

THE EXTINCT NORTHERN SEA-COW, AND EARLY RUSSIAN EXPLORATIONS IN THE NORTH PACIFIC.

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One object of the meetings of this club, is that of enabling its members and their friends to bring before the Society for explanation and discussion, subjects which they have been engaged in studying, or which may have come under their notice. Thus it has occurred to me that it may interest you, as naturalists, to review the main facts relating to the now extinct Manatee or Sea-Cow of the North Pacific. The collection of these facts has interested me particularly because, in 1891, I had an opportunity of visiting the former resorts of the animal and of procuring there a number of its bones. This animal is one of these—forming a very short list in all—which have disappeared completely within historic times.

The connection established in the title of my paper between the sea-cow and the early Russian explorations in the North Pacific, may appear to require explanation, but this explanation is found in the circumstance that the extermination of the animal chiefly resulted from these explorations, and in the fact that if left to itself, the sea cow,—though evidently in its decadence—would in all probability be still reckoned as a member of the living world.

Everyone here must be familiar with the fact that a principle motive in the exploration and occupation of the northern part of North America was the trade in furs. Missionary enterprises may have actuated many of the early explorers, but some even of the missionaries, were not averse to profitable barter; while in the case of the great fur companies, this was the object of their existence. The Hudson's Bay Company was early in the field, and after the conquest of Canada the Montreal North-West Company superseded the older French trading companies, and first in competition with, afterwards in combination with the Hudson's Bay Company, pushed its trading posts and stations westward to the Pacific Ocean.

Furs and pelts of many kinds were obtained by these traders, but, throughout, the skin of the beaver may be stated to have been their