

Three years after the cession of Alaska, the Alaska Commercial Company obtained a twenty-year lease of the Pribilof islands, the consideration being an annual rental of \$55,000 and besides a revenue tax of two dollars on every skin taken. The maximum number of seal skins allowed to be shipped was 100,000 per annum. As the original cost or purchase price of Alaska was \$7,200,000, it is seen that the United States had almost from the beginning an income from these two small islands alone of nearly four per cent. on their investment for the whole territory.

A few words about the seal itself. Professor Elliott, of the Smithsonian Institution, spent several years on the dismal Pribilof islands for the express purpose of thoroughly studying seal life in all its phases, and to him most of our accurate knowledge of seal life is due. As already stated the first seal-fur of commerce came from the South Sea, hence the name South Sea seal still obtains, although by far the greater number of skins now come from the Alaskan or North Pacific waters. Whether ever the Alaskan seals migrated from the South Sea, thereby crossing the equator is not known, neither was it certainly known where these animals spent the winter months till this was discovered in the course of the investigations of the British Bering Sea Commission in 1891, when it was ascertained that the greater part of this season was passed in the waters adjacent to British Columbia and Southern Alaska. Prof. Elliott says, "there are few, if any, creatures in the animal kingdom that can be said to exhibit a higher order of instinct, approaching even our intelligence" than the fur seal.

A male in its prime, say six or seven years old, will measure  $6\frac{1}{2}$  to  $7\frac{1}{4}$  feet from the tip of its nose to the end of its abbreviated, abortive tail, and will weigh at least 400 pounds. The female on the other hand is very much smaller, being from 4 to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, and is only about one-sixth of the weight of the male, but is much more shapely in its proportions. The adult males are the first to arrive in the spring, between the 1st and 5th of May, on the seal grounds or rookeries on the Pribilof Islands. It may be remarked also here that after the adult males land, they never leave the island nor partake of any food whatsoever until they leave some months later in the fall to spend the winter