

The Spring of 1882.

NEWFOUNDLAND.

St. John's, Nfld., March 31.

The chief topic of thought here at present, among all classes, is the seal fishery, now in progress, and about which an unusual degree of anxiety is felt. This year has been altogether exceptional, in regard to the immense snowfalls, and above all, the enormous icefields which have been driven in on the coast and held there by persistent easterly winds. All the easterly coast, and in every bay and harbor, the ice-pack has been unprecedented during the present generation. The six powerful Dundee sealing steamers, in attempting to reach St. John's, were caught in the pack, carried past the harbor, and when at length they got a chance to reach the mouth of the harrows, they had to force an entrance through an ice barrier several feet in thickness. By a fortunate change of wind, as I described in my letter of the 14th inst., the steamers in St. John's got away on the 10th and 11th of March and boldly dashed out into the ice-fields. But they were not out of sight till the wind veered again to the north-east, and once more the ice blockade was renewed. For several days they were visible from Signal Hill, fighting their way northward towards the sealing grounds, sometimes caught and carried in the impetuous pack southward, then getting free, struggling to reach the lanes of open water, and so cleaving their way through the heavy ice barrier toward their prey. Since the last steamer disappeared below the horizon nothing has been heard from our sealing fleet, but we hope, in eight or ten days, to see the first of them returning, bringing their fat cargoes with them. Still the prospects are not bright. The ice has been very heavy and by easterly winds has been pressed on the shore and tightly held together. It will be very difficult for the steamers to penetrate these heavy masses in pursuit of the seals, and the danger is that some of them may be caught in the pack and held fast. Besides, it is thought that, owing to the ice being pressed on the coast so early, the seals will be out of the usual track and far off the shore. Conjectures, however, are vain. "It is the unexpected which usually happens." Till the first sealer returns nothing certain will be known.

CONCEPTION BAY SHUT IN BY AN ICE BLOCKADE.

The winds which drove the ice off the coast about St. John's unhappily were unable to make any impression on the enormous mass of heavy ice which had been wedged into Conception Bay. Even a violent gale on Tuesday night from the south-west, had no effect in loosening or breaking up the ice in this bay. North east winds drove it in, mass after mass, till across the mouth it "rafted," that is, was heaved up by the swell sheet after sheet, on each other, and then frozen together so as to form a solid wall of ice several feet high. It would require a very heavy swell from the south-east to break up this solid mass. The condition of the Conception Bay sealing fleet is pitiable. There they have been since the beginning of March, waiting for an opening in the ice to enable them to get away, and enduring all the pangs of "hope deferred." The steamers Vanguard, Mastiff and Iceland are solidly frozen in and unable to move. The Greenland had been at St. John's getting new boilers, and attempted to get into Harbor Grace to procure her outfit and crew, but was forced to return, and not being in a condition to go to sea from here, she remains in this harbor. This is a most disastrous affair for the sealers of Conception Bay, who are thus hopelessly imprisoned. The voyage may now be abandoned, as there is no appearance of the ice opening, the east wind having once more

set in. The chances of the voyage are completely gone and the men will probably soon return to their homes, many of them in a cheerless and destitute condition. The sailing vessels fitted out at great expense for the ice, in Brigus, Spainiard's Bay, Harbor Grace and Carbonear, together with the steamers above named, are all alike prisoners. The industrious efforts of hundreds of men are thus paralyzed, and in consequence great privations and hardships will follow. Nothing is to be earned at this time of year. The merchants and suppliers in this quarter will lose heavily, as all preparations for a start were made, the men booked and on board, and, of course, they had to feed them in complete idleness since the first week of March. Such a blockade of ice has not occurred in Conception Bay for fifty years. Gloom has settled on all the people.

Vessels Crushed by Ice.

St. John, Nfld., April 3.—The sealing brigantine *Dawn*, Captain King, arrived yesterday with the officers and crew of the British schooner *Promise*, crushed by ice on Friday in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The *Promise* left this port on Wednesday for Lisbon. She had a cargo of codfish valued at \$15,000. On Friday, when about forty-five miles south-west of Cape Pine, she was struck by a huge ice floe on the starboard bow, and began to leak badly. There was a heavy gale blowing, and a very high sea and swell rolling among the ice. Signals of distress were hoisted on the schooner without delay. The vessel was surrounded by ice floes, and no boat could live for a moment among them. The mail steamer *Newfoundland* passed down on the eastward side, but too far distant to notice the distress signals. The crew boarded the *Promise* and mended the pumps, but the vessel was sinking rapidly. The crew of the *Promise* were transferred to the *Dawn*, and the whole sealing crew set vigorously to work to save the cargo before the hull settled down in the water. Two thousand five hundred quintals of codfish were saved. The schooner sank with the balance of the cargo. Five miles distant lay the German barquentine *Solid*. She had been rolling some time among huge sections of ice, when suddenly she disappeared and was not seen afterwards, nor any portion of her wreck or gear. Captain King is of the opinion that she was struck by a heavy floe, opened, and sank immediately.

