

CHAPTER X

YACHT RACING, **AND** THE FASTEST YACHT IN THE WORLD

I DO not remember how young I was when I learned to scull a boat, but I well recall my pride when, at eleven years of age, accompanied by another lad, I started out at the helm of a catboat for a cruise down Georges River. For food we depended on fish, potatoes and a firkin filled principally with doughnuts and pies. Mter sailing ten **miles**, a strange looking schooner hove in sight, and when we came alongside of it I recognized the captain, my father's best friend, for whom I was named. He was Charles Everett Ranlett, of the Edward Everett **family**, who was returning with a graduating class of Bowdoin College that he had taken to Labrador, Iceland, and Greenland.

Although I had much youthful experience off the coast of Maine in deep-sea sailing and fishing, it was not until 1879 that I took up the sport of yachting. In that year I purchased the sloop yacht Gracie-the largest sloop yacht in America. Her purchase required some strategy. I applied to the owner's broker, who told me that he could not sell me the *Gracie*, as Herman Oelrichs, who was then testing her speed down the **bay**, was negotiating to buy her. However, learning that the owner, Jack Waller, was on his

way to New York from Bar Harbor on his newly acquired yacht the *Dauntless*, I sent telegrams addressed to him at every harbor he was likely to put into, offering \$7,500 for the *Gracie*, subject to immediate reply and immediate delivery. Within a few days I walked her deck as owner.

To minimize the cost I took in three partners, Edmond Robert, Joseph P. Earle and Wendell Goodwin—all of us bachelors—and we made the *Gracie* our summer home. Robert, a Swiss, who is an excellent English scholar and who speaks French, Italian and German, was then senior agent of the Credit Lyonnais, and the youngest banker of importance in New York. He had brought a letter of introduction to me from Edward Baring, who afterwards became the first Lord Revelstoke. We were a happy quartette when we sailed on the New York Yacht Club cruise of 1879, in which the *Gracie* won honors in the contests between ports.

In reviewing our experiences in racing the *Gracie* I will confine myself to three events that are unique in the annals of yacht racing.

Owing to the pressure of business, I was unable to be on board the *Gracie* at the Buzzards Bay race of 1880 for the Spirit of the Times Cup, but I arrived at New Bedford the morning after the event. As soon as I joined my shipmates, including "Bob" Bacon, one of our Corinthian sailors, who afterwards became Ambassador to France, they informed me that, at the end of the race, the yachts had run into a dense fog, and that they believed that the *Gracie* had won, but the Regatta Committee had awarded the cup to the *Mischief*. I immediately took steps to get

the facts, and ascertained from those on board a yacht owned by Weld of Boston, which was anchored at the finishing line to observe the end of the race, that the *Gracie* had crossed the line before the *Mischief*.

Armed with this information I went on board the flagship, repeated the statement of the men on the Weld yacht and asked that the award to the *Mischief* be withdrawn. The Regatta Committee answered that the withdrawal of an award was unprecedented, but that Captain Busk, the owner of the *Mischief*, would put up the cup to be raced for again. This proposition I refused on the ground that Captain Busk did not have any right to the Cup and was therefore not entitled to put it up. The Regatta Committee closed the conference by saying that their decision not to withdraw the award was irrevocable.

Whereupon one of our Corinthians remarked: "We are not like that Irishman who, when told, 'You'll get justice in this court,' said, 'That's just what I don't want!' We not only want justice but we must find a way to get it."

Knowing that Captain Busk was an Englishman, it occurred to me to telegraph my Custom House broker for the name of the owner of record of the *Mischief*. The name that came back was the name of the Chairman of the Regatta Committee.

I have never doubted that the Chairman and all the members of the Regatta Committee were acting in good faith, but we thought that the testimony of the men on the Weld yacht, at the finishing line, should be conclusive; and

so did the Committee, on sober, second thought, for they finally withdrew the award to the *Mischief* and awarded the cup to the *Gracie*. I then offered the cup to be raced for again.

In the second race, over the New York course, the *Gracie* again won, and the Spirit of the Times Cup is now on my sideboard.

