RUSSIAN AMERICA.

BY OTTO STROLINERI. The discovery and early history of the Russian Possessions in America, until the late action of Congress, attracted but little attention; but with a prespect of its becoming a part of our national domain, every fact connected with It becomes interesting. The object of this paper is not to describe the country as it at present exists, but to go back to the beginning and show how it was discovered, and by whom. Our chief sources of information are found in "An Account of the Russian Discoveries between Asia and America," by the Rev. William Coxe; and "A History of Russian Discoveries," by Gerard Frederick Müller, written in German, but translated into French and English; and both of these works as quoted by English; and both of these works as quoted by Captain James Burney, of the British Navy, in his "Chronological History of Northeastern Voyages of Discovery, and of the Early Eastern Navigations of the Russians," published in London in 1819. We are indebted also to the "Voyage Round the World," by Otto von Kotzebue, of the Russian Navy.

The desire to discover a northeast passage from Europe to Asia was early expressed by the Russians; and this desire was very natural, first, on account of the benefit that would accrue to that empire from an easy passage round their coasts from the European to the Indian ocean; and, secondly, on account of the greater facilities possessed by them. especially the inhabitants of Siberia, and from their being inured to the hardships of an

As early as 1558 the Czars of Muscovy assumed the title of Lords of Siberia, including all the northern portions of Asia. The conquests of the Russians over the nations of Siberia and Tartary opened the way for the advance of venturers and fur hunters, and in the early part of the eighteenth century these Russian adventurers began to push their way eastward across the continent for the purposes of trade. These traders were called Promyschleni, and their great object was to gather up the rich furs which everywhere abounded, and the teeth of the sea-horse, which were in great demand. Forming themselves into independent companies, they gradually gained possession of the whole of Eastern Siberia.

It was not until the year 1646 that the first voyage was undertaken from the Asiatic coast, a company of Promyschleni, under the direction of a man named Isai Ignatiew. Without chart or compass they sailed from a port in the sea of Ochotsk, rounded the point of Kamtschatka, and passed towards the north. They disembarked on a point of land, placed their merchandise on the strand, and retreated; the natives then approached and took what they pleased, leaving in return sea-horse teeth, both whole and in carved pieces. The success of this voyage induced others, and in June, 1647, four vessels departed from the same port, on board of one of which we find the Cossack, Semoen Deschnew, who afterwards became famous as a voyager; but the ice proving too great an obstacle, the enterprise was abandoned.

The next year Deschnew ventured to make another attempt in behalf of the crown, and in 1648 a fleet of seven vessels sailed from the same port. Four of these vessels returned, but the other three continued on their course. The course of these vessels was along the coasts of Kamtschatka; but on account of their small size, when the wind was strong, driving the ice in towards the shore, they were com pelled to take refuge in the entrances to rivers and creeks, and could only proceed when the south wind drove the ice to sea again. Deschnew has left a journal of this voyage, which is preserved among the archives of the Russian Government at St. Petersburg, which was examined and a part published by Müller in his "Discoveries." is not necessary to enter into the particulars of this voyage, as their only discoveries were upon the Asiatic shore.

During the succeeding five or six years, Deschnew and another Russian named Duchail Staduchim made various voyages, but with little success worth recording. this time until 1697 little was accomplished in the way of discovery, but in that year Wolodimer Atlassow, a Cossack officer, headed an expedition under the direction of the Siberian government, for the purpose of conquering Kamtschatka for the Russian crown. This expedition was made overland. Near the coast they found villages of Russians, having formerly been in Kamtschatka. It was a kind of traditional report among the natives that strangers had arrived among them who had married women of the country and settled there. These were, no doubt, traces of the expeditions sent out early in the century.

Up to this time the Russian Government in Europe had taken but little interest in the affairs of this remote region; but after the beginning of the eighteenth century, Peter the Great sent directions to the Governor of Takutsk, the capital of Siberia, to prosecute the discovery of new lands in the Arctic Sea, but little seems to have resulted from this order. Passing by the numerous independent voyages undertaken during the next twenty years, which are devoid of special interest, we strike upon the name of one whose discoveries were highly important-Captain Vitus Bering, a Dane by birth, but in the service of the Russian Czar. Towards the close of the reign of Peter the Great, the question which had eagerly engaged the attention of navigators, whether the continents of Asia and America were united or separated by water, again arose. In order to ascertain this point, Peter, who entered warmly into the question, drew up with his own hands a set of instructions, which he delivered to Captain Bering, who assumed the command of the projected expedition. But the first attempt was unsuccessful, one of the vessels employed being disabled by the ice, and the other was never heard of after her departure. It was only a few days after the departure of Captain Bering that the Czar died. The instructions which he drew up for this expedi tion were included under these three heads:

