

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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POLAR ICE AND WEATHER

The average amount of ice that drifts annually from the polar regions into lower latitudes has been estimated at 50,000 cubic kilometers. If evenly distributed over the entire land surface of the earth it would make a layer a foot thick. The amount varies greatly, however, from year to year, and its variations are presumably both the result and the cause of varying weather.

In his studies of these supposed relations Dr. Otto Petterson, the Swedish Oceanographer, found that between 1892 and 1897 there was an enormous outburst of ice from the Antarctic, which filled the Southern Ocean with ice floes and icebergs to such an extent that traffic between South America, Africa and Australia had to seek more northerly tracks than usual. According to the same investigator, this outburst had far-reaching climatic results. The monsoon region of the Indian Ocean was greatly disturbed. Years of excessive rainfall (1893 and 1894) were here followed by years of drought (1896 and 1899), resulting in famine and the loss of millions of cattle. In New South Wales and Queensland almost continuous drought prevailed from 1896 to 1902. In these seven years it is estimated that Australia lost more than 50,000,000 sheep.

There have been many discussions of similar though less striking effects of excessive or deficient Arctic ice in the North Atlantic. How greatly the amount of ice varies is indicated by the fact that the International Ice Patrol reported about 1,200 icebergs south of Newfoundland in 1912 and only 11 in 1924.

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