

Q. If this fur-seal business were opened to free trade and no restrictions as to the number to be taken each season made by the Government, what do you think would be the consequence?—A. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind, from my knowledge on the subject, that at the end of the third year there would not be a seal on the ground. The business would be destroyed. Here are the reasons: If those islands were opened to free trade not less than a hundred, or perhaps five hundred, vessels would go up there every year from San Francisco and from other ports, and even if they did not kill a seal on the islands for two years, and those vessels were permitted to go up there and anchor around, they would have to be constantly shifting from side to side of the islands, passing and re-passing these rookeries, (for vessels have to hug the land close there to keep out of the swell), and the consequence would be that the harassing of the breeding-seals would drive them away. The females are exceedingly timid. The males are very bold, and will not leave unless driven off, but the females will. I, myself, unaided, could drive every seal off that island in two years, without killing one.

Q. Did you seek, by inquiry and observation, to inform yourself of the condition of the natives there?—A. Yes, sir; and to more thoroughly do that, I studied the Russian language, and acquired sufficient knowledge of it to converse with them, and to read and write it, and I am free to say that those people have talked to me in a very independent, and, to my surprise, a very intelligent manner.

Q. What seemed to be their feelings toward the lessees?—A. Their feeling, independent of their testimony to me, is one of gratitude and thankfulness.

Q. Did they seem to be satisfied with the treatment they received from this Government?—A. Yes, sir; and they have so expressed themselves in a series of annual letters written to their bishop in San Francisco. They are all Christians, you know, members of the Greek Catholic Church, and they make an annual contribution for its support, and a very substantial one, too, some six or eight thousand dollars a year. That is always accompanied by a letter or letters from those people to the bishop in San Francisco, and you will find in those letters on his files expressions of their gratitude, and of their greatly improved condition. At first, when I went up there, I wondered why the company should voluntarily offer to build houses for the people, but on looking into the matter I saw in it a very wise policy on the part of the company. It is this. When the Russians had possession of the islands they treated those people as they would treat so many dogs. The natives lived in hovels, and when they were required to work they were brought out at the word of command, or sometimes with blows; this I had from the people themselves. They lived in damp, unhealthy dog-holes, you might call them, and indeed the Russian agents themselves lived in a sort of cow-house when the transfer took place. The men, therefore, had no pith or backbone, no energy in their work, and they were all summer taking the catch of 100,000 seals, instead of taking them in their prime condition, within twenty-eight or thirty days, as they do now. The company, therefore, by putting the people into good houses, treating them well, and giving them some idea of manhood and self-reliance—and I may say that there is not a record of a cross or ugly word spoken to the natives by the representatives of the company since the granting of the lease; at least, the natives have told me so, and there was nothing of the kind while I was there—the company, by treating them in this way, keeps them in good condition, so that they are able to pitch into the work when the seals come, and take the whole catch in from twenty-eight

to forty days, according to the season. They could take the whole number in twenty-eight days if the season admitted, but sometimes the seals are not fit to drive, and then they have to lie over for a time. What is the object of taking them within this short period? It is this: The company get their 100,000 seals in prime condition. After the seal has been out three or four weeks he begins to shed his hair, or his fur, and every day after the third week that he remains on land his skin deteriorates in value; so that those skins taken by the Russians in September and October were really worthless in the London market, compared with prime skins. Therefore, this company, by putting the people into more comfortable houses, and treating them well in every respect, have them in good condition to do the work at the right time, and their seals go to London all prime, and, instead of fetching a low average price, the average is high. That is the whole secret of it, and you will see at once that it is a very wise policy. The natives are perfectly free to work as they please. The system of labor is briefly this: The natives elect a chief and two subordinates; they have a time-keeper and a tally-keeper, and when the sealing season opens the men get together and the chief goes to the company's agent on a certain morning, and asks if he is ready to go to work. The company's agent says, "Yes, in your judgment, go ahead;" and from that time on until the 100,000 seals are taken the agent of the company never speaks to those men. The work is done by the men, under their own chief, and the tally is kept by their own tally-keeper. The company's agent at the salt-house also has an account of the seals taken, and the Government agent has an account. The people have their account in a set of books which they keep, and keep very beautifully, too; the company's agent keeps his books, and the Government agent his. The natives understand the law in regard to the limitation of the number to be taken just as well as the Government or the company do, as it has been translated for them, and as soon as the 100,000 are taken they have a general settlement. They say, "Here, we have taken a hundred thousand seals; now we are ready for a settlement." The company's agent looks at his books and says, "Yes, you are right." The Government agent looks at his books and sees that it is all right, and the whole thing is settled on that basis.