1. To construct at Kamtschatka, or other

commodious places, one or two vessels. 2. With them to examine the coasts to the north and towards the northeast, to see whether they were not contiguous to America. 3. To see whether there was any harbor belonging to Europeans in those parts, and to keep an exact journal of all that should be discovered.

In 1728, Captain Bering started on another voyage, with two vessels built on the Bay of Okutzk; one was called the Fortunata, the other the Gabriel. They sailed on the 14th of July, and in September arrived in the river of Kamtschatka. From the fact that the coast of Asia, in the most northern part of this discovery, trended towards the west, Captain Bering came to the conclusion that the continents of Asia and America were certainly separated by water. Neither in going nor returning did he catch even a glimpse of the

American shore. While this expedition was in the Northern

Eeas, another was started by the Russian Government, under the command of Colonel Schestakow. A part of the plan was the same with that of Captain Bering, namely, to discover the American coast. On his arrival at Ochotek, he found the vessels Fortunata and Gabriel, lately returned from the expedi-tion under Captain Bering. Placing his men on board these vessels, he set sail; but shortly after leaving Ochotsk the Fortunata was driven on shore a hopeless wreck. Schesta-kow, who escaped with one hundred and fifty men, proceeded towards the North by land, but, in a skirmish with the natives, he was killed by an arrow, and his men routed. Three days previous to this event, Schestakow had despatched a messenger to one of the Russian settlements in the South, to a Cossack officer named Krupischew, directing him to equip a vessel, and sail northward along the coast of Kamtschatka. Schestakow associated with him in this enterprise a Russian named Gwosdew, and, having repaired the wreck of the Fortu-nata, set sail. To these two men is due the honor of first discovering the northwest coast of America. When in latitude 65 deg. 67 min. north, they came upon an unknown shore opposite to Asia, which they found inhabited, but could hold no intercourse with the natives for lack of an interpreter. This, therefore, was the first sight of the continent in the northwest by Europeans.

The discovery, when it became known at St. Petersburg, caused a great sensation. Bering and other officers engaged in the discovery were promoted, and various plans were formed for new expeditions. The Academy of Sciences was consulted, and men eminent for science were appointed to proceed to the New World. The persons thus chosen were denominated La Societé des Savans, Mil-ler, to whom we are indebted for much of the information in this paper, was one of the corps, and the province undertaken by him was to write a civil history of Siberia, to describe the manners and customs of the inhabitants, to search for and examine records, to describe the antiquities, and also to write a history of the expeditions undertaken. The members of this expedition were long delayed after their arrival at Ochotsk; but at last, in September, 1740, set out in two vessels called respectively the St. Peter and the St. Paul, under the command of Captain Bering; but owing to the heavy ice, they were obliged to winter in Awatcka Bay, on the coast of Kamts-schatka, and it was not till June, 1741, that they really directed their course towards the American continent. On the 4th of the month they were in latitude 46 deg. N.; but not finding the expected land, Bering directed the course northeast to latitude 50 deg. N., and then east. On the 20th the ships parted com-pany. Captain Bering, in the St. Paul, cruised near the spot for several days, hoping to fall in with his consort, but at length determined to advance alone. On the 15th of July they caught an indistinct glimpse of the land; on the 18th the low coast line of the American continent showed itself before them in latitude 60 deg. N. Far inland they saw the snow-capped summit of a lofty mountain, to which they gave the name of Mount St. Elias, and a projecting point of the coast they named Cape St. Elias; another cape to the westward they called St. Hermogenes; the bay lying between these two points has been called Prince William One armed boat was sent to examine the bay, and another to seek fresh water. Among the islands that studded the bay they found a secure anchorage in very deep water. Upon the shore were discovered a number of cabins built of smooth boards; and in one which they entered they found pieces of cordage, a whetstone, upon which copper instruments had been sharpened, an arrow, some articles of household furniture, a hollow ball of baked clay, in which a stone rattled, and which was probably a toy for children; and, in the cellar, some dried salmon; but the inhabitants had all taken flight upon

their approach. Captain Bering did not think it advisable to enter the bay with his vessel, but, having procured a fresh supply of water, he proceeded up the coast, and towards the end of August found himself among a cluster of islands now known by the name of the Aleutian group. At one of these islands they were approached by some boats filled with natives, but they would not trust themselves on board. During the next two months the St. Paul cruised among these islands, the crew suffering the most intense anguish from sourvy and exposure, until at last, through the exhaustion of the crew, the vessel was stranded. And to complete their misery, Captain Bering, who had been for some time sick, having been carried ashore, after a few days expired.

