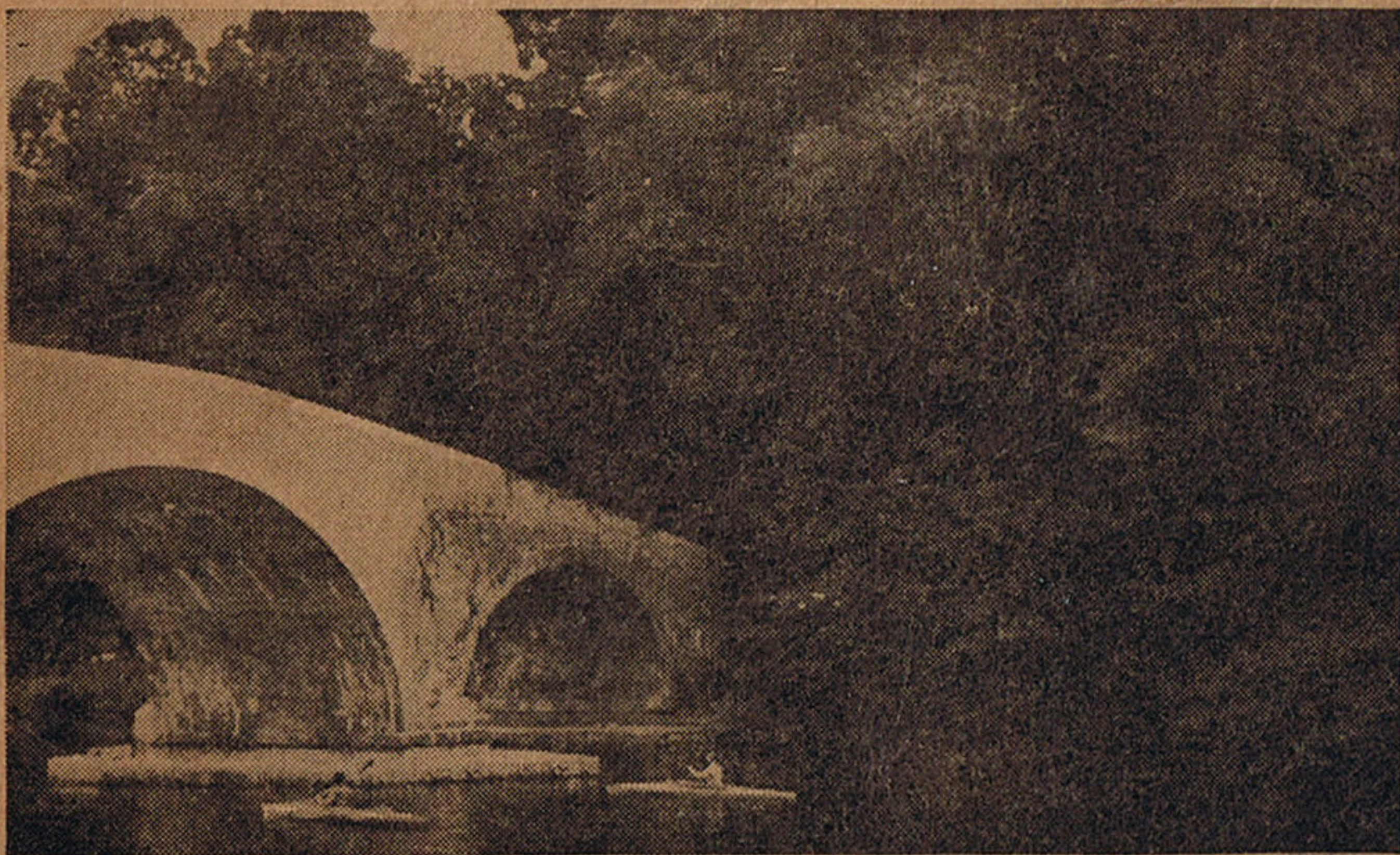


CANOEING
IN
IRELAND



RAVEN-HART

THE CANOE & SMALL BOAT

1/-

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CANOEING IN IRELAND

by

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"Canoe Errant on the Nile"*

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The cover photograph shows Kilsheelan Bridge on the Suir, with its entrance arch newly-built after its blowing-up during "the Troubles."

CANOEING IN IRELAND

IRELAND seems to have been deliberately designed for canoe-cruising. In no other country of this size is there so much canoeable water, nor so much variety of rivers: consider only the great Shannon, wide and slow, with wide views and wide lakes, rather pompous, sometimes dull; the wayward Erne, always doing the unexpected, with lakes that are parodies of the usual river-lake—look at them on the map; the Cork Blackwater, in its sixty miles contriving to give samples of all possible river-scenery, and first-class samples at that.

Ireland has also peculiar advantages as a holiday-country, especially for the British visitor and above all for the British camper. It is a foreign country, definitely foreign, with its own (very beautiful) coinage and stamps and uniforms and language, and yet British money passes and there is no exchange-variation to upset the budget or new names of coins to learn, and English is spoken everywhere except in some of the most isolated areas. It is a country saturated, perhaps over-saturated, with history, and ruins of churches and abbeys and castles are a continual feature of the landscape; and their architecture is so different from that of Britain that it must interest even the layman. Its scenery is usually good, often excellent, extremely varied and yet contriving always to be definitely Irish, so that hardly a photograph can be taken which is not at once identifiable as of an Irish scene. It has huge stretches of that superb loneliness that is to be found only here and there in Britain, where you do not see a soul for hours and camp out of sight of any signs of human life; and yet towns and supplies and civilisation are always within easy reach. And its people, in North or South, show the visitor that friendliness which one soon comes to expect, to consider as a typical Irish trait.

Ireland has dozens of canoeable rivers, a coastline more indented and therefore more suitable for small boats than is credible without a map before your eyes, and some ten thousand (I suppose) lakes. It must therefore be obvious that no booklet can pretend to deal with "Canoeing in Ireland" exhaustively.



THE IRISH WATERWAYS

Dotted line denotes border of Eire and Northern Ireland.

The choice of waters has here been made on the principles: that very short (one-day) trips are likely to be of interest to local residents only, and that they already know all about such trips; that the canoe-tourist will probably have a good deal of gear with him (or her: as it was once stated in an official document "Hereinafter the masculine always embraces the feminine") and that therefore portages should be few; and that coastal areas may be almost ignored, since a map will show which of them are sheltered and only local information is of value as regards tide-runs and currents. Canals are ignored entirely: they are of little use to the owner of a collapsible, and in any case the Grand Canal, the larger system, does not allow canoes or rowboats at all. Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 16 are from personal observation, the others from the best information obtainable: criticisms, corrections, and additions would be welcomed.

General Information

Routes to Ireland, fares, times, etc., should be obtained from the Irish Tourist Association, Dublin, or from travel agencies: no difficulties appear to arise in handling collapsible canoes as personal luggage on any of these routes. Information as to rail and bus services in Ireland can be obtained from the same sources. Here, again, the collapsible is usually accepted as luggage, though on the buses an extra charge may at times be made.

There is no Customs duty on canoes, cameras, field-glasses, fishing-gear, etc., entering Eire if they are declared as for the personal use of the owner. If the boat is brought from Great Britain or Northern Ireland into Eire it should be produced to the Customs authorities at the point of *exportation* (British port or Northern Ireland frontier-post) and a certificate obtained to allow of its re-entry into those countries without payment of duty. If this certificate is not available (e.g., if the owner lives abroad, and comes to Eire from a foreign port) the boat can be imported temporarily into Northern Ireland on deposit of the duty (20 per cent. *ad val.*), with a refund on re-exportation.

If the Erne is taken into Northern Ireland, the legal

position is that a permit must be obtained from the Collector of Customs in Belfast to use this unauthorised route; and if the boat is not British and has not paid British duty the canoer must report to the Customs Officer at Enniskillen on arrival and make that deposit.

Camping

This is usually very easy in Ireland, and payment for camp-sites is almost unheard-of. Camping and cooking outfits are very desirable, since except in the larger towns accommodation is often very scanty. For towns the Irish Tourist Association Hotel List (free) is indispensable. Most camping material is dearer than in Great Britain: foreign-made cooking-stoves are, however, cheaper.

