



# JINGLE BELLS

BY FRANK R. ADAMS  
ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK B. DRUEN

### FOURTEENTH INSTALLMENT

I followed the direction of her glance. The dresser was bare, save for toilet articles.

Maryella looked at me, panic-stricken. "Why, where are they? Will you look in the drawers?"

I did. They were not to be found. "Possibly Mrs. Lillilove nicked them up," I consoled. "I'll ask her."

When Mrs. Lillilove was summoned she disclaimed having seen the jewels at all the previous evening.

"That thief must have taken them then!" decided Maryella firmly.

I recollected that in order to get to the door Julius had been forced to pass the dresser on which the pearls lay. It was perfectly possible for him to have picked them up unobserved as he went by.

"What shall I do? I can never look Mrs. Hemmingway in the face again if I have lost them! They were very valuable. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"I'll get them back," I declared heroically, not knowing into what depths my statement might lead me.

"Oh, will you, Tom?" Maryella exclaimed, dragged from the slough of despond by my confidence. "If you do, you can ask anything of me you want!"

My heart thrilled at the promise in her voice. With such a reward in sight I would have entered upon the labors of Hercules without a doubt in my own mind of accomplishing them.

I didn't know exactly what she meant, but I thought I would take a chance even though Jim Cooper had said they were engaged.

There was no time to be lost. Leaving Maryella to dress, I went down stairs to organize a posse to go in pursuit. My announcement that I was going to lead another party to recapture the escaped convicts met with scant enthusiasm on the part of the old soldiers. One and all they politely declined. Even the sheriff did not respond to the idea with any zest.

"How can we catch them?" he objected. "We've got to follow on foot and they've got my horse."

"From what I've seen of your horse," I replied, "I don't think we will have much trouble in beating him in a race."

"He is a good horse," the sheriff argued truculently, "and he is only nineteen years old, come next May."

"Well, let's go," I urged. "Even if you and I have to go alone."

The sheriff looked at his watch. "They are clear in town by this time," he observed, "and they'll be taking the 9:36 train out. We haven't got a chance. We'd have to get there in twenty minutes, and that ain't possible."

I groaned. It was only eight miles. There was no way of making the distance except by an aeroplane or—

There was an alternative. The ice-boat!

I ran to the window. It was still on the lake where I had seen the boys rig it the day before.

I told the sheriff my plan. He was doubtful.

"I wouldn't trust myself on one of the dog-gone things. Terra cotta is good enough for me any time."

"Won't you go?" I asked. "I need some one to help me sail it."

"No sir-ree! Not for a thousand dollars."

I turned to the rest of the men. "Who will go with me on the ice-boat to intercept our escaped prisoners before they can catch the 9:36 train?"

My proposal was received with absolute silence.

"I will," said a voice from the stairs. There stood Maryella, vivid with restored health.

"You're on!" I said. "Hurry. We've got only eighteen minutes now."

At my suggestion Maryella put on a pair of trousers over her other clothing and borrowed a man's coat and overcoat.

Thus equipped and accompanied by the protests of our companions, we hastened down the hill. It was

snowing again, but there was a gale of wind back of it.

It took me probably a minute to get the sails hoisted. At any rate, we had less than ten minutes in which to make town. Fortunately the wind was on the quarter and I knew what an iceboat was capable of when crowded to its utmost. Maryella had sailed a regular craft before so she knew how to handle a jib without instruction.

I shoved off. She started very slowly. At first I feared that possibly she was too heavy for the sail expanse.

As soon as we got out in the lake, however, away from the protection of a wooded point of land that protruded from the bank near the institution, a heavier gale of wind struck us and with a leap like a frightened horse the ice-boat jumped it.

For the most part the ice was black and clear. Occasionally there was a small drift. When we struck them the rigging would rattle and we would slow up. But we went through every time, and out in the middle we struck a clear space, smooth, unbroken and hard.

A sudden squall of snow came with the wind, obscuring everything; but I knew how to steer from the wind. As long as I held her where she was we would reach Fair Oaks on one tack. The cold was stinging and the snow beat upon our exposed faces. My fingers were numb from holding the tiller, and so were Maryella's where she grasped the jib sheet.

But the exhilaration made the blood pump faster. The terrific, staggering speed, the hiss of the runners, the whine of the wind in the rigging and the occasional flap of the mainsail when I pointed up too high were music for my ears. We seemed not to be touching the ice at all; and indeed there were moments when we were running on only two runners. Maryella's weight was not sufficient to hold the windward shoe on the ice, and often it would jump a foot or more from the surface.

I looked at her inquiringly the first time it happened to see if she was frightened. She read the question of my glance.

"It's all right," she shouted. "I'll take a chance!"

And so we did. I held the ice-boat with all sail set at the point where she went fastest.

Suddenly out of the white flurry loomed a black shape. It was one of the fishing shanties that dotted the lake. I tried to swerve and almost crashed, but it was too late.

