

PREFACE.

I have adopted this method as a brief, concise and I hope satisfactory manner of replying to thousands of questions and dozens of letters received by me asking for information relative to the country which is just now attracting such widespread attention.

It has been my aim, not to elaborate on any particular point, but briefly to give such information as, judging from the general nature of the inquiries made a great majority of persons are desirous of acquiring.

B. K. COWLES,

Sitka, Alaska.

Where is Alaska? Strange as it may seem to many, this is a question often asked, and I will reply to it first. It is the extreme northwest portion of the United States, extending from latitude $54^{\circ} 40'$ to the totally unexplored regions of the Arctic Sea, and lying between longitude 131° and 193° west from Greenwich, that is to say, covering 62 degrees of longitude.

It was discovered by Vitus Behring in 1741, was originally known as Russian America, was purchased from Russia in 1867 for the sum of \$7,200,000, and is the largest possession of the United States. The land portion contains 531,491 square miles. Its extreme length north and south is 1,100 miles, and its extreme breadth 800 miles, a distance greater north and south, than from Lake Michigan to the Gulf of Mexico, and almost equal east and west from the same lake to New York City.

The Aleutian Islands, which are a part of Alaska, extend so far into the Pacific Ocean that the Geographical centre of the United States east and west is found in that body of water about 500 miles west of San Francisco. From the above figures a faint idea can be formed of the immensity of this territory.