Clothing

It is, perhaps, worth reminding the canoer who is used to Central Europe that Ireland is less "advanced" in matters of costume. In the boat the usual scanty garb is permissible; but for landing even at villages a shirt should be added, not a singlet. Shorts for women are little seen, and may cause unfavourable impressions.

Sailing

Since many of the routes lie through inland lakes or on inlets of the sea, a sail should be brought. The beginner may be reminded that winds on mountain lakes are tricky, and that storms on such waters get up surprisingly fast. In general, the winds in Ireland are stronger than in Great Britain—or so they seemed to me, especially when adverse.

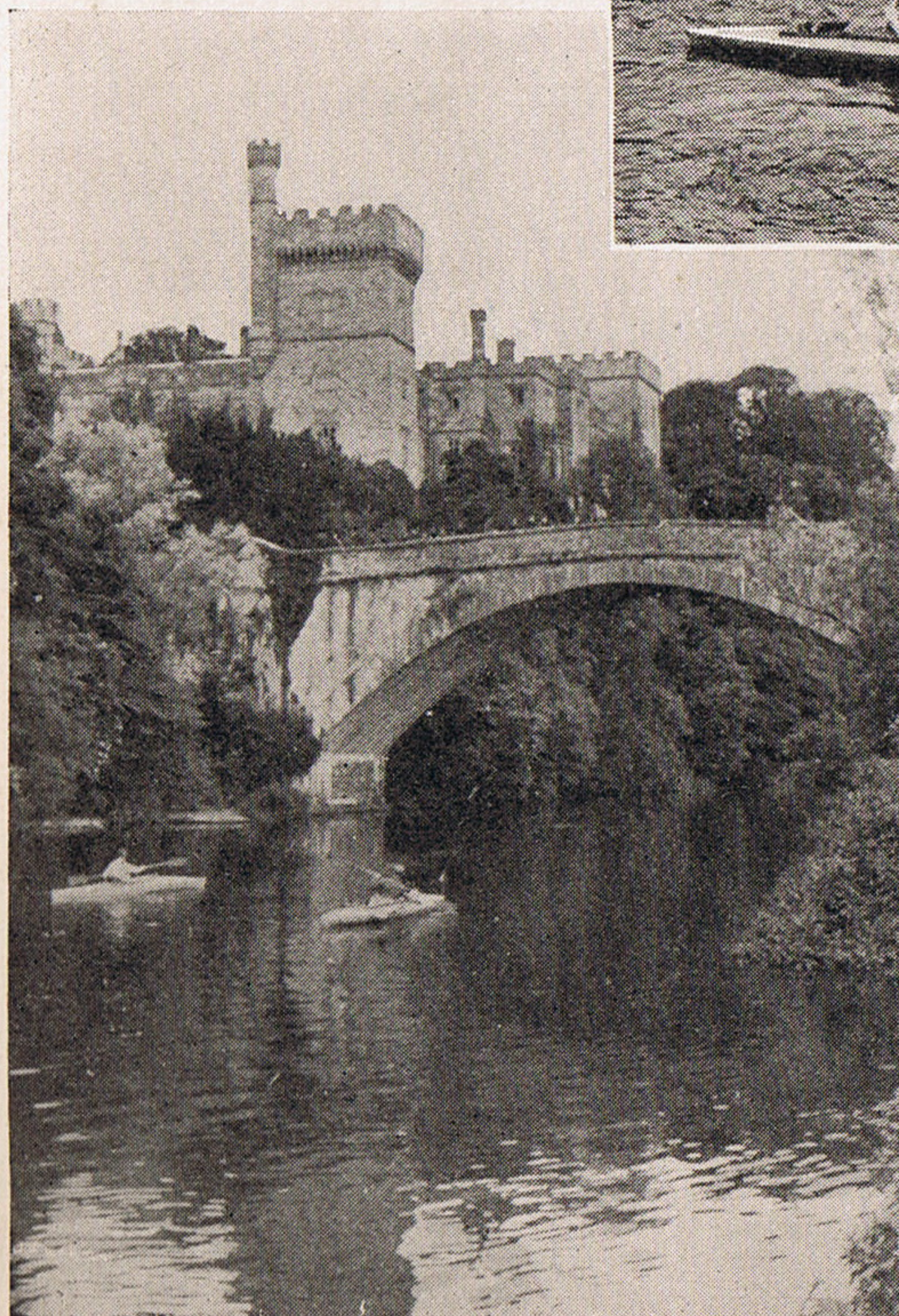
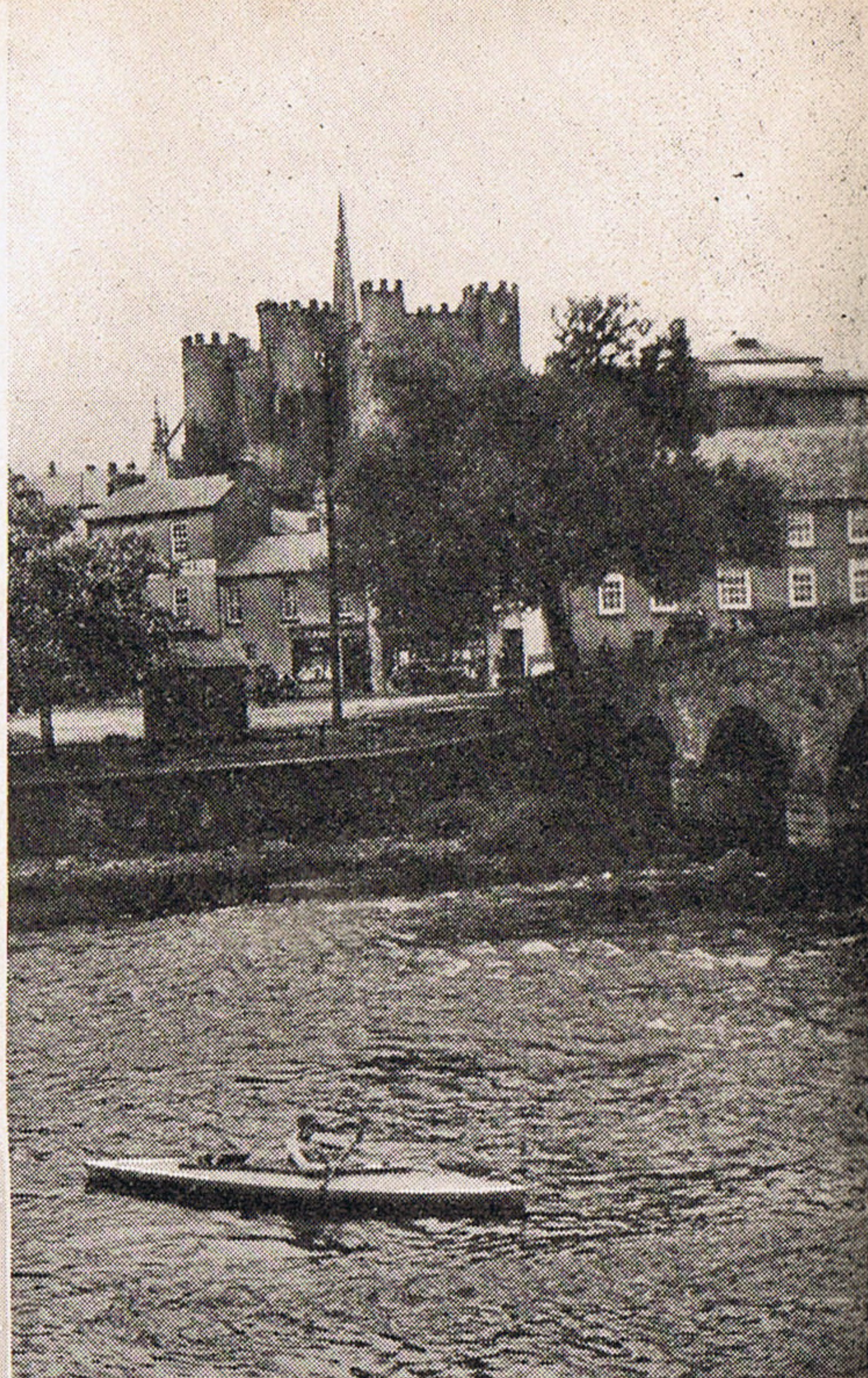
Flags

Owing to the unfortunate fact that in the past national flags were frequently used for factional purposes, it is preferable that the boat should be flagless for an Irish cruise.

