

# THE RUDDER

EDITED BY THOS. FLEMING DAY

VOLUME VII

MAY, 1896

NUMBER 5

## Erie Yacht Club

By GEO. T. BLISS



NLY a year old, and a club house built. Think of this, all you who have belonged to boat clubs for years, but never possessed even a roof under which you could meet the year around, and discuss matters nautical with kindred spirits.

Like visiting strange countries one visits strange clubs. All individuality is lost sight of, and the

history, environments and government, are particularly inquired into.

Feeling that the Erie Yacht Club has met with phenomenal success, its brief history of a brief career will be given, leaving personalities aside, except in a few instances; and we will attempt to deal with the subject in a way that will interest those now belonging to clubs, and perhaps be able to give organizations, now undergoing crystallization, one or two useful hints without giving anyone to understand that we wish to be considered an authority on the subject.

Of course all history must have a start, and with us, we will be sure and plunge into the past far enough, in order to avoid any possible mistakes.

In 1811 and 1812, Commodore Perry built his fleet at Presque Isle Bay, which is Erie's harbor. Erie, being the birth place of this famous fleet, has always been more or less venerated, and particularly so, as Perry's two flagships, Lawrence and Niagara were brought here after the battle of Lake Erie, and sunk opposite the city in a beautiful little harbor, bearing the lugubrious name of Misery Bay. In 1875, the Lawrence was raised and sent to the Centennial, where she was cut up, and ornaments made of her timbers.

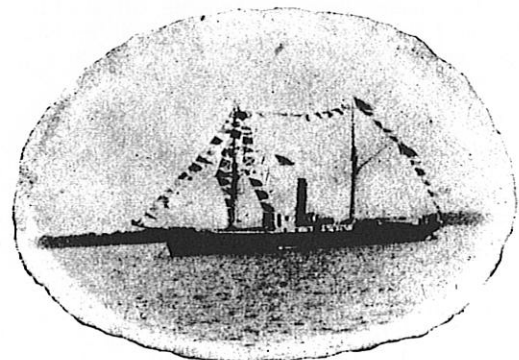
The Niagara is still sleeping on a bed of mud in about ten feet of water where she was sunk, and just the other day the writer passed over her in a small boat, and had a long look at the historic skeleton.

In 1844 the U. S. S. Michigan was built here. She is of iron. The plates and frames were rolled and bent in Pittsburgh, and hauled to Erie by ox teams. She is a barkentine-rigged, side-wheel steamer, and is now in active service. She has in the past few years ridden out storms on the Great Lakes that have sent many modern steamers to the bottom.

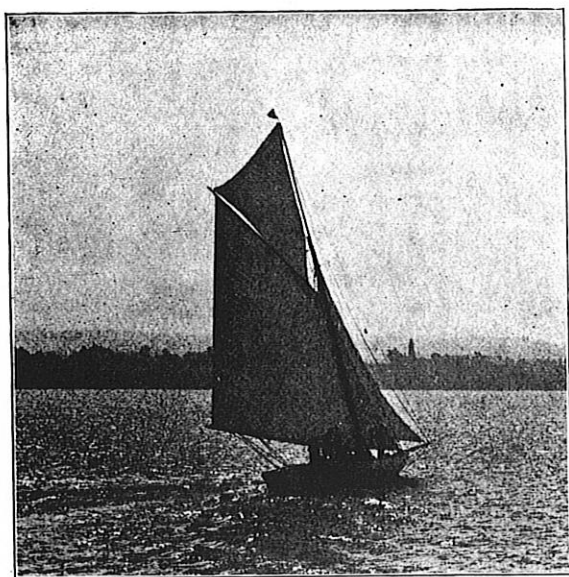
In 1861 the light-house supply steamer Haze appeared. She was built that year at Mystic, Conn.

