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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE ANTARCTIC'S ICY GIRDLE

The recent experiences of the Byrd expedition have called attention to the fact that in order to reach the Antarctic continent it is necessary for a ship to pass through a great belt of floating ice, known as the "pack". Its limits and its breadth vary greatly from year to year. Of steamships that have entered Ross Sea in recent years, the "Nimrod," in January, 1908, saw practically no pack, while the "Terra Nova," in December, 1910, was 30 days in forcing her way through.

The pack consists partly of ice frozen in the open sea, partly of sea ice formed along the shore, and partly of ice from glaciers on land. It has a general drift to the north of west, under the influence of prevailing southeasterly winds and currents. It is thus gradually carried toward lower latitudes, but at a certain distance from the continent it encounters a belt of strong winds blowing from west-northwest or north-northwest--the "brave west winds"--which prevent the ice from spreading all the way to the shores of South America, Africa and Australia, and at the same time, by pushing it back toward the south, cause it to become more or less densely compacted.

The tendency of this ice to drift away from the Antarctic shore toward a region of stormy winds and warmer water in which it eventually disintegrates explains why long sledge journeys cannot be made over it, as compared with the many that have been made over the ice pack of the Arctic Ocean.

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