



U. S. Revenue Cutter "Bear" Communicating with Siberian Deermen.

[From a photograph by Dr. S. J. Call.]

ALASKA AND THE REINDEER.

BY LIEUT. J. C. CASTWELL.



HE landing from the United States revenue cutter *Bear*, at Port Clarence, Alaska, during the month of July, 1892, of a herd of 180 domesticated reindeer purchased in Siberia, together with four native Siberian herders, marks the establishment of the first herd of the kind on the Western continent. This is an event of more than ordinary importance. If it is successful it will create throughout Northern and Central Alaska a new food supply in place of the walrus, whale, fish and fur-bearing land animals that are yearly becoming scarcer and more difficult to obtain.

Furnished a better and surer food supply, the native Eskimo population now decreasing in numbers may reasonably be expected to increase; and changing them from mere hunters to herdsimen will be the first upward

step toward their civilization. With the increase and civilization of the natives and the general introduction of domesticated reindeer herds throughout Alaska, the vast unknown interior of our northern province can be thoroughly explored. Lines of communication between distant settlements can be kept open during the long winter months and the frigid, bleak and now comparatively useless plains of that little known region will become a source of wealth and prosperity to the land.

The ultimate necessity of the U. S. Government, either to feed the Eskimos or provide some means by which they can feed themselves, has yearly been growing more apparent. In the past there was a large population of coast Eskimos, whose food supply was derived from the pursuit of the whale, walrus and hair seal. At Point Barrow, in 1828, Captain Beechey found Nuwuk a village of 1,000 people; in 1863, there were 300, while now there are not