

Bert's Rescue

By JAMES CONLEY.

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"Come on, Bert," urged Charlie. "The ice is bully just now. Come on ahead."

"Don't rub it in," pleaded Bert. "This is my punishment for seeking to astonish the natives with a frock coat and silk hat. The train was so late that no one beheld my glory, and as my trunk will not be here until tomorrow I'm afraid that I shall have to go without my skating."

"But we're the same size," insisted Charlie. "Put on some of my duds."

Bentham winced. It was his quarrel with nature that she had made him but two inches taller than five feet. His little cousin was only thirteen yet, and, as he said, Bert could wear his things. For a moment pride fought with desire, and desire won. He had always been passionately fond of the ice, and it had been a couple of years since he had enjoyed an opportunity of skating. This chance was too good to be lost. It was a beautiful night, and the probabilities were that no one would recognize him. He could slip into the crowd and quickly lose himself.

"Proceed," he said, with mock tragedy. "I shall enjoy my second childhood rather earlier than most men; that is all."

Half an hour later they were on the river. Already a crowd had assembled, for the moon was full and the ice a perfect glare. Charlie's simple "My cousin, fellows," was regarded as sufficient introduction, and presently Bert was skimming over the ice with an easy swing that betokened the experienced skater.

He shot straight up the river, speeding along with no thought of anything save the enjoyment of the skimming motion, and it was half an hour before he realized how far he had gone.

Skating back against the wind was a slower process, and by the time he reached the ferry road again the ice was crowded. He hunted up Charlie and then contented himself with shorter flights, though he kept away from the most crowded part of the ice. He had been skating in artificial rinks for so long that the broad stretch of glassy ice fascinated him, and he had no use for the parties of skaters that clung in groups.

He had just wheeled for a trip up the river when a tiny form shot past him, and almost unconsciously he gave chase. Apparently she was a mere child, but her strong, graceful strokes carried her along with a speed that tested his own qualities, and he skated after her.

Around the bend of the river the sluiceway from the cotton mill emptied into the stream, and for a space the ice was thin. Bert had kept away from this side of the river after the discovery, but now he was so intent upon his chase that he did not realize that the child was bearing dangerously in toward shore until she gave a little cry as she felt the ice crack under her feet.

Instead of keeping ahead she seemed paralyzed with fright and dug her skates into the ice to stop herself. He could hear the new ice giving way as the strain of her weight continued, and with a sudden swerve he dashed in toward her.

He was powerfully built for his size, and it was an easy matter to catch the child up in his arms and carry her out of the danger zone. As they swept along he could feel the ice give under him, and the ominous crackle seemed to follow him. Then the noise stopped as he shot out on to the firm ice, and he ceased skating, coming gradually to a halt.

"That was a risky thing to do," he said sharply as he set her on her feet. "Don't you know about the sluice?"

"I should have remembered," she said as she clung tremblingly to him, "but I heard one of the boys coming after me, and I wanted to beat him. I forgot all about the danger."

"I guess that's the last time you'll forget this season," he said.

"I should say so," she agreed. "It was awfully good of you to act so quickly. Who are you?" she asked as he changed position so that the moon shone on his face.

"I'm Charlie Bentham's cousin," he explained.

"Oh, yes," she smiled. "I remember Mrs. Bentham telling us that Charlie had a little cousin coming to visit him. You're a good boy, and I'm awfully grateful to you."

She stood on tiptoe and kissed him squarely on the lips. For a moment Bert was too astonished to speak; then he sped after her.

"Can't I skate with you?" he asked. "Let's skate up as far as the railroad bridge."

"Come ahead," she called as she put out her hand. Bert grasped it, and they glided off. For a few minutes nothing was said. They skated together as perfectly as though through long practice, and they were almost at the bridge.

"You are a newcomer in Maridale?" he asked, breaking the silence. "I don't think I remember you."

Bentham said you were the same age as Charlie?"

"That's Ned Collins," he explained. Ned's coming down for the holidays. I'm Bert Bentham."

"But"—she began, with a glance at his clothes.

"I see," he laughed. "You thought I was a boy because I was wearing one of Charlie's suits. You see, I got a foolish idea that it would be funny to come down all togged out. When Charlie said 'skating' I realized that a frock coat was scarcely a skating costume, so I put on one of his suits. I guess I look pretty much like Charlie. That's the worst of being so short."

"And you let me kiss you," she reproached.

"That's all right," he smiled. "I've had little girls kiss me before, you know."

"But I'm not"—she began. Bert started.

"You don't mean to tell me that you"—he gasped.

"I'm nineteen," she said, her eyes filling with tears. "There's nothing to laugh about," she added as Bert shouted. "You let me kiss you, and it was real mean."

"It was real nice," he contradicted, "and I didn't let you. You kissed me before I knew you were going to."

"And now every one will laugh at me," she sobbed.

"The laugh is as much on me as it is on you," he reminded. "I don't think I'm any too anxious to be laughed at."

"And you won't tell?" she demanded, her sobs growing less violent.

"Never," he promised, "not if you kiss me a thousand times. But I thought surely you were a child," he said, glancing at her short skirt.

"I have my dresses all made long, so that I look taller," she explained, "but they are awfully in the way when I skate, so I borrowed one from my sister."

"I guess it's a standoff," he declared. "We fooled each other and ourselves. But we haven't reached the bridge yet."

He held out his hand, and she slipped hers into it. Somehow the sense of a secret between them gave her a feeling of security, and her embarrassment soon wore off. Before they turned she was chatting away as though he had known her all his life.

