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THE SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE.

THE ESKIMOS OF DAVIS STRAITS IN 1656.

(From the French of LOUIS DE POINCY.)

By DAVID MACRITCHIE.

(With Illustrations.)

THE following account is extracted from a quarto volume published at Rotterdam in 1658, under the title *Histoire Naturelle & Morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amérique*.¹ The author only signs his initials, "L. D. P.," and in a second edition (Rotterdam, 1681) he remains altogether anonymous; but "L. D. P." is now recognised as denoting a certain Louis de Poincy. It is somewhat extraordinary that such an excellent description of the Eskimos of Davis Straits should be found in a book relating to the West Indies, and the author himself frankly admits that it is a digression from his general theme. How it came about is explained by the author. The chapter (18) of which this account forms the main portion was intended to relate solely to the narwal or sea-unicorn, as is shown by its opening words: "We cannot conclude our

¹ De Poincy's account is of great interest to Scottish readers, as well as to all anthropologists, in view of the fact that the Eskimos described by him are essentially the same kind of people as the Finnmén seen in Orkney waters in the latter part of the seventeenth century, as reported by the Rev. James Wallace, minister of Kirkwall, and others (see *The Scottish Geographical Magazine* for March 1912, pp. 126-128). "These Finnmén," observes Wallace, "seem to be some of these people that dwell about the Fretum Davis, a full account of whom may be seen in the *Natural and Moral History of the Antilles*, chap. 18." By an odd reversal of nomenclature, Wallace's son and editor, James Wallace, M.D., F.R.S.Lond., speaks of De Poincy's description of the Davis Straits Eskimos as "a full account of these Finnmén." It is clear that the elder Wallace, at any rate, had read De Poincy's book, had seen the illustrations which are here reproduced, and had no doubt in his own mind that the Orkney Finnmén were of the same stock as the Eskimos of Davis Straits. (I have to thank the authorities of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, for the use of their copy of the edition of 1658.)

account of sea monsters more suitably than by describing a fish so remarkable and wonderful that it demands a special chapter. This is the sea-unicorn, sometimes found in these parts," *i.e.* the West Indies. Thereupon he devotes some four or five pages to a description of the narwal, illustrated by two woodcuts, of a pleasing and quaint character, one intended to represent a West Indian and the other an Arctic specimen of this animal. He then glides into his digression on the Eskimos in the manner now recorded :—

At the very time when we were taking from our cabinet this account [of the sea-unicorn or narwal], for the purpose of making it known to the public, a vessel of Flushing, commanded by Nicolas Tunes, in which Burgemeester Lampsen, now deputy of his province in the assembly of the States-General, Heer Biens, Heer Sandra, and other merchants of the same town were interested, having safely returned from Davis Straits, brought back from thence, among other rarities, some fine trophies of those unicorns of the Northern Ocean, of which we have just spoken. And as the account which we have received of this voyage may throw great light upon the matter here treated of, we believe that the interested reader will approve of our placing this new information before him, related with the fidelity which marks the original account.

The captain, from whom we have received this narrative, having set out from Zealand at the end of the spring of 1656, with the intention of discovering some new source of trade in those northern lands, arrived at the end of June in Davis Straits, whence having entered a river which begins at 64° 10' N. lat., he sailed to the seventy-second degree, where the land about to be described is situated.

As soon as the natives, who were out fishing, observed the ship, they came towards it in order to reconnoitre, in their little skiffs, which are made to hold only one person, those in advance being followed by so many others that in a short time they formed an escort of seventy of these little vessels, who never quitted the foreign ship until the anchor was cast in the best anchorage, where they testified by their acclamations and by every sign of goodwill that could be expected from a nation so little civilised the great joy they felt at this happy arrival. These little vessels are so admirable, whether one considers the materials employed, the marvellous industry displayed in their construction, or the incomparable dexterity with which they are controlled, that they well deserve the first place in the descriptions furnished by this agreeable digression.