A second unprecedented yachting event occurred when a squall off the high land of Staten Island carried away the topmast of the *Gracie* as she entered the race. On board the Club steamer a score of cries announced the disaster.

"The *Gracie* is crippled!"

"The *Gracie* is beaten already!"

But the crew, every member of which was a Corinthian -including Fred Tarns, Emlen and Alfred Roosevelt, the founder of the Seawanhaka Yacht Club, Wallace Soule and Sidney Chubb-made up their minds to take the one chance in a thousand of winning. The Corinthians rapidly cleared away the wreck, saved the balloon jib topsail which was under foot, and hoisted and lowered to the deck the stump of the topmast. The *Gracie* being to windward of the *Mischief* was able to blanket her sufficiently to hold her alongside down to the southwest spit. In the meantime one of our Corinthians, a school-mate of mine from Maine, went aloft, shinned up the broken spar and made fast a rope around the broken end of the topmast so that we succeeded in setting an improvised spinnaker. The *Mischief* running free with all sails set, topsail and spinnaker intact, gained on us, of course, very rapidly; but we felt that although we should

be far behind when she rounded the lightship, we should have a fighting chance, since the yachts had to beat home against a strong wind, and a topmast would have been of no advantage to either craft. In fact, the *Mischief* came to the lightship with a housed topmast.

Noting this, Mr. Fresh, who was on board the Club steamer remarked, "Don't you think that was a very courteous act, the *Mischief* lowering her topmast because the *Gracie* hasn't any?"

"Courtesy be damned," replied an old salt, "there's no courtesy in yacht racing!"

The *Gracie* gradually picked up on her antagonist and finally crossed the line a winner. The backers of the *Gracie* on the New York Yacht Club and excursion steamers were hilarious. That evening the Corinthian crew of the winning yacht, joined by Thomas Baring of Liverpool, had a joyous dinner at the New York Club to celebrate a victory the like of which was unheard of in yachting circles and which has never occurred since.

