

year 1886 the government took up the ice boat service. It was, previously to that, in the hands of contractors as a private enterprise, tendered for and carried on in that way, but owing to an unfortunate accident that occurred, and an admitted lack of efficiency in the service, in 1886 it was taken up and conducted as a government service. Previous to that steamers had been tried upon the eastern route, two boats, with very little success, but in the year 1888 the steamer "Stanley" was put upon the eastern route, and as most hon. gentlemen know very well, she has proved very successful indeed, when the great difficulties which she has had to encounter are taken into consideration. She is not absolutely successful because the communication is far from being continuous and at any moment the island may be thrown out of mail and passenger communication for some days, and sometimes weeks. That has occurred with the "Stanley." But the comparative success which the "Stanley" has achieved in contending with heavy ice has led a great many people to believe that a boat similarly constructed, if placed at the narrowest point, between Cape Tormentine and Traverse, where the ice is all the time moving, where it never freezes fast at all, might be found effective, and reduce the communication between the island and the mainland to the matter of a ferry. For some years it has been argued that it was the duty of the government to supplement the steamer "Stanley" by another boat which could be put upon that western route; for hon. gentlemen will understand this, that it would not be just to Prince Edward Island, it would not be safe to transfer the "Stanley" from the eastern route, where she is making fairly effective communication, and put her upon the western route where she might be liable to be locked up for the whole winter and the province might be deprived of communication during the whole of that time, and therefore with one boat the western route cannot be fairly tested. Last year the present government made an attempt to test the practicability of steam communication on this western route between Cape Tormentine and Cape Traverse. I am very sorry—and I think I speak the sentiments of the people of Prince Edward Island almost universally—that that experiment was made at all under the circumstances. Instead of building, or procuring a boat that was suitable for contending with ice, a mere

tug boat, from Kingston, was selected, for reasons that nobody in the world can understand. She was brought down there, and at a cost of \$14,000 or \$15,000, what was called an experiment, was made. As everybody might know, this weak, small tug boat could not be expected to accomplish anything in the face of the difficulties that were there to be encountered. Anybody that knew anything about that place, knew that nothing but a powerful and strongly built boat would do anything there. In the face of that, the Minister of Marine and Fisheries chartered a tug boat called the "Petrel" from somewhere near Kingston, from the Collins' Bay Rafting Company, and brought her down at a cost of something like \$14,000, and she lay there all winter. Reference is made to this experiment in the report of the department, in these words:

In connection with the communication between Prince Edward Island and the mainland, representations had been made from time to time concerning the possibility of conveying mails and passengers by steamer during the greater part of the winter season between Capes Traverse and Tormentine. Many of the inhabitants of the island have held the opinion that communication could be kept up between these points, which are not nine miles apart, by a suitable steamer during the greater part of the winter. It had also been stated by them and others interested that the route, being a short one, would be more advantageous to the travelling public and a more direct route for the conveyance of mails than to Pictou by the steamer "Stanley." Petitions have been sent to parliament embodying these views, and very strong representations have been made by members of parliament in the same connection.

During the session of 1896-97 a sum was voted by parliament with a view of making the experiment. The sum was not more than sufficient to charter and fit out a vessel and pay the wages of a crew for the purpose of testing the practicability of the scheme. An officer of the department was given instructions to examine all suitable vessels in the Dominion with view of selecting one sufficiently strong, well equipped and powerful to make her way through moving ice.

No vessel exactly suitable could be found for the purpose, as vessels for navigation in ice must be specially constructed and of a suitable model. The best vessel, however, that could be procured for the experiment was the "Petrel," owned by the Collins Bay Rafting and Forwarding Company. The "Petrel" is a steel tug boat of very strong build, of 22 nominal horse power and draws 9½ feet of water. The steamer made several trips across the strait during the winter, and during these trips careful observations of the tides, leads in the ice, the force of the ice against a vessel endeavouring to work her way through it, and the best and most convenient places for landing were made.

As the "Petrel" was allowed to remain until the opening of navigation in the spring, an officer on board made careful notes respecting the difficulties presented to steam communication, and in what month these obstacles were the greatest. The thickness of the ice and the quantity passing through the strait, backwards and forwards, are matters upon which the department desired information, to be able to arrive at