

What Will Our Oarsmen Do ?

By J. T. STIRRETT

ATENTION of Canadian oarsmen is directed annually towards three sets of contests, those at home, those in Europe and those in the United States.

For the last three seasons, followers of the sport have centred their interest in the performances of the three eight-oared crews, one from the Ottawa Rowing Club and two from the Argonaut Rowing Club, which went to England in quest of the elusive Grand Challenge Cup, presented annually to the champions of the world. There should be no flagging of enthusiasm this season. Robert Dibble, of the Don Rowing Club, will try to win the Diamond Sculls, which all Canadian scullers, since the time of Scholes, have failed to secure. It is also probable that an eight-oared crew from the Winnipeg Rowing Club will enter the Grand Challenge contests at Henley. If the crew goes to England it will be stroked by Riley, who stroked the four which won the Stewards' Cup at Henley a few years ago. Last year, this crew easily won the senior championship of Canada from the Argonauts and Detroit. The Winnipeg crew is composed of men of different physique from those who made up the Ottawa and Argonaut crews in previous years. Ottawa and Argos filled their shells with bone and muscle. In rowing language, they "secured the beef." A wise provision was this, too, in the opinion of experts who call the sluggish, shallow Thames "a strong man's course." The Winnipeggers, however, did not strike the observer as heavyweights. They were long and strong, gaunt and tough, like the old timber wolves who used to howl about Lake Manitoba; and, when we remember that the Stewards' Cup four were of the same grizzled and hungry appearance, hope stirs that these elongated strips of whalebone may win the Cup.

In the Diamond Sculls contest, Dibble should not be easily beaten. He is a rugged sculler, and the sticky Thames should not sap him. He has stamina, for he swept away most of the United States sculling championships in one afternoon at Boston last season. Finally, he has great courage, the quality which wins most rowing races. It has been reported that Culver, of Winnipeg, will compete, but this seems improbable, for, although he is a finished sculler, he is not rated among the first class men on this continent.

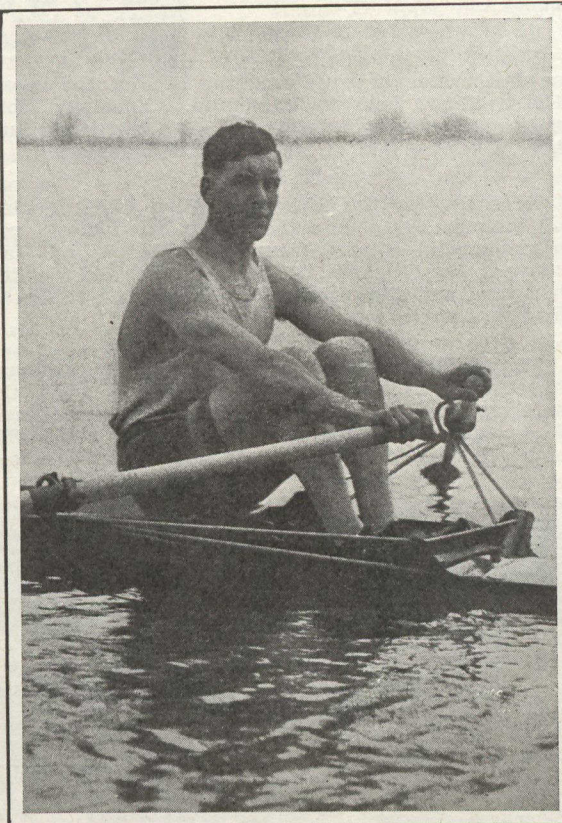
Canadian regattas give promise of stirring contests. The Argonaut Rowing Club, which has concentrated the energies of its best members on the British Henley and the Olympic during the last two years, will turn its attention to the task of regaining the Canadian championships, lost last year, when the Argonauts' colours were preceded in two out of the three final eights races. In some fours, too, the Argos were beaten, and in all the sculling races, so they have considerable lost water to regain. It is probable that they will have four eight-oared crews in training, heavy senior, light senior, first junior and second junior.

