

dare not hunt alone, nor in small numbers, on account of the hatred of the natives." *

The whole story is a very painful one and most of it has lapsed beyond the possibility of recovery. The Russian traders were scarcely less barbarous than the Aleuts whom they eventually subdued and reduced into a scarcely disguised slavery. They were, however, provided with firearms, while the natives had, whether for defence or for attack, only spears, darts, and such like primitive weapons. We have imperfect accounts from the Russian point of view of these transactions, but none from that of the natives who were the principal sufferers. We gather and with difficulty, only the fact that the Aleutian Islands were originally occupied by a numerous population, which before many years had become reduced by slaughter and by disease, introduced by the conquerors, to very scanty proportions.

The Aleut race was decimated, but the fur trade continued, and has continued in one form or another up to the present day. Meanwhile the sea-cow became extinct, and it is to this fact particularly that I now wish to draw attention.

It soon became habitual for the Russian traders to resort in the first instance to Behring Island in order to lay up a supply of salted meat for the farther voyage to the Aleutian Islands. The good qualities of the flesh of the sea-cow rendered it the chief object of pursuit for this purpose, and thus it happened that this nearly defenceless animal was constantly sought after and hunted. We have already seen that its range was very limited. Within historic times it appears to have been practically confined to the Commander Islands—Behring and Copper Islands.—Tradition speaks of the occurrence of the animal on the Kamtschatkan coast, and investigators have found reason to believe that it at one time frequented also the northern islands of Japan and the northern coasts of China. Its bones have been found on Attu Island, the furthest west of the Aleutian archipelago, but it is not certain that these may not represent merely carcasses which have been washed ashore there. From the accounts of Steller, it would appear

**op. Cit.* pp. 220—221.