

ICE GRIPS SHIPS.

Captains of 30 ocean-going ships had the shock of their lives in the nine-mile-long Lachine Canal, above Montreal. The freeze-up came two-to-three weeks earlier than usual; all of them might be ice-bound till the Spring thaw. All available men were put on chipping ice away from the canal sides. The sudden drop of the mercury had caught everybody unawares, and if the way down to Montreal harbour couldn't be cleared, the ship owners stood to lose millions of dollars. Already ice had the lock gates in a seemingly unbreakable grip.

Where steam jets hissed against the ice it slowly yielded. Ships inched their way out, still with a chance to reach Montreal, perhaps even the Atlantic, before the lower St. Lawrence froze solid. What irony it would be if winter won the battle in spite of all this effort; for by next spring the new St. Lawrence seaway will bypass the Lachine canal - small consolation to any ships that failed to escape now. By toil and sweat, plus a bit of luck, all thirty got through to Montreal harbour. But that's a thousand miles from the open Atlantic. As we go to press the odds are still slightly against fifteen of the ships getting away.