They are constructed of small, slender strips of wood, the greater part of which are split in two, like hoops. These pieces of wood are fastened together by strong cords of the intestines of fish [*boyaux de poissons*, but probably seal-gut], which gives them the form required. They are covered outside with skins of seals [*chiens de mer*, literally, but presumably intended for *veaux marins*], which are sewn together so closely, and are so carefully coated over the stitches with resin, that the water cannot penetrate at all.

These little boats are generally from fifteen to sixteen feet in length,

with about five feet of circumference at the broadest part, the middle. From the middle they contract towards either end, narrowing to a point; these extremities being tipped with white bone or pieces of narwal [tusk]. The deck is flat, and covered with skin like the rest, and the hull has the shape of the belly of a large fish, so that they are well fitted to glide over the water. They have only one aperture, which is exactly in the middle of the structure. This aperture has a rim or girth of whalebone all round it, and it is shaped to fit a man's body. When the savages who have invented this little vessel wish to make use of it for fishing or for paddling about, they thrust their legs and thighs into the aperture [or man-hole], and, seating themselves on the bottom of the canoe, they lace their outer shirt so tightly to the rim of the man-hole that they seem to be grafted to the canoe and to form a part of it.

Having considered the appearance and the material of these little vessels, let us turn to the equipment of the men who control them. When they wish to go on the sea, they cover their garments with an over-shirt,¹ which is only used for this purpose. This sea-coat is composed of several skins, without the pile, which are so well prepared and joined together that they seem to be a single piece. This garment covers them from the top of the head down to below the navel. It is coated all over with a blackish gum, insoluble in water, to which it is quite impervious.² The hood which covers the head fits so closely to the neck and forehead that only the face is uncovered. The sleeves are tied at the wrist, and the lower part of the over-shirt is also fastened to the rim of the man-hole of the canoe so carefully, and with so much skill, that the man's body thus covered is always dry in the midst of the waves, which, with all their efforts, can only wet his face and his hands.

Moreover, they have neither sails, mast, rudder, compass, anchor, nor any other of the articles of equipment which are essential to our ships. Nevertheless their owners undertake long voyages in these little vessels to which they seem to be stitched. They know the stars quite well, and they need no other guide during the night. The oars which they use widen out at each end in paddle shape, and in order to enable them to cut the waves more easily, and also that they may be more durable, they enrich them with white bone, covering the ends of the wood and also the edges of the paddles, these bone additions being pinned to the wood with horn pegs instead of iron nails. The middle part of the oar is also ornamented with bone, or with precious horn [narwal or walrus ivory], and consequently the oar, which they grip in the middle, does not slip in their hands. Further, they handle their double-bladed paddles with such dexterity and swiftness that their little

¹ Known as *kayarsit* in East Greenland and *kakorsorkut* in West Greenland at the present day. Both these names are clearly connected with the word *kayak*.

² It is curious to reflect that the mackintosh waterproof coat, which received its distinctive name from its supposed inventor in the nineteenth century, was actually in use among the Eskimos of Davis Straits in the seventeenth century.

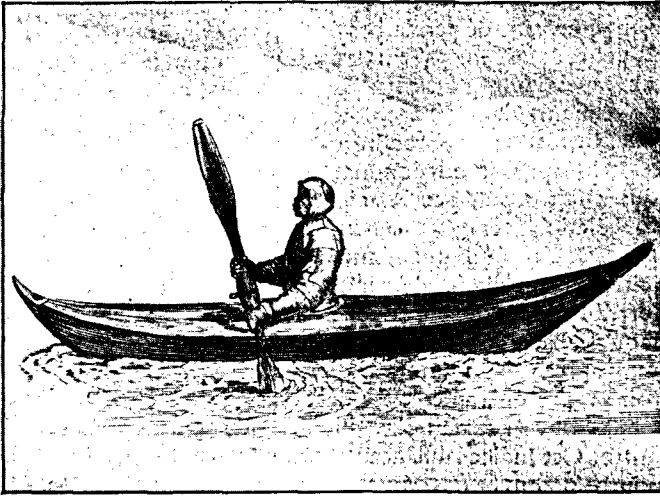
vessels easily outdistance ships under full sail, with favourable wind and tide. They are so much at their ease in these little skiffs, and they manage them with such skill, that they make them perform a thousand caracoles for the amusement of spectators. Sometimes they tilt at the waves with such force and agility that they beat them into foam as though agitated by a storm, when they look more like struggling sea-monsters than like men. And as if to show that they have not the slightest fear, and that they are on the best of terms with this element which nourishes and caresses them, they turn lateral somersaults [*ils font le moulinet*], plunging and rolling in the sea as often as three consecutive times, in such a manner that they might pass for veritable amphibians.¹

