

* * The Story Page. * *

The Swift Sport, Ice-Boating.

BY JUDSON KEMPTON.

Baseball goes with a hot summer day, football with a leaden autumn sky, snow-shoeing with a white world, piled into drifts; but, when the word "ice-boat" is mentioned, any one who has ever enjoyed the sport sees again in imagination the wide frozen lake, steel-colored, dashed, perhaps, with thin streaks of snow; and he gasps involuntarily, and seems to shrink for warmth's sake into his smallest bodily compass, as he thinks of speeding, shooting, flying—select your swiftest verb—through the frosty air at the rate of fifty, fifty-five, sixty miles an hour!

Ice-boating is certainly the swiftest sport, and an ice-boater should bear as his heraldic symbol a swallow flying with the gale. For the speed of the ice-boat is greater than the rate of the wind. This seems at first impossible, but a little reflection will show that it is true. The three smooth steel runners of the ice-boat on the level ice cause practically no friction, so that, when she is running directly before the wind, her speed would be equal to the rate of the wind, gaining little, probably, by her momentum; but, when she veers to the right or left so that the wind is "on her quarter," the ice-boat moves across the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle, and her speed will be as much greater than that of the wind as the hypotenuse is greater than the side of such a triangle.

(Who would ever think, says my high-school reader, that geometry would help a fellow sail an ice-boat?)

Of course there is a limit to the application of this rule. As the ice-boater "keeps her off" farther and farther, the big skates, her runners, begin to cut the ice, to keep from sliding sideways; and this means friction which operates against our law of velocity; but this much is sure, that it is possible with a moderate wind to get a terrific speed.

So little has been written about ice-boating that it is difficult to learn its history; but I believe that it does not date far back, and that it is American. It seems to have spread from New York State westward, until now it is enjoyed on every lake situated near a city from the Atlantic to St. Paul. It has crossed the border into Canada, and American enthusiasts have introduced it into Russia, Norway, Sweden, and Germany.

Its pleasures are of the hardest. No sport is this for a soft-muscled, cold-footed, fender-eared carpet knight. Let him turn on the steam, stay at home, and play ping-pong! On the wind-swept lake the skater may keep warm through exercise; but the ice-boater, in his narrow steering-box, has small space for movement; and, though he may be warmly clad, as he should be, from head to foot in wool, he will still need to have red blood in his veins and a good circulation, or the keen, cold blast will nip his fingers and toes, and chill him through and through. But the youth of either sex who is not afraid to give rough, red-mannered old winter all the advantage, and they play sharp games with him, will find an exhilaration in ice-boating that surpasses any other winter sport, and will go home at night, red-cheeked and tingling with the feeling that lungs and blood have been so purged by the north wind that there is not an atom of poison in the whole system.

DANGERS.

The dangers of ice-boating could be grouped under three heads,—upsetting, colliding, or running into open water.

If the boat is well built, there is not much likelihood of its upsetting. The two out runners are so wide apart that, even if the one to windward should be lifted from the ice, as frequently occurs, it is not easy to overturn the structure. And when, occasionally, something breaks and the boat is wrecked or upset, and its occupants are thrown overboard, the accident is not often dangerous. If the boat is going swiftly when the accident occurs, the unfortunate ice-boater may have a prolonged slide on the smooth ice, and tear some of his many wraps, and simulate a hockey ball in motion; but, when at last he comes to a full stop and picks himself up, he finds that his chief misfortune is that he must take a slippery walk of anywhere from one to ten miles in length, and perhaps abandon his wrecked ice-boat.

There is not much danger from colliding for two reasons, the roominess of a lake where the sport would be introduced at all, and the easiness with which an ice-boat is steered. Of all the vehicles that man manages, from a wheelbarrow to an ocean steamer, the ice-boat is the easiest to steer, "the quickest on her heels." Before a regatta you may be standing on the ice, watching the ice-boats, big and little, as they manoeuvre, darting back and forth, in and out, like swallows around a barn in summer, when, turning around, you look up in mortal terror to behold one of the largest contestants, a winged stick of timber forty feet long, bearing directly down on you like a huge arrow coming swift as a fast express, and before you have time to shriek or clutch the air, the helm has been put "hard about," and the great winter bird is speeding off the other way.