A colony was established recently at Six Mile Lake, in Tunica county, Miss. The colonists knew nothing of the habits of the erratic Father of Waters, and the flood caught them napping. The first warning was the sound of the torrent breaking through the levee. All who were at home got upon the tops of the houses, but several men who happened to be in the fields, climbed trees. Four men were imprisoned in that way for twenty hours, the angry water lapping their feet as it swayed the branches to which they clung. Rescue came at last in the shape of a steamboat that happened to be swept through the break.

A correspondent of the Chicago Times took ride in a skiff last Tuesday morning among the submerged plantations near McGee's Station, just below Memphis. At one place he found a farmer walking upon stilts around his yard, which was several inches under water. While the reporter was talking to the man a splash attracted the attention of both. When the reporter saw that the splash had been caused by a child falling from a second story window into the water, he was alarmed. "Never mind," said the father, quietly, "that's Jim; but he won't get drowned; he's got four gourds on." The reporter was much interested to

learn that most of the little ones in the neighborhood had similar rude life-preservers tied to their persons.

A resident of Caruthersville went in a boat last Wednesday to look after some cattle which had been placed upon a platform in a swamp. In paddling through the swamp the voyager saw eighteen deer on a narrow strip of dry land. He wantonly shot every one of the poor brutes and gained the curses of his neighbors for his pain.

Amount of Snow-fall in North-Eastern America.

(H. Y. Hind.)

The snow-fall on the coast of North-Eastern Labrador is very considerable, but not nearly so great as one would suppose from the vast accumulations on sea slopes and in ravines facing the east or south-east. As far as can be gathered from the accounts of the missionaries, Esquimo and resident trappers on the coast, the snow does not in general exceed eight (8) feet in the woods, when it is protected from winds. Judging by this rude method, the annual snow-fall may average some thirty or forty inches more than in the maritime provinces of the Dominion or some parts of Ontario. But this zone of snow, even when we confine its limits to a depth not more than five feet on the level, or about sixty inches, allowing for evaporation, is a power, when moved by winds and thrown into drifts, which under favorable circumstances, exercises an influence in moulding the outline of the surface to an extraordinary extent, and is strictly comparable with the more striking, because concentrated effects of other forms in which frozen water or vapor is seen to act. But a snow-drift remaining throughout the year on an exposed slope, and slowly, almost perceptibly, gliding down to a lower level, affords of itself no measure of the mechanical work it directly effects by gravity and motion. It is a never-ceasing agent for condensing the vapor of the atmosphere, and to the mechanical effect it produces by its own weight as snow, must be added the effect produced by the moisture it condenses from the air throughout the entire period of its existence. Mr. G. P. Marsh in his work entitled "The Earth as Modified by Human Action," draws attention to the observations made in Switzerland on the hygrometric functions of snow in relation to the condensation of atmospheric vapor by the snows and glaciers of the Rhone Basin. It is estimated that the total of this condensation is nearly equal to the entire precipitation of the valley. There can be no doubt that permanent snow-drifts on the Labrador coast condense an immense amount of moisture which must find its outlet during the summer months in the counterpart of miniature glacial rivers, and these proceeding from a snow-drift a square mile in area, will be no insignificant streams. There are very many such drifts on the N. E. Labrador coast.

The following tables, penned from the data contained in the extensive important series published under the supervision of Prof. Kingston, at Toronto, in the reports of the meteorological office, show the existence of a great snow zone in North America, stretching far down into temperate latitudes, which is doing extensive geological work on the Labrador coast. It there represents a modern and existing continuation of work formerly done over wide-spreading areas farther to the south, and in its mode of operation it represents in innumerable miniature forms, the action of Alpine glaciers, and is yet thousands of feet below the line of perpetual snow, in the ordinary acceptation of the term.