

### Hudson's Bay Expedition.

Mr. James Fisher, M. P. P., having returned Tuesday by the Northern Pacific railway from his trip to Hudson's Straits and Hudson's Bay, a Free Press reporter waited on him early in the afternoon. He was found already at his desk in his office, but, though busy, he was quite willing to enter into conversation respecting his summer expedition, and to give any information which would not involve the discredit of publishing what his official position required that he should first report to the provincial government.

"I suppose," said the reporter, "we may say that you enjoyed the trip to the north."

"Yes," replied Mr. Fisher, "it was a most enjoyable, as well as a most interesting voyage."

Asked as to the length of time they were on the *Diana*, Mr. Fisher said they sailed from Halifax on the 3rd of June, and up till their return to Halifax on the 7th of November they were never of the ship for a single night.

"Perhaps," said the reporter, "you would be willing to make a statement as to the objects of the expedition, and as to the general results."

To this Mr. Fisher replied, substantially, as follows: "As to the objects of the expedition, I fancy these are pretty well known to the public. In the first place, and mainly, the expedition was undertaken with the view of ascertaining more fully the conditions of the ice in Hudson's Straits, especially in the month of June, and in the fall season. In the second place, the commander, who has for many years been the chief officer of the fisheries department in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, was instructed to examine into the character and value of the fisheries of Hudson's Bay. It was on the question of the ice conditions that I was to report."

"As to the results of the expedition, in so far as that question is concerned," Mr. Fisher went on to say, "I have the feeling that until I make my report to the government of the province, I ought to confine any remarks in the meantime to a statement of actual facts upon any question put to me, without offering any opinion as to the probable length of the period of navigation. It is probably known already to the readers of your paper that we were beset a considerable time in the ice on the Labrador coast, before reaching the entrance to Hudson's Straits. It is known also that we entered the Straits on 22nd June. I may say that at the entrance and for some distance up the Straits there was practically no ice. We steamed in somewhat about 150 miles without meeting ice, except such as a strong ship like the *'Diana'* could pass through without difficulty. On the 23rd in the afternoon we came up to the close pack of heavy drift ice, and we cruised up and down in front of the pack that evening and I think all next day looking for an opening through it. Finding none it was determined—I think this was on the morning of 25th June—to enter the pack and endeavor to force a passage through it. This was found impossible after we once got into it, and we were closely beset in it from that time until about the 10th of July. For the greater part of that time the ship was absolutely held fast, so as to make progress wholly impossible. At times, under the influence of the outgoing tide the ice slackened a little and we steamed on

for a short time. But on such occasions very little progress was made. Up to the 10th of July we had, it is true, made some progress inwards in our course through the Straits. Perhaps we had made 70 or 80 miles altogether, but much the greater part of this progress had been made not under steam, but by a current that was carrying the ice and the ship imbedded in it up the Straits to the Northwest."

"Is there, then, a natural current of this kind always found in the Straits?"

"Certainly we found such a current," said Mr. Fisher, "and there is apparently evidence that usually it is found there. That is, there appears to be a natural current of more or less strength going inwards on the north side of the Straits and outwards on the south side. But it must be understood that this current is greatly affected by the winds, and it is also very considerably affected by the tides. For instance, a south-east wind, which then happened to prevail, had the effect of intensifying the inward current, and at the same time of tightening the ice. Again, the tide, which is very high there, rising and falling about 30 feet, had its effect. The ingoing tide increased the current and tightened the ice. The outgoing tide tended to loosen it a little, and occasionally, under the influence of that tide, we actually drifted back a little, but on the whole the drift of the ship during its imprisonment in the ice was inwards, and towards the north shore."

"Then the conditions, I suppose, had changed before you were released?" suggested the reporter.

"Exactly so," replied Mr. Fisher; "the wind had, if I remember right, changed to westerly or north-westerly, causing the ice to spread abroad, leaving it, of course, much looser. I think it was on the 10th of July we were first able to make any real progress through it. On the 11th, I think, it was, we got clear of the pack, and on the 12th we passed through the Straits into Hudson's Bay."

"As already stated in the columns of the Free Press, we made the return passage through the Straits with the least possible delay, making only the necessary halts to land the members of the geological party who had gone up with us to the Straits. As soon as we completed the return passage through the Straits we turned in at once to make another passage, and return, and we completed the fourth passage—that is two each way—on the night of July 27."

"Was the ship held fast in the ice at any time after the first trip inwards?"

"No; we were not held fast in any of these later passages. We certainly saw much ice at times, in fact every day it was in sight and around us, and sometimes it was heavy, thick ice, but generally quite loose so that we had no difficulty in passing through it. Of course it was necessary at times to slow down in speed, but practically the ice was not such as to be a serious obstacle to the progress of the *'Diana'*."

"Perhaps I ought to say that in our first return passage through the Straits we attempted to reach the coast of Baffin's Land near the entrance of the channel where Dr. Bell was desirous of landing with his party. But on approaching the east end of Salisbury Island, on the 15th of July, I think, we met again with the heavy pack of ice which suddenly closed

around us as fast as ever and we had fears of another long imprisonment. Fortunately, however, a favorable movement in the ice took place which scattered it just as suddenly as it had closed on us; the *'Diana'* made a hasty retreat and no further attempt was made to reach that coast."

"Did you after the end of July meet with any ice?"

"None to speak of," said Mr. Fisher. "We went up into Cumberland Sound as far as the Arctic circle, reaching that latitude on 15th August. We found no ice there. Returning we went into Hudson's Straits again, I think on 21st August, and passed through the Straits and bay to the harbor of Churchill. On this voyage we went up once more towards the northwesterly part of the Straits to test the condition of the ice, if any existed to the north of Salisbury Island. Here we saw a body of ice extending northerly and northwesterly towards Baffin's Land and Fox channel. But we did not attempt to enter it, and it did not lie in the way of a clear passage to Churchill. In our last voyage through the Straits, as you are aware, we saw no ice whatever. We passed out of the Straits on the 20th October. It was hoped that we could have remained in the west end of the Straits till at least the 1st of November, but heavy weather and especially the prevalence of severe snowstorms, determined the commander to leave a few days earlier. There was also sufficient frost to make it extremely difficult to work the ship. Under heavy winds and a heavy sea washing over the decks, ice accumulated on the deck and in the ropes and rigging generally. Not that the cold was extremely severe. I think the lowest temperature was 18 degrees of frost, or 14 above zero."

"Were the harbors frozen over at this time?"

"No, we were in the Douglass harbour, on the south side of the Straits, and something more than half-way up towards the west end, on the 29th October, and it was still entirely open. The ponds of fresh water on the land were then frozen solid."

"What about the 'rip' in the ice that the *Diana* sustained, and where did it happen?"

"This happened near Big Island, on the north shore, about half way up the Straits. Yes, it was a serious rip—or rather, it put the ship in serious peril, and we did not know at what moment we might have to abandon the vessel and take to the ice. There was pressure of this kind for two days, I think, the first and fourth of July. Fortunately, however, we escaped without actual mishap to any of us. True, the ship suffered considerably from the pressure, but not so as to unfit her to proceed on the voyage."

"I suppose that you met with a good many of the natives?"

"Yes, we saw something of the Eskimo, and I would be glad to tell you about them, but I am afraid it would be too long a statement for the present."

"You see," said Mr. Fisher, in conclusion, "that I have given this statement hurriedly, without referring to my records, but I have no doubt I have given you the dates correctly from recollection."

The new license act in the territory allows wholesale druggists to sell alcohol in quantities not exceeding five gallons, to retail druggists and physicians. The bill has not been finally passed yet.