When they intend to make a longer voyage than usual, or when they fear they may be driven out into the open sea by a tempest, they carry in the interior of their canoe a bladder full of fresh water for quenching their thirst, and some frozen or sun-dried fish to sustain them, failing any fresh food. But it rarely happens that they require to have recourse to these provisions. For they have certain darts or small spears, attached to their canoes, which they know how to cast so swiftly at the fish [*poissons*; but marine animals are indicated] which they come across, that they are scarcely ever without fresh food. They have no need whatever of fire for cooking their viands, because, whether on sea or land, they are accustomed to eat their food quite raw. They carry also certain teeth of large fish [*i.e.* narwal and walrus tusks], or very sharp bone spits, which serve them as knives, for they use them to rip up and carve the fish [or marine animals] that they capture. There can be no altercation, moreover, in these vessels, because one single man is captain, seaman, purveyor, and pilot, who can stop the vessel when he thinks fit, or abandon it to the wind and tide, whenever he wishes to take the rest that he requires for recruiting his strength. In that event he thrusts his paddle into deerskin straps made for this purpose, which are attached to the deck of his canoe; or otherwise he fastens it to a buckle which hangs in front of his over-shirt.

¹ This performance is described by the Rev. J. G. Wood in these words (*Natural History of Man*, London, 1870, p. 712):—"After seeing that the skin cover is firmly tied round his waist, and that his neck and wrists are well secured, the man suddenly flings himself violently to one side, thus capsizing the *kia* [otherwise kayak], and burying himself under water. With a powerful stroke of his paddle he turns himself and canoe completely over, and brings himself upright again. A skilful canoe-man will thus turn over and over some twenty times or so, almost as fast as the eye can follow him, and yet only his face will be in the least wet." It is a matter of regret that the Eskimos of Labrador have now quite lost this art (Hutton's *Among the Eskimos of Labrador*, London, 1912, p. 246), a presage of the time when the use of the kayak itself will be forgotten. E. W. Nelson also records the decay of this accomplishment among the Eskimos of Bering Straits in 1877-1881. "I was told," he says, "that some of the most skilful among the coast people could upset their *kaiaks* and right them again by the use of the paddle, but the old men said this feat was now becoming rare, as the young hunters were degenerating and were not as good *kaiak* men as formerly" (*Eighteenth Annual Report, Amer. Ethnology, Smithsonian Inst.*, 1896-97, Part I., p. 222).

The women never use these little skiffs,¹ but in order that they may sometimes amuse themselves on the sea, their husbands, who show them much gentleness and affection, convey them in other vessels, of the size of our long-boats, and capable of carrying fifty persons. They are made of sticks tied together, and are covered with seal-skins [*peaux de chiens de mer*], like those we have just described. They are propelled by oars in calm weather, but, when the wind serves, sails of skin are hoisted to the mast.

In order that the description of these rare vessels, and of these



men of the sea, may be made clearer and more lifelike, we have here introduced a representation of them, taken from the life.

