

Hearne's Journey.

115

The tract of land inhabited by the northern Indians, reaches from latitude 59 to 68 deg. and is about five hundred miles in width. The surface is frequently covered with a thin sod of moss; but, in general, it is no more than one solid mass of rocks and stones. It produces some cranberries, and a few other insignificant shrubs and herbage; and in the marshes are found different kinds of grass: but nature has been very sparing in her gifts in the vegetable class.

There is a kind of moss of a black, hard, crumply appearance, growing on the rocks and large stones, which is of infinite service to the natives, as it sometimes furnishes them with a temporary subsistence, when no other food is to be procured. When boiled, it turns to a gummy consistence, and is neither unpalatable nor unwholesome. Fish and deer, however, constitute their principal support; and these are in most places, sufficiently abundant at the proper seasons.

When two parties of those Indians meet, they make a full halt within a few yards of each other, and, in general, sit or lie down for a few minutes. At length one of them, commonly breaks silence, and when he has made his oration, the speaker of the other party begins his reply.