THE ICE QUEEN

[ILLUSTRATED]

By



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A HAPPY CONCLUSION.

THE ICE QUEEN

By

ERNEST INGERSOLL



"JIM GOT IN AT LEAST ONE GOOD BLOW."

AUTHOR OF
"FRIENDS WORTH KNOWING," "KNOCKING ROUND THE ROCKIES," ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

THROWN UPON THEIR OWN RESOURCES.



The early dusk of a December day was fast changing into darkness as three of the young people with whose adventures this story is concerned trudged briskly homeward.

The day was a bright one, and Aleck, the oldest, who was a skilled workman in the brass foundry, although scarcely eighteen years of age, had given himself a half-holiday in order to take Kate and The Youngster on a long skating expedition down to the lighthouse. Kate was his sister, two years younger than he, and The Youngster was a brother whose twelfth birthday this was.

The little fellow never had had so much fun in one afternoon, he thought, and maintained stoutly that he scarcely felt tired at all. The ice had been in splendid condition, the day calm, but cloudy, so that their eyes had not ached, and they had been able to go far out upon the solidly frozen surface of the lake.

"How far do you think we have skated to-day, Aleck?" asked The Youngster.

"It's four miles from the lower bridge to the lighthouse," spoke up Kate, before Aleck could reply, "and four back. That makes eight miles, to begin with."

"Yes," said Aleck, "and on top of that you must put—let me see—I should think, counting all our twists and turns, fully ten miles more. We were almost abreast of Stony Point when we were farthest out, and they say that's five miles long."

"Altogether, then, we skated about eighteen miles."

"Right, my boy; your arithmetic is your strong point."

"Well, *I* should say his feet were his strong point to-day," Kate exclaimed, in admiration of her brother's hardihood.

"It wasn't a bad day's work for a *girl* I know of, either," remarked Aleck, as he took the key from his pocket and opened the door of their house, which was soon bright with lamplight and a crackling fire of oak and hickory.

The house these three dwelt in was a small cottage in an obscure street of the village, but it was warm and tight. Kate was housekeeper, and The Youngster—whose real name was James, contracted first into Jim, and then into Jimkin—was man-of-all-work, and maid-of-all-work too, sometimes, when Kate needed his help.

While these two are getting tea, and Aleck is carefully wiping the skates and putting them away where no rust

can have a chance at the blades, or mice gnaw the straps, let me tell you a few things about the family.

Jim could remember his father only vaguely, but Kate and Aleck could tell us all about him. His name was Kincaid, and he was a master-builder of houses. He had bought and fitted up the cottage, and had put savings in the bank, though Mrs. Kincaid was sick much of the time, so that money was spent that would have been laid by "for a rainy day" if she had been strong and well.

Unfortunately, the rain came sooner than any one thought for. One day, about five years before the beginning of our little history, papa was brought home hurt by falling from a scaffold at the top of a house. He was not dead, and all thought he would be well again in a few weeks at most; but instead he grew slowly worse, and after a time died.

Then the poor mother, always weak, did the best she could, and Kate tried to help her, while Aleck stopped his school-going, and went to work in the brass foundry. At first, though, he could earn but a little, and Mr. Kincaid's savings slowly melted away until almost nothing was left. Then the tired and desolate mother, never strong, bade her children that long farewell that seems so terribly hopeless to all of us when we are young, and the three

"mitherless bairns" were thrown upon their own resources.

The question arose as to what they should do. Jim was now eight years old, and going to school. Kate had not neglected to do some studying, and a great deal of reading, too, though she had always been so busy; and a few weeks before her mother's death she had begun to study regularly with a lady who lived near, whom Katy repaid by picking various small fruits as they matured in the lady's large garden. Aleck, as I have said, was working steadily, and getting enough wages to keep them all in fair comfort, since they owned the house and enough garden to give them plenty of vegetables. So, after talking the prospect over, they decided to stay in their little house and live together. A letter was written to Uncle Andrew, in Cleveland, who had offered Kate and Jimmy a home, telling him they would try it alone a while before burdening any of their friends.

