

BY H. PERCY ASHLEY.

SOME said Jim Flagner was an ice-yacht crank, but he was only pertinacious. He had been beaten twice by the cracks of Silver Lake by larger and more powerful boats, but he was undaunted to the point of obstinacy in his belief that, with right principles and a perfect balance of canvas and hull comparison, he could yet win. To think with him was to act, and the result was a medium-sized up-to-date ice-yacht from the hands of an expert. The construction comprised a long backbone of forty-one feet, with the natural spring to the basswood and with a thick curved runner-plank of butternut, set well back, with the mast stepped four feet forward of the runner strap. The mainsail was cross cut and the end of the boom ended at the middle of the steering box, and she carried a small jib. This, he felt confident, insured perfect handling and windward work. All halyards were pliable steel, set up with jigs. The mast was well stayed and trussed, and no alarm could be caused in a stiff blow. This type of ice-yacht was a revelation to the racing men at Silver Lake.

He had entered his boat, and it was the subject of a very animated and excited argument among the Race Committee of the Silver Lake Ice-Yacht Club whether or no it should be allowed in Class A in the race that was to take

place next day for the championship of the lake.

"For my part," remarked old Commodore Amley, Chairman of the committee, "I would let that cheeky young kid go in the first class, and you will find, shipmates, that he will have the conceit taken out of him with a short turn. Jim will be like a young bear, with all his troubles to come."

After a little more discussion it was moved unanimously to bring the sun over the fore-yard, and it was also decided to allow the entry of Jim's boat, the *Iceicle*, in "Class A."

The Silver Lake Ice-Yacht Club was composed of twenty-five of the leading members of the town of Greenburgh, situated at the head of the lake. The fleet of ice-boats numbered over twenty, running from 16 to 60 feet, from jib-stay to standard. The larger ones were built with two side-strips, narrow backbone, and comparatively little space between the cutting surface. With their large jibs and liberal main-booms protruding ten and twelve feet over the standard, the boats would act quite brutish in a stiff blow; but by the Silver Lake standard they were the acme of perfection.

The Silver Lake Ice-Yacht members had not seen the new *Iceicle* under sail, as Jim had made his tuning-up spins early in the morning, before the crowd

was active, and he felt perfectly certain that he could go with it in Class A, composed of 58- and 60-foot yachts—and win, too.

The morning of the race broke cold and clear, without a breath of wind. The sky at the horizon seemed to be cut out of cold blue steel, and the metallic air made the few clouds look very far away.

Oh, for wind! sighed Jim, as the yacht moved toward the club-house at a snail's pace. "I am sure we shall have all you want, sir, later in the day," remarked Jim's man, Andrew, who was stowed away in the port compartment of the saddle-cockpit.

The club-house was gay with bright bunting and the ice in its vicinity crowded with skaters and fur-clad visitors, who had driven from adjacent towns to see the struggle on the ice-bound lake. Capt. John Black had held the championship for two successive years with his powerful 58-foot side-bar sloop *Snow Bird*.

As the *Icicle* ran up to the starting line, and was thrown, shaking, head to, in the wind's eye, a crowd of Jim's curious club-mates gathered around the craft.

"Humph," remarked the Commodore *sotto voce*; "she is very pretty as to polish and silver and plated iron work, but they are no more to that hull than a ladder. Just see that mast stepped away forward of the runner-plank, and the runners are heavy enough for a boat twice her size; besides, she has no side-bars. Then her jib isn't bigger than a good-sized pocket handkerchief. Why, Kid," he continued, turning to Jim, "you have not got enough sail to drive her slow."

The Commodore had yet to fully recognize the value of the scientific problem of the center of balance of sail area, beam, out-board weight and driving power required for an ice-yacht to be a true racer. There are not many of the kid-glove sailormen who are competent to solve these most difficult problems.

It was decided to start the race at eight bells for Class A, the course to be a triangular one, each leg being three miles in length, to be sailed over twice; total distance, eighteen miles.

As the time for the start approached, the wind had increased to a light sailing breeze, but what caused Tim's heart to

bound with joy was a rugged fringe of clouds piling up on the horizon. Just before the start Jim bent a watch tackle to his pliable steel peak halyard. It caused a smile to run over the committee's faces. The Commodore jokingly remarked to the timekeeper that "Jim, the Kid, and his man had not strength to sway up the peak halyard." This caused a general laugh at Jim's expense.

The positions of the four contestants were drawn for, the *Snow Bird* getting No. 1 (the windward and most desirable), *Snow Flake* No. 2, *Avalanche* No. 3, while the *Icicle* got No. 4, being the leeward, and the poorest of the lot.

