

VII. *A Letter to James Theobald, Esq; giving an Account of the Norwegian Finns, or Finlanders, by Peter Kinck, Esq;*

S I R,

INclos'd I send you an Account, the best I can collect, both from Persons of Veracity, as well as my own Observations, made in several Years Residence in the Neighbourhood of the People; which if it will be any Entertainment to you to peruse, will sufficiently answer the Pains of transcribing.

In the Kingdom of *Norway*, in those Confines which border upon *Sweden*, live a Sort of People call'd *Finns*, whose Habitation is in the Woods and Forrests, and who are some of them under the *Danish*, some under the *Swedish* Jurisdiction, of whose Original, Nature, and Manner of Life, I shall give some Account. And

I. Of their *Original*, which was from *Swedish Finland* Eastward of the Sea of *Bothnia*, from whence by Hunger, Times of Famine, and Want of the Necessaries of Life, they formerly transported themselves into *Sweden* and *Norway*, where in the Forrests and Wilderesses they got Leave to build and inhabit. For the common People of *Finland* are strong and hardy, and by Consequence fruitful and long-liv'd. *Finland* formerly was not so well cultivated as at present it is; so that the Produce of the Earth was not sufficient to subsist the Numbers of People born there; insomuch that Abundance of them (as the *Goths* and *Vandals*)

were

were oblig'd to seek out new Quarters: And tho' these People have for the most Part kept to their native Language, yet have they made several Alterations in their Manners and Ways of living.

As for their *Language*, (tho' the much greater Part of them both understand and speak the *Norwegian* Tongue, as well as the *Swedish*) yet they mostly use their own, which has not the least Affinity or Resemblance of either the other Two. As for Example, where the *Swedes* and *Danes*, in numbering tell 1, 2, 3. *Een, Toe, Tree*, they in theirs tell *Tx, Kax, Kolime*; and as the First say, for Give me Bread, *Giv mig brod*, they say *Alla mina leip*, &c. And when we stand and hear them converse together, we are surpriz'd to conceive how they understand each other, since they speak so very low, that we can scarce hear them.

II. Of their *Nature*. They are generally low of Stature, but strong and hardy, and healthy; their Eyes are lively, their Noses high, and their Teeth even and white, their Feet short. The Women are generally so strong of Constitution, that in Child-bearing they seldom need any Assistance, and soon return to the Business of the Family again, except here and there a weakly Constitution. They are generally ignorant and silly; but this must be attributed to the little Converse they have with each other and the rest of the World, since the *Men*, whose Affairs call them often to traffick with their Neighbours, and in different Provinces, are Men of good natural Parts, sharp, and who look well to their Interest. They are frugal, parsimonious and humble, fearful of giving Offence, and very respectful to their Superiors: They will work whole Days without any Food, if they can only have Tobacco to smoak or chew.

III. Of

III. Of *their Manner of Life*. And this is a Subject that I could be very copious upon; but that I mayn't be tedious, what follows shall suffice. Their Food consists chiefly in a Sort of Fish which they call *Oret*, and which answers to our Salmon-Trout; 'tis a very delicious fat Fish, which they catch in the Rivers that run thro' the Woods) and next to that, in Bread and Flour of *Rye*, which they sometimes get great Plenty of, by cutting down and burning whole Forrests, and sowing the Ground with Rye, which sometimes produces 30 or 40 Fold. But this Method of producing has been of late very strictly forbidden, under very severe Penalties, by the Landlords of those Forrests, by Reason of the immense Dammage it does, by the Loss of so much Timber; and because the Fire sometimes lays wast immense Tracts of Land: So that it is with great Difficulty extinguish'd, burning whole Months together, to the great Detriment of Trade.

They frequently use *Bathing*, at least once a Month, thinking thereby they prevent Sickness, and dissipate all Weaknesses from the Body: And their Method of Bathing seems so very particular, as would scarce agree with any other Constitution, or meet with Approbation from Physicians. The Method is this: In the Middle of the House (which generally consists of One large Room, built all of whole Timbers laid cross, and notch'd in at the Ends to let them close, and then caulk'd with *Moss*, as the Seams of a Ship are with *Okam*) they build an Oven with Stone without Mortar, and without a Funnel; the Smoak going out at a Hole in the Roof, which is left open while the Wood is burning in the Oven, but shut close as soon as 'tis all burnt to a bright Coal, which keeps in all the Heat. When the Oven is thus

made red hot, they then strip, both Men and Women, without any Reserve, and place themselves on Benches made near the Roof on Purpose: Then cold Water is brought in, which from Time to Time is sprinkled upon the Oven; from whence arises a thick Steam on the Bathers, which makes their Bodies so warm, that they sweat very plentifully. Each Person has a Rod in their Hand, with which they gently beat their whole Bodies; and if they find themselves so hot that they cannot well endure it, they call for cold Water, which they pour over themselves in so dextrous a Manner, that it diffuses its self over their whole Bodies, and so cools them again. Thus when they have bathed sufficiently, they go directly out into the Air, tho' in the most inclement Season of the Year; and what is more, will roll themselves in the Snow for a good while together, and get no Harm by so doing: And this Method of Bathing they make Use of as their ordinary Cure, when they find any Indisposition of Body upon them.

In the Winter, when the Ground is cover'd with Snow, they make use of a Sort of long wooden Shoe, *Inducunt soleas ligneas tres vel quatuor ulnas longas*, on which they go so swiftly, that in 2 Hours Time they will run 13 or 14 Miles: And as they are generally good Marks-men, with their Guns they kill Abundance of wild Game, both to help to support their Families, and sell to buy themselves Necessaries.

They are very ignorant of Christianity, by Reason of their great Distance from any Towns; but that Misfortune the present King of *Denmark* has taken some Measures to remedy: Yet tho' they seem so ignorant and barbarous, yet 'tis very rare that any of them are guilty of any considerable Crime.

*I am, &c.*

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