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GLACIERS

Paramount Pictorial

by

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An Alpine glacier which is formed from compacted snow high on the side of a mountain moves slowly downward until it melts in the lower altitude. At the end or snout of the glacier the melting ice forms a river. Here are great boulders that have been carried down on the moving ice and finally deposited in the bed of the stream.

Scene- Snout of the glacier where the river begins.

As the slow-moving mass of ice comes down the mountain side, if the bed of the glacier is even, the surface of the ice above is a sloping field. In places where the ice passes over a prominence the surface cracks and fissures are formed.

Scene- Ice field in foreground, crevasses back.

Crevasses are often fifty or a hundred feet deep and twenty or thirty feet wide at the top.

Scene- Nearer view of crevasse.

The glacier coming down the side of the mountain is usually so broken up with deep cracks that it makes travel extremely difficult.

Scene- Broken surface of glacier. Three men following along edge of crevasse.

Some glaciers fill vast basins and are fed by ice streams coming from the high mountains surrounding. A tideline glacier is one which reaches the sea and forms a sea cliff from which icebergs are continually breaking off and dropping into the water.

Muir Glacier at the north end of Glacier Bay in Alaska was discovered in 1879 by John Muir. It is one of the largest tideline glaciers in the world. Approaching the entrance of Muir Inlet, one generally finds it blocked with floating ice.

Scene- Yacht Westward in distance among icebergs.

Some of the floating bergs that had broken off from the face of Muir Glacier were a hundred or more feet long. A floating iceberg is about one-third out of the water and two-thirds buried under the surface.

Scene- Close-up view of iceberg from yacht. Distant view of yacht coming out from behind berg.

It was like nearing the North Pole, as the boat had to



push its way slowly among the smaller chunks of ice and avoid the larger icebergs.

Scene- People on yacht and views of floating ice.

The face of Muir Glacier rises three hundred feet above the surface of the water, and the measurements made by John Muir showed that the ice extended down underneath the water seven hundred feet to bedrock. So if one could see the whole face or snout of the glacier it would be a wall of ice a thousand feet thick.

Scene- Distant view of face of Glacier.

Luck played in the hands of the photographers. After several cold, rainy days no bergs were breaking off. Then when the sun came out the weather warmed a bit. We were about a mile from the ice cliff of the glacier when a crack appeared in its face and a gigantic berg slipped off into the sea.

Scene- Continuation of above view showing great splash.

It was dangerous for a boat to get close to the face of the Glacier, but with long lenses we could bring the Glacier closer to us.

Scene- Near view of face of Glacier.

Watching the face of the mile-wide Glacier, occasionally an ice pinnacle two or three hundred feet high would begin to topple over. It seemed almost as if we were in a nightmare. Then the iceberg sank in the boiling waves.

Scene- Pinnacle toppling over with splash.

Then the camera man was hauled up to the masthead to try some views with the long lens. As the great blocks of ice hundreds of tons in weight broke away and hit the sea each was followed by a great boom like that of a tremendous cannon.

Scene- Finley hauled to top of mast and view of ice cliff from masthead.

The next big berg that broke away and plunged downward made a splash as high as the wall itself. Then a great tidal wave started toward the boat. Fortunately it played out in the mass of floating bergs between the base of the cliff and the yacht. It reaches us in long, rolling swells, making it too unsteady to photograph from the masthead.

Scene- Finley on masthead and view showing splash of big iceberg.

After that, we photographed from the deck of the rolling boat. Each berg that broke off was followed by an



avalanche of smaller bergs. One explosion seemed to set off several more with a continuous thunderous roar as if one were in the midst of a battery of exploding cannons.

Scenes- Cascade of falling bergs. Camera moving up and down with the boat.

The weight of the falling ice, the thunderous shocks, and the plunging waters cracked the face of the Glacier and in an hour the whole appearance of the ice cliff had changed, showing how rapidly Muir Glacier breaks at tideline. When a berg drops from the top, it plunges deep underneath, then bursts back up like an exploding geyser. Then it rolls and balances itself.

Scene- Bergs boiling up at the base of the Glacier.

The ice melts more rapidly in the air. Underneath the water, the bedrock ice of Muir Glacier shelves out at the bottom of Muir Inlet for perhaps two or three miles. In other words, the compact ice underneath the surface has not broken away. Suddenly a berg popped up a few yards from the yacht. It was a mile away from the ice cliff. Until then we did not realize the danger. If the berg had come up underneath the boat, we surely would have been wrecked. On account of these dangers, the larger tourist boats do not go anywhere near the face of the Glacier.

Scene- Berg at side of yacht, showing men on berg.

The world is in a warmer state and not so much snow is falling in the mountains, and not so much ice forming. Muir Glacier fills a tremendous basin of about three hundred and fifty square miles. If the ice is receding faster than it slips down from the mountain, so Muir Glacier is retreating or receding and has shortened itself about five miles in the past fifteen years.