Maps

The Ordnance maps quoted can be obtained through any bookseller at 1/6, paper, or 2/6, cloth, for the one-inch

The imperturbable Norman
Castle at Enniscorthy on the
Slaney.



Lismore Castle and bridge
on the Cork Blackwater.

sheets, 2/- and 3/-, respectively, for the half-inch. The special one-inch Killarney sheet is, exceptionally, 2/- and 3/-. Full details of the maps needed have been given for the sake of people who, like myself, enjoy getting them well in advance of a tour and studying them.

Fishing

No licence is required except for salmon and sea-trout, and other fishing (brown trout, etc.) is usually free. Full information is contained in the "Anglers Guide" (2/4, post free from the I.T.A., Dublin).

Climate

In the canoeing season showers are frequent, but steady rain is rare. Good spray-decks and waterproof jackets are essential, just as for all other countries of Europe. Camping kit may be the same as for Great Britain, although the nights tend to be warmer in Ireland.

Stores

Milk, eggs, bread are obtainable everywhere, and of excellent quality. Other stores (Irish bacon is not to be forgotten) are best obtained at towns: tinned foods at *large* towns only. Petrol can be got almost everywhere. Maps, odds and ends of camping gear, films (especially for the less-common sizes) should be bought in Dublin or Belfast).

1. THE SHANNON

This is the longest river in the British Isles. It may be started at Drumshambo (rail) near the lower end of Lough Allen out of which the river flows : in this case the lake will be taken for about a mile to reach the exit of the river. A portage at this exit may be necessary, and there are several shallows and easy rapids in the six miles to Battlebridge. Here a portage may again be necessary, to pass a shallow stretch ; but from there onwards there is a clear run to Killaloe except for five locks (Jamestown, Roosky, Termonbarry, Athlone, Meelick : 1/- each, pay at each lock as you use it, no permit needed, no charge if portages made, no Sunday locking except by special arrangement and then at 3/3 instead of a shilling). The alternative route by canal from Drumshambo to Battlebridge is rarely navigable owing to shortage of water.

From Killaloe down the river is not attractive and may be very shallow, much of the water being taken by the canal to the power-station at Ardnacrusha. To use this dull canal and the impressive double lock at the powerhouse costs 9/- ; but this *same* amount will also purchase a permit from the Shannon Navigation Office at Limerick or at the first lock passed which is also good for the five locks above Killaloe, a point to remember if it is intended to go on to Limerick.

The only difficulty on this river may be from winds on the very large lakes traversed, especially Lough Ree and Lough Derg. In this connection it is worth noting that Lanesboro, at the head of Lough Ree, has a daily bus-service to Roscommon, whence there is rail to Athlone at the foot of the lake ; and that Portumna, at the head of Lough Derg, has a daily bus to the rail at Birr, should it be found necessary to abandon here. A "lift" down a lake may also be obtained on a barge, and there is pretty sure to be at any rate one a day. If, as I would suggest, Killaloe is made the end-point, this has bus-service to Birdhill (rail) and Limerick. Another point that might be useful as a terminus is Scarriff, with bus to Portumna and to Limerick, since it should be possible to reach here up the little river.

Other possible starting-points besides Drumshambo are Carrick (rail) and Boyle (rail), the latter on the very lovely Lough Key, about ten miles from the Shannon. By this route, my own preference, the Boyle river is taken as the start, with one locking or portage where it flows out of Lough Key, at Knockvicar (a pleasant name, but it means only "The Vicar's Hill"). If it is proposed to continue to Limerick the 9/- permit can equally be obtained here : should a portage be made here it would be on the right bank and rather a long one—alternatively, if not too much water is passing, the carry can be near the fish-pass, on the weir itself. Boyle is greatly preferable to Carrick as a starting-point if time allows : both avoid the shallow first part from Lough Allen to Battlebridge and the portage there, but Carrick loses the ten miles of Lough Key and the Boyle river, and these are among the most beautiful of the whole cruise ; in fact, if the start is made at Drumshambo the side-trip to Boyle and back should be included, despite the double locking or portage at Knockvicar.

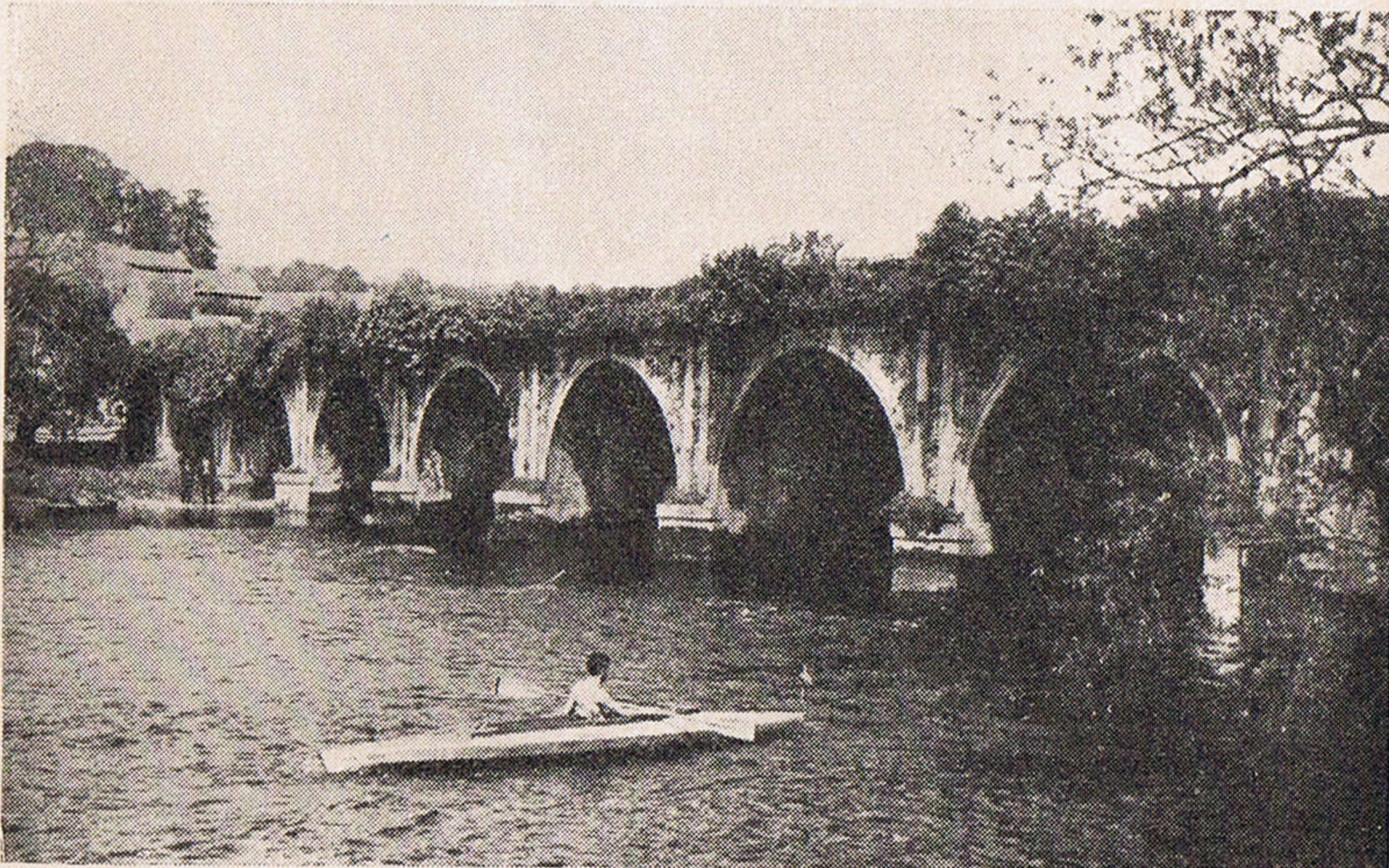
The half-inch sheets 7, 12, 15, 18 will suffice for this trip : 18 could almost be dispensed with if it ends at Killaloe. With these maps there will be no difficulty in finding the route : navigation-markers (poles and buoys) also exist, red to the left and black to the right of the channel when descending the river.