In 1864 the revenue cutter Commodore Perry was built in Buffalo, N. Y. She was stationed at Erie, under the command of Captain Douglass Ottinger, according to whose plans she was constructed. She had a fine model, but her mode of getting through the water at sixteen knots an hour was most interesting. She had two regular propeller wheels placed about amidships at right angles to her keel, one on each side, and immersed about one-third their diameter. Her engines were mostly in the paddle boxes, and lay athwartship. The connecting rods coupled on to the shaft of the propellers direct.

In those days she was a wonder for speed, but she was also a good sea boat, and no matter how hard a gale was blowing, if Captain Ottinger heard there was a ship in distress, you would see the little Perry fly out of the harbor, and in a couple of days hear of her towing some disabled craft into the most convenient port. Somewhere about 1882 she was sold to Buffalo parties, who remodeled and made her an ordinary screw boat. She is now doing duty as an excursion steamer at Buffalo, and is known as the "Perriwinkle."



COMMODORE PERRY



IRIS

In 1864 the first boat club came on the scene. This was the Undine. Many of our prominent business men were members of this club, and often we have heard them recounting their numerous experiences. This club lived for quite a long time, but at last it was given up.

In 1868 the sloop Unknown was owned in Erie by L. G. Reed. This was our nearest approach to a yacht.

About that same year, several gentlemen bought their daughters a very handsome barge, and the young ladies organized the Una Boat Club. They rowed splendidly, and for many years this crew was the pride and delight of Erie. However, Time got in his work, so did Cupid, and now not even their boat house is standing.

A little sailboat was owned at that time by J. H. Bliss, and commonly known as the Star, because a great, red star was on the mainsail, in order that he could always tell his boat at a distance, and so account for the occasional absence of any member or members of the family.

In 1869 Erie braced up, and a seventy-five-foot steam yacht was brought here for public use. This was the Silas H. Hunter. For a long time she was here, but was sold, and shortly afterwards was lost in the ice on Lake Erie, so the writer heard.

In 1870 the little steam yacht Col. I. Camp came into existence. She was built and run by Captain J. D. Paasch. In 1873 he bought the seventy-five-foot steam yacht Emma V. Sutton at Buffalo; then came the yacht Ariadne, followed in 1876 by the J. H. Welsh. All of these were little steamers, and they were kept busy with fishing, hunting and bathing parties.

1877 found a big sloop, Flora, in Erie. She was a regular skimming dish, almost as wide as she was long. Her sides were built up, and she was transformed into a steam fish tug.

In 1878 Mr. E. D. Beigler built our first yacht, the Wanderer. This was Erie's awakening. She was a schooner, 48 feet over all, 14 feet beam. He built her in a yard about three-quarters of a mile from the water. This craft caused no end of excitement, and the whole town saw every nail driven, followed her to the Bay, and almost in after her. She was a fine cruiser. She changed owners many times, and was at last sent to Buffalo to be rebuilt. When she was completed she started on her homeward trip. On Sunday, July 24, 1892,

she left Dunkirk, N. Y., to proceed to Erie. She was lost in a squall that afternoon. Two men were aboard—one was drowned.

About that time Mr. Frank Fairbairn came to the fore with a big catamaran. The writer does not know just what became of this flying machine. It passed everything it ever sailed against, and perhaps is now running against Time.

Erie's next acquisition was the side-wheel steamer Geo. S. Frost. She was destroyed by fire, and her hull used as a dry dock. Now it is an ordinary dock, and supports numerous fish shanties.