The real danger in ice-boating lies in the open water. In every large lake, even in midwinter, there are always "air-holes." Generally these are in the form of great cracks extending for miles. These cracks sometimes will be a few feet across, and then the ice-boat will skim over them without wetting her feet, but adding to the excitement of her occupants.

Sometimes, however, the cracks are wide, or the air-holes are little seas; and then there is danger. For to the occupants of the boat the open water often looks exactly the same as the good hard ice or the patches of snow that have drifted on the lake. Add to this deceptive appearance the glamour of the sun shining in the steersman's eyes, the tears caused by the cold wind, and the velocity of a mile a minute, or a little less, and you have the elements of a tragedy.

While I was pastor of a church in Madison, Wisconsin, there occurred one of the saddest accidents that ever caused a death on Lake Mendota; and, as it was accompanied with an inspiring exhibition of heroism, I will close my article by telling it.

The beautiful halls of the University of Wisconsin look out over the lake, and one evening the students in a fraternity house were having their usual evening chat, when one of them suggested that they go for an ice-boat ride. The suggestion was at once taken up, and in a few minutes a lone ice-boat with three occupants was gliding to and fro over the gleaming ice. It was not the intention to go far, but soon they found themselves gliding past Picnic Point, three miles from town.

This was the most dangerous part of the lake, as a great crack was always open here. But this the students did not know. In the moonlight the glitter of the water was much the same as that of the ice, and in a second, without any warning, the boys and their skeleton boat were plunged into a strip of water sixty feet wide. Their momentum carrying them into the centre of the crack.

Ed Waller, the strongest of the three, at once plunged into the cold water and struck out for the firm ice. He gained it safely, but it was only by his greatest effort that he was able to grasp it and pull himself, with his heavy clothes, up out of the water. Having done this, he looked back and saw that the other boys were still clinging to the almost sunken timbers of the boat. He called to them to swim for it before they got so cold that they could not do so. This one of them attempted to do, but after a few strokes he lost his strength and would have drowned, had not Waller jumped into the water and swam to his relief. How he succeeded in getting the benumbed and drowning student to the ice-edge, and how he then climbed up himself and got his companion out will always be a wonder to himself and all who hear of it.

But this true tale of heroism is not yet done. The third boy was still clinging to the submerged ice-boat. He could not swim.

What must have been the agony of mind of that hero on the ice as he learned this fact, we can only conjecture. We only knew that for the third time he sprang into the icy water.

THE CRISIS.

Bravely he struck out for the ice-boat, but this was more than even his sturdy physique could stand. He felt the cramps gripping him, and knew he must turn back. He reached the ice-edge, and with the assistance of the boy whom he had saved he managed for the third time to drag himself out of the lake.

The thermometer was at fifteen below zero. By the shortest cut the town was two and one-half miles away. The nearest house was half a mile away, and showed no light. Waller called to the drowning boy to try to hold on till they could get him help; he despatched his companion to the farmhouse and he himself ran the two and a half miles to his boarding house, where he fell on the floor in the doorway, whispering; "Phil—in—lake. Go."

But, when assistance arrived, it was too late; and, when the story of the drowning was told next day, two thousand students and many others became mourners for the unfortunate victim of the accident and admirers of its hero, who was then and for several weeks afterward unconsciously fighting a fever, but consciously, in his delirium, still struggling in the icy water to save his companions.

To the joy of all Madison he ultimately recovered, and the last I heard of him positively he was with Roosevelt at El Caney, though I believe he is now in business somewhere in Wisconsin. I trust he is one of God's soldiers.—C. E. World.

Mr. Carroll, I'll

How Ailsie Saved the Bible.

