

A ROYAL DANE IN GREENLAND

BY. SVENN PAULSEN

[King Christian X, of Denmark, recently visited Greenland in commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the landing of Hans Egede, the Norwegian missionary, on its coast in 1721, where he founded the first colony of the second Scandinavian occupation in that country. This is the first royal visit to Greenland. The account is by the editor of the Copenhagen Berlingske Tidende.]

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As the royal squadron approached Godthaab in the luminous Arctic night, the scene was one never to be forgotten. From the shadows of the still distant coast a solitary kyak shot toward us like an arrow across the mirror-like surface of the sea. The ship bearing the King stopped. The man and his light craft were pulled aboard together; and the royal couple greeted with lively interest this first fur-clad messenger from massive, rock-ribbed Greenland.

Simultaneously three larger vessels, decorated as if on parade, emerged from the fjord, sailing toward the royal squadron. A pilot, rowed by five Greenlanders in white *anoraks*, boarded the King's cruiser. Salutes were fired, anchors dropped, and cadets manned the rails. From ashore, between the low, red-painted and whitewashed houses, a small battery boomed an answering greeting into the wonderful Northern night.

Suddenly, as if these rocks along the coast had become alive, hundreds of kyaks shot forth. As they drew nearer, we could see the water curl high under their prows, while the paddles of the fur-clad Eskimos spun like so many mill-wheels. In the wake of the kyaks followed a fleet of small craft filled with women, in pantaloons costumes of red, blue, and white, all pad-

dling at full speed. The governor of the colony, accompanied by the leading citizens, came last in a motor-boat.

Thus a fantastic fleet soon surrounded the King's ship. The people waved their greetings, they laughed, they cheered. The kyakmen threw their harpoons and bird-arrows high in the air; spinning their tight-decked boats entirely over in the water, and reappearing with their clothes dripping wet and their black hair clinging to their smiling faces.

Almost encircling the fleet, tower snowclad heights, their tops glistening in the Midnight Sun. Black rocks jut out of the placid surface of the fjords, side by side with white ice-floes. On the barren coast an ancient church, and a cluster of huts, tents, and low houses are visible. The scenic setting seems unreal and fairy-like. All the royal party are fascinated by this first sight of Greenland.

The following morning was Sunday, and the King and his entire party attended services in the native church, where a choir of Greenland women sang most expressively. On his way back to his ship after service, the King spoke to many of the people and was cheered enthusiastically.

A day of festivities followed. Why have not our poets and writers dis-

covered sooner this wonderland of the Arctic? Ah, *Kaddara!* that is not Greenland, scarcely its faint reflection! The real Greenland cannot be pictured in an opera.

My total impression of the day centres around the singing of the women. Their melodies are as bizarre and rhythmical as their primitive sealskin costumes are colorful and harmonious. Their musical tone-forms are unique, utterly different from the familiar European psalms which they have also learned from Danish missionaries. The same female choir which sang at the morning service delighted us later with its singing at the outdoor festivities. The natives' voices were like the soft cooing of seabirds on their nests, melancholy and merriment alternating, as the cloud shadows and sunlight alternate across Greenland's fjords and sea.

In no aquatic sports, in any part of the world, is more skill displayed than was shown by the Eskimos in handling their kyaks. The Greenlanders are trained to use these frail craft in fair weather and foul. Here, where the battle with the elements is unceasing, apparently dangerous water-feats are as child's play. Though ice-floes surround them and the water approaches freezing temperature, this is their real home.

First came 'ordinary' races; but in truth they were far from ordinary for us. Little wonder that the Eskimo kyak is reputed to rival in speed a swift motor-boat! It fairly flies across the water like a skimming seabird. Then came kyak spinning, in which the hunters from Ustederne displayed their prowess.

Clad in sealskin coats, with black hoods laced tight, both around their faces and to the drumhead deck of their little craft, they sped toward the King's ship like a swarm of bees toward a hive. Suddenly, every kyak upset, its

occupant plunging head downward into the water, while the boat's bottom only appeared on the surface. It looked very dangerous. But all at once, as if by a word of command, the hood-clad heads bobbed up again, and each kyak righted itself. Giving their paddles a screw-like twist, the Greenlanders resumed their swift course as if nothing had happened. It was a most brilliant performance; these aquatic tumblers seemed the very seals they hunted.

Then followed a kyak play in which the light skin-boats slid gracefully over the water, while their prows and sterns rose alternately high in the air. Other exhibitions were given without paddles. Again, they showed how they rescued those in distress from drowning.

Admirable, indeed, are these brave hunters of the Arctic seas, their slender craft, their courage! A race that can produce such men ought not to perish. It is entitled to survive, and to contribute its share to the labors of mankind. This lesson went home to the visitors: allowing for nature's handicaps, these Greenlanders have attained a stage of culture that might put to shame other races more fortunately situated.