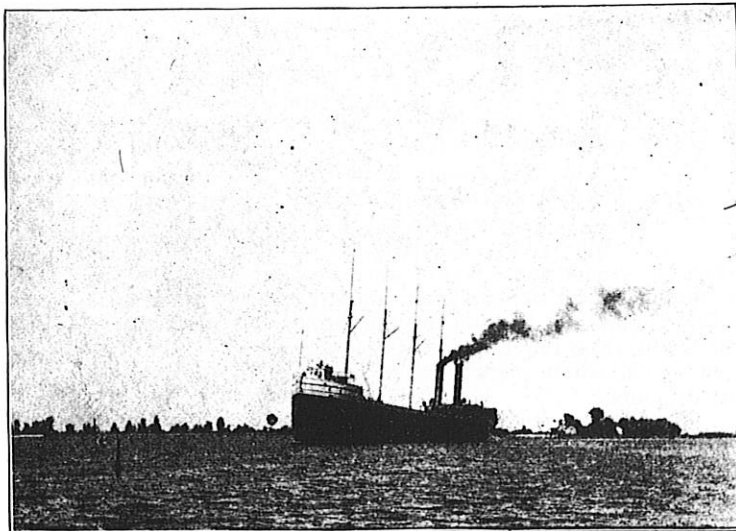
That same year the schooners Dawn and Chiquita were built in Buffalo for Erie parties. Their careers were uneventful. One was cut in two and lengthened. She sailed the lakes for a number of years. The other was sold to Baltimore parties.

Still, in 1879, the schooner Corsair was brought from Buffalo to Erie by Mr. F. H. Ball. She was 30 feet long, about 10 feet beam. Mr. Ball with his sons, Harry, Bert and Fred, and numerous friends, kept the Corsair on a constant tear, looking for prizes to race for. No matter where on Lake Erie a prize was hung up, the Corsair would put in her appearance in plenty of time to make it decidedly interesting for the other boats.

They were all splendid, fearless sailors, and many members of the Erie Yacht Club are indebted to them for their knowledge of practical yachting, many pleasant cruises, and exciting races; and of the latter, the Corsair always got just a little more than her share of the prizes offered for them. Everything went well with her until 1888. That year she engaged in numerous cruises. The last one she had on board Fred Armstrong, Geo. Carroll, Harry Ball and Fred Ball.

On August 12, 1888, while near Lorain, Ohio, the boys noticed a storm coming. All canvas was taken in. The storm burst on them, and besides wind and waves to deal with, the boys soon discovered two water spouts bearing down toward them. What it was that finally hit them, they do not know. The Corsair was suddenly knocked over, and all four boys struck out for the shore, which they fortunately reached.

The Corsair was broken in two, and her stern is now used as a rustic seat by the water's edge, where many Lorain couples spend spoony evenings, little troubling themselves about what interesting stories the little wreck could tell them.



LAKE FREIGHTER AURORA

Much of the rigging was saved, among other things the tiller. And the writer enjoyed a cruise on the yacht *Miriam* last summer, and the tiller was that of the old *Corsair*.

That same year, 1879, Wm. L. Scott brought the steam yacht *Mystic* to Erie. This was, and is yet, the only private steam yacht that was ever owned in Erie, with one exception. She was built at Mystic, Conn., in 1867. The owners have never used her for cruising, or attending any of the regattas at neighboring ports, Put-In-Bay, or even in Erie. However, we are happy to say she flies our pennant, and expect that next season she will follow the yacht races, and let our friends see that Erie has one steam yacht at least.

In addition to the five boats already mentioned as having come to Erie in 1879, we must not forget the little sloop *Dart*. She was brought here by Captain Adams, who was then the United States engineer, stationed at Erie to look after the harbor. When he left Erie, the boat fell into the hands of some of the writer's friends, who distinguished themselves by knocking down a lamp-post, situated on the corner of one of the docks, with the boom, once every three weeks. They would always jibe at this corner, and knock over that unfortunate lamp-post with the greatest neatness and despatch. They let her go to ruin almost. When Chas. Nunn, her present owner, got hold of her, he built her nine inches higher, put on an overhang aft, rigged her lateen, and every way—but she will never go as she did in her paling days of the early eighties.

So six boats came to Erie in 1879. Enthused by this activity, another boat club came into existence, composed of several youngsters, aged about fifteen. They were known by the name "Bay Rangers." Their large rowboat bore the same name. These youngsters could swim, row and sail, and their boat was much more liable to be seen among the white caps than on calm water.

