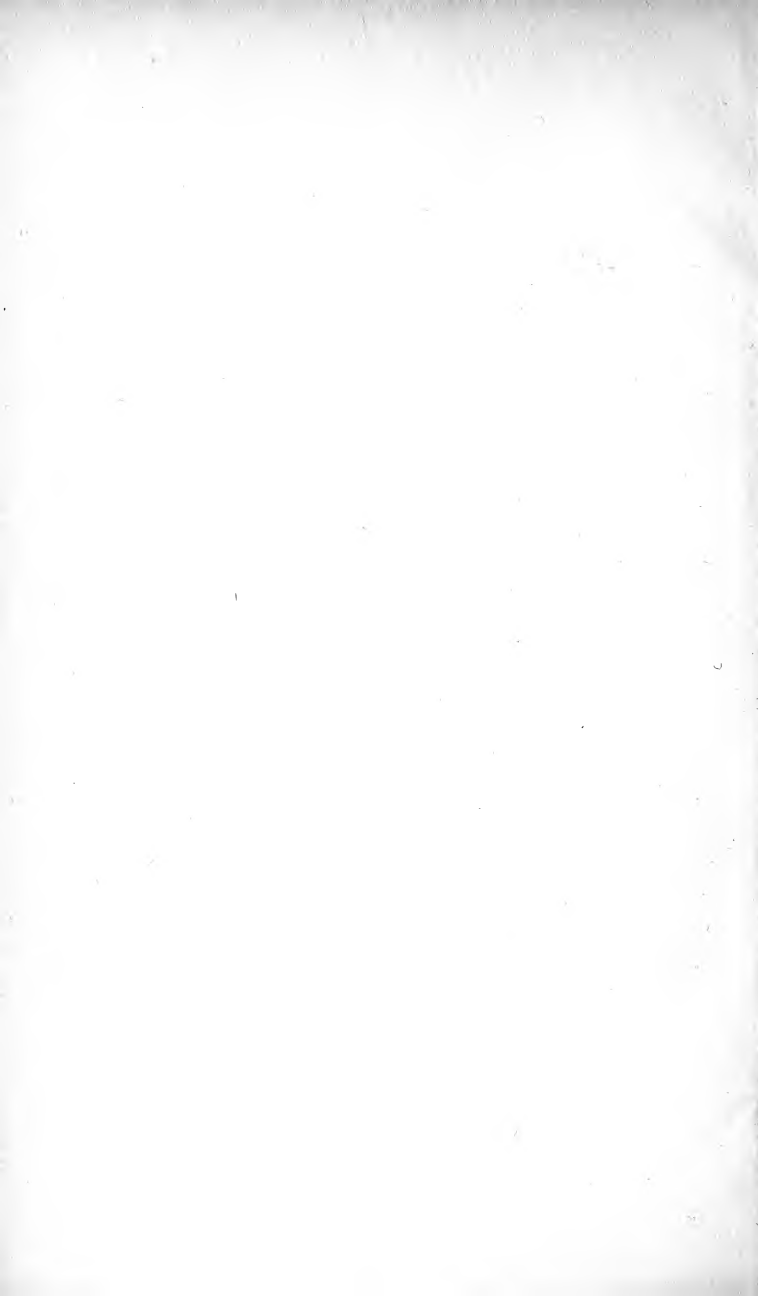


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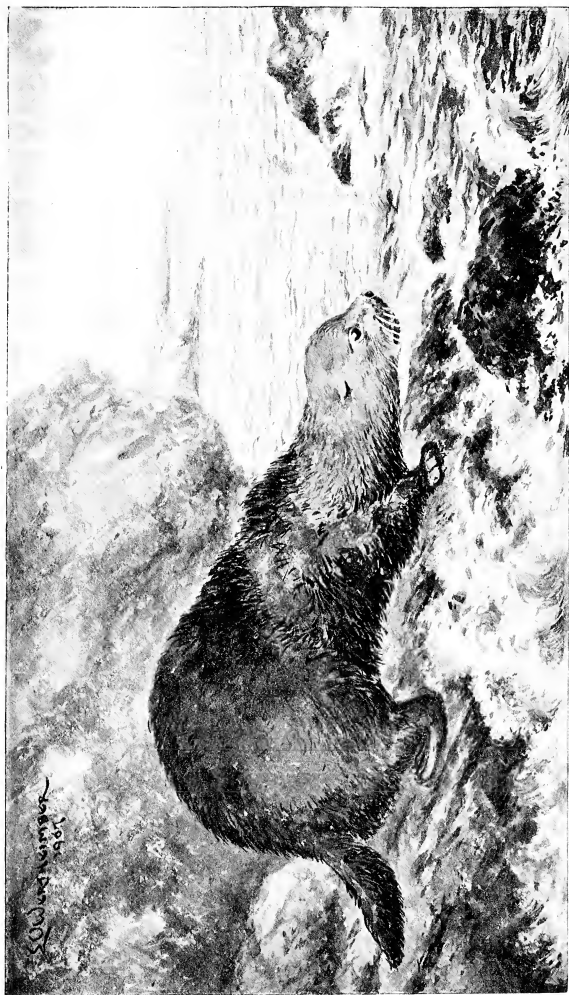




IN FORBIDDEN SEAS







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# IN FORBIDDEN SEAS

RECOLLECTIONS OF SEA-OTTER  
HUNTING IN THE KURILS

BY  
HENRY J. SNOW, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "NOTES ON THE KURIL ISLANDS"

ILLUSTRATED



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## PREFACE

THIS book is the result of the importunities of many friends, who for years past have urged me to write an account of my adventures in the little-known waters of the North-Western Pacific when hunting the sea-otter and the fur-seal.

I have hesitated so long before acceding to their request because I doubted my ability to write in a way that would interest the general reader of to-day, who, it appears to me, needs his reading matter dished up with highly spiced trimmings. Being of a somewhat unimaginative temperament, such writing is beyond me, and I have only attempted to set down in plain words what I have to say. Thus my little craft is launched to sink or swim as the fates decide.

The early chapters of the book deal with the sea-otter, its haunts, habits, and the methods of hunting it, with some account of the islands where it is found and the people inhabiting them. The information here embodied is the result mainly of my own observations, but is also derived in part from various other sources too numerous to mention in detail, my indebtedness to which I hereby gratefully acknowledge. The later chapters deal with personal adventures, experiences, and reminiscences, culled from my diaries, and cover a period of many years, during the

greater part of which hunting the sea-otter was my chief pursuit.

The illustrations are partly from photographs, and partly from sketches made under my own supervision.

Whilst on my many hunting trips to the Kuril Islands, I took occasion to make notes on their physical features, their fauna, flora, meteorology, etc. ; also to make a survey of nearly every island on the chain. The results were embodied in my "Notes on the Kuril Islands," one of the extra publications of the Royal Geographical Society, for which work I was honoured by the Society with the Back Grant and Diploma. My charts were accepted and published by the Admiralty, and are those now in use. The "Notes" have since been translated and published in Japanese by order of the Japanese Government. By permission of the Royal Geographical Society, I have made extensive use of them in the first two chapters.

Further adventures and experiences when in quest of the fur-seal, with an account of pelagic seal-hunting, await the reader should the present book prove to be of sufficient interest to warrant me in writing another on similar lines.