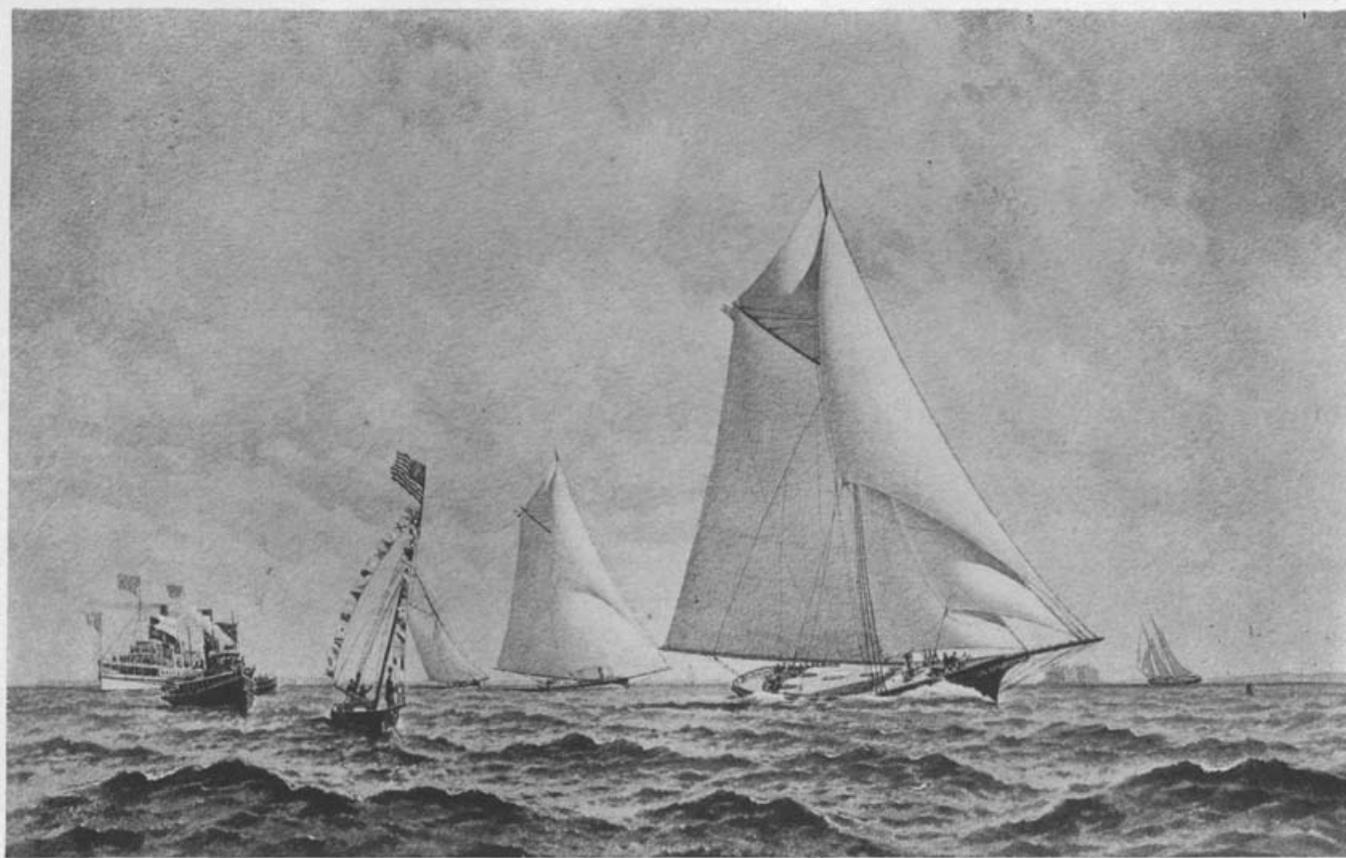
The third exceptional event occurred in 1881, when the *Gracie* sailed a race with the *Mischief*, while the latter **was** defending the America's Cup. The contests between the two yachts for the honor of defending the America's Cup had been very close. In a twenty mile test to windward and back, the *Gracie* was ahead of the *Mischief* by several minutes, but owing to a tow which got in her way, our boat lost that test race by only two seconds. While there was no question as to the Committee's fairness in selecting the *Mischief* as the defending yacht, we owners of the *Gracie* wanted to show the speed of our craft.

We were heavily handicapped, as we could not endanger in any way the protection of the America's Cup. The *Mischief* could take the wind out of our sails and blanket us when we tried to pass her, but we could not take the wind out of our rival's sails by passing her to windward, as such an action might have endangered America's hold on the Cup. But the handicap did not prove insuperable, for within a mile of the finishing line, when the yachts were running free, there came a strong gust of wind which enabled the *Gracie* to get away from her antagonist and to slip over the finishing line ahead of the *Mischief*.

The people on the steamers were enthusiastic and very appreciative, for we had given interest and excitement to a race which otherwise would have been very tame, as the Canadian yacht, the *Atlanta*, was practically not in the contest, being over two miles behind at the finish.

The greatest pleasure in yachting is in entertaining, and this was particularly true fifty years ago **when** there were not as many yachts as there are today. **It** is unusual for a yacht owner to invite women guests on board when his yacht is to race, but on the occasion of the annual regatta of the Larchmont Club in 1881, I made up a yachting party in which were included Miss E. Kate Simmons, who became my wife, Hon. William M. Ivins, William Baird, the well known baritone of the Mendelssohn Glee Club, and a Russian, Mr. Gisiko, a popular amateur singer.

It was a closely contested race, so that there were cheers to gladden my heart as we went over the line a winner. There was an added thrill that few yachtsmen have ever



" Atlanta" " Mischief" The " Grade" going over the line a **winner** after sailing against the " Mischief" which had been selected to defend the America's cup-The " Grade" was badly handicapped as she had no right to pass her antagonist to windward

experienced; as the *Gracie* went flying over the finishing line, the rich contralto voice of Miss Simmons, mingling with the voices of Baird and Gisiko, rang out in a song of JOY.

