

derly, and they have gone even beyond this, and have foully and treacherously slain the comrade, that good man Gortsky, whilst peacefully trading amongst them."

One of the Cossacks, a young man, coughed, and grew red in the face.

At once the little burning eyes of the speaker fixed him. They were two points of red hot steel, even in that molten face.

"Whilst peacefully trading amongst them as thou knowest Ivan Dubovitch," he repeated coldly, and the man who coughed, hastened to affirm that it was so, though he had reasons for knowing that Gortsky's peaceful trading included rape.

"And so thou Yaksheem wilt go to Shakmut's village tonight, and reason with these men. We would that we might report to Her Imperial Majesty that peace reigns in Alaska, and that these poor savages progress in civilization as they should do under Her rule."

"Certainly your Excellence," and the man saluted again, whilst the speaker took off his sheepskin cap and stood scratching his bald head.

It was an action strangely at variance with his grandiose manner and carefully chosen words, but the whole man was a mass of contradictions.

Undersized, bloated in the face, bald and of a ferocious ugliness, he spoke when only half drunk, with the unction of a latter day saint; he fought, drunk or sober, like a primitive devil.

A sot, to whom gallons of rum were as glasses of wine to another, he was never too drunk to transact business, and he was, drunk or sober, the best business man that ever set foot in Alaska.

Weathered by Siberian winds, tough as rawhide, brave as most of the promishleniki were, he yet revelled in coarse luxury, and saw to it that he had his share of the good things of civilization, though his nest was in the most inaccessible of the world's wilds.

Hail-fellow-well-met with his men, whose equal he was in birth, and their leader and comrade in the wildest or-

gies, this wonderful man was yet absolute autocrat amongst them, more absolute perhaps than the sovereign he served, between whom and himself, Siberia and a waste of wild waters and fog shrouded lands, set an impassable barrier.

That was Baranoff's luck.

But he owed much of his success to himself; to his courage, his business capacity, and the two facts that he allowed no one to return who would report of him save as he pleased, and that the dividends paid by his company always exceeded the shareholders' expectations.

Therefore he remained Governor of Alaska.

"And Yaksheem!"

"Your Excellence!"

"Thou comprehendest that thou art but second in command tonight. Our friend the Captain Maxim Stroganoff, who I think does not see us, leads under thy guidance. Thou wilt leave the Shaman to him."

As Baranoff spoke, he turned and bowed ceremoniously towards a figure which set cowering in a great military overcoat, under the lee of one of the canoes.

The man rose when his name was mentioned, and stood stiffly at attention, saluting formally, but he made no reply though the Governor seemed to wait for him to do so.

What light there was still left fell upon a strikingly handsome face, but pale to the lips, and so convulsed with passion as to suggest madness.

If hate ever withered, such hatred tortured Maxim Stroganoff, a noble knouted by a tradesman, an officer of Miloradovitch with whip weals on his back.

"Thou wilt help our new friend, Yaksheem," the Governor drawled, looking the Captain sneeringly up and down. "He is a little raw may be still, but he will take kindly to our discipline, even if our methods are not Miloradovitch's."

There was an emphasis on the "raw" which made the men titter, and Stroganoff straightening himself seemed for a