H. J. S.



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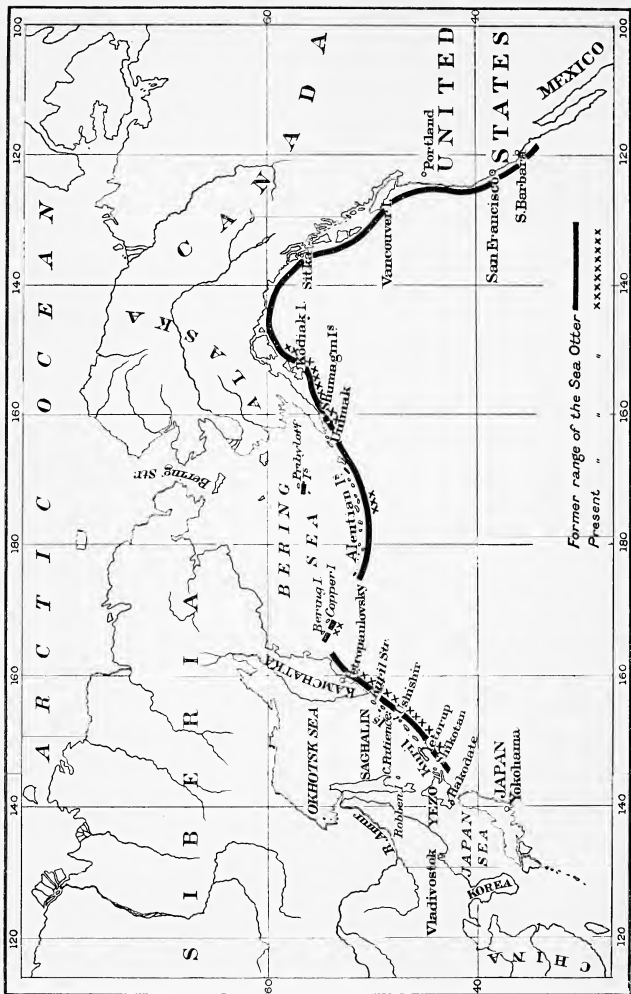
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SKETCH MAP SHEWING DISTRIBUTION OF THE SEA-OTTER.

# IN FORBIDDEN SEAS

## CHAPTER I

### THE KURIL ISLANDS

As this book will deal more particularly with sea-otter hunting and adventures among the Kuril Islands, I will begin by giving a short account of those islands, for they lie in a part of the world so little known and frequented that the vast majority of people have little or no idea where they are situated.

The Kuril Islands form the eastern boundary of the Sea of Okotsk, and extend in almost a straight line in a north-east direction from the east coast of Yezo to the southern extremity of Kamchatka, a distance of about 630 geographical miles. Their total area is 2,788 geographical square miles. Shikotan and the small group of islands lying off the easternmost point of Yezo can hardly be said to belong to the Kuril Chain. The spelling of the names of the islands will be found to vary on different maps. I have adopted that used on the British Admiralty charts of 1897.

All the islands, with the exception of Shumshir, are mountainous and of volcanic origin. Active, dormant, or extinct volcanoes are found on every

island, with the one exception mentioned. They range in height from 1,360 feet (Ushishir) to 7,640 feet (Alaid). Steam issues from the craters of at least twenty of these volcanoes, including no fewer than five on Yetorup. I have seen three of these volcanoes—one on the north-east end of Yetorup, in May, 1883; one on the Black Brothers, in June, 1879; and another on Simushir, in September, 1881—in violent eruption, and sending forth clouds of black smoke, rocks, and ashes, to a great height, accompanied by thundering noises which could be heard fifty miles or more away. Two others—Matau and Chirinkotan—I have seen slightly eruptive, the red-hot lava simply welling over the crater lips, and running in small streams down the sides of the mountains.

On one of my visits to the islands in June, 1879, I witnessed the formation of a new point of land at the Black Brothers. This was effected by a most remarkable, slow, and gradual upheaval of the southern slope of the mountain, close to the sea. It was as if some gigantic mole were at work burrowing beneath, and forcing up the rocky matter with his back. This gradual raising went on under my very eyes, masses of black volcanic rock being pushed up from below, which at short intervals rolled down the slope and fell, crashing and splashing, into the sea. Watching an opportunity, I pulled my boat alongside this recently erupted rock, and found it quite hot, the heat, however, not being more than the hand could bear. From all parts of the newly-formed point smoke or steam was issuing. Notwithstanding a recent violent eruption from the crater, and this gentler one from the base of the mountain,

innumerable guillemots, gulls, shags, and other birds, were located on the ledges of the cliffs, laying their eggs close to the disturbed portion of the island. At each thundering and splashing noise made by the masses of rock rolling down clouds of these birds would fly screaming off, to return and settle again a few minutes later.

How long this slow upheaval lasted I am unable to say. It was going on during the three or four days I remained around the islands, and, judging from the distance to which the point was extended, and the quantity and height of the mass, I should say it must have continued at least for some weeks.

