



Whether Common or Not

By Wm. M. Metcalfe.

The Strike

Bill Simpkins wuz a worker, somewhere's near 'bount 6 o'clock, sittin' 'round the grocery fire, where he'd talk, and talk, and talk. 'Lowed that he could 'complish wonders 'ith th' cradle an' the plow, An' said maybe, if chance offered he would shorely show us how. But when asked to give a reason fur his lazy, shiftless ways O' jus' never doin' nothin' but a wastin' ov his days, Bill would blink his eyes a minnit then would say as if surprised, "I'm a waitin', boys, on congress, f'r I must be subsidized.

"What's the use o' takin' chances?" Bill would ask in anxious tones. "What's th' use o' wastin' muscle or a rackin' ov yer bones?" Then he'd settle back a grinnin' in th' ol' splint-bottomed chair, One hand reachin' out f'r crackers, tother mussin' up his hair. An' next day he'd keep a loafin' an' th' rest of us would sweat F'r th' clothes that we wuz wearin' an' th' little that we et. "Taint no use o' workin' that way," William Simpkins he surmised; "Send petitions down t' congress an' we'll all git subsidized."

An' at last we got t' thinkin' that perhaps ol' Bill was right, An' we made up a committee f'r t' try an' furnish light On this thing that Bill had mentioned, an' it wasn't very long Till we found him right, by hector, an' th' rest ov us wuz wrong. Ah' we all just took t' loafin'; nary load o' grain we'd haul 'Cause we knowed it didn't pay us, an' we didn't work at all. An' we're goin' t' keep on loafin' till the country's paralyzed Or our trusty old farm wagons, like th' ships, is subsidized.

Some Thoughts on a Variety of Things

It is all right to sit and think about the good times we had when we were young, but when we seek to have fun the same old way we are very apt to be jarred. This is a personal experience. Do you remember what glorious times we used to have during the winter months in the old, old days? Sleighrides, skating parties, taffy-pulls, and all that sort of thing? The other night we sat and thought

about those old skating days. Of course we used to be a fine skater. What middle aged man is there who was not an expert on the ice when he was a boy? We heard a party of young folks skurrying by on their way to the lake, their skates jingling and their merry voices ringing on the frosty air.

Well, having been a fine skater in the old days, and being all alone on this particular evening, we decided to go to the lake and give the young folks of today a few lessons in fancy skating. We did, too—that is, we went to the lake.

Say, it's funny how much harder and slicker the ice is these days than it used to be. We got the skates on all right, but they did not feel just right. They were all-clamps, and we used to skate on skates that were all-straps. The heel strap came up over the instep and gave it a good brace. By the way, do you remember how that old heel strap used to wear a great blister on the outside ankle-bone? We never noticed 'em, of course, until after we got home from the pond, but gracious, how they would hurt then, especially if we had to saw and split a lot of wood for mother!

But this is a digression. We started to tell you how we gave the young folks an exhibition of fancy skating. We gave the exhibition all right. After tottering around a little we tried the "outside edge," at which we used to be particularly good. But legs have a habit of growing unruly as the years go by, unless one keeps them in training. And those unruly legs of ours refused to do as they were told.

The depression we left in the ice will remain there until the final thaw in the spring.

Then we tried the "inside edge," the "dutch roll," the "grapevine twist," the "figure 8," and a few more, but we tried them very cautiously. And caution is not a good thing to use when one wants to do stunts on the ice. One must have nerve, and strike right out. We gave an exhibition, as before remarked, but it was not up to the advance notices. It was very much like the advertised tragedy that is so vilely played that it becomes a farce. It is all right to have people laugh with us, but when we are doing our best it is discomfiting to have people laugh at us.

For the rest of our natural life we are going to be content with sitting by the fire and telling how well we could skate twenty-five or thirty years ago. No more practical demonstrations in ours.

But what a lot of fun it is to sit by the fire and recall those old skating days. Nowadays it often becomes too cold for the young folks to go skating. But it never got too cold in the old days. The colder the better. Remember how we used to build a huge fire on the bank, and then pile a few rails along for the girls to sit on while we fastened on their skates. Gee, how numb our fingers used to get! When they were that numb we could never hold an ax or a saw, but it was nothing to fasten a half-dozen obstinate buckles provided the straps were on "her" skates. Just shut your eyes and see if you can again see an old game of "dare base."

Look out, there goes Dot after one of the prisoners! Crackey, how that girl could skate and dodge! And

how easily Clarence Norris could sneak past our guards and get on our line. Gracious, what a bump you got when you tried to dodge Billy Armstead and collided with Vene Legg!

Remember those old games of "shinney?" Every time you think of that good old game you wonder what people can see in that game of golf.

O, how the old faces come again to view. Laughing eyes, in which the light of boyish and girlish friendship shines, peer at you through the mists of the long, long past. As you sit there the years roll from your shoulders, the silver in your hair fades again to darkness, the wrinkles are ironed out by a magic hand, and the blood grown stagnant with the passing years again leaps through your veins. No wonder you get up feeling like you could again don the skates and do fancy stunts for the boys and girls of today.

God pity the man or the woman who can not sit by the fire and dream of the old, dead days—days when life was life without a care or a responsibility.

The governor had pardoned a man who had been convicted of a crime. The evidence was convincing. There was no doubt of guilt. Yet the governor had exercised clemency, and many men were condemning him.

But out there in that little country village was a grayhaired, widowed mother who was crying for joy, and her withered hand was resting upon the head of the boy who had been given back to her.

"He was a good son, governor," said a sobbing woman as she sat by the desk of the chief executive. "He never gave me a cross word, and he took good care of me. He fell into bad company, and he learned to drink and to gamble. One night, when under the influence of liquor, he got into a quarrel at the gambling table and stabbed a man. He did not deny it. But it was the liquor, governor. Won't you please give him back to me?"

The weeping mother knelt at the feet of the governor, and her sobs shook her weary frame.

"He was always good to me, governor; always good to me. He will still be good to me if you will give him back!"

O, all ye carping critics. You may think you could withstand the pleading of a mother like that—but could you?

Before you condemn the governor, put yourself in his place.

Brain Leaks

A new broom does not sweep clean. A clear conscience needs no press agent.

A pampered stomach is worse than a spoiled child.

A tract to the freezing will not put warmth in their blood.

Some men advocate reform and secretly seek to prevent it.

If we could we would cancel the insurance upon every apartment house where "no children" is the rule.

A man who never has anything to do is not a good man to apply to when you want something important done.

You can do so many favors for a man that he will come to the point when he looks upon them as his just due.

We do not like to see babies too awfully clean and dressed up. It leads us to believe that they are not having a good time.

The easiest thing in the world is to make mistakes; the hardest is to acknowledge them; the next hardest is to profit by them.

Of course it would be dangerous for any nation to knock a chip from Uncle Sam's shoulder, but why should Uncle Sam be so foolish as to carry a chip around on his shoulder?

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