¹ The testimony of most writers on the Eskimos is to the same effect. On the other hand, it is stated by Baffin, who was pilot of the *Patience*, one of Captain Hall's ships in 1612, with reference to the Greenland natives: "Every one, both man and woman, has a boat covered with seal's skin, close sewed, that no water can enter them" (Hakluyt Society's Arctic vols., London, 1894, pp. 100-101). The Danish expedition of 1883-85 found also that two women at Angmagsalik possessed kayaks (*Meddelelser om Grønland*, x., Copenhagen, 1888, p. 384 of text). Among the Eskimos of the western shores of Hudson's Bay, women still use kayaks, but in a very restricted fashion. Speaking of the people of that region and their kayaks, Mr. David T. Hanbury observes:—"They do not trust their women in them unless they are lashed together so as to form a raft" (*Sport and Travel in the Northland of Canada*, London, 1904, p. 3). According to J. G. Whittier, the use of the kayak was quite common among the women of the Eskimo tribes formerly inhabiting the northern coast of the St. Lawrence at its embouchure, as may be seen from his reference to the

"Squaw, in her small kyack,
Crossing the spectre's track."

Another illustration is afforded by the woman in the two-holed kayak reported by Martinière as captured off the Vaigatz coast in 1653. All these show that the kayak was not exclusively a man's canoe, although its use by women has been very exceptional in recent times.

With regard to the native land of these people, its situation, already indicated, denotes that the climate is very cold. It is true that during the months of June and July, which constitute the summer of that country, and which are lighted by a perpetual day—just as the months of December and January are one long night—the air is warm, agreeable, and serene; but during the rest of the year, as the days lengthen and contract alternately, there are dense fogs, snow, and hail, with great cold.

All the seaboard territory is dry, and rough with bare rocks, of a frightful aspect; while, when the snows are melting, it is flooded in many places with torrents rolling their troubled waters into the vast bosom of the sea. But, after traversing about a league of barren country, one comes to beautiful fields, carpeted in summer-time with a pleasing verdure. There also one sees mountains covered with small trees, which enliven the view wonderfully, and give shelter to birds and water-fowl. And one passes by valleys watered by clear and pleasant streams, flowing downward to the sea.

The captain who commanded this Flushing vessel, in the voyage now chronicled, having landed with a party of his people, and having surveyed the neighbourhood carefully, observed among other things worthy of remark a vein of a certain brown earth, studded with glistening silvery particles, of which he caused a cask to be filled for assay, but after having been tested in the crucible, it was found to be only fit for using as an encrustation on small boxes and similar woodwork, to which it gave a very beautiful lustre. Nevertheless, this indication leaves some hope that one might find mines of silver in this earth, by penetrating further.¹

Although this country is very cold, one sees there several beautiful and large birds, of black and white plumage and of various other colours, which the natives flay for the purpose of making themselves garments of the skins, the flesh of those birds being of course eaten. Deer, elk, bears, foxes, hares, rabbits and many other quadrupeds are found there; nearly all of which have white or grey fur, very thick, long, and soft, and very suitable for making good caps, or beautiful and rich garments.

As regards the inhabitants, our travellers report having seen two kinds, who live together on the most friendly terms. Of these, one kind is described as very tall, well-built, of rather fair complexion, and very swift of foot. The others are very much smaller, of an olive complexion, and tolerably well proportioned, except that their legs are short and thick. The former kind delight in hunting, for which they are suited by their agility and natural disposition, whereas the latter occupy themselves in fishing. All of them have very white, compact teeth, black hair, animated eyes, and the features of the face so well made that they present no notable deformity. Moreover, they are all so vigorous and of such a strong constitution, that several of them who have passed their hundredth year are still lively and robust.²

¹ I am informed by Mr. W. F. P. M'Lintock, B.Sc., of the Royal Scottish Museum, that the substance in question is probably mica.

² The statement that these people represented two different types is of much interest. The small, olive-complexioned, short-legged people are at once recognisable as Eskimos.

In their ordinary conversation they are of a gay humour, and cheerful and brave. They like their foreign visitors because they bring them needles, fish-hooks, knives, bill-hooks, hatchets, and all other iron implements that are useful to them; and they prize these so highly that they buy them at the cost of their own clothes and of all that they value most. They are, however, so opposed to all novelty in dress and diet that it would be very difficult to persuade them to alter the one or the other. Although they are one of the poorest and most barbarous nations that the sun shines upon, they regard themselves as very fortunate and as having the happiest lot in the world. Indeed, such a good opinion have they of their way of living that the civilities of all other nations seem to them as barbarous, unbecoming, and as ridiculous as possible.

