

himself, and substituted "boy." "But I assure you, my dear Miss Petroleum, I like it very much."

"Oh! I'm so glad. I'm passionately fond of it. Won't you go with me to-morrow night? I'm sure you'll like it."

"How could I help liking anything you liked? Oh! if the recording scribe of the court of Cupid could—ah—depict indelicately the—the—"

"Hat my father wore," sang Bob, the irresponsible young brother of Miss P., as he burst into the room and stopped the torrent of eloquence.

Eventually it was arranged to go to the rink on the next evening.

"Now do come, Mr. Jones, for that hateful Tom Houston wants me to go. I hate him, I do, and I do so love to make him jealous," whispered his charmer as she daintily responded to his fervent hand-pressure at the door.

Of course Mr. Jones declared he would considerably prefer losing his head than fail to call for her, and with a graceful bow departed.

Mr. Jones did not feel particularly exhilarated on his way home. He had serious doubts as to whether he could even put his skates on; but the prize to be won was something not to be sneered at. Still he reflected bitterly on the probable consequences of to-morrow evening. His dreams were full of anguish that night, and he anathematized his luck in words not to be found in any theological work.

When Mr. Jones sallied out next day to buy a pair of skates, his haggard look testified to his anxiety of mind. He was elaborately clad, but all his paraphernalia of fashion could not conceal the outward manifestation of his inward woe. So pre-occupied was he that when a graceless "hoodlum" on Dundas St. remarked "Shoot the swell!" he bestowed a dime on him under the impression that he had been accosted by a case of heart-rending destitution.

Going into G.'s, he bought a pair of fancy, self-adjusting, lightning Acme skates, which he paid for with a premonitory groan. Then he slowly took his way to the residence of Miss Petroleum. He found her waiting. In the parlor with her were a gay little girl of seventeen, named Rosa Robinson, and the gentleman who was so unfortunate as to be hated by Miss Petroleum, Mr. Tom Houston. Thomas was a handsome, frank-faced young man of twenty-five, and he eyed Mr. Jones' accoutrements with a decidedly supercilious eye. Secure in the hopes which fired his ardent breast, Augustus mentally voted his rival a "cad," and proceeded to bestow his smiles on the ladies. He concealed his agony under an appearance of juvenile gaiety, and almost totally ignored Tom.

When the party arrived at the rink they found it crowded. Jones groaned heavily within himself.

"Oh! what a splendid time we shall have," rapturously said Miss P. to the wretched Augustus.

"Ah! yes, certainly, of course; but really I would almost as soon go for a sleigh-ride, wouldn't you?" said he.

"Why, Mr. Jones, how can you say so? I think this is charming. Oh! dear, I wish we were skating now, don't you?"

"Yes—yes; but isn't it almost too crowded?"

"Not a bit. The more the merrier. Here we are: please put on my skates at once, Mr. Jones."

That hapless individual, I am afraid, swore to himself as he gracefully knelt, and after about fifteen minutes hard labor, with the perspiration

streaming from his brow, succeeded in fastening the steel to her pretty little feet.

"Now, Mr. Jones, put on your's."

"Ah! aw—I think I'll wait a little while. I have a tooth which has just taken a twinge, and I'm afraid I'll have to watch you a while."

"All right," said Miss P., and Tom Houston coming up just then, she seized his arm and they darted away like swallows.

Augustus watched them with a brow worthy of Mephistopheles. As they darted past him, the lady's eyes and cheeks seemed a battery loaded and leveled directly at the heart of Mr. Thomas Houston.

A spirit of grim determination took possession of Jones.

"By Jove," said he to himself, "I can't stand this. Confound that 'cad,' now happy he looks here, you young reprobate, put on these skates," to a hoodlum near him.

The boy, with a grin, complied, and just as the operation was finished, Miss Petroleum darted up to him. Jones slowly, and with trembling knees arose. Determination was written on every line of his face. He was braced for a grand effort. Still he wished to defer the final moment as long as possible.

"Aw—Miss Petroleum, sit down a while; the seats are—are—in short, to sit on."

"Oh!" said the girl, laughingly, "I'm not old or infirm; I prefer not sitting."

Jones started. Could she know anything of his age? Horrible thought!

"Come, Mr. Jones; what are you waiting for? I'm growing cold."

Jones' smile was simply ghastly.

"Dear me," chattered he; "why, your cheeks are like roses, as they always are. You really look bewitching." All this time Jones' feet exhibited an alarming tendency to slip from under him.

"Don't flatter, Mr. Jones, but come along."

The ill-fated victim in desperation grasped his partner's arm, and wildly struck out. Much to his own surprise, he did not fall. Wishing to know his fate before that detestable Houston should have a chance to supplant him and shatter his youthful hopes, he stopped after two or three strides, faced around in front of the syren, and gasped:

"Oh! Miss Petroleum—Maggie, my own, my love, if I could only hope you would look on me with those angel orbs; if you could only love me as I sigh to be loved; if you would—ah! if, my dear Maggie—" Here he wildly clutched at her arm, as his feet began to slip.

"Why, Mr. Jones," said she, "what can you mean? Dear me, right here, too. If I'd known this, Tom."

"For Heaven's sake, don't speak of him; fair pearl of the city, you must have seen how I love you. Could I only know you love me, I'd be contented to lie at your feet—oh!"

*Horrible dieu!* Just then, as the words of passion were culminating in a grand climax, the feet of Mr. Jones flew up, and he fell on his back in front of the astounded Maggie.

"Ill luck comes in battalions." Tom Houston, who, with Rosa, was skating at lightning speed, fell over the fallen Lothario. Three uncouth youths, who were not *au fait* in the skatorial art, followed suit, and for a moment the scene presented nothing more definite than a medley of tumbling arms and legs.

Finally all arose—Mr. Jones last. But what a