

# CANOEING.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

The sporting canoe of to-day developed from that of primitive races—  
Rob Roy McGregor—The Rob Roy canoe—The Canadian canoe  
—The cruising canoe—The sport of canoeing.

THE canoe was probably the earliest boat invented by man, and was the first improvement on the floating tree and the raft. The canoe, constructed of skins, bark, or hollowed tree, was the vessel of primitive races, as it is still the only craft of their less-developed successors. The varieties of canoe in use for sport nowadays, in this country and in North America, have all evolved from the log and birch-bark types of Canada. Some little improvement on the primitive canoe had previously taken place in Canada; but it is little more than twenty-five years ago since this canoe entered on the course of development which has produced the marvellous little craft that exist to-day. The first improvements were due to Mr. John McGregor (Rob Roy); the interesting books recounting his canoe travels led to popular interest in the craft and in the sport, and, thereby, to that development of the canoe which has taken place in this country, in Canada, and in the United States.

McGregor's first *Rob Roy* was a partially decked canoe,

of shallow draught, and with a flat deck; in subsequent boats the well became smaller, the deck was arched, and sails were added. From the Rob Roy, which is still admirably suited for paddling and for inland waters, the various decked canoes of to-day have evolved, alterations being made to adapt the craft for rough water, for sailing qualities, and for storage. A class of boats has still further developed from the same origin and in the same directions, these boats were known as "Mersey," "Humber," and "Clyde" Sailing Canoes, but are now generally grouped under the term, "Canoe-yawl."

Canoeing in this country has not become so popular as it is in America; and many of the later improvements in canoe fittings and management have come to us from the other side of the Atlantic. Speaking generally, our weather, waters and coasts are hardly so suitable for canoeing as for canoe-yawl, yacht, and boat sailing; and of late years canoeing proper has not advanced in popularity in comparison with these other branches of nautical sport, at least so far as decked canoes are concerned. The growing popularity of the Canadian canoe amongst us is remarkable, and might be of great advantage to the sport generally if the owners of these boats would join existing canoe clubs, or form associations of their own, for racing, cruising, and the regulation and improvement of canoeing generally; this, up to the present, they have not done to any appreciable extent, the clubs and associations including few but decked canoes. It has been calculated that there are at least a thousand Canadian canoes on the Thames alone. For inland waters these boats may supplant decked canoes; but for prolonged cruises, large lakes, and for all salt-water work the decked canoe is much the better form of vessel. Whatever decline in popularity there may have been so far

as the cruising canoe is concerned, this has been parallel with marked development in the more elaborate specimens of the craft, and especially in the racer. This has, perhaps, not been of benefit to the sport generally. The handy little cruising craft—costing but little, and suitable for so many different purposes, the canoeist's home by day, and often too by night—appeals to a much larger constituency than does the elaborate, expensive box of strings, a marvel for beauty and speed, but quite unsuitable for a cruise; and the latter being only used by a select body of experts, the popularity of the sport must depend on the cheaper and less complicated boat. Canoes appeal mainly to those who have a passion for the water, but have not time, inclination, money, or opportunity for yachting. Therefore, in proportion as they are kept simple and cheap, so we may expect them to be popular.

As compared with other craft the cruising canoe's peculiar vocation is to navigate waters, for which its shallowness and lightness render it specially suitable; as, for instance, where there are overhanging banks, shallows, or frequent portages, and where camping out, afloat or on shore, is a common accompaniment of the voyage, necessitating capacity for the carriage and keeping dry of stores, clothes, and tent. Canoeing is a cheap, healthy, and most enjoyable form of sport; a man only needs to try it to become an enthusiast. There are signs of increasing popularity of the sport amongst us, and a British Canoe Association has been formed, with the object of promoting "cruises and meets, whereby canoeists of the United Kingdom, irrespective of clubs, may unite for the purpose of cruising and camping," and of securing "reasonable tariffs for land and water transit of canoes, for procuring concessions and permissions for the navigation of canals, streams, and lakes,

and, in all possible ways, to procure increased facilities for cruising, camping, and exploration." The association already numbers nearly two hundred members, and has held several delightful and successful meets. In the United States canoe clubs exist wherever suitable waters are to be found; there are probably as many thousands of canoeists there, as there are hundreds in this country. Some of our best racing sailors have been beaten when they have competed in American canoe-sailing contests.

The canoe is a craft which need cost but little in the first instance, and next to nothing to keep up. It has been justly styled the "Poor Man's Yacht." The sport may be indulged in alone by those who so prefer, or it may be made as sociable a sport as any other; it is suitable for ladies as well as men; the B.C.A. includes many lady members, some of them active, skilful, and enthusiastic canoeists.

In this country the sports of yacht- and boat-sailing are so popular, and our waters are so suitable therefor, that a large portion of the nautical constituency are absorbed in these pursuits, and the sister sport of canoeing has suffered in consequence. Again, it has too commonly proved the case that canoeists develop (or degenerate) into yachtsmen, and forsake the humbler craft. It must be put to the credit of the sport of canoeing that a fair number of the present yachtsmen and boat-sailors have graduated through the ranks of the canoeists. Many a brass-bound Corinthian and many a skilful helmsman of to-day was the enthusiastic canoeist of yesterday. Desire for more extended cruises, for more comfort or display, for facilities to take family and friends with him or to offer hospitality afloat, for more extended opportunities for racing—these or other motives may lead the canoeist to forsake the canoe for larger

craft, and so the ranks of the canoe clubs are thinned. After all, the deserters remain sailor men; once a canoeist a man will seldom desert nautical life altogether, until for the last time he "cross the bar;" and he will never despise the craft in which he first tasted the joys of sailing. No yacht or sailing boat necessarily demands more skill, pluck, presence of mind, or readiness of resource than does the sailing canoe, nor does it necessarily afford more healthful enjoyment.

A more insidious foe to the canoe than the yacht or sailing boat, and one that may be said to be of its own household, is the canoe-yawl. Especially of late years has this craft become popular, and most canoe clubs now include a fair number of owners of canoe-yawls who were canoeists first. However, the canoeist who takes to the canoe-yawl is not lost to the sport as the yachtsman generally is; as a rule the former remains a member of his canoe club, and cruises on much the same waters as do his canoeing friends, and frequently in company with them; not seldom he returns anon to the smaller, less expensive, and less troublesome craft. The canoe-yawl, when not run to seed, is not much more than a big canoe; its type, construction, rig, and handling are very much the same; it is not so manageable ashore, but almost as easily when afloat. A treatise on canoeing could hardly be written without reference to the canoe-yawl, so a chapter will be devoted to it in the following pages.

In considering the popularity of canoeing there is too much tendency to look to the musters of the various canoe clubs and to the records of the entries for their races. Canoe-racing is, in this country at least, confined to a limited body of experts; but wherever one may travel on British waters one will meet with Canadian or with cruising

decked canoes, a large proportion of which are unattached to any club. The boating man whose tastes tend towards racing will be more likely to indulge in rowing or in the sailing of boats or yachts; there are more opportunities for contests and for display in such craft. The man who prefers exploration, adventure, cruising, and in general the life of a gipsy afloat, will find a canoe or a canoe-yawl the very vessel to suit him. The author believes there are many more of such than is generally supposed, and than the languishing canoe clubs of the country contain.

Our consideration of the sport of canoeing may be fitly divided into that of the boat itself and of its management. A canoe consists of a hull, its fittings and appliances, and the spars and sails. These we will first discuss, and then pass on to the use of the canoe as a paddleable and as a sailing vessel.