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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN one of Baronov's Slavonian hunters stood before him in the privacy of a special meeting at Sitka, in 1804, and took out from his pocket a handful of golden nuggets and scales, saying as he did so that he knew where there was "plenty more," the old Russian Governor chilled him with a fierce gesture of disgust, then said to him: "Ivan, I forbid you to go farther in this undertaking; not a word about this, or we are all undone; let the Americans and the Englishmen know that we have gold in these mountains, then we are ruined; they will rush in on us by thousands, and crowd us to the wall—to the death."

Baronov was right as a Russian fur-trader; he knew that word of Ivan's discovery, if given voice, would bring that scourge of fur-bearing districts, the miner, into the very depths of Russian America instantly, and so he suppressed the news; he and his successor also, suppressed it well.

But the successors of Baronov were not his equal in money-making as fur-traders and managers; they ran into debt, and these debts of the Russian American Company induced the Imperial Government to part with Alaska to the United States of America in 1867. The Russian authorities turned Alaska over to us with a good word for its furs and fisheries, and nothing else.