The following day was Sunday; and, while my men guests still slumbered, I arose and went to the residence in Larchmont where Miss Simmons was a guest, to accompany her to church. How my friends took my church going is best described by this little poem from the **pen** of William M. Ivins, which I find in the *Gracie's* log book.

It was only a day on the *Gracie*
 The first of the 'season, you know;
 And we all love Flint's yacht, trim and racy,
 Which won-but we won't stop to blow.

The wind came up warm from the southwest,
 That rarest of rare days in June,
 And Gisiko's voice stood the prime test
 Of his wildest Bohemian tune.

The blue skies of Heaven shone on us,
 The shadows danced over the sea;
 But the eyes of the ladies there won us
 As, Heaven can't win you, boys, or me.

One face there transcendently lovely,
 Another transcendently bright,
 Made the day quite too awfully lovely,
 Full of utterly utter delight.

And the story again was repeated,
 And the conquest of Helen of Troy,
 Whose, *esprit*, I suspect, has defeated
 The resolves of the Flint-hearted boy,

Who played host to us that summer morning,
 While he whistled his brave bachelor airs
 With his brave anti-marital scorning,
 But-boys, look at that brace of chairs.
 Who sat there goes quite without **saying—**
 Of course it was Gisi and I,
 While Baird sang in response to our **praying**
 With a voice to own which I'd die.

But of beauty Man ne'er knows satiety,
 And **Flint's** seldom left in the lurch,
 So next day he succumbed to his piety,
 And actually that race-winning Sinner put
 on his best bib and tucker and without breath-
 ing a word of it to the fellows who had weath-
 ered it through the night with him tuned up
 his best psalm-singing voice and went over
 to Larchmont to church!

I was a member of the Cup Defender's Syndicate which won the races of **1893** with the yacht *Vigilant* against Lord Dunraven's yacht *Valkyrie II*.

I had learned of the prowess, endurance, and pluck of his Lordship from Nova Scotian Indians (who had accompanied me moose hunting, coming to me the same night that his Lordship had given them an honorable discharge) and I knew of him as an all around sportsman. He made an excellent impression on the members of our syndicate when we dined his Lordship on his arrival from England. But, after his yacht was defeated, the opinion became general that he was not a good loser, and thereafter the New York *Sun* always referred to him as Lord Durracing.

In contrast one may note Sir Thomas Lipton's sportsmanlike bearing in the presence of defeat, which won for

him the admiration of American yachtsmen. The Larchmont Yacht Club, at a grand reception to Lipton, expressed its regard for him in verse. The **chorus**, to **the** tune of *Tommy Atkins* was loudly sung.

"Oh! Tommy, Tommy Lipton, we have welcomed you
before

And we hope to welcome you a thousand times or more,
We have faith in our *Reliance* that it will win the Blue,
But losing, Tommy Lipton, we had rather lose to you."

I was a guest of Lipton on board the steam yacht *Erin* when his *Shamrock III* lost the first of the series of races of 1903. He was naturally greatly disappointed. With his experienced eye, after seeing the American yacht *Reliance* sail, he realized that Nat Herreshoff had won at the drafting board not only the first but the series of races of that year, as both yachts were sailed with about equal skill. After the first race, the representatives of the press asked this disappointed man to grant them an interview. Sir Thomas ordered Scotch whiskey and soda; his natural geniality came to the rescue, and the ordeal was soon and happily ended. But the incident did not pass off without a jarring note. While conviviality was the order of the moment, a cub reporter of a Chicago newspaper, to the disgust of the other representatives of the press, butted in on the good fellowship of the hour and addressed Lipton: "Sir Thomas," he said, "you said if there was plenty of wind you would beat the *Reliance*."

With his ready Irish wit Lipton replied: "If we had had as much wind as you are said to have in Chicago, we should have won."

The expense of yachting is generally supposed to be very heavy. One reason for this is that many yachts are built very much larger than is suitable for our inland waters. Personally I found yachting cheap enough. The *Gracie* furnished a summer home, and by taking in three partners the expense was divided by four. I bought the *Nada* for \$3,700 and, after running her for two years, sold her to Gould for \$7,000. The *Fiseen* and the *Javelin* I transformed into torpedo boats for a South American government. The forty-five foot steam yacht *Sport* I sold to advantage.