The high estimate which they have placed upon their condition contributes not a little to that satisfaction and contentment of mind which is seen on their faces. Add to this that they do not concern themselves with various affairs that might trouble their tranquillity. They do not know all those gnawing cares and worries with which the restless desire for riches vexes most other men. The luxury of beautiful and sumptuous buildings, the spirit of the times, the delights of grand entertainments, the knowledge of things that are beautiful, and all that we esteem as tending to the charm and tranquillity of life, having never yet reached them, they are not vexed by any desire of possessing these things, which might disturb the peaceful life they now enjoy. Their sole aim is to acquire without much trouble those things which are essential for their food and clothing.

Their usual exercises are hunting and fishing: and as they have neither fire-arms nor nets, necessity has taught them to attain success by other methods. They eat all their viands raw, and without any other sauce than a hearty appetite supplies. They laugh at those who cook fish or venison, for they assert that fire absorbs their natural flavour and everything that gives them savour, according to their taste.

But although they have no need of fire for cooking their food, they nevertheless appreciate its usefulness very highly, and their caverns are never without fire during winter, as much for the sake of brightening and cheering the gloomy darkness of the long night that reigns in their country, as for modifying by its pleasant warmth the cold which besets them. But when they sleep, or when they need to come out of their grottoes, they fortify themselves with a certain fur which, by an admirable instance of Divine Providence, has the virtue of protecting them against all injury by frost when they are reposing in the midst of the snows.

The men's attire consists of a shirt, breeches, coat, and boots. The shirt comes down to a little below the loins: it has a hood which covers

But their taller and fairer comrades give rise to speculation. The readiest suggestion is that they were descended from the early Norse settlers. It is believed by many that the Norsemen were not exterminated by the Eskimos, but were gradually absorbed by them, through successive intermarriages. (See, for example, Dr. Nansen in *In Northern Mists*, London, 1911, vol. ii. p. 103.) The account given by Tunes seems to show that this was the case, but that the fusion of the two races was still only partial in 1656.

the head and neck. It is made of the bladders¹ of large fish, which are cut into strips of equal breadth and are very closely stitched together. There is no opening at the chest as in our shirts, but in order that it may not tear when one is putting it on, the ends of the sleeves [*la tétière* (?)] are bound beneath with black leather: as in the figure here shown.



Their other clothes, and even their boots, are also made similarly to their shirts; but they are of much stronger material, namely, of dressed deerskin or sealskin [*peau de chien de mer*], with the pile retained. The garb of the savage whose portrait is here reproduced, drawn from life, was of two skins of different shades, the strips being cut of one breadth, and so tastefully arranged that one white strip was sewn between two brown, with a fine effect. The pile seemed to be as soft and smooth as velvet, and was so well laid, and the various parts were so skilfully joined together that the general effect was that of a garment made of one single skin. As regards the form of the hood, and all the externals of the savage whom they adorned, the engraver has shown them so clearly in this picture that it would be superfluous to attempt a fuller description.

The savages inhabiting the Davis Straits region never go into the

¹ *Vessies de gros poissons*,—the intestines of seals, no doubt, as in similar waterproof shirts in use to-day.

country without having a quiver filled with arrows on their shoulder, and a bow or spear in their hand. The arrows are of various kinds. Some are suitable for killing hares, foxes, birds, and other small game; while those of a different variety are used in the pursuit of deer, elk, bear, and the larger animals generally. The former are only about two or three feet long, and, instead of iron, are pointed with bone, very sharp, and having three or four barbs on one side, which have this effect that the arrow cannot be withdrawn from the place which it has pierced without enlarging the wound. The latter are at least four or five feet long, and are tipped with bone, with serrated barbs. These latter are



launched with the hand, but in order to give them greater force and so send them farther, they hold in their right hand a throwing-stick, grooved on one side, in which they place the butt-end of the javelin, to which a great impetus is thus conveyed when it is launched.