ROWING has languished in Ottawa since the retirement of Harvey Pulford; they had the men, the boats, the club, but something was wrong last year. Both Ottawas and Britannias should make a much better showing this season, especially as the Interprovincial Regatta will be held on the Ottawa River. The last Interprovincial, held at Hamilton, justified rowing men in forming the new association. Its object was to stimulate interest in rowing by holding a big regatta after the regular season was completed in a different city every year. The Canadian Henley is fixed at St. Catharines, a convenient place for Toronto, Hamilton, London and St. Catharines clubs, but not so convenient for Ottawa, Montreal, Winnipeg and the Maritime Provinces. The first regatta at Hamilton created much interest and furnished plenty of good sport, as the contestants in the various races were in fine condition after the strenuous season. By holding it in Montreal next year, Halifax the next, or Winnipeg the next, and giving other cities the privilege in their turn, local oarsmen, who might not have possessed the assurance to compete at the National Regatta, will have an opportunity of proving their skill. If rowing reaches a higher state of perfection in the Maritime Provinces by means of the Interprovincial Association, no better results could be attained. It has been a matter of regret that the Maritime Provinces have not turned out more crack crews. There is no finer course in the world than that of the "Arm" in Halifax Harbour, and Scotch oatmeal should produce much rowing bone and sinew. Good oarsmen have been produced, it is true, but not in such profusion as the physique and sea-going habits of the Blue Noses promise.

The Lachine Club, of Montreal, under the coaching of Mr. Sydney Smith, made a very creditable showing last season and should be reckoned upon as formidable opponents for the Canadian championships.

The Winnipeggers, if they do not go to England, will probably defend the honours which they won so easily last season at the Canadian Henley. Detroit crews are always near the finish at Port Dalhousie and will send strong crews this year.

The Pacific Coast rowing clubs confine their attention largely to sculling, and, at the moment of writing, do not seem to possess a sculler of the first rank.



Mr. Robert Dibble, of the Don Rowing Club, Toronto, present single scull champion of Canada, who will compete this year at Henley for the first time.

The National Championships of the United States, which will be decided at Philadelphia, in August, will cause some of the keenest racing witnessed in

many years. Captain Joe Wright, of the Argonauts, wants to win as many as possible. And the Dons, of Toronto, may be as successful in the sculling events this season as they were last season. Duluth has been the rising star in the rowing world. Its crews tested their mettle against Winnipeg, obtaining much valuable information by the process. The eight-oared championship of the United States is held at present by Duluth, which wrested the trophy from the picked crews of the country at Boston. As it is seldom that the championship goes to the Western States, it is certain that the powerful Eastern clubs, such as the Athletics, of New York; the Vespers, of Philadelphia, the Detroits or the Pennsylvanians will make the most determined efforts to recover it. The Argonauts should beat the pick of them. In the sculling events, Thomas Findley, of the Dons, is probably the best man in America, barring Dibble, who may or may not compete, according to his luck at Henley.

So much for the race winners. Winning races is by far the most spectacular side of rowing, but it is by no means the most important. All over Canada, everything considered, the regattas held by the clubs have the most far-reaching results. The club regatta is open only to members. It gives the beginner his chance. If he has the brawn and skill, he is put in line for promotion. If he has neither of these essentials for racing crews, he has his fun, anyway. At the Spring Regatta of the Argonaut Rowing Club last year, eighty men competed. Only a few of them will ever make the first eight; but they all learn to row, and lay a solid foundation on which to build years of future enjoyment. In the last stages, racing is a stern business. It means plain diet, abstinence from many harmless indulgences, severe physical trials and singing nerves. The big race itself is a mighty thrill, but often thrills are dangerous. But the club regatta race is a hilarious affair, with upsets and splashing and "crab-catching." On the whole it is a good example of real sport, and it is a more creditable thing for a club to have fifty men enjoying a private regatta, than eight men drawn grim and taut in a public race (if they cannot have both the fifty and the eight), which is the ideal state of affairs.