At 11:45 the four yachts were shoved smartly in line, headed in the wind's eye.

"Are you all ready?" called the Chairman. Crack! reverberated the sharp report of the pistol at 12:00, as the boats were shoved a rap full and were sailed close-hauled on the port tack, headed for flag stake No. 1.

With the light wind and large sail area, the *Snow Bird* swept ahead of the fleet, closely followed by *Snow Flake*. The *Avalanche* blanketed the *Icicle* in great shape.

It was a cut-and-dried thing that the *Avalanche* should hang to Jim and bother the *Icicle* on her windward quarter, while the *Snow Bird* and *Snow Flake* could divide the race between them.

The four yachts held the same relative positions for the first leg, the first two yachts splitting tacks and the *Avalanche* harassing the *Icicle* at every tack.

The next leg was a beam wind and then a dead run to the home line.

By the end of the second leg Captain Black was two and one-half miles ahead of Jim. A vicious puff caused the *Icicle* to rear slightly, giving fair warning of the coming blow.

On the third leg the *Icicle* overhauled the two leading yachts. On they flew in the momentarily increasing gale, *Snow Bird* still leading, but rearing somewhat, while the *Icicle*, with her small balanced sail area, moved steadily on, her windward shoe scarcely three inches above the ice.

The yachts rushed onward, the runners sending out showers of spray ice and humming like animated hives of bees. The *Snow Bird* plunged and

reared, getting more and more brutal in the increasing gale.

It was neck-and-neck at the second round of the first mark. *Snow Flake* at this point parted her throat halyard block, and dropped out of the race. *Avalanche* was far in the rear.

With a scream through the wire rigging, the snow squall pounced upon them. "Give that peak jib drift," shouted Jim to his man Andrew.

The head of the sail flopped wildly, and with the small jib she still had true balance of duck, and tore over the second leg, with the gale on her beam, at the rate of over a mile a minute.

A cry of terror rang out from the *Snow Flake*. "Hang on for your lives, crew! Good God, give me ice room!"

The *Snow Bird* had taken the bit in her mouth and bolted,

With the increased speed of the *Icicle*, she was just able to keep three boat lengths ahead of her larger rival. The *Snow Bird* reared sharply in the air and the two runner-board men were lifted fourteen feet from the frozen surface. The lee shoe did not cut the ice, and as she flew sideways as well as ahead, the situation was appalling. Luckily the

extreme lee end of the *Snow Bird's* runner-board struck shell ice, jumping her sharply in the wind's eye and about, nearly throwing the crew from the yacht.

The' fury of the squall had passed and the *Icicle* was a half-mile ahead at the second flag stake, with a slashing sailing breeze over her stern.

On the boats flew, on the finishing leg, the *Icicle* wearing, dropping her peak and gybing, while the *Snow Flake* lost by being compelled, every few seconds, to come about at each turn.

Like a pair of frightened sea-gulls, in long, graceful, undulating curves, snake fashion, they flew to the home line with a dead free wind. As the *Icicle* rushed over the finish line, her rival, nearly double her size, was over two miles astern, and Jim Flagner, with his peerless sloop *Icicle*, had won the coveted championship and the silver loving cup of the Silver Lake Ice-Yacht Club.

A cheer went up, which was echoed and re-echoed by the hills, for the plucky owner of the *Icicle* and his daring struggle against overwhelming racing odds. Science had beaten mere brute force, as it always will.

HOMeward BOUND AT CHRISTMASTIDE.

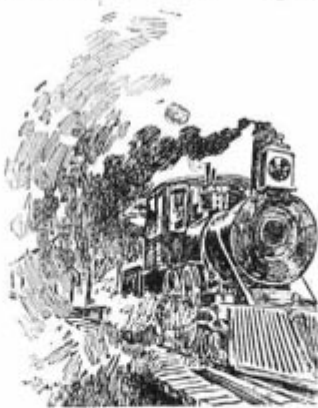
Like a living thing the straight
rails sing

A high, exulting strain;
The coaches reel o'er the shin-
ing steel

As we thunder across the plain.
Through night, through day,
we leap away

With rattle and crash and
roar,

And our pulses leap as we home-
ward sweep,
And Christmas comes once



The smoke flung back on the
shining track,

Like a banner floats and furls:
With a leap and bound, like an
unleashed hound,

The engine forward hurls.
Beside us fly the field and sky
And the woods with echoed
roar,

And our hearts beat fast as the
miles sweep past,
For Christmas comes once
more!

DOROTHY DEANE.

