OBSERVATIONS ON AN ANCIENT IRISH BOAT.

BY T. L. COOKE, ESQ.

ALONG with this paper I forwarded a drawing, with measured plans and sections, of an ancient Irish boat, at present in my possession.

I believe that this boat is in a much more perfect state than the generality of such relics are found to be in. Its principal defect consists in a split, which runs from the lower part of the starboard side, quite through the solid stern. The greatest length from stem to stern, is twenty-two feet seven inches. The greatest breadth of beam, thirty-one inches. It is all one piece of timber, formed in the solid out of a single oak tree; and, although it looks, on a superficial view, as if the tree had been hollowed by means of fire, nevertheless, a close inspection proves, by the sharpness of the internal angles and the thinness, as well as smoothness, of the bottom and sides, that some sort of edged tools were used in its formation. The bottom, which is perfectly flat and without a keel, is two inches thick. The sides, which also present plain surfaces, incline outward from the point where they rise from the bottom. This splay of the sides causes the boat to be much wider at what may be called the gunwale than it is at the flooring. The sides are an inch and a-half thick where they meet the bottom, but they gradually become more thin from thence upwards, their topmost edges not being more than half an inch in thickness. The larboard side is several inches lower than the starboard one; but this manifestly is the effect of accident since the boat was made. The sides are prevented from collapsing by two stout ridges of solid timber, one of which was left standing near either end of the vessel, thus serving the office of what ship-builders term beams. These ridges are about thirty-one inches from the extreme ends of the boat; and between them and such ends, cavities have been scooped out of the timber, apparently for the purpose of rendering the craft more buoyant. A horizontal hole, about an inch and a-half in diameter, is visible in the most forward and highest part of the stern. It seems to have been for securing a painter or foot-rope to. There is no trace of thwarts or benches: and as the sides had neither row-locks nor thole-pins for the application of oars, the boat must have been propelled by means of paddles or by sculling.

Major Richard Dunne, the gallant and worthy gentleman to whose kindness I am indebted for the possession of this interesting relic, has obligingly informed me that when he was in Greece, he used to fowl in boats cut out of the solid tree and nearly similar to the one I have described. The Greek boat (he says) was then called *μενοξολον*, probably from *οχος currus, vehiculum.* My worthy friend had this ancient boat sent to me from Brittas, the seat of his brother, lieutenant-colonel Dunne, M.P., situate near Clonaslea, in the Queen's

County. It was found with three or four other boats some two or three years ago, on colonel Dunne's estate, in the progress of some drainage or other operations, at Lough Annagh, a natural piece of water which separates the King's from the Queen's County. The boat sent to me was the only one of those then found which had pretensions to be reckoned at all perfect. Lough Annagh is about three quarters of a mile long, by half a mile broad. It is about a mile and a-half N.N.W. of Clonaslea village. All the boats, which were then discovered there, lay in the same part of the lough. Each of them had the same dip in the sand or mud, and lay with its bow in a north-westerly direction. Hence we may conclude that they all were contemporaneously wrecked in some common catastrophe. It is at the present day almost hopeless to inquire of the time or nature of the visitation which submerged the little fleet.

The ancient Irish had various kinds of boats, known by the appellations cṙaṅoȝ, cṙan-ṙŋaṁ, ꝑuṙȝáŋ, báḋ, coṫ, coṙṙaċ, ṙcíṙṙa, or ṙcaṙṙa, ṙcíb, and báṙc. Of these the báḋ and báṙc seem to have been general terms by which to express any sort of boat. The coṫ was a small boat, which Ware (*Antiquities*) informs us was made of *a hollow tree;* and the ṙcaṙṙa and ṙcíb were properly what we would call a skiff, small light boat, or cock-boat. The ꝑuṙȝáŋ was a vessel made of bark after the fashion of some foreign canoes of more modern times. The cṙaṅoȝ and the cṙan-ṙŋaṁ were made of timber. Cṙaṅoȝ probably comes from cṙan, a tree, and oȝ, young, little, or oȝ, entire, whole, in consequence of its having been made of small boughs, or being formed solid out of a single tree like the boat which is the subject of this paper. The term cṙan-ṙŋaṁ was even more expressive. It comes from cṙan, a tree, and ṙŋaṁ, or ṙŋáṁaḋ, swimming. The coṙṙaċ was a boat made of wicker-work and covered with hides. Ware (*Antiquities,* c. xviii.) gives an account of the coṙṙaċ, and Mac Geoghegan (*Hist. d'Irlande*, tom. i. fol. 89) says, on the authority of Gratianus Lucius, "dans les plus anciens tems ils se servoient de petits bateaux de bois léger, ou d'ozier, couverts de peaux de bœuf, de cheval, ou de quelque bête sauvage, et qu'ils nommoient *curraghs.*"