There is very little current as a rule, and the scenery is rarely striking except on some of the lakes ; but there is much to visit on the banks. A guide-book should, of course, be consulted for details, but mention may be made of : the ruined Cistercian Abbey at Boyle, with lovely mouldings and sculptured capitals ; ruined churches and especially a ruined castle on islands in Lough Key ; a ruined abbey-fortress near Leitrim (missed by starting at Boyle) ; the old gate at Jamestown (missed if the lock-canal is taken here) ; the islands in Lough Ree, especially Innisclothran ("Quaker Island") with ruined churches, and Hare Island, a little gem of woodlands ; Rinndown and Galey Castles on the West of this lake, especially the former ; and Rathcline Castle on the east of it ; the old keep at Athlone ; Clonmacnoise above all, a centre of



The tow-path at Killarney that makes it easy to get up through the little rapid at the Old Weir Bridge.

The grass-parapeted bridge at Inistriogue on the Nore.



learning in the days of Charlemagne—there are eleventh and thirteenth and fourteenth century churches, and a castle, and a monolithic sculptured cross, one of the finest in Ireland; and the school-teacher there is an enthusiast for the place and a mine of information. Above all, do not miss the ruined nunnery there, some way from the rest of the ruins, with sculpture that is at moments convincingly Aztec, at others curiously Hindu. A well there cures headaches—if you can span the cross your wish is granted—backaches are cured by sitting in a “chair,” really a fallen fragment of an arch. By the way, take the narrow arm to the right at Inchinalee Island above here to best first sight of Clonmacnoise, and arrive late in the evening; but if on the other hand you want to photograph it from the water, arrive in the early afternoon.

Then there is a fine tower at Banagher; an abbey at Meelick, reachable by canoe up a side-stream from below the lock; lots of ruins on islands on Lough Derg, especially on Illanmore and Inniscaltra (“The Island of Burials,” “Holy Island” on the map—one of the churches here was rebuilt by Brian Boru, and there is a round tower, and curious carvings); more ruins on the lake-shores, castles at Drominagh and Dromineer and Castlough and Derry and elsewhere; a superb doorway in the cathedral at Killaloe, and beside it a curious, steep-roofed oratory; and another oratory, rebuilt from an island now submerged by the new dam, beside the Catholic church there; and (if you get so far) the great castle at Limerick, and the Treaty Stone near it that symbolises a breach of faith not yet forgotten in Ireland.

Although there are no ruins to visit on them, the colony of fishermen on the Black Islands of Lough Ree are worth a stop with their amphibious cows that swim from one island to another as casually as the ordinary cow goes through a gate into another pasture. And, speaking of cows, keep a look out for the white cow near Innisboffin (“The Island of the White Cow”) not far off: she rises out of the lake and swims there whenever anyone is to be drowned in a coming storm. Other legends are associated with Saints Island (now an island in name only) where there is a well which sprang up as a monk

knelt to pray for those who had expelled him and his fellows—its water cures hatred if drunk with a pure heart; and a "Stone of Truth" in the ruined church there, false oaths on which cause a brand to appear on the faces of the perjurer and of all his kin to the seventh generation.

Some modern relics are worth mentioning also: the fortifications at Shannon Bridge and those at Meelick Lock (1798); and the huge and useless eighteenth-century hotel at Shannon Harbour, where the canal comes in from Dublin—it figures in "Jack Hinton," if anyone still reads Lever to-day.

The total distance from Drumshambo to Limerick is about 140 miles by the shortest route; but at least 200 in reality allowing for explorations of islands and bays, and even if the wind does not make a course along the shore of the larger lakes not only desirable but necessary. At least ten days should therefore be allowed, and two weeks if possible: from Boyle the run is about the same, and stopping at Killaloe cuts off only some fourteen miles. If time is short it would be preferable to omit Lough Derg rather than hurry the upper part.

There are hotels at Drumshambo, Carrick, Boyle, Athlone, Portumna, Dromineer, Killaloe, Limerick: supplies should preferably be obtained at these towns. Clubs exist at Termonbarry (for Longford), Athlone, Limerick.

Should showery weather make building or unbuilding in the open undesirable, the only thing to do at Boyle is to build in the town and hire a cart for the mile and a half down to the "Wooden Bridge," the nearest place to launch, as there is no shelter there at all. At Lanesboro the Canal Company's warehouse might be available: at Athlone there are various warehouses near the lock. If Portumna is made the end of the trip, permission would again have to be sought from the Canal Warehouse-keeper for drying out the boat and unbuilding: if Killaloe, there is a hotel on the left bank above the bridge which has a garage "contagious" to its boat-building (I hope you know Robert Martin's old Killaloe song).

The run from Boyle to Killaloe offers absolutely no

navigational difficulties, and is in all ways suitable even for the entire novice, providing he does not take foolish risks on the lakes but skirts their shores. The section from Lough Allen to Battlebridge offers no danger to the canoer but considerable risk of scrapes or worse damage to the boat: a new hand in a nice new boat would be better advised not to take it.

If it is decided not to use the locks the best portages are probably as follows; at Jamestown on the left bank—this easy portage is strongly recommended, since the loop cut off by the lock-canal and missed if this is taken is one of the prettiest stretches of the river. Alternatively, the loop can be explored before and after locking, in both directions, down to and up to the weir, respectively. At Roosky carry over on the weir itself, near the right bank, unless the water is too high, in which case the right bank should be tried. The lock and weir here are below the bridge, in the main river, and not on the old lock-cut shown on the map; this old canal is, however, worth exploring for its tree-sheltered picturesqueness and the contrast with the wide river. At Termonbarry the best portage will be on the left bank. At Athlone the portage should be made on the weir itself, unless there is too much water going over, in which case it may be possible to carry at the lock. At Meelick the best carry is on the left end of the weir, but the rapid below may give trouble: alternatively, in this case an arm going off to the left opposite Shannon Grove, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles above Meelick, may be taken, and a fairly easy portage made on this arm at Kilsragh Mill, the side-arm rejoining the main river just below Meelick Lock.

2. THE ERNE

This cruise may be started at Drumhowna (rail), from where the river will usually float a canoe, possibly with the canoers on foot beside it, a couple of miles to Lough Gowna. Alternatively, it is usually possible to get transport from Drumhowna to Scrabby, a village on this same Lough : it is a very fine one which will give a good twenty miles of exploration, with a ruined abbey on an island near its south end. The river leaves it again not far from where it came in, and then makes a run of about twelve miles to the next lake, Lough Oughter. In these twelve miles there are some fifteen points at which the boat will have to be floated or carried down, and at least three portages.

For this reason, and although it entails missing Lough Gowna, an alternative starting-point is suggested, at Killeshandra (rail) on Lough Oughter. This lake must not in any case be missed : it is entirely unbelievable without a map, and quite improbable even with one—a rough idea of its complexity, in reality not one lake but a maze of dozens, may be got by spilling the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle on to a table and letting them represent the water. It would take at least thirty miles to explore it even superficially ; and yet the shortest distance from Killeshandra to the exit is barely eight miles. Ten miles of river follow, with at moments a good current : at Bakers Bridge this current sets nicely on to a sharp-topped railway-rail in the left arch, the only possible one in low water. Below Belturbet bridge there are shallows where a portage will almost always be necessary : it is best made by landing above the bridge on the right, carrying across it, and re-launching on the left.

The river then brings you to Upper Lough Erne, a labyrinth of islands, as mad in its way as Lough Oughter. The shortest distance across it is thirteen miles : it would take at least sixty to begin to explore it. From it, thirteen miles of river, a clear run, bring you to Enniskillen, a suitable end to the cruise after a run down to Devenish Island and back (four miles in all) : Lower Lough Erne, though very lovely, is very exposed to wind, and although

it is only twenty miles across it from Enniskillen to Rosscor you can reckon with, at any rate, thirty and probably forty or more as actual paddling-distance if there is anything more than a light breeze. In any case the trip must end at Belleek, since from there to the sea the river falls by a series of cataracts.

The total straight-line distance from Killeshandra to Enniskillen is thus 45 miles : the actual run will be well over a hundred, and could easily reach two hundred without often going over the same routes twice. A week is the minimum : a month would hardly be too much, especially for those who like to camp on deserted islands and fish for their larder and go really savage.