The sale of this last yacht was a rather amusing transaction. A man came to my office and asked the price: I told him \$1,500. He said that this figure was ridiculous and belittled my yacht. He intercepted me, however, on my way to the Downtown Club where I was in the habit of lunching, and I told him that after listening to his opinion of the *Sport* I had decided to advance my price to \$1,800. He turned on his heel with the remark that I was "trifling"; but the next day he came to my office to dicker again. I told him the price was ~~\$2,500~~. He slammed the door as he went out of the office. On my way down to dinner that evening the bell rang. I opened the door and there was the would-be buyer again. I immediately told him that the price was now \$3,000.

At which he quickly answered: "I'll take her before she goes up another dollar."

He had, of course, a good reason for acceding to my price. This yacht had been built for me by Herreshoff, with twin screws and universal joints on the shafts, so

that she could run at low speed in eighteen inches of water by raising the propellers, while by lowering the propellers she could run at high speed in deep water. She was the only yacht in the United States that fulfilled the purchaser's requirements.

In the case of the *Arrow*, I will explain a profit on a cost of \$160,000. During the preparation for, and the continuation of, our war with Spain I was spending about four days of every **week** in the Navy Department and was impressed by the fact that, according to the naval records, the Spaniards had a larger torpedo fleet than the United States. So I ordered two quadruple expansion engines of **3500** horse power each, with the intention of building a second class torpedo boat in association with Lewis Nixon. But after Cervera had been defeated the United States Government did not want a small torpedo boat at any price, and there was no way of marketing two highly refined **3500** horse power engines. I then decided to make the world's record for speed on the water, and, although I knew by experience that aluminum disintegrates when it is used in boat construction for salt water, I made up my mind to build a very light hull. The result was that the *Arrow* steamed a measured mile at the rate of 45 and **$\frac{6}{10}$ ths** miles per hour.

Nothing that I have ever done has given me such wide publicity as the *Flint Arrow*. The *Arrow*, making the world's record for speed on the water, was shown in the movies throughout the world. In publications showing the fastest locomotive and the fastest horse, and picturing athletes, the *Arrow* was usually included. When it

became manifest that there would be a Russo-Japanese war, I sent a model of the *Arrow*, transformed into a torpedo boat, to the Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovitch. The reputation as an expert in high speed which the *Arrow* had gained for me went far in giving me a profit on its cost in connection with my purchase, for Russia, of all suitable munitions available in the United States, and my selling to Russia eight submarines and ten torpedo boats.

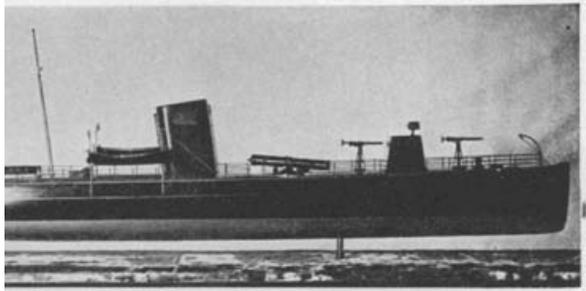
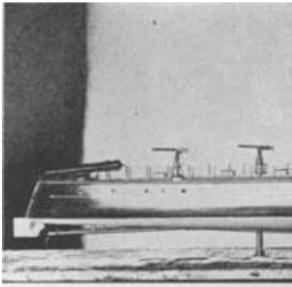
My log-book was one of the most enjoyable features of yachting, and now it is a joy as an aid to reminiscence. The ordinary log-book, and often a guest-book, is as monotonous as that diary described by Mark Twain in which the writer entered daily that he "Got up, washed, and went to bed."

At a dinner which I gave to Major A. E. W. Mason, the author of *The Four Feathers*, at the Lord Baltimore Dower House in Maryland, Patrick Francis Murphy took the bill of fare on which the word "Menu" was painted in brilliant colors, and derived from it this apt epigram. "It is not what you eat, it is the Men-U meet!"