Among their number was Jno. W. Brooks, who graduated at West Point, and was instructor of artillery there. He is now First Lieutenant of the 4th Artillery at Fort Adams, Newport. He made all the sling-shots for the Bay Rangers, and equipped them with wooden guns, which carried a bullet most wickedly. The bullet was propelled by a system of rubber bands. It is strange how the building of these toys developed his talent for the science of artillery.

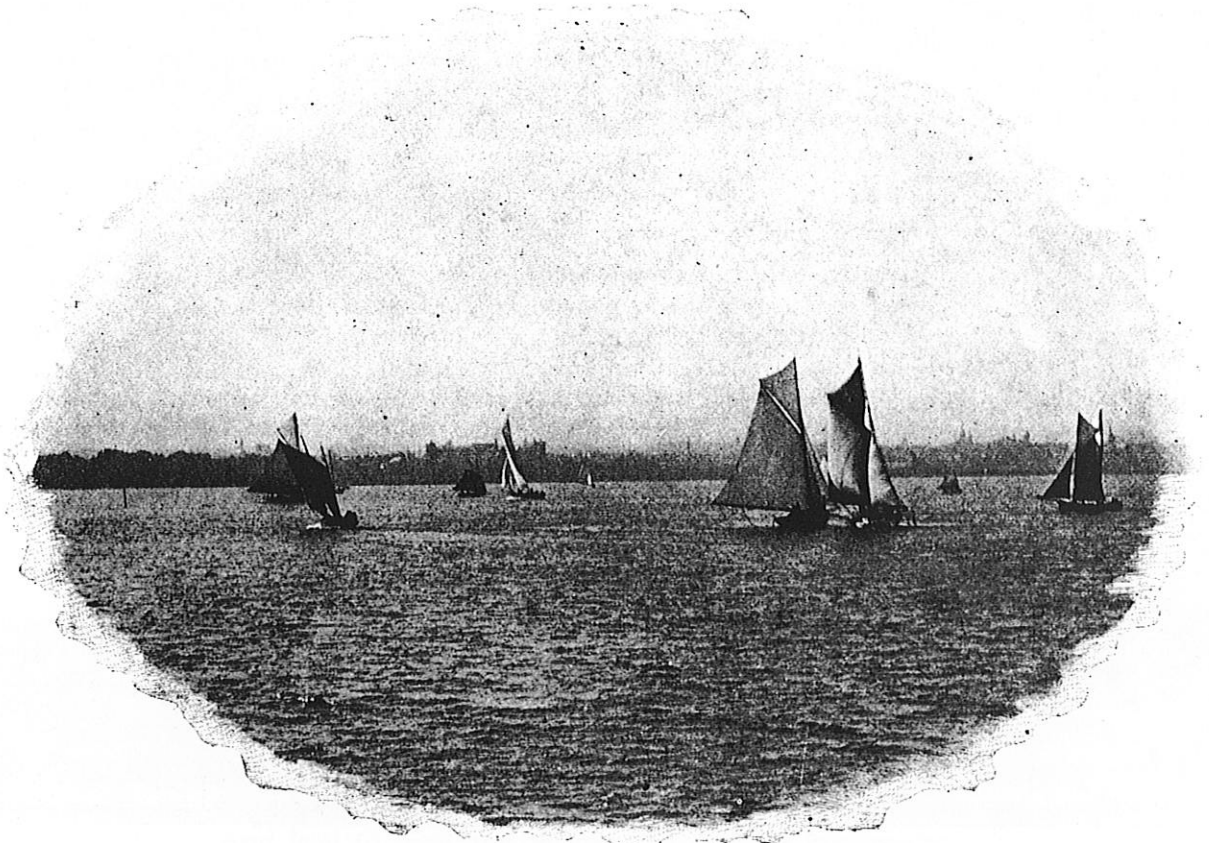
In 1881 the passenger boats, *Massassauga* and *Lena Knobloch*, became fixtures here. The old Commodore Perry was sold, and the new Commodore Perry took her place, which was built in Buffalo, N. Y., in 1884. She was in Erie a few years, and then sent to Alaska. It was a long trip for the little craft, but she got there safely, and the writer thinks she is now back in New York.