Sheets 3, 7, 8, 12 of the half-inch series will suffice from Drumhowna to Belleek, sheet 8 alone covers Killeshandra to Enniskillen ; but it would be better to get the one-inch sheets 45, 57, 68 instead of the half-inch sheet 8 for those lake-labyrinths ; and a good compass should be carried. Even with those one-inch maps there are many points which are not clear : for instance, in Lough Oughter note that the channel between Trinity Island and Tawlaght is blocked when the lake is low, and the channel to the east of Trinity is then very shallow. The route from Inch Island to Eonish is no longer as shown on the map, a cut through the neck having shortened it by two miles or so ; and Eonish is blocked by a causeway on the west. Then again, whereas Inishmore has a clear passage either to the east or the west (the latter is preferable in low water : we stuck horribly on the mud to the east) Inishmuck is now connected to the land by a causeway with no opening in it, where the "Ford" is shown on the map.

In Upper Lough Erne note that you have a choice of three routes soon after Clowninny—left, centre, and via Quivvy Lough to the right. The middle one is the shortest and the dullest ; that on the right is the most explorable ; you will probably take the one on the left, so irresistible is the first sight of it under a narrow bridge. From the map you would also think that this left route connected to the middle one at Bloody Pass : it does not, unless you portage there. All three do, however, unite just before

Crom Castle ; and after that it is merely a question of choosing to which side of any given island you prefer to go. Some of the narrower passages between island and island (e.g., between Inishturk and Inishcrevan) are blocked by stepping-stones over which the boat must be half-lifted, half-floated.

A prominent landmark that will puzzle you because too new to be on the map is the bridge to the east of Trasna Island : another, less visible, links this island to the west shore of the lake.

Complications recommence at the exit : there are three ways out, two of which (right and centre) unite after a mile or two, leaving the third (left) to come in after another four miles : the centre one is the best. Even with map and compass it is not too easy to find : the simplest way is to get due north of Knockninny Hill, spot three islands in this north-south line, and then look for a hideous red bungalow on a fourth island, due north again—the exit is to the west of this last island.

Then, at the last island before Enniskillen (it has a ruined church on it) keep to the west : the shorter eastern route is very shallow and usually blocked. Finally, the map shows Enniskillen as on an island : it is, but the right arm as you arrive is blocked, and the left one must be taken.

The Erne has practically no current. The scenery is very good, soothing, amiable throughout, with superb moments of woodlands and lakes ; and there is lots to see, if less than on the Shannon. The highlights are Cloughoughter Castle in Lough Oughter, on an island that was almost certainly a stockade-fortress long before castles were thought of ; and the many ruins—tower, churches, abbey—on Devinish Island near Enniskillen ; but there are minor ruins on many islands and capes.

Hotels exist at Killeshandra, Belturbet, Enniskillen : re-victualling except at these points is somewhat of a problem. It is this very loneliness of the Erne that is for me one of its greatest charms.

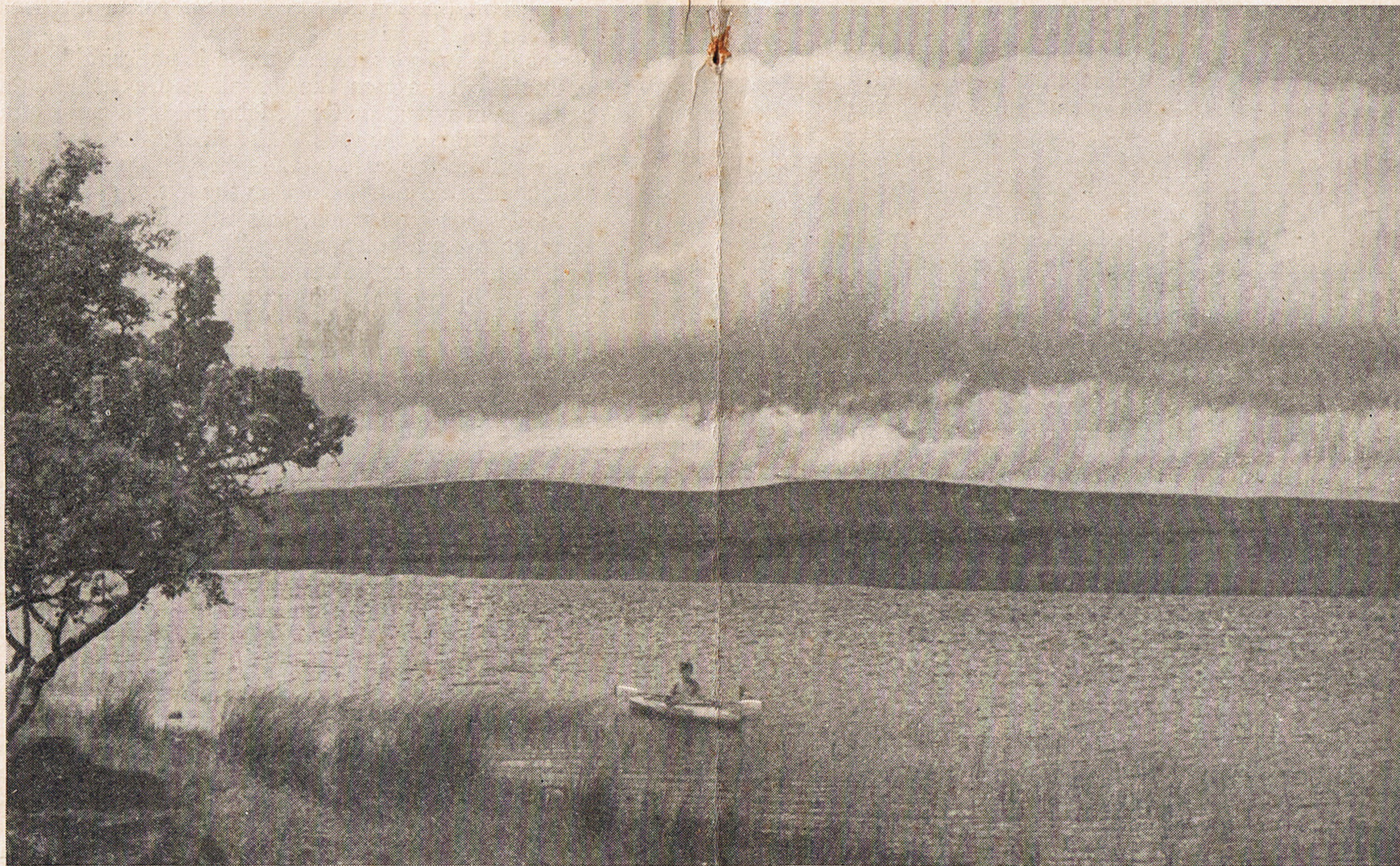
It is worth noting that if a longer cruise is desired the Erne links very conveniently to the Shannon, there being a railway from Enniskillen to Boyle : it is a friendly little

line, very much on the lines of Percy French's "all depends on whether the old engine holds together" song, which I hope you know, and it runs through Dromahaire, whence Lough Gill (section 3) can be done as an interpolation between the two rivers.

Should showery weather make it undesirable to build or unbuild in the open, the best places are : at Drumhowna at the railway-station itself, followed by a carry of about 200 yards along the rails to the river ; at Killeshandra at a sawmill on the edge of the lake ; at Enniskillen at the boathouse above the bridge on the left.

As regards navigation, this is quite easy from Killeshandra to Enniskillen, and quite suitable for the absolute beginner except at Bakers Bridge where he would be well advised to use the painter and float the boat down. Should the start be made at Drumhowna, details of the portages between Lough Gowna and Lough Oughter should be taken from the British Canoe Union handbook : the rapids shown in that handbook between the bridges at Belturbet no longer exist. If the cruise is continued on through Lower Lough Erne, reasonable care should be taken not to cross the wider stretches, as storms get up rather suddenly and raise nasty short seas. In this case, the left arm must be taken at Belleek, and the landing made on the right bank of this arm, at a boat-landing.

