

agricultural region here awaiting development in the near future. The real facts do not warrant any such expectation. The whole valley of the Zukon lies within a few degrees of the Arctic Circle, and the soil, where it is level, is always swampy, and the heat of summer has no effect beyond an astonishing growth of native grasses and weeds, and bringing into life dense clouds of mosquitoes."

#### *The Aleutian Division.*

The islands of this division are a mere continuation of the main Alaskan Range. They are all mountainous, with peaks of from 4,000 to 8,000 feet in height. The Shumagin Group is the great resort of the sea otter, of which about 600 are secured annually. The Pribylof Islands contain the breeding-grounds of the fur-seal, but the "rookeries" are found only on the Islands of St. Paul and St. George, and are the subject of an interesting Report by H. W. Elliot, under the direction of the Superintendent of Census. These islands are situated 1,400 miles west-north-west of Sitka, and nearly 200 miles from Oonashka on the Aleutian Islands. They were first peopled by natives from Oonashka, brought over by the Russians in 1786. There are eighty families and as many dwellings on the Island of St. Paul, and twenty-four families on the Island of St. George.\*

The Alaska Commercial Company has its fur-seal fishery organization here. The breeding-grounds are carefully watched and protected; 1,000,000 seal-pups are born every year, but there is a loss of 50 per cent. by whales, sharks, and other predatory fish. Seals are in their prime at from 4 to 5 years of age. An average seal will measure 6½ feet long, and weighs 400 lbs. It is estimated that there are over 3,000,000 seals on each island during the breeding season, not counting the non-breeders. The Company is permitted by the Government to take 100,000 seals annually, and this catch is made between the 14th June and the 1st August. More than 4,000,000 seal-skins have been taken since 1797.

When the killing season has arrived squads of men rush in between the sleeping seals and the surf-wash and drive them slowly to designated slaughtering grounds, halting them occasionally to rest and cool down, for heating injures the fur. Finally the slaughter grounds are reached, the seals are told off in detail, and at a given signal the men fall upon them with clubs and <sup>and</sup> ~~cut~~ them out right and left, after which work they are knifed and skinned at the rate of one in four minutes.

The Alaska Company has stations all over the Aleutian Islands west and north of Kadiak, and employs four steamers and a dozen ships, barks, and sloops, besides working boats.

The blue fox has been introduced into these islands, and some 200 are killed annually.

The sea otter is scarce.

#### *The Kadiak Division.*

This division comprises the south side of the Alaskan Peninsula as far west as the narrow isthmus between Port Moller and Zaakharof Bay. The Settlements are small and widely scattered. The walrus frequents these coasts in large numbers, and supplies the principal food of the inhabitants.

The Island of Kadiak was discovered by the Russians in 1762, but was abandoned on account of the hostile disposition of the natives, and was not permanently occupied until twenty years later, when the first missionaries arrived. The Report says that a century of uninterrupted presence of Christianizing influences has so transformed these natives that not a vestige of their former fierce and savage nature can now be found. The climatic conditions of the island are favourable for the cultivation of vegetables and rearing of cattle. Large game abounds. Black and brown bears, the latter measuring from 10 to 12 feet in length, are killed in great numbers. A species of reindeer, the woodland cariboo, moose, mountain sheep, the beaver, the porcupine, the whistling marmot, black and grey wolves, the lynx, the wolverine, the marten, mink, and musk rat are also plentiful. Aquatic birds swarm. The easternmost part of this division comprises the coast bordering on the Gulf of Chugatch or Prince William's Sound, and from thence to Mount St. Elias. This is essentially an alpine region. The superficial area is approximately 70,884 square miles, and the number of inhabitants 4,352.

#### *The South-eastern Division.*

This division comprises the narrow strip of coast-line from Mount St. Elias to Portland Canal, and partakes of the character of the coast of British Columbia. It is

\* See Report on History and Origin of (Sir L. West's No. 212.)