During the winter thirty out of the crew of seventy died on the same island. The remainder, from the materials of the St. Paul. constructed a frail vessel, and on the 27th of August, after a tedious voyage, anchored in Awatehka Bay.

We will not dwell longer on these early discoveries of the Russians, but step across thirty-six years, and glance at a voyage of the celebrated Captain Cook in these waters. In July, 1776, he left England, having two ships under his command, the Resolution, commanded by himself, and the Discovery, commanded by Captain Charles Clerke. December of this year they sailed from Society Islands on their voyage, and on the 18th of January, 1777, discovered that since celebrated group of islands, to which were given the name of the Sandwich Islands; and on the 7th of March, in latitude 44 deg. 30 min. north, they sighted the American continent, but soon lost sight of it again. After being driven out to sea by adverse winds, they again made land in latitude 49 deg. 28 min. north, and on the 22d entered a sound of deep, placid water, where they were soon surrounded by the hoats of the natives. This sound was called by the inhabitants Nootka Sound. The natives were of short stature, armed with pikes pointed with bone and iron, and bows and arrows. Their language was harsh and difficult of utterance. The shore appeared to be studded with their villages. The men were eager to exchange their furs for the beads and trinkets offered them.

On the 25th of May, they left the sound and proceeded towards the north, to discover, if possible, the northwest passage. On the 4th of June they came in sight of Mount St. Elias, which they mistook for an island, no other land being in view. This mountain is the continuation tinuation of the Sierra Nevada range of California, and rises to the height of more than 17,000 feet above the sea. Upon the 25th, they found themselves surrounded by rocky islands, which proved to be the Aleutian Islands. From this time until September they were coasting the shores of America, going as

far north as latitude 70 deg. 30 min. Soon after this voyage of Captain Cook, the Empress Catharine II of Russia planued au expedition for making northern discoveries, which was placed under the command of Cap tain Joseph Billings, Captain Billings re ceived his instructions in the autumn of 1785, and in October sat out, having chosen his own officers, and been supplied with all necessary instruments, and with charts and journals of all former navigators from the year 1724.

—Northern Monthly and New Jersey Magasine.

Among the instructions which he received, showing the liberality and sense of justice of the empress, were the following:-"Such coasts and islands as you shall discover, and which cannot be disputed by and are not subject to any European power, you are, with the consent of the inhabitants (if any), to take possession of in the name of her imperial majesty." And still again: - "When you bring under Russian subjection newly discovered and independent nations or people, you are to observe the following directions:-As such people have most probably never been insulted by any Europeans, your first care must be to give them a good opinion of the Russians." This voyage of Billings accomplished little; but in 1790 we find him at the Aleutian Islands, protesting, in the name of his Government against the injustice and cruelty practised against the natives by the Promyschlenies who had subjugated them. The natives were held in the most abject slavery, and treated with the greatest barby these traders, so that it was calculated that, in the short space of fifteen years, in consequence of compulsory labor, exhausting efforts in hunting, the violation of all rights, insurrections, and the per-petual anguish attending such evils, more than two-thirds of the inhabitants had perished. Captain Billings, in his protest, says:—"There is no name so dreadful to the natives as the eader of a gang of hunters. Immediately on their arrival they send the natives out on the chase, and then take by force the youngest and most handsome of the women for their companions." The journal of another officer says:—"When two different parties of hunters meet, they sometimes fight for the possession of the natives, and sometimes join in one company. The barbarity of these subduers to the crown of Russia is not to be described.17 Captain Burney writes: - "Russian for-hunters. trained in ferocious habits of robbing and destroying at their pleasure and with impunity, having the ready pretense, if pretense is ever thought necessary, of collecting tribute for their sovereign; men careless of justice or the welfare of others, yet esteeming themselves pious, and making lowly reverence at every turn to images or to crosses; these are the men who share the gains made by such barbarous usurpation, while the Government of Russia, by permitting a continuance of this progress of depopulation, not blindly, but with the evidence of its iniquity in their possession, are losers. What might palliate or be a reasonable motive for conquering the Americans is wholly wanting, the possession of one acre of American territory being no way necessary to the security of the Russian empire. The plain and efficient remedy for the evil in its present state is for the Russian Government to restore the remaining Aleutian Islanders and the conquered Americans to their independence, and to admit the subjects of Russia to have intercourse with them in future only on a footing of