It was in the year 1555 when Queen Mary sat upon the English throne with her Spanish husband at her side, and filled the land with trouble because of her terrible persecution of the Protestants.

In the west of England was a little village called Harrant. At one end of the hamlet, standing apart from the few dwellings scattered along either side of its single street, was the blacksmith's shop, with his small house just back of it, and a tiny garden in the rear.

The smith's wife was dead, but his bonny, blue-eyed little daughter kept his house. When lonely, she pushed aside a small panel in the end of the shop, and crept in and stayed with him, unless the sound of voices or hoof-beats on the road drove her away, for she was a shy child.

One day, when she had stolen in, her father was standing behind the door.

He had a slipper in his big hand, with which he touched the side of the great black beam in the corner. Suddenly a block of wood fell forward, disclosing a small opening. Into this he thrust a dark, leather-bound book, and quickly, but carefully, fitted the chip into its place, so that no sign of the hidden space remained.

Seeing his daughter, he started and said sternly, "Ailsie, my child! How dare you spy upon your father?"

"Oh, father! I am not spying!" and the blue eyes filled with tears.

"Of course you were not. I was wrong to say so, child!" said the smith remorsefully. "But you saw what I did?"

"You put the holy book into the beam, father. It is a fine hiding-place, too; for surely neither priest nor soldier can find it there."

"I would you knew not its place of concealment, for the knowledge may bring you into danger, lass. You must never betray it." When Parson Stowe went away to foreign lands, he gave me the Sacred Word, and told me to keep it as my life. For, by the Queen's orders, all the Bibles have been gathered up and burned, and we are forbidden to read from its holy pages. This is the only one between here and the sea; and it is more precious than the crown jewels. You are fifteen, Ailsie, and old enough to understand, so I have told you all."

"You need not fear, father," said Ailsie, firmly; "I will not tell." But the rosy cheeks grew pale as she remembered all that her promise might mean.

Now, there was a certain priest that came sometimes to Harrant to preach to the villagers. But being all Protestants, they would neither listen to him nor pay him tithes. He was very angry at their behavior, and spled about until he became sure there was a Bible among them; and he knew that it was in the blacksmith's possession, because he was the only man in the village who could read.

After trying in vain to find the Holy Book, he went to the nearest town and lodged information against the village with the officers there; and one day when the smith chanced to be away from home, an officer and six men marched into Harrant.

They called upon the cottagers to surrender their Bible; but one and all declared they had none. Then the soldiers searched every dwelling, and threatened to burn them, everyone, unless the book was found.

But that did not suit the priest at all. He would get fewer tithes than ever if the village was destroyed. So he told the soldiers to let the rest of the villagers alone, for the Bible was in the blacksmith's possession. It was getting late, and the soldiers were in a great hurry to be gone. So they resolved to burn the two little buildings, and thus destroy the book quickly and surely.

At the first sight of the strange men, Ailsie had fled through the garden, out upon the moor, and hidden among the furze bushes. She was terrified, for she feared that they might find her and demand the hiding-place of the precious Bible.

It was growing dark when she saw a bright light against the sky, and sprang to her feet. Her father's house was on fire. The light made the shy child a heroine. Forgetting all about her danger, she only remembered that she must save the Bible at all cost.

Swift as an arrow she flew homeward.

The soldiers were intent upon piling straw round the burning buildings, and did not see the little figure that darted in between the house and the shop, whose thatched roofs were all ablaze. Breathless and determined, she pushed aside the panel and stumbled through the blinding smoke.

The hungry flames scorched her dress and her hair, and burned and blistered her hands and face before she secured what she sought. But at last she reached the Bible and fled out into the open air.

No one had noticed her in the darkness, and she crept safely into the little garden and sank down, choked and suffering, among the vines.

But she felt that the Bible was in danger even now. She slipped off her woollen petticoat and wrapped it around the volume; then, digging with her little burned hands in the soft soil, she buried it under an immense cabbage. Then she crawled upon her hands and knees to the spring at the foot of the garden, where her father found her an hour later half-unconscious with pain and