Hot springs are found on most of the islands. On the western side of Rashau, about three and a half miles from South Cape, is a spring of warm water with a temperature of  $111^{\circ}$  F. It emerges from the base of some high cliffs, and runs over a ledge of flat rocks in which are several crevices and hollows about as large as a good-sized bath-tub. These hollows are always full of hot water, and make capital bathing-places, but I never saw or heard of the spring being used by the natives who lived on the island. The water is clear, tasteless, and odourless, and does not discolour the rocks over which it flows.

Kunashir has boiling springs, and on Yetorup there are a number of hot springs, some of which are resorted to by the inhabitants for the cure of skin diseases, rheumatism, etc. Ushishir has a boiling spring inside the crater, on the south-eastern side. Here, at the base of the hills, the ground widens out into a flattish area, on which a bank of sulphurous earth has been formed; through this bank fumaroles emit steam, bright yellow, flourlike sulphur being

deposited around the orifices. Close by this, and only a few feet above sea-level, are the springs of boiling mud and water. The hot water flows in a small stream into the basin of the crater. The water, as may be imagined, smells and tastes strongly of sulphur.

Ushishir, although one of the smallest islands of the group, is exceptionally interesting, partly on account of its formation, and also for the marvellous number of birds which resort to it during the summer season. It is separated into two parts, joined by a bouldery reef. The northern portion is flattish on top, grass-grown, and about a mile in extent. The southern part, which is rather more than a mile in diameter, is a hollow volcanic crater which has been breached on its south side, giving access to the sea. The outer entrance to this crater is between high perpendicular cliffs of rock on the west side, and a lofty dome-shaped rock, some rocky cliffs, and a ridge of sandy and pumiceous hills, on the east side.

A short distance inside the points two low bouldery spits run out, one from each side, and approach each other to within about 20 yards. Still farther in is another spit, extending from the eastern side, and reaching nearly across to the western side of the crater. On this spit there is a narrow but lofty peaked ridge, mostly overgrown with grass. Between the inner and outer spits the water is shallow, with a sandy bottom, there being only sufficient depth for a boat to pass in. Through the openings the sea flows in and out with the rise and fall of the tide. Beyond the second spit extends a perfectly land-locked circular basin, the lips of which are from 500 feet to nearly 1,400 feet above

the surface. The depth of water inside the crater, so far as I sounded it, ranged from 5 to 23 fathoms. Near the centre of the basin are two rocky grass-covered islets. The western walls of this crater, mostly of hard rock, are the highest and steepest, reaching to a height of 1,360 feet in one place.

From this side the crater-lip gradually slopes round to the northern side, where it appears to be formed of pumiceous earth, and is about 800 feet high. Continuing round to the east and south-east, the crater walls become narrow and lower, until they are not more than 500 feet in height. There is a narrow beach all round the basin. It is only on the northern and eastern sides that it is possible to scale the walls of the crater. From inside the basin the outer ocean is not visible. The water is as smooth as a mill-pond, and covered with countless numbers of sea-fowl, which make this island their breeding-place. On a fine day here, shut in by the lofty walls of the crater, the clouds of steam quietly rising from the fumaroles and springs, the blue sky visible above, and against it myriads of birds ceaselessly sailing to and fro in silent flight, with no apparent object but the enjoyment of the exercise, the scene is most impressive. So much soundless motion, however, soon becomes burdensome, and one longs for the roar of the surf or something else to relieve the monotony.

This place is a veritable paradise for birds. There are no foxes or other land animals—the principal reason why so many birds abound. The burgo-master gull (*Larus glaucus*) makes its nest more or less all over the islands, around the hot spring and on the bank of sulphurous earth being favourite

spots. Here I have often taken the eggs, and cooked them in the boiling water of the springs. On the ledges of the rocks and cliffs tens of thousands of guillemots (*Uria troile* and *U. brunnichi*) lay their eggs and rear their young, whilst here and there amongst them are large colonies of kittiwake gulls (*Rissa tridactyla*), with their nests perched on inaccessible shelves and in little hollows of the cliffs.