It must be noted that this cruise crosses the frontier into Northern Ireland (at the entrance into Upper Lough Erne : there are disappointingly no gaudily-painted frontier-markers) so that the remarks in the introductory matter must be read and remembered. If the Erne cruise is ended at Enniskillen, and then followed by the Shannon, with or without Lough Gill as a link, the legal position will be that the deposit made at Enniskillen on arrival will have to be reclaimed and refunded also at Enniskillen, on leaving by rail after visiting Devenish : in these circumstances, and if the stay at Enniskillen is a short one, some canoers may feel disinclined to worry the busy Customs officers there.



On the Shannon. A thorn-tree, wind-blown clouds and water, a navigation marker : and room to breathe.

3. LOUGH GILL

Although this lake is extremely lovely—some say even lovelier than Killarney—it would hardly be worth visiting by the canoe-tourist were it not that it fits in so neatly after the Erne and before the Shannon. The railway from Enniskillen to Boyle takes you through Dromahaire, one possible starting-point, and quite close to Sligo, another one; and then the same railway takes you on to Boyle.

One way is to make it twenty miles, Sligo to the end of the lake and back to Sligo, with really lovely smooth scenery: Sligo to the lake is three miles on a harmless little river, and then the lake itself is seven miles by the shortest route to the far end; and there are things to see at Sligo (a ruined fifteenth-century abbey), on the river (the "Irish Stonehenge" and a Holy Well), and on islands on the lake, especially on Cottage Island and Church Island. And one of the islands is Innisfree, of the "linnets' wings" in Yeats' poem: it is not marked by name on the map, but lies E.S.E. of Church Island, near the shore—on the half-inch sheet 7 it almost exactly forms a full-stop after the word "GILL."

Another way would be to leave the railway at Dromahaire, and come down the little Bonet River to the lake, thus traversing it once only: unfortunately it is about three miles from the station to where this river becomes navigable, nor is there anywhere to build under cover handy to the launching place if showers threaten.

There are hotels at Dromahaire and Sligo, and of course all supplies can be obtained at the latter town. The best place to build or unbuild there would be at a boat-hirer's shed just above the weir.

4. KILLARNEY

Any tour in Ireland would seem incomplete without a visit to Killarney: any canoe-tour more especially so. At the same time, many will be put off by the touristy nature of the district. This is an error: tourists are, thank Heaven, gregarious animals and come in herds, and between one invasion and the next there are hours of peace. They also follow certain definite routes: away from these are huge expanses of shore that are almost as lonely as the Erne.

The best map is the one-inch special "Killarney" sheet (portions of sheets 173 and 184 combined into one).

Camping is, of course, less easy in this area than elsewhere on Irish waters, but it will be seen from the I.T.A. list that several of the smaller inns have free camping-grounds.

The canoe can best be left at the boathouse of the Saint Brendan's Club: it will be necessary to write to the Secretary, Mr. Alfred Smith, in advance, so as to make arrangements for the key, since there is no permanent caretaker there. This boathouse is at Ross Castle, unfortunately a couple of miles from the station and nearly four miles from the camping-sites referred to.

To reach the Upper Lake, one of the finest and most lonely parts, and the Long Range, the stretch of river which I myself prefer to all the lakes put together, a short rapid has to be passed, at the Old Weir Bridge: a towpath is provided, so that there is no difficulty at all in getting the boat up. On the return journey this miniature rapid can, of course, be shot.

Navigation is of course dead easy, except for the possibility of sudden storms on these mountain-lakes. Do not round any of the headlands too sharply as rocks often extend from them under water for a considerable distance.

5. LAKES MASK AND CORRIB

These two lakes will provide a very extensive cruise, totalling some forty miles by the shortest route, but giving at least double that with a little exploration.

Lough Mask can best be reached at Partry (bus) and cruised southwards: this is the only place on the lake where supplies can be bought, and even here no hotel figures in the I.T.A. list. It is this very isolation that makes so greatly for the charm of this region. The lake is a fine one, with an early church on Inismaan island: one of the estates on its shores is Lough Mask House, where Captain Boycott added, unwillingly, a new word to the language.

A river connects Loughs Mask and Corrib: unfortunately it is a subterranean one, so that the only way to cross is by land, a matter of four miles by road. Transport of a sort is generally to be had from Cong, on the southern side of the narrow neck separating the lakes, where the canoe will be re-launched on Lake Corrib.

This lake can be navigated as far as the town of Galway, some twenty miles of lake followed by six of river: explorings will at least double the lake total, however. Cong itself has a market-cross and a fine abbey: the processional cross, which is one of the greatest treasures of the Dublin Museum, came from here. The subterranean river already mentioned should also be visited from Cong, sink-holes allowing it to be reached.

On Lough Corrib the principal island to be visited is Inchigoill, for the ruined churches. There are various other ruins on the banks, especially at Claregalway, Moycullen, Annaghdown, Annakeen, Aughanure (near Oughterard). Galway itself is an exceptionally interesting town, even for Ireland, especially for the past glories of its trade with Spain.

An alternative route would be to start at Galway and work up the river and along the west and north shores of Corrib to Cong, there getting transport across to Mask and going north here to Partry (bus). The decision will probably depend on how this section best fits into a more general tour of Irish waters.

Sheets 11 and 14 of the half-inch series will suffice, and with them the navigation is easy, except for storms.

6. SOME COASTAL AREAS

These may be mentioned briefly, for the reasons already stated, and rather for the purpose of indicating their relative accessibility than as regards navigational hints.

In the North-West (half-inch sheet 1), Lough Swilly can be reached by rail at various points. Mulroy Bay is preferable, as being more sheltered and equally beautiful; but is less easy of access.

In the West (half-inch sheet 6), Belmullet (bus from Ballina) lies on a narrow neck between two landlocked harbours, Blacksod Bay and Broad Haven. Mallaranny (bus from Westport) serves Bellacragher Bay: Achill Sound is next door and can be also reached from Achill itself (bus from Mallaranny). Kilkieran Bay (sheet 14 of the half-inch series) can be reached from Screebe or Gortmore (bus from Galway) and is very extensive.

In the South-West, the Kenmare River is very accessible from Kenmare (rail) and Bantry Bay from Bantry (rail): valuable information for these two inlets is to be found in the British Canoe Union handbook. A smaller but more sheltered inlet is Baltimore Bay, reached from Baltimore (rail). All these are on the half-inch sheet 24 except the head of Kenmare Bay which runs into sheet 20 or sheet 21.

The lovely side of the Barrow—the valley of the Pollmounty to explore.



7. THE BARROW

This river has been canoed from a little above Portarlinton (rail), some 21 miles to Athy with only three portages. From Athy (rail, pronounce "A-thigh") the river is navigable by barges, and there are 23 weirs with locks in the 41 miles to St. Mullins. From there it is tidal to the sea: this tidal part is dealt with in section 16.

The locks are operated by the Grand Canal Co., but no permission is needed from them for the use of the river. They do not, however, allow canoes to use the lock-cuts or the locks: portages are said to be easy at all the weirs.

The river-banks are pretty throughout, and there are frequently good views of the distant hills as a variation: the finest parts are those near Carlow, Muinebeag (Bagenalstown), and below Borris. There are perhaps less things to see along the Barrow than on most Irish rivers: Lea Castle, above Athy, is one of the finest of these sights, and there are other castles at Athy (sixteenth century), at Carlow (good twelfth century), at Clogrennan just below there, at Leighlinbridge; and a ruined Cistercian abbey at Graiguenamanagh ("The Oratory of the Monks").

Hotels exist at Portarlinton, Athy, Carlow, and supplies are best obtained there. The half-inch sheets 16 and 19 cover the river from Portarlinton to New Ross (on the tidal part): if the trip is from Athy only the one-inch sheet 128 may with advantage replace the half-inch sheet 16.

At least four days should be allowed from Athy to New Ross, since there is little current and the portages will take up much time: five days would be better. The navigation from Athy down is easy: above there it is hardly suitable for the beginner.



Devenish Island on the Erne—ruined churches and round tower and evening.

8. THE SLANEY

This has been canoed from Tullow (rail) to Wexford (rail), a total of 43 miles, but with some eleven portages in the first 28 miles above Enniscorthy. Below there the river is tidal, and is dealt with in section 16.

The river is exceptionally clear, which makes rock-dodging easier; and there is plenty of it above Enniscorthy. The scenery is pleasant throughout. There are relatively few things to visit on the way, except the imperturbable Norman castle at Enniscorthy, interesting for its association with Spenser as well as for itself. The only hotels listed are at Tullow, Enniscorthy, and Wexford. Sheet 19 of the half-inch series will suffice, although it does not quite reach Wexford.

