

had never been definitely ascertained,) and its establishment was therefore contrary to the terms of a treaty existing between the Russian and English governments. The traders of the Russian company had, however, with one exception, never ascended the river beyond a point several hundred miles below the post, and seem to have had no disposition to object to this invasion of rights which they did not desire to enjoy. Nevertheless, this post was the occasion of great loss to the Russian company; for upon the opening of the Yukon in the spring, the enterprising and energetic Scotchmen of the station were accustomed to descend the river for some three hundred miles to a station called Nuchucayette, where they met the assembled Indian tribes, and purchased their stores of winter skins, before the tardy Russians, delayed by current and ice, could arrive at the trading-ground.

The retirement of the Russian American Company, consequent upon the transfer of the territory to the United States, inaugurated a new order of things. Immediately several American companies located small establishments upon the river and near the coast, and one company sent up the river a small party, which succeeded after great efforts in reaching a point near Nuchucayette, and wintered opposite the mouth of the great Tanana.

In the following spring, when the traders of the Hudson Bay Company paid their annual visit to Nuchucayette, their right to trade in the "Indian country" of the United States was fiercely contested, and they were informed by the Americans that any future attempt to purchase skins within our territory would be resisted, if necessary, by force.

In the spring of 1869, a new venture was projected by capitalists in San Francisco. It was proposed to transport a small steamer upon the deck of a sailing-vessel to some point near the mouth of the river, and, launching it, to ascend, if possible, as far as Fort Yukon, trading along the banks. In connection with this enterprise it was regarded as extremely desirable that the question of English right to trade in this portion of our territory should be definitely settled; and as the region in the vicinity of Fort Yukon was supposed to be peculiarly rich in furs, it was also desired that the position of this post should be officially determined, and, if it was found to be within the Territory of the United States, that measures should be taken to cause its abandonment by the English company.

The duties with which I was charged by General Halleck's letter of instructions are as follows:

1. To determine the latitude and longitude of Fort Yukon.
2. To ascertain and report upon the amount of trade carried on by the Hudson Bay Company within our territory, reporting more particularly upon the quantity of goods brought by them from British territory.
3. To obtain as much information as practicable concerning the resources of the Yukon and its tributaries, and with regard to the number and disposition of the native tribes in its vicinity.
4. To report upon the number and condition of the public buildings at Michaelovski, (Redoubt St. Michael's.)

The obstacles encountered in making the required astronomical observations, and the means by which they were fortunately overcome, will be referred to in the proper place.

The collection of general information was a matter of considerable difficulty. The Russians had retired from this part of the Territory, and the experience of the American traders was for the most part extremely limited. The chief trader was also unfortunately absent from