

find that twice a week steamers leave that port for Juneau, the commercial centre of Alaska. Splendid steamers they are, built to brave ocean winds and waves, and supplied with every modern convenience, for each of them carries hundreds of pleasure-seekers. The wild scenery, and especially the volcanoes, glaciers and hot springs of Alaska, are the attractions. Alaska is emphatically a country of volcanoes; over sixty volcanic peaks are known in the territory, a dozen or more of them being in activity at present. Glaciers, many of them remarkable for their extent and grandeur, fill the principal mountain gorges, and terminate at the sea in beautiful masses of overhanging ice. Hot and mineral springs abound on the islands and neighboring coast.

If you are a close observer of men and things, reader, you wish perhaps that you had had the advantage of studying the history of Egypt at a desk over which daily fell the shadow of an obelisk, or of some other monument from the land of the Pharaohs; you regret that it was not your good fortune to become familiar with the early records of the land of your birth, in a study overlooking the Gibraltar of America and the Plains of Abraham. In preparing for a trip to the far north, provide yourself with Bancroft's "History of Alaska." Its several hundred pages will be found interesting and instructive at any time, but the events described will surely become actualities not soon forgotten, when they are unfolded to the reader en route for Behring Sea, or better, in sight of Mt. St. Elias. The following brief historical outline of the Czar's old colony must satisfy you for the present.

Three days before the death of the reformer and tyrant, Peter the Great, Vitus Behring, a Dane in the service of Russia, started from Moscow as commander of a scientific expedition to the Sea of Kamtchatka. He returned in 1728, after an absence of more than three years, during which he sailed into the Arctic Sea, and ascertained that Asia was not joined to America. In 1741 he sailed a second time from the Sea of Kamtchatka and explored part of the coast of Alaska. Cook and Vancouver visited this region in 1776; Prouse, under French colors, fol-

lowed in 1785, and about the same time, Spanish navigators pretended to take possession of parts of the northwest coast of America, in the name of their government. Spain a little later, abandoned her claims at the instance of Great Britain, and this power and Russia divided the newly discovered territory between themselves.

Small settlements were formed by the Russians at various places, chiefly for the prosecution of the fur trade. This with valuable fisheries, mines and forests, constitutes the sources of wealth of Alaska. The agricultural resources of the country are very limited; little grain is raised, and the vegetables consumed are brought almost entirely from the Pacific States, a distance of one thousand, and often two thousand miles. In the interior, the climate is rigorous, the mountains are always snow-capped, and the ground remains frozen to within two or three feet of the surface throughout the summer. The great warm current of the Pacific sweeping along the coast gives it a tolerably mild climate, but also causes such an excessive rainfall that cereals will not ripen. At Sitka, lat. 57° N., the capital of the territory, ice fit for consumption seldom forms, but this town is the rainiest place in the world outside of the tropics.

"God is high, and the Czar is far away," was the motto of the early adventurers and traders in Alaska. Their enormities among the peaceable natives were checked when Baranoff became the Russian autocrat's representative in 1770. The first governor was ennobled before his death, and deserved the distinction, for he was a man of energy and character. He founded Sitka, on the island which now bears his name, and there built sailing vessels, a large factory and his famous castellated fortress which was destroyed by fire only a year or two ago. He had a Russian bishop appointed, and opened commercial relations with various parts of the world. Baranoff's efforts to make Alaska a thriving colony were not successful; there were many drawbacks, the greatest perhaps being that Russia, like some of her sister powers on the continent, has not even yet learned the secret of developing the resources of new lands, and of retaining the affections and loyalty