Sometimes, also, they carry a kind of lance in the hand, furnished at the small end with a round bone, the point of which has been sharpened on a stone, or with the horns or tusks of the fish already described [narwals and walruses]. These lances are seven or eight feet long, and they are furnished at the butt end with two pinions of wood or of baleen, by which they are better balanced in their flight.

Besides several kinds of fish-hooks which they use for catching the smaller fish along their coasts, they have also various sorts of darts [harpoons] which they launch with unparalleled dexterity at the great

and monstrous fish [*i.e.* marine animals] that they seek in the open sea. And in order that their prey, when wounded with these darts, may not sink to the bottom of the sea and thus frustrate their efforts, they fasten a deerskin tether, twenty-five or thirty fathoms long, to the butt end of the harpoon, while to the other end of the tether or line is attached an inflated bladder, which, always coming up to the surface of the water, denotes the place where the fish [animal] is, and thus they are enabled to draw it towards them, or to guide it to the shore, after it has exhausted its strength.

The dress of the young women is not very different from that of the men; but the old women more often clothe themselves with the skins of certain large birds, of black and white plumage, which are very common in that region. They are so skilful in flaying these birds that the feathers remain attached to the skin. These garments hang down to the calf of the leg. They are girdled with a leather belt, to which, in place of keys, they hang several small implements of bone, pointed like pins, of the length of a bodkin. They wear neither bracelets, nor necklaces, nor ear-rings; but, as their only embellishment, they make an incision in each cheek, and then fill the cicatrix with a certain black colour which, in their opinion, makes them seem much more charming.

While the men are away hunting or fishing, they busy themselves in sewing garments, and in making tents, baskets, and all the little utensils required for their domestic life. They also take great care of the young children, and when they have to change their abode, or to follow their husbands on some journey, they carry or lead the children wherever they go, and in order to amuse them by the way and to soothe them when they cry, they have small drums, covered with fish-bladder, upon which they know how to play such pleasant tunes that the Basque tambourines are not more agreeable. They also beat upon these drums for the purpose of frightening away bears and other wild beasts that often prowl around the caverns in which these savages and their families live during winter, or around their tents in summer.¹ We insert here the portrait of one of these women, clad in feather garments, whence the graceful appearance of the others may be inferred.

Although these poor barbarians have not much in the shape of civil government, they have nevertheless among them petty kings and chiefs who rule over them, and who preside in all their assemblies. They raise to these dignities those who have the best physique, and who are the best hunters and the bravest among them. These rulers wear more beautiful skins and more valuable furs than their subjects, and as a badge of their rank they wear an embroidered rosette stitched in front of their outer shirt, and when they go about they are always escorted

¹ No mention is made of the important part that the drum plays in the shamanistic rites of the Arctic races of America, Asia, and (until recently) Europe. The drum held by the woman in the accompanying picture closely resembles that in use among the existing Inik, or Tåk, of Angmagalik, East Greenland. See *Meddelelser om Grönland*, x., Copenhagen, 1888, Plate xxvi.

by several young men, armed with bows and arrows, who obey all their orders.

They do not possess the art of building houses ; but during summer they live in the open country in skin tents, which they carry about with them and pitch wherever they find a good camping-place: and during winter they inhabit caverns, either those of natural origin in the mountains, or others which they have there dug out artificially.

They neither sow nor gather any kind of grain for their sustenance. Nor have they any fruit-bearing trees or plants, except a few strawberries and a species of raspberry ; but, as already indicated, they subsist



entirely by hunting and fishing. Their ordinary drink is pure water, and their most delicious draught is the blood of seals, or of deer and other land animals that they have slain, or that they have caught in the traps which they know how to set with marvellous skill.

The winter of their country being so long and so rigorous, they suffer much want during that dismal season, especially throughout that terrible night that enwraps them for two whole months ; but, besides the fact that they are well able to endure hunger, if need be, they have so much foresight that they cure the surplus of their fish and other viands in summer, and store it up, with all the fat and tallow that they can collect, for their sustenance in that trying and wearisome season. It is said, moreover, that they are so skilful in hunting by moon-

light that during the thickest darkness they are seldom without fresh meat.