Much information as to these curraghs is collected in the 34th chapter of the 3rd part of O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, which, amongst other interesting particulars, mentions the fact that Cæsar conveyed his troops across the rivers in Spain by means of curraghs, after he had witnessed the use of them in Britain. We know that it was in curraghs O'Sullivan Beare and his followers crossed the river Shannon, near Portumna, in the reign of Elizabeth, when retreating towards Brefney. The late Rev. Cæsar Otway (*Sketches of Ireland*) has dressed up the circumstance in his usual racy style. He calls the curragh by the name *nevoge*, which seems to be compounded of ṅoí, a ship, and oȝ, little or young. I have myself had some experience of the security with which these curraghs bear their freight over even

the angry surges of the troubled deep. It is now some fifteen or sixteen years since I was conveyed to land in one of these boats from on board a yacht, which sought refuge from a storm under the great western island of Arran. The fury of the gale had lashed up such tremendous waves, that a second cable had to be spliced and let out to ease the yacht and prevent her from straining while riding at anchor. After two days she was driven before the tempest and cast ashore some forty miles from her moorings. On another occasion I wished to visit Mutton Island, which lies off the western coast of the county of Clare, and in that part of the Atlantic ocean which is with great propriety denominated the *Malbay*. I embarked in a curragh for the purpose of my voyage. The day was fine and the breeze moderate; nevertheless, a heavy and broken sea was running upon the only beach, and that a very limited one, where a landing on the island was at all practicable. As we approached the shore a succession of huge seas, which were momentarily increased by a ground swell, were seen to follow us. Although I was then a practical seaman, and by no means a timid one, I apprehended that our little vessel would be swamped as soon as one of these angry seas should overtake us, and I expressed myself to that effect to the experienced fishermen who were rowing the curragh. They assured me that the slightest risk was not to be apprehended, but they added that it was necessary I should hold on firmly and be on my guard, so as not to be jerked over board by any sudden evolution of the vessel. I obeyed their orders. The precipitous leader of the huge waves was now foaming and towering over us within a dozen yards of our stern. I thought it must assuredly overwhelm us—but in an instant the well-trained boatmen, by a judicious use of their oars, the one backing water while the other pulled with all his strength, brought the head of the curragh round to the sea, and she gallantly breasted and rode easily over a surge that would have broken upon a less buoyant craft or a less firm or less experienced crew. In a similar manner we bounded over two other enormous seas which, as is usual on that coast, came consecutively with white crests after their leader. A fourth and smaller wave succeeded. As soon as the curragh had mounted upon this last-mentioned billow, her able pilots put her head once more towards the shore, pulled rapidly upon their oars, and in a few seconds the noble little craft was left high and dry upon the strand, while the broken water on which she had ridden receded as hastily as it had previously advanced.

The few notices I can now call to mind respecting boats formerly in use in Ireland, render futile any attempt to fix a certain era for the cran-snav, by which name I shall designate the valuable gift of major Dunne to me. The cran-snav must have been used by a people of very remote time indeed. There is a very worn and imperfect specimen of this sort of boat in the British Museum. A descriptive catalogue of the contents of that depository, entitled, "A Visit to the

British Museum," says, in reference to that boat, "the barbarians who constructed this canoe, as you call them, were most probably countrymen of ours; and its great age and consequent decay render it curious and interesting. This boat may have been used *by the Britons who lived before the Roman invasion.*" According to such hypothesis the specimen at the British Museum may be now more than 1900 years old, for Julius Cæsar invaded Britain fifty-five years before the Christian era. In the first volume of *Old England*, wood-cut No. 57 represents a boat somewhat resembling the Annagh Lough one, and the letterpress of the same volume, page 22, informs us that it was found in 1834, in a creek of the river Arun, in the village of North Stoke, Sussex.