This decision had been made almost four years before my story opens, and it had not been regretted. They had even saved some money, but the larger part of this had been spent in repairing the house, and in fitting up a new boat for Jim and one of his friends, who thought they knew a way to make a little money in the summer vacation if they had a good boat. This boat had been com-

pleted only in time to prove how good it was, before the winter had closed the river with ice at an unusually early date, and now the pretty craft was safely stored in a warehouse at the schooner-landing, a mile below the town.

All slept very soundly after their skating holiday—even Rex, the great Newfoundland dog, who was a member of the family by no means to be overlooked; but their ears were not stopped so tight that the clangor of the church bells about midnight failed to arouse them with its dreadful alarm of fire. Hastening to an upper window, one glance at the blaze-reddened heavens showed our friends that the group of factories in the southern part of the town was burning, and one of these was the brass foundry where Aleck worked.

Aleck hurried away, and they did not see him until after sunrise, when he came home tired, wet, and soot-blackened. The whole shop had burned to the ground, he reported, and it was only by great risk and exertion that he had been able to rescue his father's precious chest of tools.

"I didn't think," said the young man, as he sat wearily down to Katy's hot coffee, "that my job would be so short

when McAbee told me yesterday I could work there 'as long as the foundry lasted.'"

During that day and the next Aleck tried every possible chance of employment in the village, but found nothing; and by the time evening came he had made up his mind that no regular employment equal to his old place was to be had there for months to come.

There was no doubt about it. The time had arrived when they must avail themselves of Uncle Andrew's kindness, and seek in his hospitable house at least a temporary home.

CHAPTER II.

"THE YOUNGSTER'S" PLAN.



" ou see," said Aleck, "though I've about seventy-five dollars ahead, yet when we have bought what we shall need, there will not be more than forty dollars left. Now, if we go to Cleveland in the cars and take our things with us, it'll cost us twenty-five dollars or more, and leave us almost nothing to get started with there."

"S'posin'," said Jimkin the Wise, "s'posin' we don't go in the cars. Cleveland's on the lake, and the lake's all ice; let's skate down to uncle's!"

"Humph!" grunted Aleck.

"Pshaw!" said Kate.

"Didn't we skate eighteen miles yesterday, and couldn't we have gone farther?" persisted Jim, unabashed.

"It's more than a hundred miles to Cleveland. Think you could do that in one day? Besides, how would you know the way?"

"Didn't say I could do it in one day. But couldn't we go ashore and stop at night? That's the way the Hall boys did, who skated up to Detroit last winter."

"I read in the newspaper yesterday," said Kate, "that the lake was frozen uncommonly hard, and was solid ice all the way along the shore as far as the headlands of Ashtabula."

"If we could be sure of that," Aleck admitted, "there might be some use in trying; but one can't be sure. Besides, how could we take along our baggage?"

"Pull it on a sled," said Kate, "the way they do in the arctic regions. Men up there just live on the ice, sleep at night and cook their food and travel all day, and they don't have skates either. Gracious! Who can that be?"

No wonder Katy was astonished, for there came echoing through the house a noise as if somebody was pounding the wall down with a stone maul. Aleck hastened to put a stop to it by opening the door.

He was greeted by the grinning face of a round-headed, chunky lad nearly his own age, named Thucydides Montgomery; but as this was too long a name for the Western people, it had been cut down very early in life to "Tug," which everybody saw at once was the right word, on account of the lad's strength and toughness. The mammas of the village thought him a bad boy, getting their information from the small boys of the public school, whom, in his great fondness for joking, he would sometimes frighten and tease.

Aleck knew him better, and knew how brave and goodhearted he was. Jim had good cause to be fond of him, for, in behalf of The Youngster, during his first week at school, Tug had soundly thrashed a bullying tyrant; while Kate gratefully remembered various heavy market-baskets he had carried for her, since he lived near by. A

closer tie between our little family and their visitor, however, was the fact that, like them, he was an orphan, and, like them, had relatives in Cleveland, whom he had often thought he should like to be with better than staying with his aunt here in Monore.

When Tug had joined the circle gathered before the big fireplace, and had begun to talk about the brass-works, he was promptly hushed by Aleck.

"Put that up now, and attend to me. This urchin here, who has become very cheeky since he began to go to school—"

"And came under my care," Tug interrupted, loftily.

