

conceive how any communication should have been carried on between them. But the Russians, having subjected the western part of Siberia to their empire, gradually extended their knowledge of that vast country, by advancing towards the east into unknown regions not only in Asia, but likewise on the continent of America.

"These the Russians imagined to be part of America; and several circumstances concurred not only in confirming them in this belief, but in persuading them that some portion of that continent could not be very remote. Trees of various kinds unknown in those naked regions of Asia were driven upon the coast by an easterly wind. By the same wind, floating ice was brought thither in a few days; flights of birds arrived annually from the same quarter; and a tradition obtained among the inhabitants, of an intercourse formerly carried on with some countries situated to the east.

"After weighing all these particulars, and comparing the position of the countries in Asia which had been discovered, with such parts in the north-west of America as were already known, the Russian court formed a plan, which would have hardly occurred to a nation less accustomed to engage in arduous undertakings, and to contend with great difficulties. Orders were issued to build two vessels at the small village of Ochotz, situated on the sea of Kamschatka, to sail on a voyage of discovery. Though that dreary uncultivated region furnished nothing that could be of use in constructing them, but some large trees; though not only the iron, the cordage, the sails, and all the numerous articles requisite for their equipment, but the provisions for victualling them were to be carried through the immense deserts of Siberia, down rivers of difficult navigation, and along roads almost impassible, the mandate of the sovereign, and the perseverance of the people, at last surmounted every obstacle. Two vessels were finished, and, under the command of the Captains Behring and Tschirikow, sailed from Kamschatka, in quest of the new world in a quar-