When the Geese Fly North

By ARCHIE P. McKISHNIE

(See Front Cover)

THROUGHOUT the night the world of bog, and marsh and shallows has slept with a feeling of insecurity. Spring has gnawed down through the gleaming fethers or the water-courses so that tiny streamlets trail their frost-blackened margins with white, clinging fingers. It is the hour preceding dawn. The night winds are sighing themselves to rest; lisping whispers of strengthening currents drift up to mock their weakening voices.

Dawn finds the low-lying world wrapped in silence. The currents have eaten the life from the jagged-fanged ice that tried to fight them back, and now rush down the polished grooves without murmur or song. The winds are dead. All that morning finds as she shoulders her course through the cloud-banked east is marsh-locked desolation, and the soul of Spring rising in billowy folds of mist to meet her; this and silence.

The vapory clouds lift and fluctuate and drift upward as the greying face of night dips behind the far hills; one by one the fading stars blink themselves out from the lighting skies. Across the dead face of the marshland grotesque shapes grow up and tower menacingly above the baby grasses born in the night, rush-clumps and dwarf trees thus magnified into giant proportions by the shifting bog-mists. Over all rests the great hush of solitudes.

Suddenly that gripping hush is broken. Far down the aerial track of the lighting skies rings out the clarion notes of the grey sky-voyagers, the call of the wild geese flying north to the old feeding grounds. Clear and musical that throaty call is hurled from the veteran leader of the wedge-shaped flock to be echoed all along the line by the strong-winged followers who have learned to trust to his leadership.

"Honkey-honk, honkey-honk, honkey-honk." At the sound the marsh-grasses stir, the sullen ice groans and moves slowly out on the current that has mastered it, the drab marsh-scape assumes a look of waking life.

The cries of the frantic voyagers grow up closer, more distinct through the lifting dawn, until that speeding wedge stands out against a background of rosy mauve; closer, closer, until the whining whistle of strong wings comes to the watcher, and between the long-drawn notes of the wild birds he hears the little muttered calls of assurance from the leader and the low answers of his followers.

That watchful old gander has piloted his flock many long leagues in search of the big, northern marsh-field, and the flock has followed him trustingly as all day long, day after day, he has formed the apex of that swift-moving triangle as it sped the

track of the sky at the rate of sixty miles or more an hour. He has breasted and split the air-currents for them, kept vigilant watch for them, guided them, assured them by low-voiced calls when, weary with the long flight, they have faltered a little in the line, and finally, at close of day, has led them down to safe feeding-fields.

He has watched while they fed, standing a little apart from them with grey body erect and long neck stretched high as his sharp eyes probed the reedy grounds in search of danger-signs. He has not fed until after they had fed and settled down with throaty murmurs to preen their wind-buffed feathers and rest.

Now the long flock are speeding north again. As the mauve in the sky deepens to crimson, the grey leader gives a call that rings far out across the drab world of bog and water. He has sighted the far-stretching shallows that means their long journey done.

Now, wild and clamorous, ring out the cries of the birds as they voice their gladness; the long, double line of wings which move in perfect unison fan the air a little quicker as the old leader twists and drops closer to the black field beneath.

FAR down, just outside a clump of rushes, the big gander has sighted some of his own kind and has heard their answering calls when he sent forth the welcome tidings to his flock. Now he twists closer in towards the rush-clump and honks again and the decoy geese below stretch their long necks upward and send him and his an invitation to settle among them.

The big flock is sweeping in now, sweeping closer, closer to the rush hide in which crouches the shooter, hoping and waiting. Three hundred yards from the blind the big birds pitch and come down and in against the light breeze on strong-set wings.

The shooter braces himself and lifts the heavy goose-gun, but he is to take no toll of the birds that have faced dangers to get back to their own. Just outside of the danger zone, the watchful old leader of the flock has scented danger. With a wild honk he twists upward and out, his frightened flock clamouring in his wake.

Higher and higher the wild geese ascend until far beneath them the wide expanse of marsh-land sweeps like a great plain dotted with shallow lakes and veined with white water-courses, and just as the sun lifts above the scraggy woods far eastward, the old gander leads his weary, hungry followers down to the big mucklands where there is food and safety.

The wild geese have gone north.