

her hauled and yanked all over the rink by that pink-eyed, lop-eared dude, Fred Wagstaff, that's been making up to her lately. He wasn't in it until the cold snap set in, and the infernal skating mania broke out. Lettie wouldn't look at him. But now, just because he can keep his feet on the ice and drag her around she's dead gone on him. Just like the girls, anyway. They have no feeling, and think of nothing but the transitory pleasures of the hour.

"Oh, woman, in our hours of ease, Uncertain, coy, and hard to please, When pain and sickness wring the—"

No, not the brow—much otherwise. The quotation is not so apt as I thought it was.

"Oh, George, I do so wish you could skate!" said Lettie yesterday afternoon. "You've no idea how delightful it is to glide along the frozen surface like a bird swooping with outstretched pinion."

"I can skate well enough," I said, foolishly.

"Oh, then, do come over to the rink to-night. All the girls are going. Fred Wagstaff and Henry Peters were there last night and went all round with us, and—why, what's the matter, George?"

"Oh, nothing. Only you seem mighty fond of Fred Wagstaff's society lately. You used to say you couldn't bear him."

"How silly, George! I never see him anywhere except at the rink. And he does skate like an angel. But it would be far nicer if you would come."

"Why, I used to be a splendid skater when I was a boy. I'll call for you to-night at eight sure."

Now how could I help it? I didn't want to let that whelp cut me out with Lettie, not if I could prevent it. And besides, how could I know that I couldn't skate until I tried?

I procured the instruments of torture, and with some misgivings hied me to the place of execution. Lettie was in high spirits—mine were considerably under proof, as it were. The wretch Wagstaff was there, gliding gracefully over the treacherous element. Somehow it didn't look so easy as I had fancied. I lingered apprehensively over the operation of adjusting the cruel and gleaming steel until Lettie, who was all impatience, called out, "Say, George, are you ever coming? If you don't hurry I shall ask Fred to go round with me."

I braced my courage up for the effort, and struck out cautiously at first. I took several strokes. "Wonder



PAID BY THE HOUR.

LITTLE GIRL—"Oh, dad, did you notice those men; they don't seem to feel the cold at all?"
DAD—"No, my dear; the colder the weather the better they like it. They're plumbers."

ful!" I thought, "I really can skate," when all of a sudden, making a more energetic stroke than I had yet ventured upon, my legs seemed to slip from under me and I assumed a sitting posture on the hard, cold ice. Lettie laughed heartlessly, and the beast Wagstaff, who had been watching my motions with a smile, called out, "Say, old man, that ain't the way to skate. It's a big mistake to strike out with both feet at once, you know."

And then the merry throng laughed again.

I scowled at him and said, "I know how to skate well enough. I just happened to trip over something."

Then I arose somewhat painfully and joined Lettie, who seemed rather shy of letting me accompany her.

"Don't be afraid" I said. "It's some time since I had skates on, but I'll soon get accust—"

I had been frantically trying to keep my balance, but suddenly my skates seemed to tip up in front, and as I felt myself going I clutched at her unthinking, purely with the instinct of self preservation. Down I came with a thud that will echo painfully down the corridors of memory through the coming years, dragging her with me.

I draw a veil over Lettie's indignation at my awkwardness and incompetency, the jeers and merriment of the devotees of the brutal and pernicious sport, and the