In 1885 the steamer *Kate White*, and a little dude of a steam launch, the *Dandy*, swelled the ranks; but these were public boats. Mr. Jno. Goodwin built the little schooner *Caprice* that same year. She is now one of our crack little boats, and the best cared. Unfortunately she does not fly our pennant, but we have hopes.

About 1886 Mr. Clair Converse brought the sloop *Mallard* to Erie from the East. He was very fond of cruising, and a thorough yachtsman. He left Erie, and now lives at Highwood, N. J. He is a member of the Knickerbocker Yacht Club, and owns the yawl *Alice*.

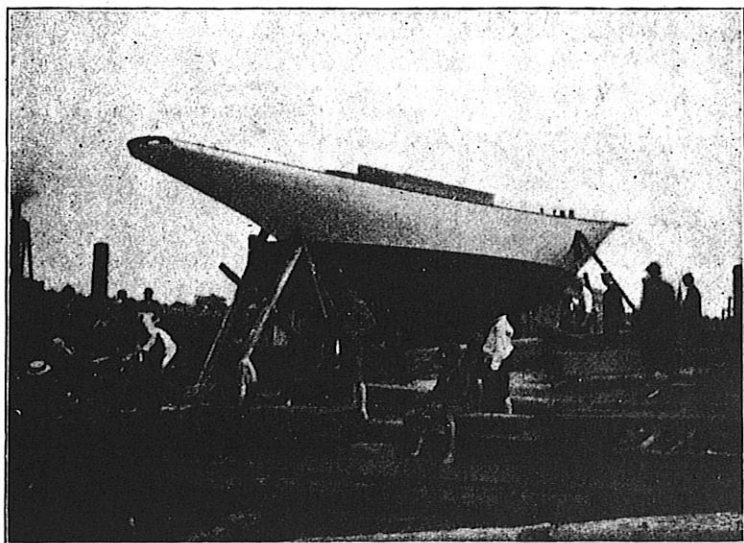
The *Mallard* was sold, and is now in Buffalo, N. Y.

In 1887 the steamer *Loretta Englesbee* was launched. She was intended for a public pleasure boat. The writer was one of a party that was the first to patronize her. We went to a dance one evening at the Lone Fisherman's Inn on this boat. Coming home we were running very fast, and struck sideways on a dock. She nearly capsized. She was then backed hard onto another dock, which smashed her rudder and wheel. A strong wind was blowing,



MANEUVERING BEFORE THE START





MIRIAM

and we were wafted across the Bay, and landed on a sand bar. The Massassauga towed us home. One young lady was seriously injured when we struck the dock first, and has never fully recovered. This incident gave the boat a bad name, and she proved a failure as a passenger boat, and was turned into a fish tug.

In 1889 Mr. F. H. Ball and his sons Harry, Bert and Fred purchased the twenty-four-foot sloop Worthless from Chicago parties. She was a little race-horse, and they pursued the same course they did with the Corsair. They sold her to W. H. Warner and Geo. T. Bliss in 1891, who sold her a few years later to Geo. Loomis. She is now known as the Carmencita.

Mr. F. H. Ball and his family, much to the regret of all their friends, left Erie in 1891, and now live in Elizabeth, N. J. They still sail with their old-time energy, as Bert and Fred managed to sail Ethelwynn to her victory.

In 1891 Messrs. Davis and Farrar built a fine steam yacht, Tallalusa. Unfortunately she was burned off Long Point, Sept. 28, 1893.

The famous cutter Pappoose came to Erie from Boston in 1891, having been purchased by Mr. Davenport Galbraith. He only kept her one season, and then sold her to Oswego parties.

The sloop Wanda was our next arrival, and is now owned by Messrs. Berriman and Fischer.