equality and friendship." In 1797 this evil had become so great, and the overbearing of these free-traders so noto-rious, that the Emperor Paul of Russia interfered, and ordered the formation of a trading company to be called the "Russian-American Company," which was to supersede all the independent companies who had so long preyed upon the inhabitants. To this company was given the exclusive privilege of carrying on trade and forming settlements. Two directors appointed to administer its affairs were to reside at St. Petersburg, and be responsible to the Government and under its control. Through the energy of this company trade soon began to increase, until at last the sea otter, the great object of their trade, bad almost disappeared. The Com-pany, therefore, were compelled to extend their settlements further south, and in 1804 they established a colony upon the Island of Sitka. This island (or rather these three islands) is separated from the main-land by a narrow channel. The coast is intersected by many deep creeks, and the neighboring waters thickly shielded with little rocky islands, which are a protection against the storms, and present a strong wall of defense against the waves. The natives of Sitka were called by

the Russians Kalushes. A bold, enterprising man named Baronof was appointed superintendent of the Company's establishment. He immediately set to work to build dwelling-houses, make intrenchments, and propitiate the inhabitants. Having accomplished this, he left the colony, having confided the government to a few Russians and Aleutians. For a time things went on swimmingly; but suddenly, the garrison, believing itself to be in perfect safety, was attacked and murdered, with the excep tion of a few Aleutians, who were out in their boats. Baronof, hearing of the disaster, returned with three vessels, accompanied by the Russian man-of-war Neva, which happened to be in those waters, and the revolters, after a sharp conflict, were subdued. Baronof immediately commenced rebuilding and repairs, and gave as a name to the town New Archangel, which became the capital of the Russian Possessions in America.

The climate of Sitka is not a severe as might be expected from its latitude. In the middle of winter the cold is not excessive, and never lasts long. Agriculture, however, is not successful here. There is not, perhaps, in the world a spot where so much rain falls; a dry day is rare; and this itself would account for the failure of grain. The nature of the ground is, however, equally inimical to it.

There are no plains of any extent, the small valleys being everywhere surrounded by high, steep rocks of granite, and consequently overshadowed the greater part of the day. Some vegetables, such as cabbages, turnips, and potatoes, grow very well; the latter are raised even by the Kalushes, who have learned from the Russians the manner of cultivating them, and consider them a great delicacy. Upon the main-land the climate under the same latitude is said to be incomparably better than on the island of Sitka, although the cold is rather more severe. Great plains are there to be found where wheat can be profitably cultivated. The forests of Sitka, consisting principally of fir and beech, are lofty and thick. some of the trees are a hundred and sixty feet high, and from six to seven feet in diameter. From these noble trunks the Kalushes form their large canoes, which sometimes carry from

twenty to thirty men. Wild and unfruitful as the country appears, the soil is rich, so that its indigenous plants, of which there is no great variety, attain a very large growth. The sea near the coast, and the bays, abound in fish and in mammalia; of herring salmon, and cod there is a super-fluity. Captain Kotzebue, from whose journal the above is extracted, approaching New Archangel on the 23d of February, writes :- "The nearer we approached the land, the milder the weather became; and we were astonished, in so northern a country, to see the mountains at this season of the year entirely free from snow to a considerable height. Throughout the winter, which, however, has been peculiarly mild, the snow in many of the valleys had never lain above a few hours together. Here under 57 degrees north latitude the climate is much milder

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March 16, 1839, due July 1, 1864. June 27, 1839, due June 27, 1884.

January 23, 1840, due January 1, 1865.

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Full particulars will be given on application to either of the undersigned.

