

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CURIOUS ICE

The English explorer Parry, during his attempt to reach the north pole in boats from a base in Spitsbergen in the year 1827, observed a curious variety of ice. It was composed, he says, "of numberless irregular needle-like crystals, placed vertically, and nearly close together; their length varying, in different pieces of ice, from five to ten inches, and their breadth in the middle about half an inch, but pointed at both ends. The upper surface of ice having this structure sometimes looks like greenish velvet; a vertical section of it, which frequently occurs at the margin of floes, resembles, while it remains compact, the most beautiful satin spar, and asbestos when falling to pieces. At this early part of the season this kind of ice afforded pretty firm footing; but, as the summer advanced, the needles became more loose and movable, rendering it extremely fatiguing to walk over them, besides cutting our boots and feet, on which account the men called them 'penknives.'"

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