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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 10, 1931

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A WONDERFUL GLACIER

There is no end to the marvels of ice. Some of its most curious manifestations are found in glaciers, and none of these icy rivers is more remarkable than the Jacobshavn Glacier, on the west coast of Greenland; a source of many of the deadly icebergs that eventually drift to the transatlantic steamer lanes. This glacier is at the head of a fjord 15 miles long, in which the "Marion" expedition of 1928 found between 4,000 and 6,000 icebergs that had calved from the glacier front. The manner of their production is thus described by Lt. Commander E.H. Smith, of the U. S. Coast Guard:

"At uncertain intervals, approximately ten times a year and without warning, so say the natives, this iceberg train moves. It starts slowly, but rapidly gains momentum until the ice attains the incredible speed of five to eight miles an hour -- as fast as a fox can run, affirm the Greenlanders -- to the accompaniment of a deafening roar that can be heard for miles and that sometimes lasts for days. Sealing nets that the natives stretch under the water between the bergs are quickly torn asunder, and thus in a few moments a great part of the community's investment in fishing may be swept away. Nobody can foretell the approach of the catastrophe. This phenomenon, peculiar to the Jacobshavn Fjord, is termed an 'outshoot' by Porsild, who attributes it to the pent-up melt water, which, like a spring freshet, breaks the ice dam to discharge hundreds of icebergs out into Disko Bay."

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