Q. While you were on the islands were you free to observe everything that occurred?—A. Yes.

Q. State whether you observed that the Commercial Company was in the habit of furnishing spirituous liquors to the natives.—A. No, sir. On the contrary, I was obliged to complain of the Government agent in that respect. The only liquor furnished at that time was furnished by the Government agent, and the company's agent came to me and protested against it.

Q. What is the effect of furnishing the natives spirituous liquor; are they fond of it?—A. Very fond. They would sell their souls and bodies for liquor.

Q. Then it is very important to keep it away from them?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. What do you think of the propriety of allowing persons not under the control of the Government to engage in trade with those natives?—A. I do not think it would be good policy. I do not see exactly how it could work with harmony and propriety.

Q. In the first place, are there enough natives there to make such trade an inducement?—A. No, sir.

Q. Then you think that persons who would ask to be permitted to trade on the islands would have some other motive than that of simply

furnishing goods to the natives and obtaining the profits of legitimate trade?—A. They would be obliged to live.

Q. What is your recollection as to the number of natives on those islands?—A. There were about two hundred and twenty-four or two hundred and twenty-five on Saint Paul in the summer of 1874, and about one hundred and thirty, I think, on Saint George. I have stated the figures exactly, however, in my report.

By Mr. CHAPIN :

Q. Is their number increasing or diminishing?—A. Previous to the present order of things the number used to regularly diminish. The unhappy condition in which the people lived was such that the birth-rate was less than the death-rate, and every year or two the Russians would have to go off to the Aleutian Islands or to Kodiak and get recruits; but for the last three years the birth-rate has been somewhat in excess of the death-rate, and I am inclined to think that, with their improved sanitary condition, the people of the islands will at least hold their own.

Q. Are there any other industries there except the seal-fisheries?—A. The character of the islands forbids it. The climatic conditions which prevail there forbid the raising of crops of any kind, and the keeping of stock is impracticable because you cannot cure the coarse grass that grows there, and the islands being mere volcanic breccia and rocks, there is no mineral wealth whatever; therefore, with the exception of these seals, the natives have no other means of support whatever, and that makes them exceedingly watchful and jealous guardians of the seals. They do not know anything but seal; they do not think anything but seal; they do not talk anything but seal, but on that subject they are quite intelligent naturally. I found them so in the course of a protracted intercourse.

By Mr. HILL :

Q. Among the regulations of this company is one in which they profess not to *compel* the natives to work; what have you to say about that?—A. They never have done it, and the natives understand that as well as we do. The people work or not, freely, just as they please.

Q. Do they ever complain of not getting their wages?—A. No, sir; because they divide the whole sum among themselves, and if they complain at all it is among themselves. The company say to them, "We have authority to take so many seals on these islands, and when you have taken them we will pay you 40 cents a skin." The agent of the company pays the whole amount over to the chief, and he divides it among the workmen according to their ability, &c.

Q. The company profess to furnish the natives with such goods as they need, at a reasonable profit, not above twenty-five per cent.—A. I have gone among the natives and questioned them as to prices of articles, boots, shirts, cloth, &c., and I have found on comparison with San Francisco rates, that in many cases they had bought them on the islands at less than I could have bought them for on Montgomery street.

Q. Did you notice whether there was a sufficient supply of the things that the company profess to furnish gratis, oil, fuel, and salmon?—A. Yes, sir; there was. The salmon is vastly in excess of their needs; they do not consume half of it.

Q. Who supports the infants, invalids, widows, and those who are too old to work?—A. The company supports them. They build houses for them, and feed them and clothe them. When I was there, there

were four or five such families supported by the company, and they are always on the increase, I presume.

Q. Suppose any of the inhabitants want to leave the islands?—A. They can go on the company's vessels whenever they announce their desire.

Q. They can go free on the company's ships?—A. Yes, sir; free. They can go to Oonalaska, or, if they want to go clear down to San Francisco, they can go.

Q. Then your opinion is that this arrangement not only preserves the seals and seal-fisheries, and therefore, the trade and revenues of the United States, but that it is really a benefit to the natives?—A. It is unquestionably a benefit to the natives. Their physical condition has been improved vastly from what it used to be. I know that, from the light of the Russian records which I have translated, and codified, I might say.

Q. Do you know anything about the use of fire-arms on the islands?—A. Yes, sir; when I went up there I got a special permit from the Treasury Department, as a naturalist, to use a shot-gun, but the natives are not allowed to use fire-arms, unless when the seals are off the islands. Then they are allowed to use them to shoot birds, &c., but the minute the seals make their appearance the natives give up their fire-arms to the Government agent, and do not handle them again while the seals are there.