"Yes, no doubt. Well, The Youngster finds we all want to go to Cleveland, but can't afford the railway fare, and so he coolly proposes that we skate there."

"Well, why don't you do it? I'll go with you," said Tug, quietly.

Jim shouted with triumph. Kate laughed, and clapped her hands at the fun of beating her big brother, and Aleck looked as though he thought he was being quizzed.

"Do you mean it?" he asked.

"Of course I do. I want to go down as badly as you do. I haven't any stamps, and the walking, I'm told, isn't good. I prefer to skate."

"Katy says we might drag our luggage on sleds, as they do in the arctic regions; but supposing the ice should break up, or we should come to a big crack?"

"I have read," Kate remarks again, "that they carry boats on their sledges, and pack their goods in the boats, so that they will float if the ice gives way."

"Take my boat!" screamed Jim, eagerly.

"That would call for a big sled."

"Well, didn't you two fellows build a pair of bobs last winter big enough to carry that boat?"

"Doubtful," answered Aleck. But when they brought out the plan of the boat, and then measured the bobs, which were stored in the woodshed, they found them plenty wide, and Tug was sure they were sufficiently strong.

Kate looked at them rather dubiously, and said she had never read of arctic boats mounted on heavy bobs, but that they always seemed in the pictures to have long, light runners under them; but Jim reminded her curtly

that "girls didn't know everything," so she kept still, and the planning and talking went on.

Young people who are under no necessity to ask permission of older persons, and, besides, are pushed by circumstances, decide quickly on a plan which looks forward to adventure. Generally, I fear, they come to grief, and learn some good lessons rather expensively; but sometimes their energy and fearlessness carry them safely through what the caution of old age would have stopped short of trying to perform.

They sat up pretty late discussing the plan, but before Tug went to what he said he "s'posed he must call home," they had determined to try it if the weather held firm.

This was on Friday. They hoped to get away early in the coming week. Then all three went to bed, Jim jubilant, and looking forward to a long frolic; Kate half doubtful whether it was best, but hopeful; Aleck sure that, for himself, he didn't care, hating to put his sister and brother to any risk, yet seeing no better way of resisting poverty; Tug resolute, and bound to stand by his friends, whatever happened.



DISCUSSING THE PLAN.

So they slept, and bright and early next morning the quiet preparations began, Tug declining to answer any questions as to how he arranged the matter of his going with his aunt.

CHAPTER III.

FITTING OUT THE "RED ERIK."

he first thing was to settle upon their preparations.

"What will you want to take, Tug?"

"Precious little, I guess. Besides my clothing, which won't make much of a bundle, I don't own much except my shot-gun, and my weasel-trap, and my odds-and-ends chest, and some hooks and lines. I'm going to sell all the rest of my duds."

"Who'll buy 'em?" asked Jim, doubtfully.

"Never you mind who, infant. 'This stock must be closed out below cost,' as the old-clo' men say. I can put all my baggage in a nail-keg."

"Then that's fixed," Aleck remarked. "Now for *you*, Katy?"

"I think the little trunk that was mamma's, and my handbag for brush and comb and such things, will hold all that belongs to me—that is, of my own *own*," she replied,

laughing. "Of course, the cooking things, and so on, belong to all of us."

"Well, Jim, your traps and mine will go into the other little chest, I think—at any rate, they must. Now for the general list."

The general outfit was then talked over for more than an hour, when, looking at his watch, Aleck said:

"Now this plan all depends on what luck I have in renting the house. I heard yesterday that Mr. Porter (the owner of the burned factory) would have to leave the hotel, and wanted to find a small furnished house. I am going to see if I can't let ours to him."

So Aleck went off, and Tug and Jim started down to examine the boat, study how much she would hold, and see what would be the best way of mounting her upon the bobs, which they spoke of as "the sledge." They were not back until afternoon, and found that Aleck had just come in, full of success. Mr. Porter would rent the house, and would allow them a closet in which to store all the small goods they wished to leave behind.

"Now, what about the boat?" he asked, as he concluded the story.

"She'll do beautifully. Jim and I think we'd better deck her over from the mast forward, and cover it with painted canvas, so as to make a water-tight place to stow the provisions."

"That's a good idea."

"We thought you'd say so, and so we took exact measurements, and can make a deck here, and fasten it on down there."

