

Eskimo kayak, and consequently these boats were not so light to propel through the water. But as they were chiefly intended for crossing over channels and open spaces in the ice, and coasting along possible land, speed was not of much importance. The great thing was that the boats should be strong and light, and should be able to carry, in addition to ourselves, provisions and equipments for a considerable time. If we had made them longer and narrower, besides being heavier they would have been more exposed to injury in the course of transport over the uneven ice. As they were built, they proved admirably adapted for our purpose. When we loaded them with care, we could stow away in them provisions and equipment for three months at least for ourselves, besides a good deal of food for the dogs; and we could, moreover, carry a dog or two on the deck. In other respects they were essentially like the Eskimo kayaks, full decked, save for an aperture in the middle for a man to sit in. This aperture was encircled by a wooden ring, after the Eskimo fashion, over which we could slip the lower part of our sealskin jackets, specially adjusted for this purpose, so that the junction between boat and cape was watertight. When these jackets were drawn tight round the wrists and face the sea might sweep right over us without a drop of water coming into the kayak. We had to provide ourselves with such boats in case of having to cross open stretches of sea on our way to Spitzbergen, or, if we chose the other route, between Franz Josef Land and Novaya Zemlya. Besides this aperture in the middle, there were small trap doors fore and aft in the deck, to enable us to put our hands in and stow the provisions, and also get things out more readily, without having to take out all the freight through the middle aperture, in case what we wanted lay at either extremity. These trap-doors, however, could be closed so as to be quite watertight. To make the canvas quite impervious to water the best plan would have been to have sized it, and then painted it externally with ordinary oil paint;