Crash! The front end of the main beam went through it, breaking our forward stay and the jib halyard. The jib itself released, fluttered down. The ice-boat staggered and almost stopped.

Then, slowly, she recovered headway, the wind filled the mainsail, and by holding a little harder on the tiller I discovered that I could still keep on the course.

Fortunately the mainmast was strong and even without the forward stay it held. I doubted seriously whether we could come about and go on the other tack, but as long as we kept in the direction we were going there seemed every reason to suppose that we would last to the end of the trip if nothing further occurred.

A sudden cessation of snow flurries revealed the town to us—and with it the train approaching the station on the other side of the lake.

Maryella looked back to see if I had observed. I nodded and held her up a little higher.

Neck and neck we approached the station. I prayed for more wind, and when it wouldn't come I swore under my breath.

The train was nearly at the station.

Then came a squall. The ice-boat leaped forward once more with creaking mast. Our speed doubled. As the train pulled in I swung the ice-boat around sharply and abreast of the station.

As she came about the mast went over with a crash. Fortunately Maryella leaped clear of the rig-

ging; and without any further parley we raced up the bank. We got there while they were still unloading baggage.

On the platform, smoking a huge cigar in obvious contentment, was Julius. He had not seen us, and when I laid a heavy hand on his shoulder he looked up startled.

"I've got you," I exclaimed.

He made no reply to my obvious statement.

"See if he has got the pearls," panted Maryella.

It was a good suggestion. I hastily went through his pockets much to the amazement of the loafers at the station. He had nothing in them but some money and a knife.

"Where are the pearls?" I demanded.

"I ain't got any pearls," he replied.

"Yes you have," I insisted. "You stole them from the dresser in that room where you hid!"

A crafty look came to Julius's eyes. He pondered a moment.

The train whistled.

"All aboard," yelled the conductor.

"Will you let me go free if I tell you where the pearls are?" Julius asked.

I debated.

"Say 'yes,' Tom!" urged Maryella. "I must get them back at any cost."

"Yes, I'll let you go."

Julius moved toward the platform of the car which was getting under way.

"I'll tell you as soon as I am on the train."

Not quite understanding, I nevertheless ran on beside him and allowed him to mount the first step.

"Now where are they?" I demanded.

The train was moving faster. I could not keep up much longer.

"They are on this train," said Julius, and then seeing the questioning look on my face he added, "I sent them to myself by parcel post. They are in the mail car."

I dropped back, and the train pulled away. Julius waved at me from the car steps.

**CHAPTER XIV**  
**On the Mail Car.**

I gazed stupidly at the departing platform.

"Where are the pearls?" asked Maryella, joining me.

"On that train," I explained. "He put 'em in the mail and sent them to himself, parcel post."

"And you let the train go off without you!" she reproached.

"He didn't tell me until it was too late for me to get aboard," I defended my action, or rather inaction as best I could.

While we looked at the receding train it came to a gradual stop. I

looked for the cause and noticed a water tank beside the track.

"Good-by," I said, with hastily formed resolution, as I left Maryella and sprinted down the track.

I caught it. No need to go into details of the red spots before my eyes and the dry throat that burned me as I ran. As it pulled out I swung on to the rear platform.

I went into the car and went to the forward end where I could look into the coach beyond.

Yes, Julius was there, finishing up his cigar all unconscious of my presence. I decided it would be just as well not to make a scene on the train, but to follow him to his destination and get the pearls when he claimed them at the post office.

So I sat where I could see the platform and note when he got off. After all I was redeeming myself for any blunders I had made in the past.

"Tickets," said a voice.

The conductor had entered the door just in front of me.

I had no ticket and explained it to the official.

He looked at me suspiciously. My clothing was a trifle nondescript.

"I had only just time enough to catch the train without stopping at the station," I offered.

My short-winded condition bore out my statement.

"All right. I don't care," he replied. "You'll have to pay a little extra, that's all, by settling with me on a cash basis."

While he was asking me where I wanted to go I reached in my pocket for some money.

I found nothing but a hole. Up to that moment I had forgotten that I was wearing Comrade Dreyer-furth's "other" pants.

It's a terrible thing to be without money among strangers. I know of no sensation akin to it.

"I left it in my other clothes," I said weakly.

"Is that so?" said the conductor scornfully eyeing me with a practical gaze. "Don't try to kid me. You haven't any other clothes."

I was indignant, but what was the use?

"Cough up some money," said the conductor crossly, "or get off." He reached up suggestively for the bell cord which signals to the engineer.

(Concluded next week.)

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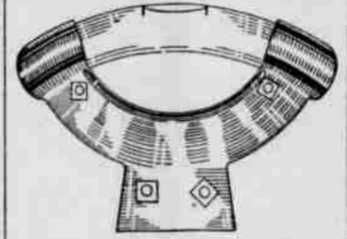
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