The navigation above Enniscorthy is definitely unsuited to the beginner: from there down it is of course very easy, except for a few shallows at extreme low tide near Enniscorthy bridge.

9. THE SUIR

This river is the "Shure," and not the "Sewer," please.

From Thurles (rail) to Clonmel (rail) there are some twenty portages in 51 miles: it is doubtful whether the run is worth the trouble.

From Clonmel (rail) to Carrick (rail) the navigation is quite amusing, and these thirteen miles should certainly be done: there is no danger whatever, and this part would be a valuable introduction to comparatively shallow-water canoeing for the absolute novice. The current here is always good, and there are several small rapids, the channel being almost always towards the left bank. The only possible trouble might be at Carrick, if arriving there at low tide (since the river is tidal from there onwards): in this case keep well to the right above the bridge in order to avoid a weir which stretches diagonally up from the left bank and leaves a narrow gap at the right one. Then, below the weir, between it and the bridge, there is a rapid, with a rock in it that must be passed to the right; and then the second arch of the bridge from the right (the first large arch from the right) must be passed. At anything but low tide there is nothing here to worry about: at high tide the weir is covered, the rapid drowned out, and any arch of the bridge will do.

On the whole run from Clonmel to the sea there is no portage, nor is it ever even necessary to float the boat down, unless perhaps in exceptionally low water—the total distance is 30 miles to Waterford, six thence to the Barrow, and 11 more down this to the sea, between Hook and Crook Points (hence the phrase "by hook or by crook" or so it is locally claimed).

From Carrick downwards to Waterford (rail) the tide should be taken advantage of, as it can be quite fast. The navigation here is, of course, very easy, except at extreme low tide when mud-flats may give trouble. Just below Carrick the route to be taken is along the right bank, through what looks like the entrance to a lock but is in reality a clear channel.

The scenery above Clonmel is fair, from there to Carrick excellent, and below there pleasant, with good distant

views of the mountains. Holy Cross, a Norman abbey with superb carving (four miles below Thurles) is one of the finest ruins in Ireland, perhaps the finest except Cashel; Cashel itself is only a few miles from the river at Golden; and there are also ruins of Athassel Abbey and Cahir Castle above Clonmel. Clonmel ("Honey-meadow") is one of the most inviting towns in Ireland, with an old city gate across the main street, and the "Main Guard," said to be from Wren's designs and certainly looking like it, and fine old houses down by the sleepy grass-grown quay. Carrick has parts of the old walls, and a curious bridge with a sort of guard-house in the centre, and the castle of the Earls of Ormonde; Waterford has little but an old tower. There are several fine and well-placed castles between Clonmel and Waterford, invitingly on the banks to be visited, notably Tikincor, Tibberaghny, and above all Granny, with a little whitewashed, thatched cottage nestling confidently into its shelter.

Sheets 18, 22, 23 of the half-inch series cover from Thurles to the sea: sheets 22 and 23 would suffice if the start were made at Cahir (pronounced "Care," twenty miles above Clonmel, with probably not more than four portages). For the run from Clonmel down, sheet 167 of the one-inch series may with advantage replace the half-inch sheet 22; and unless 23 has to be bought for other trips sheet 168 of the one-inch should be bought in preference, as it covers all the area likely to interest the canoer below Waterford.

There are hotels at Thurles, Cashel, Cahir, Clonmel, Waterford. No hotel is listed at Carrick: in the "Oarsman's Guide" of 1896, containing so far as I know the last general description of Irish rivers to be published, the remark is made for this town, "Bessborough Arms Hotel, better than its outside appearance"—amusingly enough the phrase is absolutely exact to-day, after more than forty years.

The best point to build at Clonmel is on the quay, near the lowest bridge, if necessary under the land-arch of it. At Waterford the boat may be unbuilt at the Club, or at the ferry-slip next to it, although these are a long way from the railway-station: except at high tide (and it is most unlikely that the canoer will arrive at high tide, since he

will have come down from Carrick on the ebb) landing elsewhere would involve acres of mud.

Two days will suffice from Clonmel to Waterford: it could be done in one day if the tide served. It is however worth noticing, as suggested in section 16, that there is no reason in anything like settled weather why the canoer should not go on down past Waterford (an uninviting town) with the tide, six miles to the junction with the Barrow, and then, when the tide turns, *up* this river to New Ross. If on arrival at the confluence the tide is still ebbing the canoer can well go on downstream with it for a few miles further until it turns, since the lower river below the junction is quite pleasant (but preferably not far beyond Passage since the river widens out suddenly there); or alternatively he might be able to get up Dunbrody Creek, on the opposite (hydrographic left) bank of the Barrow not far below the confluence, a mile or so to the ruins of Dunbrody Abbey, with an exceptionally fine east window, and spend here the time until the turn of the tide. All this area is covered by the half-inch sheet 23 or by the one-inch sheet 168.

10. THE NORE

This river can be canoed from Abbeyleix ("Abbey-leese," rail), about 51 miles to its junction with the Barrow, but there would be about 17 portages, and the navigation is by no means easy. The tidal section, from Inistiogue down, is dealt with in section 16.

The upper part is pretty, and the current good, but the hull of the boat would probably suffer considerably. There is little to see above Inistiogue except for the several interesting churches at Kilkenny and the ruins of Jerpoint Abbey near Thomastown.

Should any canoer wish to try the trip, it is worth noting that the railway follows the river fairly closely from Abbeyleix to Thomastown, so that it would be easy to abandon at any point.

Sheet 19 of the half-inch series will suffice for this river.

11. THE CORK BLACKWATER

The 57 miles of this river, from Mallow (rail) to the sea, are in my opinion the finest part of an Irish canoe-cruise. For my part, I would put this river among the best ten small ones that I have ever cruised, and pretty high among them at that. There is a good current, very clear water over a stony bed: there are a large number of rapids, all easy and most of them amusing. I had what local people declared to be exceptionally low water: with another three inches it would never have been necessary to get out of the boat except for the three obligatory portages at Fermoy, Clondulane, and Lismore weirs, and even as it was most of the rapids were shootable and the boat could be floated down the others. Between Lismore and Cappoquin the river becomes tidal, and it is best to use the tides, although they are rarely strong.

It is one of the prettiest rivers in Ireland—"pretty" is meant, and not "beautiful" in the sense of grandeur, although parts of the tidal section deserve even this adjective. Its peculiar charm is that the scenery is not only good but varied: other rivers may excel it, for example, in woodlands, but it has not only these but also fine estates, parks, really striking sheer rock-cliffs with the limestone overhanging in canopies over dark pools at the water's edge, sudden wide views of distant green hills and blue mountains, and then on the tidal section not the melancholy flats that so often spoil the old age of a river but a series of forest-furred slopes, building up more and more strikingly as corner after corner is passed, with the open sea as the perfect climax. Ruins abound, more perhaps than on any other Irish river (and that is saying a good deal): at Mallow a castle, at Monanimy another—this is just below Killavullen village: salute as you pass here the ancestral home of Hennessy, discoverer of brandy—another at Carrigacunna, at Bridgetown an exceptionally fine abbey in ruins, at Ballyhooly a castle, at Cregg another, at Castlehyde another.

Then comes the portage at Fermoy weir. This is best over the weir itself: go through the right of the bridge, and land at the second dry section of the weir, here running

diagonally on your left—if there is too much water land on the right above the bridge where boats are for hire, and make a long portage across the bridge to re-launch below it on the left bank.

Carrickabrick Castle follows, magnificently situated, but unfortunately spoilt by a hideous railway-bridge beside it ; and then there is another portage at Clondulane weir : land on the right bank, practically at the weir itself, and the carry is very short. About three hundred yards above this weir the river is “staked,” or so we were warned, with steel spikes to catch fish-poachers’ nets. They must have been well below the surface even with that exceptionally low water, as no ripples were visible.

Mocollop Castle follows, and another at Ballyduff : perhaps the finest scenery is from here to Lismore, with the famous castle that is associated with Raleigh and Boyle, on a cliff above the river close to a bridge ; but before reaching it there is another portage, at Lismore weir. The best point is found by going down along beside the weir—more like a wall than the usual type—almost to the gap in it through which all the water passes, and which may at times be shootable by the expert. The map shows a lock here, but it is long since derelict.

