CHAPTER VII.

CAPSIZING.

Accidental—When likely—Not dangerous—What to do when upset—Intentional capsize—Upset races.

CAPSIZING has been occasionally referred to in the preceding pages, especially in the chapter on Sailing. Practically, a capsize is rarely to be expected, except when running before a puffy breeze; with care and caution the accident need never occur. In a craft with which a capsize is comparatively so unimportant an event as it is with the canoe, a spread of sail and a method of sailing are commonly employed, especially when racing, which are excessive for such a boat, and which would be reckless with any other variety of sailing craft. I know of canoeists, who have habitually indulged in the sport for from ten to twenty years, who have never capsized. Not only when running before the wind is a canoe liable to be upset, but also by waves with way on them, as in a tideway or close to a beach, or in a steamer's wash, particularly if such waves be not rightly treated, and be not received on the bow or stern. A sudden squall, too, if not anticipated, may upset the canoe, especially if the sheet be made fast or not smartly slacked off.

The danger of canoeing has been greatly exaggerated, and is chiefly imaginary. In nearly twenty years' experience of the sport I have never personally met with a case in which a fatal accident has occurred, and do not remember to have heard of more than one or two such. When one considers the number of totally inexperienced youths, many of whom cannot swim, who go afloat in Canadian and other light paddling canoes, it would not be surprising if many of them were drowned; but such does not seem to be the case. Canoes, and some canoe-yawls, certainly do often capsize, but usually with impunity. On a cruise, with ordinary care, a capsize is a very rare event. When racing, it is another matter; sail is carried, and the boat is so sailed as to make a capsize a probable event, simply because with the canoe this is only a troublesome and not a risky eventuality. One hears of capsized canoes so often because the event is looked upon with equanimity by the canoeist; but the public, imagining such to be dangerous calamities, acquire an erroneous idea of the risks of the sport. Any one unaccustomed to a canoe, noticing the low freeboard and the constantly varying heeling of the craft to the breeze when under sail, cannot appreciate how much under command she really is.

A capsized canoe is less helpless than any other upset craft I know of. I have heard of a race in which, of nine canoes that started, eight capsized, and each competitor brought his canoe back himself. And I remember a race in which one of the competitors upset three times, and each time righted his canoe and re-entered, completing the course at last. A canoe is hardly the easiest craft in which to learn the art of sailing, but, compared with other boats, it is probably the safest for single-handed sailing. As a rule, inexperienced canoeists do not go far from shore, and

even if the upset man cannot right and re-enter his craft, he can sit on or hold on to the boyant upset boat, or can swim to land. I am, of course, only alluding to canoes with air-bags or water-tight compartments; I am unaware how a capsized Canadian canoe behaves, but expect it will at least support its crew, and in smooth water may probably be baled and re-entered.

A capsize may be accidental or may be purposely performed. Every canoeist should be able to swim, and many canoe clubs rightly make this accomplishment a necessary qualification before any one is eligible for membership. It is not essential that the canoeist should be a powerful swimmer; but, whether a lady or gentleman, it is unwise for any one to go afloat alone in a canoe under sail, until able to swim in clothes enough to reach the canoe when it may be a short distance away in the water. Every canoeist who races or who cruises should practice swimming in his clothes, and should occasionally capsize, right, and re-enter his canoe, until facility and confidence are obtained; the presence of mind and the feeling of security so gained immensely increase the pleasure and the safety of the sport of canoeing. Most canoes are lifeboats, and all should be not only unsinkable, but, by means of air-bags or water-tight compartments, they should be capable, when the well is full of water, of supporting the crew and his impedimenta; the canoeist can then at least hold on until succoured. It is, however, so easy to learn to get into an upset canoe, except in very rough water, that any one may acquire the accomplishment. Having been several times capsized under sail, having often upset on purpose, and won club "upset" races, it may be of service to state shortly the proceedings I have then found most satisfactory.

