

CHAP.
X.July,
1826.

the palms of their hands, but without any disgusting practice.

When they had parted with all they had for sale, they quitted the ship, well pleased with their excursion, and having pushed off to a little distance, clapped their hands, extended their arms, and stroked their bodies repeatedly; which we afterwards found to be the usual demonstration of friendship among all their tribe. They then pointed to the shore, and with one consent struck the water with their paddles, and propelled their baidars with a velocity which we were not prepared to witness. These boats are similar in construction to the oomiaks of Hudson's Bay; but the model differs in being sharp at both ends. They consist of a frame made of drift wood, covered with the skins of walruses which are strained over it, and are capable of being tightened at any time by a lacing on the inside of the gunwale; the frame and benches for the rowers are fastened with thongs, by which the boat is rendered both light and pliable; the skin, when soaked with water, is translucent; and a stranger placing his foot upon the flat yielding surface at the bottom of the boat fancies it a frail security; but it is very safe and durable, especially when kept well greased.

In Hudson's Strait the oomiak is principally used by the women and children; here it is the common conveyance of the men, who, without them, would not be able to collect their store of provisions for the winter. They are always steered by the elderly men, who have also the privilege of sitting in the stern of the boat when unemployed. The starboard paddles of those which we saw were stained with black stripes, and the larboard with red, as were also the frames of some of the baidars.