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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ANTARCTIC ICE

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By far the largest ice mass in the world is the continental ice sheet that covers nearly the whole of Antarctica. Its area is probably about five million square miles, or a million square miles more than that of Europe. This enormous mass flows outward in all directions. On reaching the coast, the ice continues to move seaward until there is sufficient depth of water to float it and ice tongues are formed. These ice tongues extend floating for many miles to seaward. In some places a number of them, close to one another, become cemented together, forming a great shelf of ice. The best known ice shelf is the Ross Barrier, which fills the southern end of the Ross Sea.

The Ross Barrier is an almost level snow-laden floating sheet of ice 500 miles by 400 miles and 1,400 ft. thick, with about 170 ft. above the water line. There are probably other great ice shelves, but they have not yet been surveyed. It is probable that at the head of the Weddell Sea between Coats Land and Graham Land there is an ice shelf which may be even greater than the Ross Barrier, and from which many tabular bergs and ice islands calve, some of them being as much as 180 ft. high above the water line.

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