

The man who finally established the Russian Empire on the North American continent was the iron-willed Baranov, and the extension of the Muscovite's dominions was due to the value of the fur trade,—sea otters and seals.

In 1797, the various trading companies of Eastern Siberia and the American colonies were consolidated with the Russian-American Company, which, in 1799, obtained a charter from the Imperial Government, granting it exclusive rights in the new Russian possessions. This charter marks an epoch in the history of Alaska, which from that time until the transfer of the country to the United States became identical with that of the Russian American Company.

In 1811, the Russians established themselves on the coast of California, the object being to prosecute agriculture and thereby make California the source of supply for provisions, but in this respect the enterprise proved a failure; for the Siberians and Aleuts, who were placed there, were but very indifferent farmers. Between the Stikine and Bodega Bay in California the Russians never had an establishment.

In 1774-75 the Spanish navigators, Perez and Quadra, made some explorations on the west coast, and later Captains Meares, Portlock and Dixon.

We will now turn our attention to the physical features of the country. The word Alaska, or Aliaska, was first applied to the narrow peninsula of the north-western most part of the North American continent, and extending into the Pacific to where the chain of the Aleutian islands begins. Now, the word Alaska is used to designate the vast territory lying between the Arctic and the Pacific and west of the 141st meridian, together with a narrow strip along the coast extending southward to Portland Canal, and including the adjacent and Aleutian islands. The coast of Alaska, washed by the Pacific, sweeps northward and westward from Dixon Entrance in a mighty curve, measuring over 1,200 miles, to the western extremity of the Alaskan peninsula; and from here again the Aleutian chain of islands stretches, far towards the coast of Asia, in another long curve of nearly 1,000 miles. The most southerly part of the latter curve is in latitude  $51^{\circ} 30'$ , that is, about the latitude of London, England. The most northerly part of Alaska is at Point