out almost every day. I wonder more do not come here instead of going to Southern resorts; so far as I can learn from invalids who have been in the South this is far the best climate, and the accommodations are much superior. The air is so pure and dry, balmy yet bracing, that it seems to give new life and vigor to languishing consumptives, and some wonderful cures have been accomplished by residence here, especially so in the case of patients suffering from hemorrhage of the lungs. We have the finest water that I ever saw or tasted, not excepting Loch Katrine's famous supply, which every Glasgow man thinks the best in the world, pure as crystal, cold as ice, direct from the mountain springs on Pike's Peak, and with a natural pressure throwing a stream fifty feet in the air from any service pipe. This place has improved wonderfully since I was here last year. There are some elegant stores in which the finest quality of goods are sold; we have gas, water and the telephone, and a very substantial class of dwelling houses superseding the old style of frame buildings. You may not be aware that this town was founded on the prohibition plan. All the land was owned originally by the Colorado Springs Company, and a binding condition in every sale or lease was that no liquor could be made or sold on the premises. This has been isolated in some cases, and the Company seized the properties and by decision of the United States Supreme Court held and resold them, giving a valid title to the second purchasers. The only way to get liquor here is to purchase it by the bottle at a druggist's, as there is not a bar-room in the place, yet I notice there is a great deal sold for "medicinal purposes." There are numerous fine drives around here and places of fascinating interest to the lover of nature, botanist or geologist. The scenery is varied at every point of the compass, east and north there is an undulating plain over which we have magnificent sunrise views. West and south the barren sides and snowy cap of Pike's Peak, with the rugged slopes of Cheyenne Mountain, form a picture of everchanging beauty in the bright sunlight or under the cold rays of this wintry starlight.

I spent a short time a few weeks ago at Silver Cliff, a mining town in the Wet Mountain Valley district and from the hills above the town had a splendid view of Wet Mountain and the group known as the "Sangre de Cristo" range, which with its white glistening hills and deep gorges with icy torrents rushing down between, rivals the Alps in scenic grandeur. This is destined to be a great resort in summer, and now that railway communication has opened it up no doubt will become popular with the travelling public. I hear you have had a very damp and changeable winter. One would hardly know that winter was passing were it not for the Christmas displays at the shops and the ladies'