One impressive scene was the presentation of gifts to the King and Queen. Ten young women advanced across an open space, bearing to the Queen a magnificent eider carpet, patiently pieced together from five hundred soft and beautifully shaded necks of the eider ducks. This carpet was a masterpiece, perhaps unlike anything else in existence. The King's present was exactly characteristic of the country and the people. Ten young men advanced, carrying a large kyak, made from carefully selected coal-black sealskins, sewed together with sinews chosen specially for that purpose. It was a gift certainly fit for a king. It was constructed so as to combine the lightest possible weight with the strength of

steel. Within the kyak were harpoons, spears, hunting-knives, and arrows, carved from the tooth of the walrus and the narwhal, and beautifully designed. The kyak was built to accommodate the King's tall person.

It was a great disappointment for the Greenlanders that the King did not personally paddle the kyak to his ship. Smilingly the Danish monarch told his subjects that he was immensely pleased with his present, but that he must forego the pleasure of navigating the frail craft until he had learned to manage it.

The King visited a tent-village in a valley near the water, where the hunters from Ustederne pitched camp during the royal visit. In this neighborhood dwell also most of Godthaab's poorer inhabitants, in huts made from earth. The King looked within the tents and huts, spoke kindly to the children, thanking all for their fealty and the handsome presents. In one place, the King crept through a narrow opening into a dugout, where what went for a home had been made by lining the interior with wooden boards. Here he found two old women and a very old

man. Calling to his side a young Greenland as interpreter, the King conversed with them, apparently unmindful of the smell of stale fish-oil and other disagreeable odors that filled the room.

The Greenland natives are passionately fond of dancing. When the fine marine band from the fleet played at the grand ball, in the gymnasium of the Seminary, — where no less a person than Knu Rasmussen untiringly led the hunting-dance, — so many happy Greenlanders of both sexes crowded the floor, together with the Danes, that there was scarcely room to move. But with these simple people, the more the merrier. Those who could not find room in the hall danced in the street outside. Greenland girls danced with sailors, officers, and ship's people, while young natives in neat white *anoraks* chose for partners ladies of the Danish colony. When we were leaving Godthaab harbor, a signal officer, who stayed behind, stood near the landing, playing on a violin to a dancing crowd of Danish marines and native men and women. It was a farewell scene that fastened itself indelibly in our memories.

THE CLASSICS IN EDUCATION

[This article is a comment on the recent report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the position of the Classics in the educational system of the United Kingdom, of which there has already been brief notice in The Living Age.]

From *The London Times*, July 28
(NORTHCLIFFE PRESS)

THE war has made us question everything: It has put, not only the Army and Navy, but all our institutions, on their trial. Our business methods, our railways, our political system, our religious organizations, the Church, Parliament, the Cabinet, nay, even the Crown itself, have been called upon to justify themselves. Some of them have already responded by devising or accepting new constitutions or new spheres of activity. It was not likely or desirable that our educational system would escape the all-embracing spirit of criticism and transformation. Nor has it. An Act of Parliament has been passed which, for imperative reasons of finance cannot come into operation at present, but when it does, will certainly open a new era in the education of those who attend elementary schools, and, more than that, will enlarge the whole national conception of education.

But that act has been by no means the only sign of stirring in our educational waters. Committees have been appointed by the Prime Minister, or the President of the Board, to consider particular aspects of the whole educational problem. One dealt with modern languages, one with natural science, one, which has not yet issued its report, with English. And naturally enough another, whose report lies before us, dealt with the most ancient and the most famous of all the subjects which have occupied the hours of English

schoolboys — the Classics of Greece and Rome.

The Committee which now issues its report was appointed in November, 1919. Its reference was 'to inquire into the position to be assigned to the Classics (that is, to the language, literature, and history of Ancient Greece and Rome) in the educational system of the United Kingdom, and to advise as to the means by which the proper study of these subjects may be maintained and improved.' It consisted of nineteen members, with Lord Crewe as chairman. Lord Crewe's varied experiences as a statesman, a man of the world, and a lifelong lover of fine literature, must obviously have provided him with many of the qualifications which, balancing and correcting each other, should make an ideal chairman for a body dealing with such a subject. He was certain to be equally free from the fanaticism of the classical don and the iconoclasm of the commercial utilitarian. There is, in fact, little sign of either in the report: none whatever, indeed, of the latter. The composition of the Committee precluded that. It consisted, quite rightly, of persons whose prejudices — if they had any, as most people have — were born of knowledge of the subject and not of ignorance. They were all, or nearly all, men or women of distinction in the world of learning or of education. Among them were four professors of Classics, including Mr. Gilbert Murray