Hundreds of thousands of fulmars (*Fulmarus pacificus*) occupy every available grassy tussock and ledge on the steep sides of the island, both inside and outside the crater, whilst millions of little auks of several species (*Phaleris cristatella* and *P. mystacea* being the most numerous) lay their eggs in the hollows and crannies of every nook, and beneath every boulder, all round the island.

Towards evening these little auks take their flying exercise. They gather in flocks of many thousands, and hundreds of these flocks will be in the air at one time, forming clouds which almost darken the atmosphere. They fly round and about the island, now rising high above the mountain, and then sweeping down with a great rush towards the water—to rise again and swerve off, and pass and repass each other, each flock as one bird, as if they were going through the intricate figures of a quadrille.

The guillemots, often accompanied by puffins, also take their evening exercise, but in a much quieter manner, theirs being a steady flight round and round the island in an endless line or band. All the birds that take this apparently regular exercise are confined to those species with comparatively heavy bodies and short wings.



Tufted puffins, black guillemots, and shags, also breed here in large numbers. Horned puffins, parrot-billed auks, grey-headed auks, fork-tailed petrels, and Leach's petrels, are common, but not numerous. Harlequin ducks are plentiful, but I never have been able to find their eggs. Wild-geese (*Bernicla hutchinsi*) in limited numbers breed here also. The land birds are confined to ravens, falcons, wagtails, and wrens.

Earthquake shocks are frequent all along the Kuril chain of islands. I have experienced them on shore and on board ship, both when at anchor and when under way. Perhaps, when a shock is felt on board a ship that is under way, the disturbance causing it is more likely to be a submarine eruption than an earthquake. When, however, a vessel is lying at anchor, she is attached to the earth by her anchors and cables, and an earthquake is communicated to the vessel through them.

On July 12, 1884, when sailing along the islands, about four miles to the westward of the Srednoi Rocks, we felt the effects of a series of earthquake shocks, or more probably the commotion caused by a submarine eruption. About five o'clock p.m., when in my cabin, a noise like the running out of a line over a vessel's rail was heard. I thought a cast of the lead was being taken, as a thick fog prevailed at the time, and took no further notice. Some little time afterwards the same kind of sound again occurred, but much louder. On making inquiries on deck, I found that no one had noticed it. About six o'clock we were sitting down to our evening meal, when a violent trembling of the vessel, accompanied by a sound like steam blowing off from a boiler, took

place. All hands rushed on deck, thinking the vessel had run on a reef; but all was quiet and as usual, the schooner slowly forging ahead with a very light south-south-east breeze. Several casts of the lead were taken, but no bottom found with all the line out. This same rushing noise and trembling of the vessel continued for nearly two hours at intervals of about fifteen minutes, each time lasting about thirty seconds. No disturbance of the sea was noticed, but on account of the fog our range of vision was very limited. The temperature of the sea remained normal (36° F.).

Although to those below the rushing noise like the blowing off of a steam boiler appeared to be very loud, those on deck could not hear it, notwithstanding the trembling of the vessel was equally perceptible there. The sound must therefore have been communicated through the water, and was undoubtedly due to a submarine disturbance of some kind. Some days after I visited the craters of Ushishir and Rashau, but they showed no signs of increased activity.

Lying as they do in the "roaring forties," and having a cold Arctic current (the Oyashiwo), whose average summer temperature is not more than 36° F., setting to the south-west along their coasts, with outside that, to the eastward, the warm Japan current (Kuroshiwo) setting in the opposite direction, the Kuril Islands cannot be expected to enjoy an ideal climate.

The spring is cold and boisterous, and large ice-fields, brought across the Okotsk Sea by north-westerly winds, beset the southernmost islands and the eastern coast of Yezo, and it is often well into

May before this ice clears off altogether. Fog prevails throughout the summer, the worst month in this respect being July. The autumn is the finest season of the year, when clear, bright, pleasant weather may be expected, with westerly winds. The winter is very cold, with a great deal of snow; indeed, the islands are never entirely free from snow, and it is well on into July before it is all melted on the lower portions of some of the islands.

