

The Altoona Tribune.

McCRUM & DERN.

[INDEPENDENT IN EVERYTHING.]

EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

VOL. 9.

ALTOONA, PA., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1864.

NO. 38.

THE ALTOONA TRIBUNE.
H. C. DERN,
EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.
Published weekly, except on Sundays and public holidays.
Per annum, payable in advance, \$1.50.
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Choice Poetry.

MY BROTHER'S GRAVE.

BY HENRY J. HOWARD.
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THE PHANTOM SKATER.

BY CHARLES D. GARDETT.
John Phillips was, and is one of the most accomplished skaters I ever saw. Morning, noon and night, through every skating season, found Jack skimming over the glossy surface of the river that ran by the foot of his garden, or whirling in wondrous curves and gyrations manifold within a magic circle of a few yards in diameter, whose periphery was closed by a triple line of admiring spectators. He seemed to live on the ice. People who wanted to be witty insinuated that ice was his meat and drink, and that he had been seen making a hearty lunch off a good-sized block of it, washed down by a draught of the clear, cold water of which it was composed. I have too often lunched with Jack off cold chicken and ale, however, in the noontide interval of his skating, not to know that this was pure invention.
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Perhaps the most graceful and accomplished artist, after Jack, was a charming young damsel of some seventeen summers (and winters, for every season must and will count in the race of life), by name Fanny Leyton, who lived in the cottage lowest down the river, nearly half a mile below Phillips's house. Fanny and Jack often ran races, and it was a doubtful matter which was the swifter of the two on a straight ahead match, though Jack far surpassed her in the arabesque, if I may so call them, evolutions and figures of the art. My readers will not be surprised to learn that Jack Phillips was desperately smitten with Miss Fanny; but it will give them pain, I fear, to know that she looked coldly (even in summer) upon his passion. What the reason was I never knew, nor did he, I believe. Probably it was simply one of those mysterious causes that seem incident to maidenhood. At all events it was a fact, and to Jack a melancholy one, though he bore up under it manfully, and, believing that a faint heart never won fair lady, kept hoping and persevering in his suit with praiseworthy ardor.

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"Not a bit of it, mother!" cried Jack, cheerily. "I'm used to it, you know. And haven't I that splendid worsted jacket you knit me? I'd defy Lapland in that jacket."
"They've been cutting ice up the river to-day, Jack," said Kate.—
"Look out for air-holes."
"Pooh! as if I didn't know all about it," answered Jack, chucking his sister playfully under the chin. "I'll jump them, my dear, if I don't see them in time to go round."
Being aware, from experience, that remonstrance would be useless, neither Mrs. Phillips nor Kate volunteered any further remarks of that nature; and, at ten o'clock, Jack bade them both good night, and, apprelling himself in skating guise, went merrily forth to his solitary ice frolic.

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Very well! Here goes for a chase, my fine fellow!"
And, putting forth an additional amount of strength, he increased his speed so far and quickly as to gain a hundred yards in a moment upon the flying phantom. But the other, apparently perceiving this again, immediately increased his own pace, and, without materially widening the distance between them, sped onward with a rapidity that defied Jack's utmost efforts to surpass. In a moment the form had entered the deep shadows beyond the bend, and Jack lost sight of it. In another moment he again beheld it flitting across a space of moonlight, still the same distance ahead, to become again lost almost instantaneously in the next line of darkness. In this manner, through gloom and through glitter, the chase continued with wonderful swiftness for nearly two miles, neither pursuer nor pursued gaining upon each other.
What the emotions of the phantom were (for Jack had begun involuntarily to call it thus to himself) of course, I cannot pretend to say; but Jack Phillips's mind was aroused up to a pitch of excitement that sent the blood coursing hotly through his veins, and caused a profuse perspiration to start forth upon his bosom and brow in spite of the bitter cold. He, however, was utterly unconscious of this, and felt neither cold, nor heat, nor fatigue. His whole soul was possessed with the one fixed resolve of overtaking the phantom; he neither saw nor heard anything else but the fleeing form and the echoes that rolled along the glib ice from the skate strokes; nor did he relax his speed for an instant, whether in shade or in moonshine, nor give other heed to his course than to make it as straight and swift as that of an arrow launched by a stout archer from an ash bow!

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Help, however, was at hand! The phantom had heard the shriek and seen Jack disappear, and, swift as a swallow's flight, it sped to the rescue. On the very edge of the air-hole it halted, and, rapidly tearing off a long cashmere scarf, with which its throat and shoulders were protected, planted its skates firmly athwartwise on the ice, and flung the end of the scarf, with skilful aim, right into Jack's face, crying at the same time, in a clear, sweet voice—
"Hold hard, Jack, and never fear! Now for it!"
That voice gave Jack new life. A sudden glow seemed to gather round his heart, and to start the warm blood afresh through all his stiffening frame. He caught the scarf in his teeth, and then, grasping it with his left hand, was enabled, without great strain upon his rescuer's strength, to climb upon the solid ice, hoarsely ejaculating, "God bless you, Fanny!" and instantly lost consciousness.
There was not a moment to lose. Assistance must be had at once, or Jack had only been saved from one death to succumb to another almost as speedy. There stood a small cottage on the shore of the stream, inhabited by a ferryman. To this cottage Fanny Leyton, brave and devoted girl, and no longer the provoking phantom, flew rather than skated. A few heavy blows with a large stone soon awoke the inmates, ten hurried words told the tale, and in a few minutes Jack Phillips was stripped, wrapped in blankets, and laid on a mattress before a blazing fire, while Enoch, the ferryman, concocted a powerful hot gin toddy, his panacea against all fleshy ills, for his slowly reviving guest.
Fanny Leyton, having sent Enoch, by land, to her own house with news of the affair, heroically re-buckled on her skates, and started as swiftly as ever up the river to bear the tidings to Mrs. Phillips and Kate. In an hour Jack was as well as ever, apparently, and took a second toddy with decided relish, and in less than two hours later, Mrs. Phillips's carriage, with Kate and all sorts of remedies and clothing within, drove up to the ferryman's door, and carried Jack home.

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"Yes, with pleasure," replied the kind and obliging neighbor.
When ready to return, he found his wagon heavily loaded; the trunk proved to be a large and well filled travelling trunk, quite heavy, and it was quite certain, on the principle of antecedent probabilities, that he would never get a cent for his trouble; so, seeing that it was safe at the hotel, he drove home. As he approached the residence of the Governor the latter went out and opened the gate, expecting the trunk would be taken in and left at the door. The farmer told him he was not coming in.
"But," says the Governor, "did you not get my trunk?"
"No, you didn't ask me to get it."
"Did not?" What would you call it I asked you?" thundered the exasperated Governor.
"Why, you asked me to look and see if it was there. I did so, and you will find it safe there any day by just driving over to Princeton-Good day, Governor, good day."
Suffice it to say, the Governor did not ask that neighbor to do any more errands for him.

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"Pete, how does your father hamper his sheep to prevent them from jumping over fences?" "Oh! that's easy enough; he just cuts a hole through one hind leg, and sticks the other one through it, and then puts the fore legs through that for a pin."