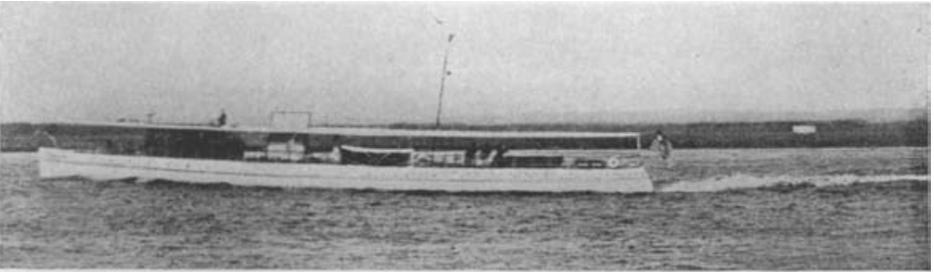
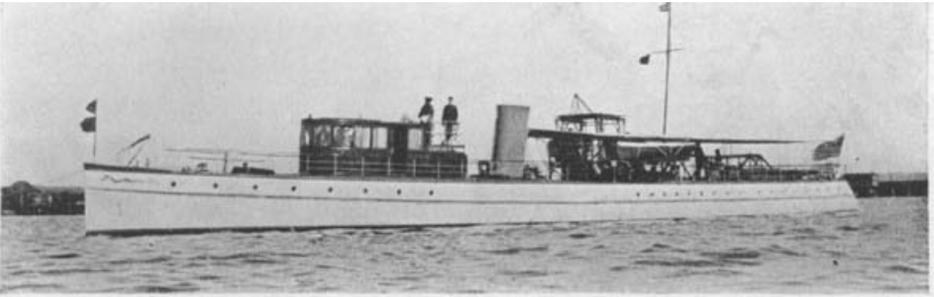
So in yachting, it is not the miles you sail, but the inspiration to pellucid thought that comes from "mixing your blood with sunshine and taking the wind into your pulses."

Let me give some extracts from the log, starting with diplomats (and I have in mind a remark made to me by James G. Blaine under whom I spent one year in the diplomatic service: "After all, Flint, the only real diplomats are women:')

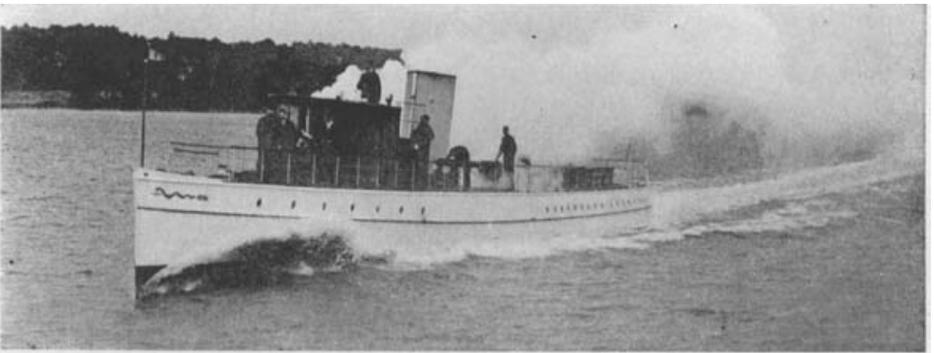
Steam Yacht *Arrow*, the fastest yacht in the world



Model sent to the Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovitch at St. Petersburg



In Commission as Pleasure Yacht



Making Record Speed at the rate of 45 6/10thS miles per hour

Therefore it seems fitting that I should first refer to the occasion when Mrs. Flint and I entertained on board the *Arrow* Countess Cassini, accompanied by the Secretary and **attachés** of the Russian Embassy.

They boarded the yacht at Jersey City, on the arrival of the train from Washington, and we steamed up the Hudson River to the Ardsley Club. A half circle was formed to **receive** us, and the president of the Club extended to the Countess a graceful welcome. All looked to her to say something in reply. **It** was an ideal day in the month of roses, and the Ardsley grounds, where the company was assembled, never looked more beautiful. The Countess turned to me and asked: "What is the name of the place where we are to go this **evening?**"

"Dreamland," I replied.

