

GENERAL REPORT.

CHAPTER I.

NARRATIVE OF THE EXPEDITION.

On the 6th day of April, 1869, accompanied by Mr. John J. Major, my assistant, I sailed from the harbor of San Francisco, on the brig *Commodore*, bound for the port of Sitka. This vessel was to transport the employes and supplies of a new trading company to St. Michael's Island, in Norton Sound, and she carried upon her deck a small stern-wheel steamer, about fifty feet in length, entitled the *Yukon*, which was to attempt the ascent of the great Kvichpak or Yukon River.

We arrived at Sitka on the 24th day of April, after an uneventful voyage of eighteen days. We remained here two weeks, and during this time, although the weather was generally unfavorable, we succeeded in obtaining a few observations to determine the errors of the chronometers.

At this point private Michael Foley, Ninth United States Infantry, joined my party, being ordered to report to me for duty by Brevet Major General Davis commanding the department. He accompanied me during the remainder of the expedition.

On the 9th day of May we sailed from the harbor of Sitka, and after a stormy voyage of twelve days we arrived at Onnalaska Harbor, in the Aleutian Islands. The circumstances of the expedition detained us here for about two weeks, and during this time the chronometer error was determined on several occasions.

We sailed from the harbor of Onnalaska on the 8th day of June, expecting to arrive at St. Michael's Island in about a week. The weather was, however, generally unfavorable, and on the 13th we encountered extensive fields of ice, which had been detached and driven off from the northern coast. To escape this danger we were compelled to turn back several times and finally to make considerable casting in order to pass between the ice-fields and the coast. Much delayed by these obstacles, and also by a severe northwestern gale which lasted for several days, we arrived finally at St. Michael's Island, on the 29th day of June, after a voyage of twenty-four days.

I shall describe this island in another chapter. It is sufficient to say here that, although the anchorage is entirely open, the island covers it from most of the prevailing winds, and it is the nearest position to the mouth of the Yukon at which a vessel can lie with safety.

We remained at St. Michael's Island four days, making the necessary preparations for our journey up the river. On the 1st of July the little steamer *Yukon* was successfully launched, and a short trial-trip gave excellent results. Sextant observations for the determination of time were made at this station. I left here a set of meteorological instruments, with which Captain Riedell, the chief trader of the station, kindly volunteered to observe.

Having obtained two large open boats, which we loaded with supplies and trading goods, and having constructed a small rough pilot-house upon the steamer's deck, we were prepared for departure. Early on the