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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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LOCATING ICEBERGS

Lieut. Commander Edward H. Smith, of the U. S. Coast Guard, who has had charge for many years of the scientific investigations carried on in connection with the International Ice Patrol, tells us that in clear weather icebergs are sometimes sighted from the masthead when 18 to 20 miles away from the ship. In a light fog or drizzly rain bergs have been seen from one to three miles, and in such cases there is a tendency on the part of the mariner to overestimate the distance of these marine dangers. In a dense fog a berg cannot be seen more than a hundred yards ahead of the ship, where it takes form as a luminous white mass if the sun is shining on it; otherwise it first appears close aboard as a somber shape.

On a clear starlight night a lookout will not pick up a berg at a greater distance than a quarter of a mile, and then the first thing that catches the eye is the swell breaking against its base.

The Ice Patrol officers are often asked whether there is any known method by which the dangerous proximity of a berg can be determined when invisible because of fog or darkness. The answer is "No." Differences in the temperature and the salinity of the water near an iceberg, which have been thought to afford such information, are really so slight as to be of no value. Experiments in locating bergs by means of reflected submarine sounds have been partially successful but this method is not on a practical footing.

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