With a wave of her pretty hand she remarked: "**It** commences here."

From Ardsley we steamed to the Atlantic Yacht Club, which was decorated with flags. There the Countess, abandoning her diplomacy, lost her temper, and demanded: "Why do you bring me to a club decorated with Japanese flags-the flags of the nation with which my country is at war?"

I had had nothing to do with putting up the Japanese flags, but here was a case that needed presence of mind and quick action. I sent at once for the International Code of Signals, handed the code to the Countess, and called her attention to the fact that the flag with the white ground and the red ball stood for the letter C.

"Countess," I explained, "we thought that the **greatest**

compliment we could pay you was to have the most prominent feature of our decorations the letter 'C,' which stands not only for Countess, but for Cassini.

In seeing the sights at Coney Island we were accompanied by a police escort and special attention was given to make the sights attractive to the Countess. As we approached the wee small hours I ventured to remark to her: "It is getting late and the Count may be anxious about you."

The reply was characteristically diplomatic: "Yes, father may worry a little, but now that we are here he would expect me to see everything."

Which she did!

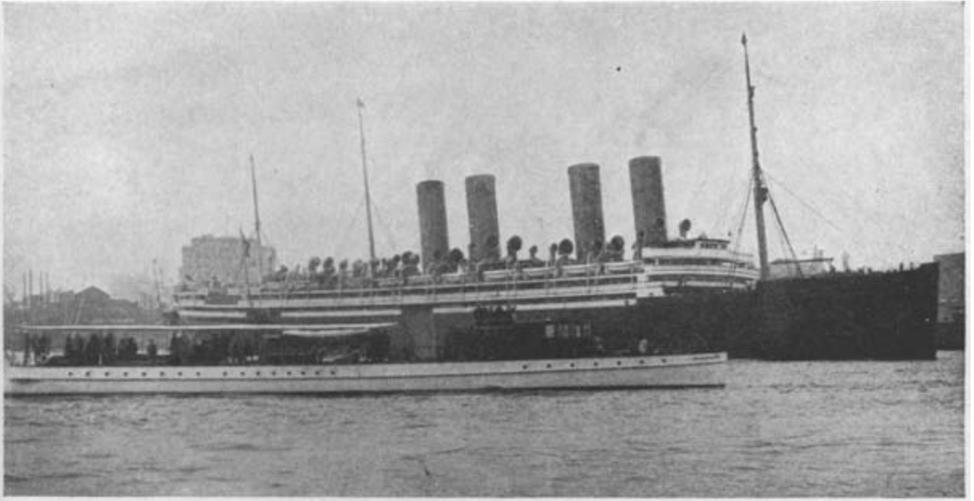
The *Arrow* was the first vessel built in the United States to adopt the only radical change in ship modelling that had been made for thousands of years, namely, the flat floor aft or flat run, which prevented squatting and which upset all previous tables of the power that could be put in different lengths of hulls. There was put in the *Arrow* three times the maximum horse power-7000 H.P.-that was allowed in the old table. The yacht was **132** feet long and weighed only 67 tons. This was a condition and not a theory when Lewis Nixon came on board, and I asked him to write in "The Log." He was a true prophet when, on July **12th**, 1904, he wrote: "In the *Arrow* we see the perfection and maturity of the steam engine. In this there is seen the need of further advance which will be the gas engine-no boiler-no steam-smokeless-noiseless-always ready."

The following month J. P. Holland generally known as the inventor of the submarine was my guest. He gave



Countess Cassini

Sailing Master Packard



Departure of the Russian Portsmouth Peace Commission. Members of the Russian Embassy on board the *Arrow*. The fastest ocean steamship and the fastest yacht

credit where credit was due when he wrote in "The Log" August 15th, 1904 as we steamed up, the Hudson River:

"Within sight of our course, Bushnell, the father of submarine warfare, made his experiments in the hope of developing weapons with which to destroy his enemies. We already have good grounds for hoping that the complete development of his idea will more probably result in the *ending* of naval warfare than in the destruction of our enemies' ships.

J. P. HOLLAND."