SKATE SAILING

By DAN BEARD

THERE is nothing new in the idea of skate sailing; it is as old as skates, and dates back to the time when our ancestors with bones of animals bound to their feet spread their ample cloaks and allowed the wind to waft them over the surface of the ice.

But since that time the art has progressed, keeping pace with the evolution of the modern steel skate from its rude bone ancestor. Some time in the eighties skate sailing was first brought to the attention of the general public by a series of articles upon this subject which appeared in various periodicals, and we then became familiar with the Danish square sail and top sail, the long double, or two-man, sail of the Norwegians, the English lateen sail, with the mast made fast to the skater's leg, the handsome double-diamond sail invented by Charles Ledyard Norton (Fig. 2) and many others of minor importance.

As a rule, the foreign designs are as clumsy, impractical, and as much out of date as the forms of government under which they flourish.

The gravest error of the foreign skate sails is that most of them must be lashed fast to the body of the skater; that this is a serious fault will never be doubted by a beginner when he finds himself traveling at a breath-taking speed with the wind at his back and an air-hole dead ahead of him.

Fig. 2.

SAILS WHICH CAN BE CARRIED OVER ONE'S SHOULDER

at a moment's notice, may be cast aside without injury to sail or skater, and such sails are not only best adapted to the wants of the beginner, but are so easily handled, that they lend themselves readily to every impulse of the subconscious mind of the expert.

With the conservatism of the Old World, the English bind a spar to the leg of the skater to support their lateen sail, but that spar is only essential to them because a fixed mast is fixed in their mind. Fig. 1 shows a lateen sail which may be carried on the shoulder of the skater, bound to his person only by the pressure of the wind and the grip of his hands.

By unlashing the spreader the sail may be done up in a small roll for transportation, the spars being wrapped up in the canvas.

Make the two yards, or booms, the same length, and let that length be governed by the dimensions of the yacht, *i.e.,* the skater. This is best ascertained by experiment; take two cane fish-poles, tie the lower ends together and hold them in the position of Fig. 1; you may thus get the length of the spreader, Figs. 3 and 4.

Stout cane or bamboo will do for the spars, and even light cane may be made to answer the purpose if a number of spars are added, arranged like the ribs of a fan, making what canoe men call a bat sail.

As the strength of the prevailing winds varies in different sections of the country so must the strength of the spars vary, light for the Ohio and Mississippi Valley and stout for the East and West. Screw-eyes may be fastened securely to the ends of the spars or small holes drilled through them for the line which is to lash the sail in place (Figs. 5 and 6.) As may be seen by Fig. 4 the sprit or spreader is made with a crotch at each end to hold the spars, and is also supplied with holes for twine with which to lash the sprit in place when spreading the two spars apart.

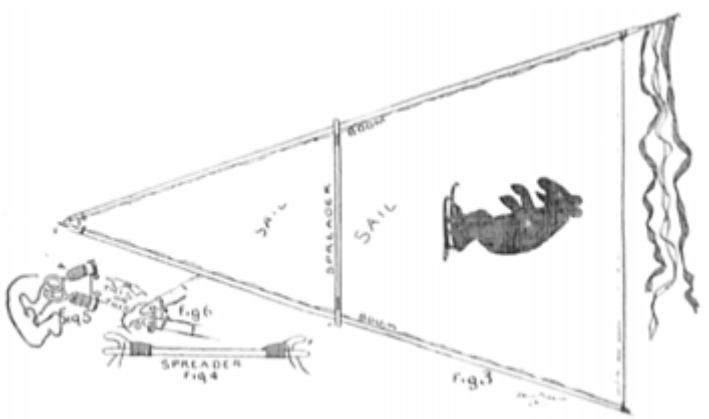
If the spars are made of good straight grained wood let them be one and a half inches thick in the middle, but somewhat lighter at the ends. After they are finished put the spreader in place, lash the two lower ends together and lay them over sail-cloth on the floor (as in Fig. 3), and cut the sail according to the pattern thus made.

