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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 28, 1931

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ICEBERG FORECASTING

The International Ice Patrol, conducted by the U. S. Coast Guard, keeps mariners informed of the location of icebergs along the transatlantic steamship lanes south of Newfoundland throughout each iceberg season (mid-March to mid-July). The number of bergs invading these waters varies greatly from year to year. In some years more than a thousand have been reported, in others only a dozen or so. As these variations are found to be more or less closely connected with the meteorological conditions prevailing over the northwestern North Atlantic during the winter and early spring preceding the iceberg season, attempts have been made in recent years to forecast the relative abundance of icebergs from weather reports. Generally speaking, abnormally low barometric pressure in the region about Iceland points to a heavy ice year off Newfoundland, and abnormally high pressure about Iceland to a light ice year off Newfoundland. These conditions of pressure correspond to wind conditions that play the principal part in determining the drift of the icefields in which the bergs as they come from Arctic waters are carried along.

In practice, the forecasts are based upon differences in barometric pressure between certain meteorological stations in high latitudes and are made by means of formulas worked out from the records of past years. Beginning in 1926, the Coast Guard has issued forecasts each year a month before the opening of the iceberg season. All the forecasts thus far have indicated correctly whether the number of bergs would be above or below normal, and except in one year, 1929, have been approximately correct as to the actual number of bergs.

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