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PROPOSALS. INTROVEMENT OF THE DES MOINES RAPIDS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

U. S. ENGINEER'S OFFICE, DAVENPORT, IOWA, July 24, 1867.]

Sealed proposals, in duplicate, will be received at this office until 12 M., WEDNESDAY, September 4, 1867, for excavating she prism and constructing the embankment wall of the Call for the Improvement of the navigation of the Mississippi river at the Des Moines Rapids.

constructing the embankment wall of the half for the improvement of the navigation of the Mississippi river at the Des Moines Rapids.

The Canal is to be about 7½ (seven and one-half) miles long, extending from Nashville to Keokuk, lowa. The width at the water surface inside the canal to be 300 (three hundred) feet in embankment, and 250 (two hundred and fifty) feet in excavation, and in low water to be 5 (live) feet deep. All the material excavated from the prism of the canal to be used in building the embankment. The latter throughout the greater part of the distance will be about 300 (three hundred) feet from the Iowa shore. Where rock excavation occurs, the bottom of the canal will have slope of 1½ (one and one-half) inches to the mile. The embankment is to be built of earth clay and rock; to be 10 (ten) feet wide on top, including the rip-rap covering; to be 2 (two) leet above high-water mark, with slopes of 1½ (one and one-half) base to 1 (one) vertical. The average thickness of the rip-rap protection to be 2½ (two and one-half) feet on the river side, 2 (two) feet on the canal side, and 1 (one) foot on top.

All propositions must state the price at which each and every kind of work specified in the proposal is to be done, and no bid will be considered that is not definite in this respect.

The Government reserves the right to reject any and all bids.

A printed copy of this advertisement must be attached to each proposal.

Each bid must contain a written or printed guarantee signed by two responsible persons.

Blanks for proposals of the form required, with form of guarantee, will be furnished at this office on application.

The price or prices in the contract will be considered as including the expense of furnishing all the materials and performing all the work, according to the plans and specifications exhibited at the letting.

The entire cost of the canal is estimated at \$2,088,345 (two million sixty-eight thousand three hundred and forty-five). The amount appropriated by Congress is \$700,000 (seven

work done or materials furnished, at the contract price thereof, will be reserved until the whole work which is the subject of contract shall be entirely completed.

Persons desiring further information can obtain the same by calling at this office, where

ontain the same by calling at this office, where maps, plans, specifications, and form of contract can be consuited.

Proposals must be addressed to the undersigned, and should be endorsed "Proposals for work on the improvement of the Des Moines Rapids."

J. H. WILSON,

Lieut, Col. 35th Infantry,

7 30 4w Byt. Major-General U.S. Army.

DROPOSALS FOR A NEW JAIL. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR. WASHINGTON, D. C., July 31, 1867. Sealed proposals will be received at this Department until 12 o'clock M., on TUESDAY, the 17th of September, 1867, for the erection of the Jail in and for the District of Columbia, autho-

Jall in and for the District of Columbia, authorized and provided for by the act of Congress, approved July 25, 1866, and the joint resolution approved March 2, 1867.

The designs, detail, drawings, and specifications can be seen at the architect's office, in the eastern grounds of the Capitol, Washington city, every day, except Sundays, between the hours of 9 A. M. and 3 P. M.

Separate bids will be received for the masonry work, brick work, iron work, and carpentry work.

The contractor whose bid may be accepted

sonry work, brick work, iron work, and carpentry work.

The contractor whose bid may be accepted will be required to enter into a sufficient bond, to be approved by the Secretary of the Interior, for the faithful completion of his contract. Payments will be made as the work progresses, on estimates certified to by the architect; but twenty per centum of the estimates will be retained until the contract is completed.

The contract will be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder, but the Department reserves the right to reject any or all of the bids should it be deemed for the interest of the Government to do so.

The bids will be opened at noon on the 18th day of September next, in presence of such of the bidders as may choose to attend.

Proposals should be endorsed on the envelope 'Proposals for New Jail," and be directed to the "Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D. C."

O. H. BROWNING,

O. H. BROWNING, Secretary of the Interior.

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Agents are clearing from \$200 to \$300 per month, which we can prove to any doubting applicant. A few more can obtain agencies in territory yet unoccupled. Address

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WANTED-FOR THE U. S. MARINE Corps, able-bodied MEN. Recruits must be able-bodied, young, unmarried men. They will be employed in the Government Navy-yards and in Ships of War oh foreign stations. For further information apply to JAMES LEWIS,
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