In 1894 C. B. Hayes brought the sloop Albatross from Buffalo. He sold her early in the fall of 1895.

So we come up to the time of the Erie Yacht Club, after mentioning a few of its progenitors.

For sailing Erie could not be better situated. The harbor is about five miles long and two wide, almost completely landlocked. The summer is enjoyed by canoeists; as well as yachtsmen, and the winter finds the ice covered with skaters and ice boats.

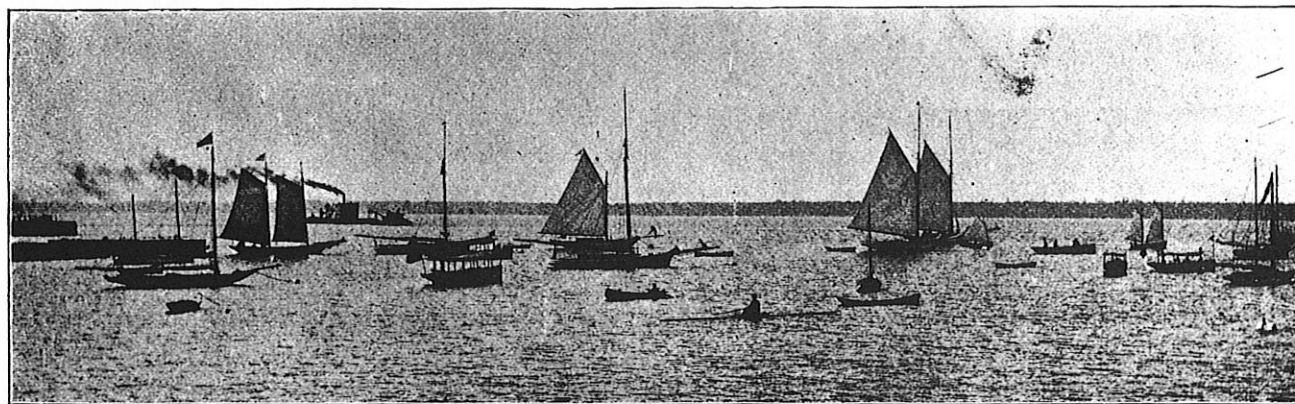
In 1894 there was no boat club, and it was decided to try and organize one. Meetings were held that were well attended until money was suggested. We couldn't get a corporal's guard together for weeks. But we kept at it, and finally on Wednesday, Nov. 14, 1894, the organization was effected.

With all clubs, the hardest thing to do is to get members. You will always meet the man who says he likes it first rate, "but," he will ask, "does Mr. — belong." You say, "yes." "That settles it," he says. "I won't have anything to do with what he is interested in." These are a good crowd to let alone. Their presence would

only mean eternal strife and petty quarrels. Then you meet the man who says he is afraid the club members will be those whom he does not care to know; that the proper officers will not be elected, etc. It never occurs to this individual that if a lot of his friends would come in, that perhaps the right people might be elected, and if only he would join the ranks, his influence could be used to gain that end, but usually such particular people are nuisances. You meet also him who says it's a very nice idea, and then makes you feel pleasant by adding, "but I wouldn't want my sister to go to such a place." We had all these to contend with, but got along anyway.

The city let the club have the use of some water lots, and our next step was the erection of the club house. Then we wrangled over plans and prices. Some wanted a club house. Some didn't. Some wanted a shed, others a brick house. Some wanted it all parlor, and others all kitchen. Some wanted a ladies' dressing room, and others wanted to bar ladies out altogether.

At last a satisfactory conclusion was arrived at, and our club house was built. We held our opening on the evening of July 18, 1895, and the whole town was there. People came in boats, on bicycles, in carriages and afoot. The place was packed for four or five hours. Commodore Gunkel, of the Inter-Lake Yachting Association was on hand, and he was very much pleased with the popularity the club enjoyed.