They have no desire to see any other country than that of their birth; and should it happen that some violent tempest, or some other circumstance, may have driven them to a foreign country, they are always sighing for their dear fatherland, to which they unceasingly demand to be restored. If their request be not granted, they then try, at the risk of their lives, to make their way thither in their little vessels, in which they expose themselves to all the perils of the deep, without any other guide than that of the stars, of which they have sufficient knowledge to enable them to steer their course.¹

Their language has nothing in common with that of any other people in the world. We have a small vocabulary of it: but, for fear of lengthening this digression excessively, we shall retain it among our papers, until a second voyage which is projected for Davis Straits may give us fuller light on the subject.

The religion in use among these poor barbarians has not yet been properly noted; but as they often regard the sun with admiration, expressed by their uplifted arms, it has been inferred that they believe it to be God.

The ship which has furnished us with this account returned from Davis Straits laden with much good merchandise, a list of which we give here in order to show that the cold which reigns in that country is not so rigorous as to freeze all sorts of commerce.

1. Nine hundred sealskins, the majority being from seven to eight feet long, chequered and wavy with black, russet, yellow, tan, and several other colours, which raise their price above those one commonly sees in Holland.

2. Several rich skins of deer, elk, bear, fox, hare, and rabbit, the most of which were quite white.

3. A great many precious furs of various four-footed animals, special to that region, at present unknown among us by name.

4. Several bundles of whalebone, of extraordinary length.

5. Some complete suits of the garments worn by the natives, made of the skins of animals and birds, as shown in the illustrations.

6. Several of their shirts made of the bladders of fishes [?] intestines

¹ There is some reason to suspect, from the above paragraph, especially when taken in connection with the subsequent reference to sun-worship, that De Poincy had embellished his account with certain details obtained from De La Peyrère's *Relation du Groënland* (Paris, 1647, 1651). In that work it is stated, with regard to several Eskimos of Davis Straits who had been brought captive to Denmark in the early years of the seventeenth century:—"Some people who had taken particular notice of their actions did observe them frequently lifting up their eyes towards heaven, and to worship the rising sun." Again, it is said of one of these captives who made his escape from Copenhagen in his kayak, but was recaptured at sea:—"Being given to understand by certain signs that he must have been infallibly swallowed up by the waves of the sea before he could reach the Greenland shore, he answered by signs that his intention was to keep along the coast of Norway, to a certain light, from whence he would have crossed over to Greenland, by the direction of the stars." De La Peyrère mentions also the painful longing for home with which these unhappy captives were afflicted.

of seals], strongly stitched together, and of their caps, gloves, and boots; also several specimens of their quivers, arrows, bows, and other weapons. Also several of their tents, sacks, baskets, and other domestic utensils.

7. A large number of those little sea-going vessels constructed to carry only one man. A large boat forty-five feet in length, capable of carrying fifty persons comfortably.

8. But the rarest and most precious of all this freight was a very considerable quantity of those tusks or horns of the fish called *sea-unicorns* [narwals], which are pronounced to be larger, finer, and better proportioned than any yet seen.

Some of these horns have been sent to Paris, and some to other parts of Europe, where they have been received with appreciation: but there is every probability that they will be still more highly prized when their admirable medical properties become known. For although their beauty and their rarity ought to place them highest among the most precious treasures of the finest collections, several celebrated doctors and apothecaries of Denmark and Germany, who have tested them in various cases, are firmly of opinion that they are antidotes to poison, and that they have all the properties commonly attributed to the horn of the land-unicorn.¹

But enough has now been said for a simple digression; probably more than enough to suit the taste of some readers.