The canoeist should always be prepared for a safe

capsize by seeing that his air-bags are intact or his bulk-heads water-tight; while under way he should be careful that no loose lines are round his body or legs. A capsize is generally a less sudden affair than the inexperienced think; and, if not flurried, there is plenty of time after the capsize is unavoidable for the canoeist to see that his legs are clear, to throw off the apron or hatch (if such there be), and often even to clamber out on to the uppermost side of the boat. If avoidable do not go out to leeward, for on that side are the sails and lines. With the deck position of sailing this is usually easily avoided; but when the canoeist is sitting below, it is not often possible to get out of the well in time to avoid falling out to leeward. When the canoeist is already on the topmost bilge of his shipwrecked craft, or is smart in getting there, he may be able to right her with her sails standing and with very little water in the well; he may clamber in as she rights with only his legs wet, and continue his race or cruise none the worse. With the small bucket-wells, common in American racing canoes, an upset boat takes in very little water, and that little either runs out of the self-draining cockpit, or may be ignored. In British canoes the water, if much be shipped, must be baled or pumped out, otherwise its weight in the lee bilge would precipitate another upset. The righting of a canoe is more readily performed if the boat has a centre-board, and this be lowered at the time; for, with a foot or arm on this, the canoeist's weight has a powerful leverage to right the boat, and she is less liable to roll over again.

Let us suppose that, from the unexpected nature of the upset, or because the canoeist was sitting below and not able to get up to windward in time, he is thrown out to leeward and the canoe completely capsized, with a considerable amount of water in the well. There is a little

more risk of the sails and lines giving trouble on this side, but they are generally easily avoided. We will first suppose the canoe has no centre-board, as the early part of the proceedings differ when there is a centre-board. Rapidly cast off the main halliard from its cleat, so that the sail may fall down as the boat rights, otherwise the weight of water in the sail will hinder the righting of the boat. As soon as the halliard is let go pull the canoe completely bottom up,—it is seldom necessary to pull the mast out unless the water be shallow or very rough; while the boat is on her side the water enters the well, but ceases to do so when she is bottom up. Now take a breath, and look around to see that nothing is floating away, and that you are not likely to drift into danger. It is very aggravating, after you have righted the boat and got into it, to find your paddle some distance off; in which case you must either get sail on, jump out again, or pull up a floor board to paddle with. As long as the paddle is safe other floating objects can be obtained when one is on board again, so it is a good thing to take a turn round the paddle with any line of the capsized craft which is handy. The next thing is to right the canoe. Do not attempt to do this by pushing up the canoe's side nearest to you; the inexperienced are very prone to try this futile proceeding. Seize the keel and pull it towards you, getting your weight on to the bilge as it comes over. The canoe will readily and quickly right, the sails and ropes lying in the water on the opposite side to that you are on. If for any reason you wish to be on the other side of the boat—to avoid or secure floating things, or to get the wind to help you in righting—do not dive under the canoe, and so risk entanglement in sail and lines, but wriggle hand over hand round the stern or bow. If there be any difficulty in righting the canoe, it is probably

because the sail does not run down readily. If there be no downhaul, or be any difficulty in furling the wet sail, let go the tack and pull out the mast, leaving it and the sail floating alongside. If the canoe has a centre-board, instead of turning the boat completely bottom up, get round to the other side (if turned out to leeward), push down the centre-board, cast off the main halliard, and pull over the bilge. If the canoe gets further over than on to its side, there is a risk of the centre-board falling into its case, it is then of no assistance in the righting and, unless there be some arrangement to prevent it, may fall out through the deck and be lost, a fairly common accident. Again, if the centre-board fall out through the deck, but still be held by its hauling line, it would probably hinder the righting of the boat; so it is well to have some arrangement to prevent the centre-board coming through the deck slot of its case during a capsize, but which will permit of its being removed this way when required; and it is advisable not to let the centre-board canoe get upset past a right angle if avoidable. If there be a mizzen, the mizzen-mast is best pulled out, either before or after righting the canoe, if the canoeist intends to re-enter his boat over the stern.