"All right; now, how do you think we'd better fasten the boat to the sledge?"

"That's where we want you to help us decide. I don't believe its weight is great enough to hold it firm."

"It's the first thing to be arranged," said Aleck, "and after dinner I guess we'll have to go down to the wharf."

An hour later the three boys were standing beside the boat, gazing first at it and then at the pair of strong bobs they had brought along.

"We must take that coasting-board off the bobs and put in a heavy reach-pole pretty near as long as the boat, that's certain," said Tug.

"And," spoke up Jimmy, "we've got to prop her up on the sledge so she'll stand even, and won't tip."

"Yes, you're both right," Aleck agreed. "The best way is to saw chairs out of two-inch plank which will just fit her bottom, and in which she will sit solidly."

"But," Tug broke in, "that won't hold her firm in the racket she has to go through. She must be bound down to that sledge, and I reckon the best way is to draw bands of stout canvas—big straps would cost too much—over the boat, from one side of the sledge to the other."

They examined and re-examined, but could none of them see any better plan; so they measured, and on their way home bought enough of the heaviest duck to make three bands, each three inches wide.

This transaction brought out a bit of Tug's loyalty. As Aleck took out his purse to pay for the canvas, Tug pushed his hand away and laid a dollar bill on the counter.

"You can just put up your cash," he cried. "This is my affair. If you fellows furnish the boat and sledge and all the rest, I'm going to pay, myself, for what new stuff we have to buy. It's little enough I can do, anyhow."

With this view there was no use of arguing, and Tug had his way that day and during all the rest of the preparation, spending the whole of his savings and the money received from the sale of his books and "contraptions."

While Tug sawed out the chairs, and screwed and spiked them firmly to the sledge that evening, the other two boys worked at the bands, and Katy sewed. They all sat in the kitchen, in order to be where Tug could work, and before they went to bed both tasks were nearly done.

The next day was Sunday.

On Monday the sledge was finished, and the boat was set upon it. Tacking tightly over it the canvas bands, two in front and one towards the stern, the whole affair proved almost as stiff and firm as though formed of one piece.

"What was the boat's name?" you may feel like interrupting me to ask.

It had not been christened yet, but when, as they sat by the fire on Sunday evening, Katy read aloud the story

of "Red Erik," they all agreed that that was the name they wanted.

Now the *Red Erik* was fitted to carry one mast, which passed through a hole in the forward thwart, and was stepped into a block underneath. The sail carried by this mast was a square sail of pretty good size, supported by a gaff at the top and a boom at the bottom. When it was not in use it was rolled around the mast, the gaff and boom being laid lengthwise along with it; and by wrapping the sheet around, the whole was lashed into a bundle, which lay very snugly upon the thwarts under one gunwale, where a couple of leather gaskets were buckled about it to keep it from sliding. There was also a jib-sail.

While they were overhauling this gear, the question of what they were to do for a tent came up, and Katy asked whether the sails could not be made useful for that purpose.

Certainly, the mainsail was large enough to form a very decent shelter when stretched over a low ridge-pole, but it needed loops of rope at the ends in order to be pegged to the ground and thus held in place.

"But there ain't any ground, and you can't drive wooden pegs into ice," objected Katy, at this point of the planning.

"Then," said Aleck, "we shall have to get half a dozen iron pegs, and I have some railway spikes that will be just the thing."

"That's so," said Tug. "Take 'em along. Now, the next thing is poles. The gaff will do for one, but the other one we'll have to make, because we want to use the boom for a ridge-pole."

"Then I'll tell you how we'll fix it," Aleck explained. "We'll put an eye-bolt in the far end of the boom, and call that the front end of the tent. We'll make a front upright post out of hickory, and have the lower end of it shod with iron, so as to stick in the ice—"

"Hold up! I've a better idea than that even," Tug exclaimed. "I suppose you want to save carrying any more timber than you can help. Well, let's cut off the handle of the boat-hook—that's hickory—until it is the right length, and its iron point will stick in the ice, or the ground (if we set her up ashore) first-rate. Then we'll go to the blacksmith, and have a cap made with a spike in it to go through the eye in the end of the boom. When we want to use the boat-hook we can take the cap off."

"That's a good way; but how about the gaff?"