De Poincy's account contains many interesting items. The illustrations are of special value, as they are the work of a good artist, although his picture of a kayak is very faulty. The dress of the natives seems to have been reproduced by him with great care and precision. It will be noted that several complete suits were brought home to Flushing, along with various Eskimo implements. Not the least remarkable detail is the number of kayaks,—sufficient to enrich many of the museums of Western Europe. At this period, indeed, there must have been a considerable number of such trophies in public and private collections. Only three years previously a Danish ship had brought a two-holed kayak to Copenhagen, together with several of the kayak-people themselves, clad in the skins of animals and birds, all obtained on the north-eastern shores of Russia.² Two narwal horns also formed part of the spoil brought home from Russia. From De La Peyrère's account (1647) we learn that Copenhagen already possessed a number of kayaks, which, with their owners, had been brought from Davis Straits earlier in the century. It is curious to note the air of novelty which each narration seems to give to those Arctic trophies. In our days of close inter-

¹ Even as recently as the eighteenth century unicorn's horn was believed to possess curative properties. Mrs. Henry Cust informs us that at that period "the popular *poudre de M. Daquin* contained ounces of elk's hoof and unicorn's horn in strange proximity with ounces of 'the root of a male peony gathered at the wane of the moon,' and of 'the rakings of the skull of a man dead of a violent death.'" (See Mrs. Cust's *Gentlemen Errant*, London, 1909, pp. 402-3.)

² See the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, August 1909, pp. 399-403.

communication by means of steam, electricity, and printing, it is difficult to realise how comparatively isolated people were in the seventeenth century, and how each returning voyager thought he was bringing home something new, when, as a matter of fact, his supposed novelties were well enough known. The skin-canoes encountered off Vaigatz by the Danish expedition of 1653 were manifestly of the same kind as those spoken of by Stephen Burrough in 1556. It is not unlikely that Burrough and his comrades had brought back some of these canoes to England, although the circumstance may not be recorded. Recorded instances of captured kayaks are very numerous. Those preserved in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Orkney in the seventeenth century,—all of them obtained in Scottish waters,—have already been noticed in the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*.¹

Besides these, many other instances are chronicled. The earliest seems to be that referred to by Claudius Claussön Swart, a native of Funen, Denmark, who is better known as Claudius Clavus, and sometimes as Nicolaus Niger. He tells us how the Wild Lapps inhabit the north of Norway, and how to the west of them is a dwarf race, individuals of whom, he asserts, "I have seen after they were taken at sea in a little skin-boat which is now [*circa* 1430] hanging in the cathedral at Nidaros," *i.e.* Trondhjem. These appear to be the same people as the "Skraelings" described by Michael Beheim, who travelled in Norway in 1450, and who states that these "Skraelings" lived in artificially-made caverns, constructed skin-vessels, ate raw meat and raw fish, and drank blood. Seventy years later, Archbishop Erik Walkendorf speaks of a dwarfish race of "Skraelings" who lived to the north-north-west of Finmark. He states that they dwelt in underground houses, and that they were "an unwarlike people, for fifteen of them do not dare to approach one Christian or Russian" (an odd differentiation). With these statements may be compared the remains of troglodytic dwellings still to be seen on the southern coast of the Varanger Fiord, and the harpoon-points found there (at Kjelmö), resembling, according to Dr. Nansen, "old, primitive Eskimo forms, which are found in Greenland." "All the harpoons found at Kjelmö are remarkably small, and cannot have been used for any animal larger than a seal," observes Dr. Nansen,² and he adds, "Nothing has been found which might afford us information as to the kind of boats these northern sealers used." But, in view of the statements made by Claussön and Beheim in 1430 and 1450, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the vessels used were skin canoes.

These conjectures, however, interesting although they are, form as much a digression from De Poincy's account of the Davis Straits Eskimos as that account forms a digression from his *Natural and Moral History of the Antilles*; and, in his words, "en voila assés, & peustestre que trop au goût de quelques-uns, pour une simple digression."

¹ March 1912.

² For these early Norwegian references I am indebted to Dr. Nansen's *In Northern Mists* (London, 1911), vol. i. pp. 215-217, and vol. ii. pp. 85-86 and 269-270.