There are no more portages, but there are more ruins : at Kilbree, a castle ; and Drumroe, another ; and Stranally, two of them, old and new ; and Molana, an abbey and a castle ; and Rhyncrew, another castle. The pleasantly casual house that dominates the river from a cliff is Dromana, with fine forests near it and the legend of the Countess of Desmond who here “lived to the age of a hundred and ten, and died of a fall from a cherry-tree then,” the tree being incidentally the first of that sort planted by Raleigh in Ireland. The view *up* river from here is particularly fine, with blue mountains in the distance : all this tidal part is grand, in the literal sense of the word. A useful side-trip is up the Bride River on the right, said to be navigable for over seven miles : it makes an amusing change from the wide Blackwater, but a couple of miles will probably suffice most canoers.

Youghal (“Yawl” or, more exactly, the “You-all” of the Southern United States) can be made the end of

the cruise, with rail to Cork. If the sea is calm the best landing for the station is on the bathing beach right below it, past the town. If, on the other hand, the bus is to be taken, it will be better to land on the first slip met with on the right, above the ferry, and unbuild there : it is horribly slippery from green seaweed at anything but high tide. Yet another way is to return on the tide to Cappoquin, well worth it for those views, now seen to better advantage than by continual head turning on the downstream journey, and there to take the train.

In any case Youghal itself is worth visiting, if only for its associations with Raleigh : he was Mayor here, and his house still stands, with the garden in which he “planted the first potatoes grown in Ireland” (that hundred-times refuted and quite indestructible legend !) and smoked the first tobacco-pipe and was “extinguished” with a bucket of water by a horrified maid-servant (which may be true). The house is unfortunately closed to visitors, thanks to the vandalisms of souvenir-hunting tourists when it was open to them. There are also parts of the old walls here, a fine gateway, another arch through which Cromwell is said to have left Ireland, two abbeys, and a castle.

Sheet 25 of the half-inch map will cover this cruise, and no comments are necessary other than those already made. For the run from Mallow to Youghal at least four days should be allowed, and preferably five in view of the sight-seeing involved. The return from Youghal to Cappoquin will take a day more : two should high water be at an inconvenient hour and the tide running strongly.

At Mallow the best place to build is just below the bridge, on the right bank : in wet weather there is an inn near by with a shed that could probably be used. At Youghal there is a disused warehouse close to the slip mentioned : at Cappoquin a friendly Club.

I cannot too strongly recommend this river. The rapids are all easy : the absolute beginner would do well to stop above many of them and prospect, and if necessary float the boat down on a painter ; but none of them are dangerous, and as a school of shallow-water canoeing the Blackwater would be hard to beat, were the scenery not so good as to distract the attention of the learner.

12. THE BOYNE & THE LIFFEY

It is to be regretted that the Boyne cannot be recommended, as it is both beautiful and historical : but there are at least 24 portages in the 32 miles from Trim to Drogheda. Only the last four miles are clear of obstacles, and tidal. Dublin canoers do it, with stripped boats and much labour : they also do the Liffey, which is equally infested with carries.

13. THE BANN & LOUGH NEAGH

The Bann may be taken at Portadown (rail) whence there is no portage in the nine miles to the lake. The lake itself will give a run of some twenty miles : the shore should be skirted, since storms on such an open expanse may be dangerous. From the lake to Coleraine (rail) is a run of 32 miles, with five locks (one double) : these can be portaged, but a permit for the lot costs 5/- only, at the first of them. Eel-weirs will also be met with, but never extend right across the river : there is always a navigable gap left for the passage of boats. The cruise could also be ended at Toome (rail) where the river leaves the lake ; or at Portna after 16 miles of the lower river with one lock only, Kilrea (rail) being within a mile of Portna. The half-inch sheets 2, 5, and either 8 or 9, which overlap here, cover the run : sheet 2 is not needed if the cruise is ended at Toome or Portna, and 8 or 9 shows only a few miles at the start from Portadown and could be dispensed with.

The whole of this area is within Northern Ireland, so that questions of frontier do not arise.

About four days should be allowed from Portadown to Coleraine : the navigation is very easy, except for possible storms on the lake, the scenery rather dull.

14. STRANGFORD & CARLINGFORD LOUGHS

The best point from which to reach the former of these is Newtown Ards (rail) : the lough is striking, with interesting ruins on some of the islands, but is rather small for a tour, giving only about twenty miles. The west shore is the better for canoeing, the islands along it adding interest and giving shelter if needed. The tide through the narrow exit to the sea is unusually fast. Sheets 5 and 9 of the half-inch or 37 and 49 of the one-inch cover this area.

Carlingford Lough is even smaller, but has fine views of the slopes of the Mourne mountains as they "run down to the sea." Warrenpoint (rail) lies conveniently on it. Sheet 9 of the half-inch or 71 of the one-inch cover it.

Both these inlets are in Northern Ireland, the former entirely, the latter as to its northern and eastern shores.

15. RIVER & LOUGH FOYLE

The river offers twenty miles, from Strabane (rail) to the lough. It is tidal throughout and the navigation easy : the run through Londonderry is worth doing, with the walls that withstood the great seige of 1689.

To what extent the lough can be canoed will depend on the weather : it can be like a millpond—or very different. In perfect weather it may even be possible to link with Section 13 by a stretch of open sea, but this cannot be recommended to the beginner.

Maps 1, 2, and 4 of the half-inch series cover this cruise.

It should be noted that for all but about ten miles centering on Londonderry this waterway forms the frontier between Eire and Northern Ireland : this may possibly cause some complications.

16. A SOUTH IRELAND CRUISE

One particular combination of waterways deserves the attention of owners of collapsibles.

It would start by the arrival at Cork (from Fishguard, Liverpool or Glasgow) or at Cobh (from America, France, Germany, etc.). It might or might not include Killarney (section 4); but it would certainly include the Cork Blackwater (section 11) from Mallow to Youghal.

From here the bus would be taken to Clonmel, via Dungarvan, where a day or two could well be spent canoeing in the sheltered natural harbour with its three little tidal rivers. Alternatively the tide could be taken back to Cappoquin and the rail used thence to Clonmel: the ideal would be to go from Cappoquin to Clonmel by the road over the Vee, but there is unfortunately no bus-service by this glorious route.

From Clonmel the Suir (section 9) would be taken to Waterford. Nine or ten days would suffice for all this, not including Killarney or Dungarvan; and from Waterford steamer could be taken to London, Plymouth, Bristol, Liverpool or Fishguard.

Alternatively, if time allowed, the cruise could be continued down the Suir to the Barrow, and up this with the tide to New Ross: if wind prevented this there is a railway from Waterford to New Ross direct.

New Ross can then be made the centre for two day trips, using one of the hospitable Clubs there as a base unless it is preferred to camp. One of them would be with the tide up the Barrow itself to St. Mullins and back, 24 miles in all, a pleasant run with good scenery and a picturesque village opposite a bold hill as the goal, and the lovely side-valley of the Pollmouny to explore; and the second would be with the tide up the Nore to Inistiogue and back, about the same distance, again a pleasant run, with a rather narrower valley and some beautiful woods—the grass-parapetted bridge at Inistiogue is picturesque, and there are several well-placed buildings on the banks, notably the happy little “Red House” (which is white). Building and unbuilding would of course be at the New Ross Club.

Finally, if time still allows, the railway should be taken from New Ross to Macmine Junction, right on the bank of the Slaney, and this river canoed for a day, either downstream first and then up to Enniscorthy, or upstream to that town first and then down to Wexford—it will depend on how the tide serves better. This will give about 22 miles in all, pleasant if not so fine scenically as the Nore. Building will be at the railway station at Macmine, unbuilding at the Club if in Wexford, less conveniently at Enniscorthy at some one of the warehouses near the river. If Enniscorthy is the terminus, there is a railway to Wexford and so to Rosslare, but time should be allowed to visit Wexford, less for its old buildings (a tower and an abbey) than for its narrow streets and general picturesqueness.

The total, without Killarney and Dungarvan, is thus about two weeks: sheets 22, 23, 25 of the half-inch series will cover it all.

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