Sometimes, if the ballast be not firmly held between battens or under the floor-boards, it will shift during a capsize, or fall out through the well and be lost. When the ballast slips down into one side of the well it may cause no further difficulty than a little extra trouble in righting the boat, and it can be got at and replaced or thrown out; when, however, it falls into one end of the canoe, it depresses this end and causes the other to stick up out of the water. Heavy ballast in this position makes the upset craft much less manageable, and is not easily got at. I have known it to entirely prevent an upset canoeist from

being able to get back into his boat, the stern of which stuck up like a fairway buoy.

To return to our capsized canoe. Should much water have run into the well it is possible to throw some of this out, by taking hold of the stern and giving the boat a few vigorous lateral shakes; then, if there be anything handy (cap, jam-pot, sponge, meat-tin, cup, baler) to bale with, more water may be got out before attempting to re-enter the boat, if the canoeist thinks such advisable or necessary. If the water-logged boat does not float high enough, the ballast may be got at and thrown out.

The canoe being righted, the next thing is to re-enter her. If the centre-board be housed, lower it, as it will diminish rolling as you get in. If there be large waves, get bow on to them when attempting to get in, and it may possibly be also necessary to take the mast out. If, at sea away from help, there be difficulty it re-entering the canoe it may assist to make a sea anchor of the masts, sails, and paddle, and to attach the end of the painter to this, in order to keep the canoe end on to the wind and sea while the canoeist gets in over the stern. It is only in really rough water that difficulty in re-entering the canoe is probable.

Some canoeists advise getting in over the side of the canoe. This I have never found easy if there be much water in the well, the canoe rolling over and over when I have attempted it. If there be but little water in the well, and if the paddle be held as a balance across the well with its longest portion away from the canoeist, or if there be a heavy centre-board, it may be possible to climb in in this manner; but the canoeist should not exhaust himself by repeatedly attempting to do so if the canoe shows a tendency to roll. I prefer, then, the following plan. After

unshipping the mizzen-mast (should there be one), edge along to the stern, and, by leaning the body's weight on it, depress the after end of the boat until it can be got between the legs, wriggle the body along cross-legged, until, by lying out face downwards and forwards, the after edge of the well-coaming can be grasped, and the body pulled along until the well is reached, when the water may be baled out before the canoeist sits down if so preferred. During this sliding forwards one's wet clothes tend to stick to the deck, to cleats, and to the steering apparatus, and require careful easing off. When the boat is baled sufficiently, the masts, sails, etc., can be got aboard, and the wreck paddled to the most convenient shore for a more complete recovery.

Most canoe clubs have "capsize" races. The canoes are started sailing. At a given signal (gun or whistle) each man must upset his boat while under sail, by leaning over to the leeward side until she capsizes; it is not permissible to roll or jump out, nor to uncleat the main halliard before upsetting. The canoe must be upset either until the top of the mast touches the water or until the keel is uppermost, according to the rules; the canoeist has then to right the canoe, re-enter, and paddle the rest of the course. For such a race, a beamy, floaty canoe without centre-board is the best. The mizzen and the ballast should be left ashore, as should everything that can float away and be lost or give trouble; the mast, mainsail, paddle, and backboard are all that are necessary, and the latter should be secured by a small lanyard. See that the floor-boards are properly fixed; also that the paddle is complete, if it be a jointed one. While under sail one should take a turn with the end of the sheet round the paddle, and observe carefully which cleats the halliard and tack are fastened to, that they have only one turn on their cleats, and that their

falls are well forward on deck out of the cockpit. As soon as the upset signal is given, let go the sheet, throw the paddle on deck forward, and capsize to leeward as quickly as possible. By so doing, and with a little skill and agility, the canoe may be so rapidly capsized, turned upside down, and righted, that little more than a bucketful of water gets into the well, and so quickly that in less than a minute from the signal the canoeist may be paddling for the winning-line without waiting or needing to bale.