When cutting the sheeting allow enough margin for a wide hem, also make some triangular pieces to reinforce the clews (corners), where loops of stout twine must be sewed.

Use any cloth suitable for canoe sails, heavy twilled sheeting is possibly the best. Brightly colored sails always present a charming appearance on the ice.

The sails may be white with colored bands or wholly white with the private insignia of the owner cut from "Turkey red" and stitched in one corner, as shown in Figs. 1, 3, 7, 8, 10 and 11. A properly made sail should have "grommets" (eyelets) sewed in the hem about six inches apart along the spar lines, but some authorities say that the eyes of common hooks-and-eyes make a good substitute. It is possible to lash the sail to the spars by passing the twine through holes punched in the hem; but such unworkmanlike sails are only excusable when one's time is limited.

A bunch of party-colored ribbons (Fig.



3) makes an appropriate pennant for a skate sail and look gay streaming in the wind.

THE CAPE VINCENT RIG,

shown by Figs. 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 is even a more simple one than the lateen just described. The main spar in the present instance is a long bow, and the spreader or sprit might, from its position, well be called the arrow. make the boom or bow 1/$^{1}/_{2}$ inches in diameter in the middle; let it be anywhere from 9 feet to 12 feet long, tapering to about an inch in diameter at the extremities. Make it smooth and round, and bore holes, large enough for the lashing, at each end; make the spreader or sprit to reach from the collar of your coat to the tops of your shoes. At one end of the sprit make a crotch similar to those shown by Fig. 4, and let the spreader be larger at the jaw or crotch than at the other end. Cut the triangle sail shown in the diagram Fig. 8; have all three sides sewed with a substantial hem and the clews (corners) reinforced by extra cloth.

The small end of the spreader is fitted with a hole and twine, as shown by Fig. 9; by this means it is lashed securely to the clew at the point of that triangle. The luff is lashed to the main boom or spar as already described for the lateen sail.

To set the sail draw your long bow until the crotch or jaws of your arrow-head can be sprung under the boom and lashed in place with a few turns of the twine around the boom. Fig. 7 shows the sail set, scudding before the wind; Fig. 10 is on the port tack and Fig. 11 on the starboard tack. The same rules which govern sail-boats govern skate sailors, and, like swimming, the only possible way to learn to handle one of the canvas kites we call sails is by experimental practice.

Fortunately the falls one gets when going at high speed are almost invariably sliding falls and seldom result in bruises or even scratches. In picking up your sail in a stiff breeze do not get to the leeward of it or you will be tumbled over. A roofer on one of the sky-scrapers in New York City lost his life by not observing this rule; he stood to the leeward as he picked up a sheet of copper, and despite his frantic efforts to save himself was blown from the roof. Fortunately in your case the worst that can happen is a tumble on the ice.

Of course it is understood that small ponds and rinks, however handy they may be for figure skating, are not the proper field for skate sailing. I have had so many injuries regarding the proper location of the sort of ice field for skate sailing that it is well to state here that the frozen inlets and bays along Long Island shores, the Hudson River and the small lakes with which this country abounds are all good fields for the skate sailor. Mr. Langdon Gibson, who was with Lieutenant Peary on one of his Polar expeditions, tells me that even in that country the skating is good, and in early winter smooth black ice extends along the coast for miles and miles as far as the eye will reach, forming an ideal skating field, which, for extent, smoothness and safety, surpasses anything in the United States. From which we see the skate sailor's field extends from the Polar seas down to the neighborhood of Mason and Dixon's line, and, at times, some distance below it. I learned to skate in the State of Kentucky, and, as far as my memory goes, we had better skating there than is usual around New York City, where the snow so often covers the ice.

Along the Ohio River the mercury at times drops below zero, which all must allow is cold enough for skate sailing.