They were on the ice again the next morning, and Bert went home a slave to her charms. Alice Vinton was the first woman he had ever seriously cared for, and he made such an active courtship that on the last night of his stay, as they turned at the railroad bridge, which marked the limit of their progress, he held her hand for an instant.

"I'm going home tomorrow," he said, "and I want to take back with me your promise that I may come for you in the spring. Will you promise, dear?"

For answer she reached up and kissed him as she had done on the night of their meeting. But this time there was no mistake of identity.

Her Serious Programme.

"I am going to have a little girl baby, and when she is three years old I am going to kill myself."

This startling remark came from the lips of a seven-year-old north side girl and was made with no more demonstration than if she had remarked that she was going to take one of her dolls out for a walk.

"My, my," said her father. "What in the world possessed you to make such a remark?"

"Well, papa," replied the little miss, "I have just been reading a lovely story about how a little girl only three years old put fresh flowers every day on her dear dead mother's grave, and her mother had killed herself, and I thought how nice it would be to have a little girl put beautiful flowers on my grave."

"Oh!" said her father reflectively. "I guess you had better play outdoors more and do a little less reading."—Columbus Dispatch.

Jeweler's Bit of Advice.

"I think I'll have to bring her in and let her choose," said the embarrassed young man as he looked hopelessly at the diamonds spread out on the table.

"Pardon me for a bit of advice," the jeweler said earnestly, leaning forward, "but I've had a lot of experience in such matters. If you pick it out yourself and take it to her she'll surely be satisfied. Always are. But if she comes here and sees bigger, handsomer rings she won't be contented with the one you can afford. The \$500 or \$800 ring she sees will stay by her. We've often lost sales that way. I've frequently seen the young woman pick out a ring that the man obviously couldn't afford, and he would find some excuse for not buying it."

Then the young man said he thought he might as well decide on that \$110 trifle at once.—Kansas City Star.

Came Near Missing the Abbey.

"Well, it was worth coming the few miles for," said the American as he puffed a cigar and drank his coffee outside the restaurant at Mount St. Michael. "They told me that I ought to come here and eat an omelet, and that omelet was real good. Now, I expect there's not much more to do on this little rock, and so I'll be getting back to the motor."

"But," suggested his English companion of the moment, "have you seen the abbey?"

"Abbey!" came the sharp reply. "Have they got an abbey on this bit of stone? No, I've not seen that, and they didn't tell me anything about an abbey. They all talked about the omelet. But if you told me that I ought to see the abbey, then I'll just have to stay half an hour and have a look at the place, but it'll make me late for dinner, I guess."—Westminster Gazette.

Dehorning a Rhinoceros.

A rhinoceros which lived in the London zoo was troubled by its horn, which grew down in front of its mouth, so that only with difficulty could it eat or drink. To save its life the keeper decided on amputation. The horn of a rhinoceros is not a horn at all, but an accumulation of hair and skin which has hardened and become cemented together by some gummy substance. The owner of this one had a very touchy temper and was not easily approached. His keeper, however, decided to try what he could do. For some days it required all his skill to persuade the beast to come to the front of the cage and put its horn through. Then for some days he stroked the horn, much to the animal's disgust at first, although later it seemed to like it. When it found he meant no harm it let him take the horn in his left hand and then with the right imitate the motion of a saw across it. When this had been done some time and the rhinoceros no longer minded it, a piece of wood was held in the right hand, and at last, when even this no longer worried the animal, a real saw was brought in and the horn cut off without the slightest remonstrance from the owner of it.

Outcome Always Same.

A Philadelphian was praising for his learning and uprightness the late Judge M. Russell Thayer. He quoted the moving passage from Judge Thayer's will, "Owing to the fact that almost my entire life has been passed in the public service of the United States and of the state of Pennsylvania, I have but a small estate to leave to my dear children and wife."

"Judge Thayer," he continued, "was a very honorable man. First as a lawyer, afterward as a judge, he treated all with whom he had dealings with the greatest fairness. Once, years ago, after he had served me well in a difficult case, I remonstrated with him about the smallness of his fee."

"Well," he said, smiling and smelling the flower in his buttonhole, "I, you know, am not that type of lawyer whose client once said:

"I never was entirely ruined but twice—once when I lost a lawsuit and once when I gained one."—Washington Star.

A Terrible Punishment.

A man suspected of treason in Morocco was punished by having the flesh of his hand sliced, the wound filled with salt and the whole hand sewed up in leather. It is a common belief that this punishment causes mortification to set in and that the hand decomposes, but such is not the case, for by the time the leather wears off the hand is healed, the result being that the hand is rendered useless and remains closed forever. It is a punishment not often in use, but is sometimes done in cases of murder or constant theft, as, without in any way injuring the health of the man, it prevents his committing the crime a second time or for the hundredth time, as the case may be. It is a punishment that cannot be applied except by the sultan's orders.—Blackwood's Magazine.

A Fairly Big Fish.

Paddy had been telling the story of a big pike he caught, too big to get into the boat, so that he had to be towed behind (with the gaff in it, it must be understood). Then followed this dialogue: "What weight, Paddy?" "Divvil a know I know, but he was an ojus baste." "Was that the biggest you ever saw, Paddy?" Then Paddy gave a description of the biggest he ever saw. "What weight, Paddy?" "Sorra a bit I know. He was a terror." "How big, Paddy?" "Sure, I can't tell to a foot or two, but a man could walk down his throat." On this incredulity, but Paddy "clinked the matter and silenced all controversy" by adding, "Wid his hat on."—Angler's Evenings.

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