Ware (*Antiquities*, Lond. 1705) concludes the 18th chapter, which treats of the ships or boats of the ancient Irish that were covered with skins, in the words following:—"It is not beside the purpose to observe here also, that the antient *Irish* had in use another sort of Boat made of a Hollow Tree, which they used only upon Loughs or Rivers, and *is still in use*, called by the *Irish Cotti*, by the *English* a *Cott.*" Sir James Ware is an accurate writer; and, if he be correct in the passage just extracted, the cran-snav construction of boat was in use so late as A.D. 1654, the year when his book, *De Hibernia, et Antiquitatibus ejus Disquisitiones*, was first published. In reference to this point I may here notice a tradition which Lewis (*Topograph. Dict.*, title Kilmanman) relates to have been handed down in the parish of Clonaslea, wherein our cran-snav was found. It runs to the effect that, "in the middle of Lough Annagh, where it is most shallow, certain oak framing is yet (1837) visible, and there is a traditional report that in the war of 1641 a party of insurgents had a wooden house erected on this platform, whence they went out at night in a boat and plundered the surrounding country."

In a folio book, now before me, printed (1643) in the Latin language, and entitled "*Orbis Maritimi, sive Rerum in Mari et Littoribus Gestarum Generalis Historia: auctore Claudio Barthol.: Morisoto*, p. 4," I read on the subject of early boats, "Nilus olim ex papiro, scirpo, et arundine naves habuit." Such boats of the Nile were, therefore, somewhat like the Irish rusgane or curragh; and we readily recognise the similitude of the cran-snav, if not its prototype, in the following words extracted from the same page of the last quoted authority, viz., "Eusebius, Usonem, ait, arboribus amputatis ambustisque primum mare ingressum." Thus the boats of Uson were formed by hollowing the trunk of a tree by means of fire.

Small boats were in use with the Irish at a very early age indeed. Accordingly, we find that Eochaidh (the son of Luighdhioch Jardhonn, and an ancestor of the O'Carrolls of Ely), who ascended the throne A.M. 3394, was known as Eochaidh Fuarceas, or *Uairceas*, in consequence of his having invented skiffs, or small boats, uaipceaṙ being the Irish for a cock-boat. The meaning of the name Eo-

chaidh (*Anglice* Achy) is explained by that learned Irish scholar, John O'Donovan, Esq., LL.D., who has written, in a note to the *Leabhar-na-g-Ceart*, "this name is Irish, and denotes *eques*, horseman." Hence, we see that the expression *horse-marine* was not in its inception, as it is now supposed to be, a modern Irish bull. It was nearly the English for *Eochaidh-uairceas*, the very appropriate name of an Irish king, about 2462 years ago.

THE ANCIENT FABRIC, PLATE, AND FURNITURE

OF THE

CATHEDRAL OF CHRIST CHURCH, WATERFORD;

ILLUSTRATED BY ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS SUPPLIED BY THE VERY REV. EDWARD NEWENHAM HOARE, D.D., DEAN OF WATERFORD.

BY THE REV. JAMES GRAVES, A.B.

A GLANCE at the plan and elevations of the cathedral of Waterford, as we find them given in Harris' edition of Ware's "Bishops," and an inspection of the ancient and highly curious oil painting of the interior of the same structure, still preserved as an heir-loom of the see, in the episcopal palace of Waterford, prove incontestably that the "urbs intacta" possessed a cathedral surpassing in size, picturesqueness of outline, and richness of style any structure of the kind in Ireland.

The plan of this noble Gothic church was irregular, and it had received in the course of time many additions. The original structure seems to have consisted of an Early English nave and choir (with side-aisles to both) and a lofty tower built about mid-way on the northern side, and spanning the north aisle; the nave was forty-five, the choir sixty-six feet in length, with clere-stories to both. Eastward of the choir projected the parish church, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, exhibiting a fine Decorated window at its eastern end. Two Decorated chapels, St. Saviour's and another, adjoined the west end of the nave, running parallel beside, and opening into the side-aisles by a series of arches, thus giving the nave at its western extremity a width of sixty-six feet, and affording a noble perspective of columns and arcades. Two small chapels to the south of the Trinity or parish church appear to have been Early English in character; whilst Rice's chapel and the chapter-house to the north were in the Perpendicular style.

The corporation of Waterford seem, from an early age, to have been mixed up in a very curious way with the property of the chapter.[1] They were bound to contribute towards the sustentation of the

[1] Ryland's *History of Waterford*, pp. 131-4.