H.N. Moseley, Notes by a Naturalist: Observations Made During the Voyage of H.M.S. Challenger (1892)

The colouring of the crevasses, caves, and hollows is of the deepest and purest possible azure blue. None of our artists on board were able to approach a representation of its intensity. It seemed to me a much more powerful colour than that which is to be seen in the ice of Swiss glaciers. In the case of the bergs with all their sides exposed, no doubt a greater amount of light is able to penetrate than in glaciers where the light can usually only enter at the top. A large berg full of caves and crevasses, seen on a bright day, is a most beautiful and striking object.

One small berg was passed at a distance which was of remarkable colour. It looked just like a huge crystal of sulphate of copper, being all intensely blue, but it seemed as if attached to, and forming part of, another berg of normal colour. Possibly it was part of the formerly submerged base, and of more than ordinary density. Only one other such was seen. The intensity of the blue light is ordinarily such that the grey sky behind appears distinctly reddened, assuming the complementary tint, and the reddening appears most intense close to the berg.

At night bergs appear as if they had a very slight luminous glow, almost as if they were to very small extent phosphorescent.

The sea at the foot of the bergs usually looks of a dark indigo colour, partly, no doubt, out of contrast to the brighter blue of the ice. Where spurs and platforms run out under water from the bases of the cliffs, the shallow water is seen to be lighted up by reflection of the light from these.

The surf beats on the coast of an iceberg as on a rocky shore, and washes and dashes in and out of the gullies and caverns, and up against the cliffs. Washing in and out of the caves, it makes a resounding roar, which, when many bergs surround the ship, is very loud. So heavy is the surf, and so steep are their sides as a rule, that we did not see one on which we could well have landed from a boat.

As the waves wash up into the wash-lines they form icicles, which are to be seen hanging in rows from the upper border of these grooves.

A line of fragments is always to be seen drifting away from a large berg. These are termed wash-pieces. They are very instructive as showing the vast relative extent of submerged ice required to float a small portion above water; the parts of the fragments below water being visible from a ship's deck.

The scenic effects produced by large numbers of icebergs, some in the foreground, others scattered at all distances to the horizon and beyond it, are very varied and remarkable, depending on the varying effects of light and atmosphere.

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