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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SIBERIA'S "ICE FLOOR"

With the exception of the Antarctic continent and possibly of the interior of Greenland and the neighborhood of the north pole, says Dr. C.E.P. Brooks of the British Meteorological Office, northern Siberia has, for its level, the lowest mean annual temperature on the surface of the globe (despite the heat of its short summers), and a curious result of this low average temperature is the "ice floor."

"Where the mean annual temperature," he writes, "is below 32 degrees the ground is perpetually frozen below a certain depth and often contains layers of more or less pure ice. In summer it thaws to a certain depth, forming great swamps; in winter these freeze again, and the whole surface of the land is a solid block of ice, in which the roots of trees are embedded. At Yakutsk it was bored to a depth of 380 feet without reaching the bottom, but this thickness is exceptional. Its origin is not known with certainty, but various theories have been put forward to account for its existence.

"The earliest attributes it to intense cold acting on a moist floor; cracks which appear from time to time in summer are filled with percolating water, which freezes in winter, thus increasing the quantity of ice. Other factors, of local importance, may be the burying of masses of river ice by the collapse of river banks, and the freezing and burying of springs. Another theory regards the ice floor as a relic of the Great Ice Age, the ice sheet having been covered by detritus from moraines and rivers. Extinct animals, especially the mammoth, are sometimes found in it, preserved exactly in the state in which they died, and it is suggested that these fell into crevasses in the ice."

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