

lent as if some speechless fear had fallen upon them, their broad, frank faces grave and watchful.

The trumpeter lifted his bright horn again and blew three rapid notes, and like a flock of doves startled from their cote, the eleven little figures shot out from under the fluttering blue banner and the race fairly began.

On, on they sped, the line scarcely broken for a space. To Katinka there was not an atom of fear. A feeling of perfect confidence and security swelled her little heart with joy. Under the excitement of this she did not notice when one lad fell down, his skate turning under him, nor had she perceived the quick advance of a third boy who wore a ribbon of pink until she heard the crowd yelling out cries of "The pink! The pink!" and then she saw that the pink had passed her.

Katinka laughed and bent her body forward. Some one cried out "Green is going to fall and she laughed again. She thought of the instructions of old Mynheer Caef. She was not falling, but following his rules.

One instant she flung apart her arms as if summoning the assistance of the wind. Then folding those strong little arms across her breast, she settled to the long, swooping flight which a swallow dares when it sails in perfect grace across the Summer sky.

There was a shout of admiration from the crowd. As she shot past the pink, leaving the other colors far behind, the young Count rose and doffed his hat. Katinka saw it, and her pulses beat with rapture. She felt the keen intoxication of success. Her yellow hair stood out like a halo about the childish face. Shouts of "Hurrah for the green!" heard on every side, filled her with ecstasy. All alone, the others vainly following, she reached the turning point, round which she swooped with such a graceful curve that the applause rose to a whirlwind of sound. She veered past the blue flag which marked the half distance of the race and came back toward the Count's sleigh with a movement easy and swift.

The Count himself had not received a

more enthusiastic greeting than was given to her as she came skimming along, the very incarnation of a swift spirit of the ice.

As she drew near the Count's sleigh, stationed at the goal, she turned her face upward to receive the smile she had coveted.

The Count not only smiled: he beckoned to her with his hand and while the crowd yelled itself hoarse, Katinka passed the goal and won the race. Then, with a gentle turn, and with no sign of breathlessness or fatigue, she floated quietly on to where the Count awaited her.

But just before she reached the sleigh there was a sudden movement in front of the horses, and a little toddling girl ran unsteadily across the ice toward her, while a startlingly familiar voice cried out:

"Katinka! Katinka! Sister Kat! Me knowed you. Trudchen said you was a boy but me saw you putting on Joo-t's clothes. Katinka's brain went round. There were two guardians of the fete standing behind the Count's sleigh.

"Ach!" exclaimed one of the men, "the child is a girl!" Flulin's babbling chatter, as she hung about her sister's waist, left no room for mistake as to this fact. Katinka, completely awed by the situation said nothing. She held Flulin by the hand and allowed the guardians to draw them nearer to the Count, who signed them to approach.

"Your Highness," said one of the guardians, "we have discovered that this racer is a girl."

"A girl," ejaculated the Count. "Then, by St. Christopher, she should teach the lads! How is this?" he added, turning to Katinka.

Katinka's only answer was a timid lifting of her lids.

The crowd seeing her in colloquy with the Count, and not knowing what had happened, began again the shouts of "The green! Hurrah for the green!"

The Count, as he looked toward the spectators, caught sight of one of the posters placed on a house nearby. He raised his hand for silence, and read:

"The race is declared to be for contestants between the ages of ten and thirteen"