Heavy gales are frequent, May being a particularly boisterous month. The currents setting along the coasts, and back and forth through the many straits, are strong and irregular, making navigation dangerous. Very heavy tide-rips are met with, mostly off the ends of the islands in the various straits. In some of these no boat could live, and a sailing-vessel, unless she has a strong breeze, is helpless, and unable to stem the currents, which at times run as much as from 5 to 6 knots an hour.

Fortunately, the islands generally are surrounded by deep water close in to their shores, and have but few off-lying dangers; further, immense fields of kelp grow about their rocky shores in from 5 to 20 fathoms of water, entirely surrounding some of the islands to a distance from the beach of a third of a mile or more. This kelp grows to lengths of 150 feet or more, and at slack water it is so thick that a boat has difficulty in getting through it. A vessel, therefore, on approaching the islands in foggy weather will usually have warning of the vicinity of the land before she is likely to strike anything. In addition to this, the initiated know of many other guides for navigating amongst these islands, so that, in spite of the fog, they can tell their whereabouts with tolerable accuracy.

Such indications are the roaring of the sea-lions on their rookeries,\* and their smell (which is often wafted off to the ship even if the animals are quiet), the sulphurous fumes from the volcanoes, the cries of the kittiwake gulls on certain points and cliffs, the flights of thousands of guillemots off others, and the presence of flocks of auks, puffins, fulmars, and other sea-birds, which are known to frequent certain localities or to be peculiar to certain islands. The presence of well-known tide-rips and many other peculiarities also serve to help the experienced man in determining the whereabouts of his vessel, and enable him to reach his destination.

I have often been amused at the state of trepidation old deep-water sailors have fallen into when, having shipped on board a hunting-vessel as mate or shipkeeper, they have visited the Kuril Islands for the first time, and seen the apparently reckless navigation of the vessel during thick fogs, stormy weather, and dark nights. I call to mind one case in particular. One evening, while lying in Roko Bay, near the south-west end of Yetorup, it came on to blow from the south-east. We had to get under way, as we were on a lee shore; but being desirous of holding on to the land, we resolved to beat out, run round the south-west end of the island, through the strait, and anchor under the lee of the land on the Okotsk side of the island, at a place called by the hunters "The Stake." By the time we had beaten out of the bay and could clear the point, it was blowing so hard that the sails had to be double-reefed. On clearing the south-west point the wind

\* The sea-lions, like the fur-seals, have their regular haunts, to which they return year after year.

had increased to a heavy gale, so we took in the mainsail, and ran before the wind through the strait under the double-reefed foresail alone.

It was now pitch-dark, but, knowing the coast well, we decided to skirt the rocky shore quite close, and make for the anchorage at "The Stake." With a reliable man at the wheel, and two of us lying out over the bows of the schooner in order to keep in sight the line of breakers (it was so dark the land could not be distinguished), word was passed aft how to steer. The distance we had to run was about eight miles, or a little more, which we were covering at a great rate; had we hit anything, the schooner would have certainly ripped her bottom out. Suddenly the line of breakers ceased, and we knew we had arrived at the point. The course was quickly altered, when we soon got into smooth water and out of the direct force of the gale. A mile or so farther up we sounded, and found we were in 8 fathoms of water, whereupon we brought the vessel to and anchored, not knowing exactly where, except that we were in smooth water, with the gale blowing as hard as ever over our heads, and occasionally sweeping down the mountain-side in "woollies" of hurricane force.

After anchoring and making things comfortable (about midnight), the shipkeeper, an old deep-water skipper, pulled himself together (he had been in a highly nervous state whilst we were running for the anchorage), and exclaimed: "Well, this kind of thing is more than I can stand. No wonder my hair is turning grey; it will be white before this trip is over." At daybreak we found we had anchored very near the place we had run for, but

within a hundred yards of the beach ; this, of course, was too close to be pleasant, so we shifted out, and a few hours later we had to leave, the wind hauling to the north-west, from which quarter it blew another gale. We then ran back to our first anchorage in Roko Bay, and lay there until the gale abated. Our object was accomplished : we had held on to the land, and so could go hunting as soon as the wind died out.

