### MY NEPHEW, WILLIE TANNER.

Bert Tanner stood on the bill smong the group of men who had gathered about the one store of the fishing settlecoast, and the ice was still in the Reach. The group were watching the movements of a coot-hunter on an island a mile from the mainland. There was a look of unessiness on Bert's face as he watched the figure crawling among the rocks, and he occasionally cast furtive glances at the them to hear comething that he could not, for Bert was quite deaf.

Bert was said to be only "half-bright" by the natives. He was a silent fellow who never in any way showed resentment at the rude practical jokes played expense. He refused to fish or to lob-

tle, then gathering himself for another but he shook them off. leap when the opportunity came.

he's done fer," said one of the group.

ing it out to sea. The hunter had been cotts. drifting upon one cake for a minute or so, watching his chance to get on the main ice. They saw the gap widen instead of close. The hunter threw his gun shead of him, where it fell upon the main ice; then they saw him remove his coat and throw it after the gua. They watched him gather himself together for a mighty leap, and their hearts stood still. He ross in the air and apparently landed upon the ice in safety. A ringing shout went up from the lusty lungs of the fishermen. It was followed by a shrill cry of despair from over the ice. A chunk of the main ice had broken away and the hunter had fallen through the fissure, disappearing in the black water beneath.

Bert gave a frenzied cry like that of an animal in pain. "It's my nephew, Willie Tanner!" he shricked.

They ran down the steep hill to the shore, but Bert outstripped them all. His thick-soled, clumsy boots, run over at both heels and hard from salt water, seemed to have wings. At the water's edge the others stopped and looked hesitatingly in each other's faces. Bert did not stop. Muttering between his teeth, "My nephew, Willie Tanner," his eyes grown dark with a desperate purpose, he leaped upon the nearest cake, and with one high bound after another reached the broad sheet of solid ice.

The boy struggling in the water had Jack and Anna, isn't there? managed to get his flagers over the edge

of the main ice. Numb with cold and half unconscious, he clung to the ice with the desperation of a drowning man. The ice was pounding and grinding about him, threatening each moment ment. It was early spring on the Maine to crush him and carry him under the great mass. When Bert had gained his footing upon the solid ice he ran swiftly to the dark object clinging to the edge. He pulled him out of the water and tried to stand him on his feet, but he sank down in a limp heap. Willie Tanner was only a half-grown boy, but he was faces of the others, as though expecting not a light load at any time; now he was a dead weight. Bert seemed to have superhuman strength given him, for he picked Willie up as if he had been a child and ran with him to the other edge The weather beaten faces of the men on the shore bianched as they saw Bert upon him or the broad jests made at his steady himself for the first jump on the moving ice cakes. He fell with his ster, but spent his time prowling over burden as he landed, for his old boots the islands after coot, wild duck, and and the weight he was carrying made it other sea birds that came ir. On the almost impossible for him to keep his rare occasions when he spoke it was footing. The cake tipped and sank either of his shot-gun or "my nephew, deeper into the water. The process was Willia Tanner," as he proudly called him. repeated, and then, as the space between "What seems to be ailin' on you, the cakes grew wider, Bert jumped with Bert?" some one shouted in Bert's ear, reckless desperation. At last there was noting his restlessness. Bert only look- only water between the man crouching ed foolish and shook his head. A sharp with his burden on the ice and the explanation broke from one of the men. shore. The men looking on were help-Bert heard it, and a look of fear came less for there was not a boat within two into his vacant blue eyes as he stared miles. They knew Bert could not swim, into their faces. A cracking sound of and the whole mass was moving so rapidly several seconds' duration was Leard. out to sea that they had to walk quickly This was followed by shorter, sharper to keep abreast of the two on the ice. sounds. The broad expanse of glitter- Bert looked around helplessly; then he ing ice between the island and the main began to pull off his boots. He drew land began to move slowly, ripping and the unconscious boy to the edge nearest tearing itself loose from the shore with a the shore and let himself down into the noise like a succession of pistol-shots. water on the opposite side, clinging to The hunter on the island had grasped the edge with his fingers. After a few the situation as quickly as the group on gasps from the first shock, he began to the hill. The watchers saw him, gun in tread water. Slowly, inch by inch, the hand, bound over the rocks to the shore. strange raft with its passenger neared They saw him hesitate, and then jump the shore. Once Bert was able to touch from the shore upon a cake of ice that bottom, hands were eagerly stretched was drifting slowly by. The men out to help him, but he did not let go watched breathlessly. There was a silly until the cake grated upon the beach. grin of terror on Bert's face. The hunter He dropped weakly to his knees at the jumped from cake to cake, drifting a lit- water's edge. Some started to lift him

"'I'end to my nephew, Willie Tanner,' "Ef he slips off one o' them chunks he gasped. More than one pair of eyes filled with tears as after a moment's rest Slowly the hunter was making his the foolish hero, wearing his usual foolperilous way to the main sheet of ice; a ish grin, staggered up the hill towards leap or two more and he would reach it. home, as though to escape the ridicule The mass was moving swifter, for the he felt must surely follow his action. wind had freshened from the west, driv- Caroline Lockhart in December Lippin-

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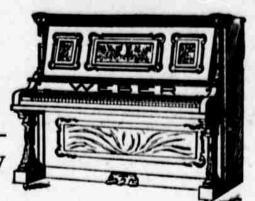
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