Q. Are there any dogs kept on the islands?—A. No, sir.

Q. You made an elaborate report to the Government of your visit and your observations and conclusions there?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you affirm that report to be correct?—A. I do, sir. I am ready to substantiate every statement in it. Every statement I made there, I am ready to re-affirm under oath.

Q. What is the character of the waters about those islands, dangerous or otherwise?—A. Exceedingly hazardous for a sailing-vessel and very far from comfortable for a good steamer. There are no harbors, nothing but roadsteads, and when the wind blows from the north and east the vessel has to lie on the south side of the island, quite close up in order to avoid the swell coming around from the two points, for it is only a little island twelve miles long by four wide; and the minute the wind hauls the steamer has to go around.

Q. It is a foggy region, is it not?—A. Yes, sir; the sun shines about one day in twenty during the summer.

Q. What is the effect of killing one hundred thousand male seals per annum? Does it tend in any way to decrease or diminish the number of seals.—A. As I have before stated, it does not.

Q. Are the female seals ever disturbed either on the breeding grounds or elsewhere?—A. No, sir, they are not, nor have they been for the last fifteen years.

Q. What are the known natural enemies with which the seals have to contend, and what influence will those enemies have on the increase or decrease of the seals?—A. I have answered the first part of that question. In regard to their influence on the increase or decrease of the seals, I think they have the effect of maintaining the equilibrium, so to speak, of seal-life on the islands; that is, they keep it at its maximum in a state of nature.

Q. Have we any guarantee that these seals will return without fail every year to the hauling or breeding grounds?—A. No, sir; we have not. They can be driven off; and, moreover, we know from certain experiments instituted early by the Russians, by cutting off the ears of

the young animals taken on St. Paul, and finding them two or three years afterward on St. George, that they do not necessarily return to the same place; and it is not improbable that if the same careful scrutiny could be exercised on the Russian Islands, the same would be found true there. I am not certain that they return infallibly every year to the place of their birth. I am inclined to think that they only return from an instinctive sense of the fitness of the whole land, and that they have no special regard for certain particular places.

Q. What constitutes the Pribylov group?—A. The Pribylov group consists of the main islands of St. George and St. Paul; St. Paul being twenty-seven miles, in an air-line, northwest from the western point of St. George. There are no islets or rocks around St. George; it is a clean, bluff coast, with a very small area fit for the landing of seals. St. Paul has an islet known as Otter Island, or rather islet, about a mile in length and half a mile in width, bold and bluff, lying within six miles south and southwest of the reef-point on St. Paul. There is also another little islet known as Walrus Island, six miles to the southward and eastward of the northeast point of St. Paul. Then there is a tiny rock close up to the reef-point of St. Paul, not a pistol-shot from the shore. These constitute the Pribylov group leased to the Alaska Commercial Company according to the law of 1870.

of the Treasury should have some provision made by which he could purchase coal so that he could have it sent up to Oonalaska as a reserve. At present he has theoretical control, but he is practically powerless.

Q. What is the derivation of the natives of the Pribylov Islands?—

A. They are derived originally from the Aleuts of Oonalaska, and some half-breed Russians, and also some full-blooded Russians, mostly Siberians, taken over there in 1786, or 1787, by the different trading companies, and carried backward and forward for a number of years, and then, when the islands were turned over to the Russian American Company, they colonized them, as it were, with about 137 of these Aleuts and half-breeds, and from them the present native race is descended; but it is proper to say that to-day not over one-third of the people on the islands were born there.

Q. How do they live?—A. They live very much as our colored people do. They are pious, docile, amiable, and they have a certain amount of independence, and a very fair share of intelligence. The men nearly all of them read and write. They nearly all talk the Russian language. Their own language is the Aleutian, in which they converse the major portion of the time. They are living, at present, each family in a frame house about 20 by 11, divided off into a couple of rooms, with an outside hall in which they keep their fuel and supplies. The house is warmly sealed, and divided into a living-room and a bed-room. The families average about three or four persons. There are some sixty-two families on Saint Paul, and about eighteen or twenty on Saint George.

Q. Have those people given any expression in regard to their own views as to their condition under the terms of the present contract? Can they express an opinion other than through the agents of the Government and those of the company?—A. Yes, sir; as I have said before, they annually write to their bishop, through their priest, or directly themselves, their views, and on his files at San Francisco you will find their letters on record.

Q. How are they controlled and directed in regard to their service?—A. That, I believe, I have explained, that it is done entirely by their own volition, under rules of their own making.