After a north-west gale there is almost always good hunting weather and smooth water. Had we been obliged to put to sea, the chances are we should not have been able to get near enough to the island again for many hours, and so have lost at least one good hunting day. I fancy that, had we met with an accident on such an occasion as I have described, and lost the vessel, no sympathy would have been bestowed on us by the members of a Court of Inquiry, who would condemn a risk which to them would savour almost of madness. I must confess, now that I am a great deal older, in looking back upon some of these ventures, if the same chances had to be taken again, I should make for the open sea and run the risk of losing a day's hunting.

The land animals found on the islands are bears, wolves, foxes, river-otters, martens, sables, hares, squirrels, rats, and lemmings. On the two southern islands, Kunashir and Yetorup, all the above are found except the lemming. They are identical with those found on the main island of Yezo. On the central islands the fox is the only land animal, so far as I know, though possibly the river-otter may exist on Urup. On the northern islands, Shumshir and Paramushir, there are bears, foxes, and lem-

mings. The bears (*Ursus arctos*) of the northern islands are identical with those of Kamchatka ; there appear to be two varieties—a black and a brown. The bear of the southern islands is of a different species ; Siebold in his “ Fauna Japonica ” calls it *U. ferox*. They were very numerous on both Kunashir and Yetorup in the early seventies, but are now comparatively scarce. The foxes of the central and northern islands are particularly fine, the red, silver, black, and cross, being among the varieties found.

Of marine mammals, the sea-otter (*Latax lutris*) and fur-seal (*Otaria ursina*) were the most important, but these have been nearly exterminated. The first-named is found all along the chain from Kuna-shir to Shumshir. Fur-seal rookeries existed on Srednoi, Raikoke, Mushir, and Makanruru—on the two latter very small ones. These have, however, been completely wiped out. Sea-lions (*Otaria stelleri*) are numerous ; there were eighteen large breeding rookeries of these animals on the islands, but even these comparatively valueless animals have been very much reduced in numbers. The black sea-lion (*Otaria gillespii*) also frequents the islands, but in small numbers ; whilst the Australian species is occasionally met with at sea, but I have never found any hauled out on the rocks. Hair-seals (*Phoca vitulina*) are plentiful ; whales, black fish, killers, and porpoises, are numerous in the waters adjacent to the islands. Birds are represented by about 170 species. In the spring and summer, the central islands more particularly are visited by vast numbers of auks, guillemots, puffins, fulmars, gulls, petrels, and other sea-birds, which resort to them for the purpose of nidification.

## CHAPTER II

### THE KURILSKY AINU

THE Kuril Islands were known to the Japanese certainly as far back as the fifteenth century, but they are not recorded as having been known to Europeans until discovered by De Vries, a Dutch navigator, in 1634.

The fact that all the Kuril Islands bear Ainu names tends to show, I think, that they were first known to, and visited by, that people. Indeed, there is ample evidence to show that such was the case. In the "Memoirs of the Literature College," Imperial University of Japan, No. I., by Professor B. H. Chamberlain, a catalogue of 465 books, chiefly Japanese, relating to Yezo and the Ainu is given. In a considerable number of these, reference is made to the Kuril Islands and their inhabitants; most, however, deal with the southern islands of the chain, although some give particulars of the central and northern islands previous to their discovery by De Vries in 1634. In order to visit the more northern Kurils the Ainu must have possessed at that time fairly substantial boats, or they could not very well have made the voyage, some of the straits being from thirty to forty miles wide, and all the risks arising from strong currents, heavy tide-rips, fog, and





KURILSKY AINU. NATIVES OF RASHAU.



KURILSKY AINU. "YURT."



stormy weather, having to be reckoned with in the crossing.

In 1654 a Russian merchant named Taras Stadukin sailed from the Kolyma River, down through Bering Strait, and along the coast of Kamchatka to its southernmost point, and so discovered the northern islands of the chain. In 1711 the Russians first invaded the islands, and by 1736 all those to the northward of Yetorup became subject to Russia. In 1766-67 a voyage was made amongst them to collect a fur tax, so it may be presumed that by that time they had been fairly well settled. In 1795 the Russian-American Company established a "factory" on Urup.