THE FLEET AT ANCHOR

Soon after our opening, three of our boats attended the meet of the Inter-Lake Yachting Association at Put-In-Bay, during the days between August 4 and 11, 1895. Then on Sept. 11, 1865, we had a very successful day's racing. In the morning we started about twenty boats, and in the afternoon nearly forty. The Mischief of Toledo, Merle and Sibyl of Buffalo, were the only outsiders, and they all left Erie feeling that it was the ideal spot for sailing, and that the Erie Yacht Club would certainly prosper.

To accommodate the ice yachtsmen, skaters and hunters, the club house is open all the year around, and any afternoon or evening some of the members are on hand, sitting in our main club room, before the fire, and ready to give a chair to any of our yachtsmen friends who will pay us a visit.

We have two rooms, including a dressing room for ladies on the second story, and so situated that they do not have to pass through the house to reach them. We allow no liquor to be used or partaken of on or about the premises. This does not prohibit its being left at the club for boat owners, and being taken aboard the boats. We adopted this last rule as an experiment, and it works to

perfection. All the members are looking forward to next season, and several new boats are under way.

Our fleet now comprises fifteen sailboats; twelve row-boats; two shells; one paddling canoe; one steam yacht; one steam launch, and six naphtha launches. Among them is the Miriam, the product of amateur skill. She was built by one of our charter members, Wm. L. Morrison.

Among the other boats, are the products of the Craig Ship-building Co.; the Hepburn Boat and Oar Co.; the Truscott Boat Co., and Dan Kidney & Son.

A better trade could have been done here if the boat builders had followed it up, but probably they did not think the club had come to stay.

Our present officers are:—Commodore, Geo. T. Bliss; Vice-Commodore, Captain Geo. Platt; Rear-Commodore, Chas. E. Shenk; Secretary, Wm. P. Atkinson; Treasurer, Walter S. Reitzell; Regatta Committee, Chas. Campbell, L. D. Hanford, F. F. Fairbairn; Directors, J. C. Sturgeon, W. L. Morrison, E. A. Davis, W. R. Beckman, E. C. Moore, W. H. F. Nick; Measurer, F. G. Lynch; Asst. Measurer, A. C. Gibson; Surveyor, F. G. Lynch; Asst. Surveyor, T. F. Scheffler.



## The Old Buccaneer's Song

By TOM SLANE

- O** MY heart goes privateering along the Spanish main,  
 And I feel the breezes blowing, and see those isles again—  
 Those isles of peace and plenty where we loved to linger long,  
 To woo the black-eyed Carib maid who sang the rover's song;  
 Who resting in the palm shade when the sun was fierce above,  
 With many a tender measure taught us what indeed is love.
- O** my heart goes privateering along the Spanish main,  
 And I hear my comrades calling me back to them again;  
 For 'tis where the breakers, roaring, flash in and beat the sand—  
 'Tis where the feathery plantain shakes its shadow on the strand;  
 'Neath orange and palmetto, and many a flowery tree,  
 Dwell the gallant privateersmen who drink and think of me.
- O** my heart goes privateering along the Spanish main—  
 I see our banners flying, and I hear the cheers again:  
 When with many a reckless comrade in vessel tall and true,  
 Before the constant trade-wind to the south-and-west we flew,  
 And ere the haughty Spaniard had thought of danger near,  
 Town and tower and galleon were spoil of buccaneer.
- O** my heart goes privateering along the Spanish main,  
 And many a pearl and red doubloon chink in my hand again.  
 Back, back unto the sunny isle to rest a season there—  
 To bind a lace of priceless gems in my sweet Carib's hair,  
 To feel her arms about my neck, to hear her sing again  
 The pleasures and the glories of our life along the main.
- O** my heart goes privateering along the Spanish main,  
 For I am weary waiting for those days to come again.  
 A curse upon this slothful life, and this black northern land!  
 O give to me the sapphire sea, and balmy southern strand:  
**O** let me hear but once again my comrades' ringing cheers,  
 And lead to spoil and victory the dashing buccaneers.