

AMERICAN COAST GUARD BEGINS SEARCH FOR ICEBERGS IN NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN

WASHINGTON, May 29.—Some weeks ago the fleet of vessels of the American Coast Guard began again the enormously important work of scouring the North Atlantic ocean, particularly the crowded steamer lanes between America and Europe, to locate drifting masses of ice coming down from the glaciers of the north.

The huge mass of ice making up an iceberg is but a bit broken off the seaward end of a glacier, the solidly frozen pieces which gradually move to the ocean. These "bits" of ice are bits only by comparison with the glaciers from which they break away. In the late winter, and early spring the icebergs break off from the glaciers and start drifting south, and it is to find those that stray as far as the Atlantic steamer lanes that the American Coast Guard vessels keep busy throughout the spring and early summer months.

Through communication by wireless it is possible now to guard the shipping of the world from the menace of crashing into icebergs. The terrible Titanic disaster is responsible for the yearly activity of the American government in finding and warning shipping of the location of floating bergs. When that vessel, then the largest afloat, crashed head on into an iceberg and sank it was able to tell other ships of its predicament while still afloat through the medium of its radio apparatus. Its signals of distress brought the steamer Carpathia to the rescue, and that vessel was able to rescue many souls who otherwise would have shared the fate of those on board who went down with the ill-fated ship.

Radio Clears Cause

Without radio, the fate of the Titanic would have been a mystery to this day, as no other ship chanced to come along the same route during the time the wrecked vessel remained above the waves. Other similar disasters might have happened since with no proof of the vessel's fate, unless chance threw survivors in small boats or on rafts in the paths of other boats.

Out of the Titanic accident some good did come in waking the world up to the iceberg menace to shipping. The disaster, like the Iroquois theatre fire in Chicago, so horrified the world and aroused its interest that steps were taken to guard in every possible way against its repetition. In the case of the Iroquois theatre, hundreds of patrons were penned into the blazing building because the great swinging doors opened inward, and the weight of the frantic mass pushing against the doors in vain efforts to escape, jammed and held the doors tightly shut, and precluded all chance of escape. Everywhere today theatre doors must open outward, and regulations provided that there must be many emergency exits which open automatically when pressure is applied to them from within.

Lesson Not Unheeded.

So, too, the lesson of the Titanic has not gone unheeded. The activity of the Coast Guard has been going on since the year of the sinking of the Titanic. The main shipping nations of the world came to an international agreement by which the United States was given the duty of scouring the North Atlantic to locate floating icebergs and warn all boats by radio of the position of icebergs and their direction of movement, as well as the speed at which they are drifting. The cost of this patrolling of the sea is borne by the various nations entering into the agreement, in proportion to the amount of shipping each has on the North Atlantic.

Icebergs are not easily visible, and cannot be detected at all in foggy weather or on dark nights. About six-sevenths of an iceberg is under

water, just as a bit of ice in a tumbler of water floats with only its top exposed to the air. Thus only a point of ice may project into the air, and a ship a hundred yards or more distant from the visible portion of an iceberg may be on the verge of crashing into the submerged mass of ice.

Seamanship Needed

The work of the American ice patrol calls for excellent seamanship, and is an undertaking not without considerable peril. For one thing, the water off the Grand Banks, where drifting icebergs often are located, is shrouded with thick fog on many occasions. But the ice must be found and shipping warned. Despite hardships and handicaps, this is so well done that there has been no repetition of the Titanic horror.

The work of the ice patrol has served to shatter many old traditions of the sea regarding icebergs. It has long been a favorite belief of seafarers that the presence of icebergs could be detected because the floating ice invariably echoed distinctly any sound within a considerable distance of it. This has been found to be untrue except in the case of icebergs presenting a flat wall to the sound waves, and even then the echo is discernible at such short distance that this warning is of little or no value.

Another tradition that has been shattered is that an iceberg chills the surrounding water and air. The facts do not bear out this supposition. Once in a while, if the wind is blowing from an iceberg toward a ship, the air may seem slightly cooler, but the water does not appear to be affected at all, except so close to the berg that no ship could reach the cooler water without practical certainty of destruction.

Another Mariner's Belief

Still another mariner's belief touching icebergs has been that birds, flying about and roosting on the ice, disclose the presence of bergs by their cries, but the ice patrol has blown up this tradition along with the rest. It has been found to be without any foundation. Many bergs have been located without any birds about them at all.

Collision with icebergs is not the only danger to shipping. Another menace is from movement of the great mass of ice in the water. As the berg drifts farther south, the air and water become increasingly warm, the ice is melted in various ways. A current of warm water will melt away that under part of an iceberg so that the whole thing will cause the whole thing to roll or turn over. When this occurs, as it frequently does, great waves are set up. An ordinary ship, if close to an iceberg when this happened, would certainly run grave risk of being capsized. Sometimes, due to the attrition of warm waters and the sun's rays, an iceberg will split in two or more pieces, with terrific disturbances.

