

In Fig. 190 *a* shows where the mast would be stepped if rigged as an ordinary sloop.

With skilful management these boats can be sailed in lumpy water; but they heel very freely, and great dexterity and quickness are necessary in sailing them in a breeze. Off the wind it is said that a 40ft. sharpie will travel 12, or 14 knots an hour, and with everything flattened in and board down will lie to the wind like a centre-board sloop.

THE AMERICAN SNEAK BOAT.

The home of the sneak boat, or sneak box, or devil's coffin, as the contrivance is indifferently termed, is Barnegat Bay, a piece of water some forty miles long and six miles wide on the coast of New Jersey. It is separated from the Atlantic by a narrow strip of sand, and is thus cut off from anything like ocean waves. Large numbers of the sneak boats are to be seen in the bay, the usual size being 12ft. long by 4ft. breadth.

The keels are of oak 4in. wide and $\frac{3}{4}$ in. deep; plank $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick. The keel has a crook or bend forward to suit the shape of the boat. The hood ends of the planks are fitted along the gunwale instead of in the stem, the bottom plank or garboard running along the keel and up round each side of the stem.

A square well is covered with a hatch with lock to stow guns, &c., as the boats are largely used for wildfowl shooting. No thwarts are used, a moveable box forming a seat for rowing. When duck shooting the crew sit or lie on the floor boards, the deck being covered with sedge.

The rowlocks are fitted in wooden brackets, which fold down to the deck. A strip of oak on each side aft serves as a washboard, and also as a rack for holding the decoys.

The most peculiar feature of the boats is the dagger centre-board, which lifts out of the case entirely, as a sword from its sheath. As a protection against rough water an apron is tacked to the deck forward of the well, and set up to a peak by a short spar as shown in Fig. 192.

With their flat bottoms the boats will float in very little water, and can be dragged with ease over mud or marsh. The rig is a small sprit-sail, and either an oar or a rudder is used for steering; the boats are taken out in all kinds of weather, and may be seen flying about the bay when larger craft are at anchor; but of course, as in all such boats, skill and experience in their management alone make them safe.

The "sneak box" appears to be an adaptation of the old Irish canoe, as found at Kilkee on the West coast. These canoes developed into a

Sneak Box.

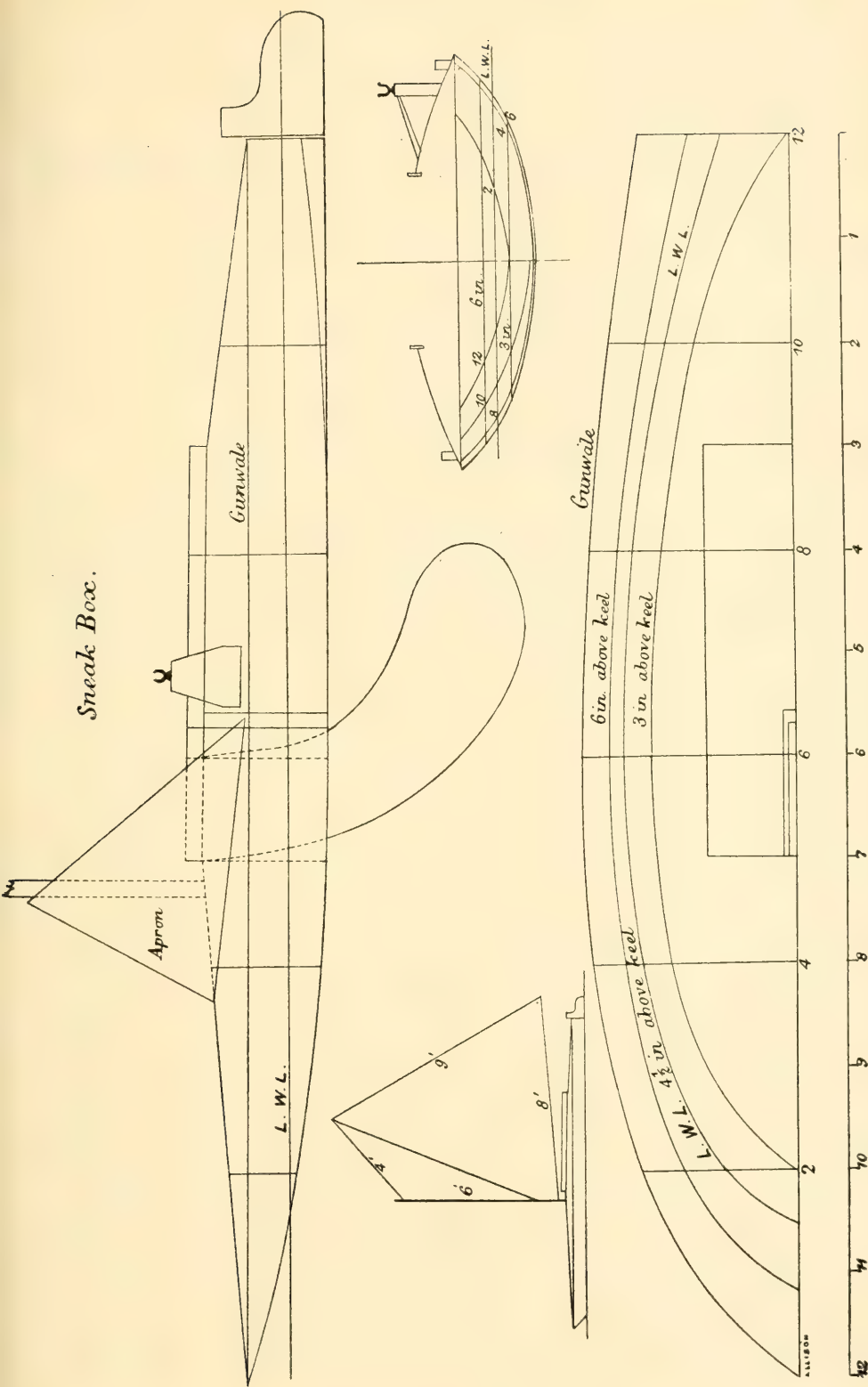


Fig. 192.

rowing boat, and are illustrated (Fig. 193) and described by the late Commander Horner, R.N.

"I recommend any one, wishing for a new sensation, to take a pull in one after a gale. They never ship a drop of water, and literally dance

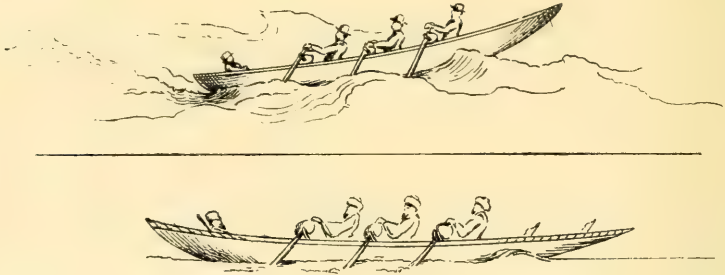


FIG. 193.

over the tops of the waves. A six-oared one, such as I went in once from Arran to Galway, would I think be very useful in going over surf." The lower sketch represents a similar boat, the *caïque* of the Bosphorus.