

"We're cold and very hungry, and we want to go home to our mothers," said one of the girls, finding it hard to speak because of the sobs that kept rising in her throat.

35. "So that's it, is it?" remarked the seal, which had, on the other hand, quite a flow of language. "I should have thought you were quite well off here; but there's no accounting for tastes. I owe you children much, for it was your shouts which warned me, and so saved me from being speared by that grumpy old man who lives in your village; so if you will trust yourselves to me, I will take you safely home, two at a time."

36. At first the girls were afraid to venture upon a sea so strewn with ice blocks; but when they considered that, as soon as the tide rose again, the rocky ledge on which they were, would surely be flooded, since it was now open to the sea, they made up their minds to try.

37. Two girls at a time, each with the baby tied firmly upon her back, climbed from the ledge on to the back of the seal. When he flopped into the water, it was all they could do, at first, to hold on; but once he began to swim, it was not so bad, and they even had time to notice the clever way in which he swam in and out among the tumbling and tossing masses of ice.

38. In a very little while he had landed them all safely on the shore. Without further loss of