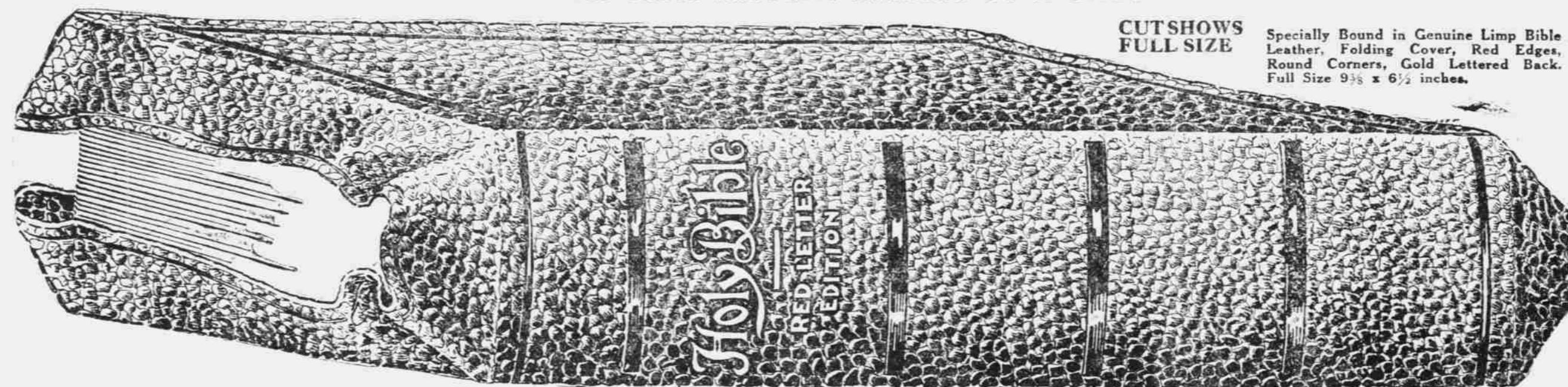
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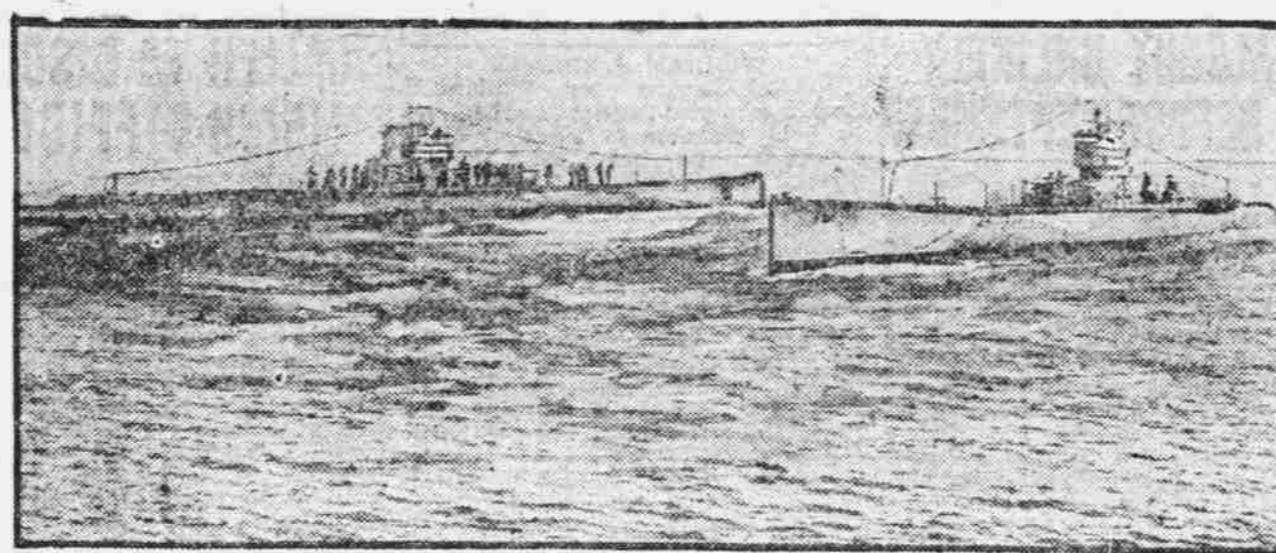
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The speed with which an iceberg moves in the water in nearly every case is due to the current in which it is moving along, and it moves no faster than this current. Occasionally, though, the exposed top of the berg may have surfaces which readily catch the wind, and thus it may sail along getting farther than the ordinary iceberg does before it is melted and made harmless.

Luckily for shipping, the great majority of icebergs after drifting southward for 1,800 or 2,000 miles, strand and break up on the coast of Labrador. It is the small number that escapes this fate that continue southward until they reach the steamer paths of the North Atlantic, a distance of from 2,500 to 3,000 miles from the mouth of the glacier where they originated.

In the late summer and throughout the autumn and winter the steamer lanes are free from the menaces of icebergs. Then the far north has frozen up tight again, and the bergs do not break away from the glaciers. The areas in which icebergs may be

expected in the spring and early summer months are now fairly well known to the coast guard, but sometimes one of the bergs with sail-like surfaces will be found blown far out of this area before being destroyed by the elements.

An iceberg often is a thing of beauty. The rays of the sun, reflected from the thousands of faces of ice, and shining through the natural prisms formed, are a spectacle well worth seeing. Icebergs in the moonlight, once seen, never will be forgotten as examples of ghost-like beauty.

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