

How did Baranof, surrounded by hostile Indians, with no servants but Siberian convicts, hold his own single-handed in American wilds? Simply by the power of his fitness, by vigilance that never relaxed, by despotism that was by turns savage and gentle, but always paternal, by the fact that his brain and his brawn were always more than a match for the brain and brawn of all the men under him. To be sure, the liberal measure of seventy-nine lashes was laid on the back of any subordinate showing signs of mutiny, but that did not prevent many such attempts.

The most serious was in 1809. From the time that Benyowsky, the Polish adventurer, had sacked the garrison of Kamchatka, Siberian convicts serving in America dreamed of similar exploits. Peasants and officers, a score in number, all convicts from Siberia, had plotted to rise in New Archangel or Sitka, assassinate the governor, seize ships and provisions, and sailing to some of the South Sea Islands, set up an independent government. The signal was to be given when Naplavkof, an officer who was master plotter, happened to be on duty. On such good terms was the despot, Baranof, with his men, that the plot was betrayed to him from half a dozen sources. It did not trouble Baranof. He sent the betrayers a keg of brandy, bade one of them give a signal by breaking out in drunken song, and at the sound himself burst into the roomful of conspirators, sword in hand, fol-