The northern and central islands were probably not permanently inhabited until years after their discovery by Stadukin, and it was only the quest of the sea-otter that then caused them to be settled. There was nothing else on or about them to induce anyone to settle in such cold, dreary, barren, and inhospitable places, more particularly when there was the choice of much better locations in Kamchatka to the north and Yezo to the south, in which places game, fish, fur-bearing animals, timber, and vegetation, abounded. The people placed by the Russians on these islands in those early days were chiefly Aleuts, as well as some natives of Southern Kamchatka, they being expert otter-hunters. As to when the Kurilsky Ainu first took to residing permanently on them there is no account. They appear to have kept apart to a great extent from the northern people; probably the Russians looked upon them as inferior beings.

It was not until towards the end of the eighteenth

century that the Japanese established themselves on Yetorup. In 1806-07 the Russians made descents on that island, and some fighting took place. In 1875 all the islands from Yetorup to Kamchatka were handed over to Japan in exchange for the southern part of Saghalin. Nine years later, in 1884, the Japanese Government collected together all the natives (between sixty and seventy) who were left on the former Russian islands, and located them in one settlement on the island of Shikotan, lying some thirty miles off the extreme east point of Yezo. The other natives who were there originally had chosen to remove to Russian territory, which left the islands between Yetorup and Kamchatka without a single inhabitant.

Some years afterwards Lieutenant Gunji, of the Japanese navy, organized a scheme to colonize these northern islands, and got together a party of emigrants for the purpose. The scheme was of a sensational and somewhat romantic character. It engaged attention just after Captain Fukushima, of the Japanese army, had made his sensational ride from Europe across Asia to Vladivostock, and the Japanese papers and public were full of the exploit. Gunji evidently thought it incumbent on a naval man to do something sensational also. The Japanese newspapers boomed the scheme for all it was worth. The emigrants were not to be taken up in an ordinary ship, but were to proceed all the way to their destination, distant some 1,300 miles, in open row-boats, coasting along the shores of Japan, and then make their way from island to island, until they reached Shumshir, the island nearest to Kamchatka.

It was a hare-brained enterprise, and doomed to

failure from the start. When the boats left Tokyo, big crowds with flags flying and bands playing gave them an enthusiastic send-off. But trouble arose before long, as well it might. Rough seas, sea-sickness, and general discomfort, soon knocked the enthusiasm out of most of the party. Some of the boats got as far as Nambu, I believe (about 400 miles from Tokyo by sea), though not without quarrels, accidents, and some loss of life. It ended in the Government sending the remnant up in a steamer, and they settled down in the old deserted villages on Shumshir, near the northern entrance of Little Kuril Strait. Later on some of the party were transferred to Shiashikotan, but one winter on those inhospitable shores was too much for them : all were found dead when the Government vessel called there the following spring. They are supposed to have died of inanition, so to speak. Some of those left on Shumshir also died.

It was not an uncommon end for Japanese in these cold climates. I have been told that in former years many Japanese who wintered in Saghalin succumbed in the same way. They remain in their huts day and night, mope, lose all energy, and gradually " peter out," dying of nothing in particular.

Gunji, who stayed on Shumshir, was an energetic worker. I was told he kept his people on the go at something or other all through the winter months, and so probably saved their lives. They made a poor showing, however. I met Gunji in Little Kuril Strait in June, 1893, and at that time they had not found out where to fish for cod even, although that fish abounded in the waters around the island. Gunji said they could catch no fish, and so were

hard up for food. I told him where he could catch boat-loads in a very short time, and since then they have done somewhat better, the catching of cod and other fish later becoming quite an industry with them.

Subsequently they made better progress. More settlers joined them, and one or two schooners were procured and used for hunting and fishing. This lasted until the war with Russia, when they made raids on the Kamchatka coast, losing their vessels and some of their people; while others, including Gunji himself, were taken prisoners. The Russians are reported to have made a raid on the Shumshir settlement, but whether this report is true or not I have not been able to ascertain. Anyhow, the Japanese Government took away all who were left, till the war was over.

Practically, the only islands of any value in the Kuril Chain are Kunashiri and Yetorup. The former has about 1,500, and the latter about 1,400, permanent inhabitants. Of these, about three-fourths are Japanese, the rest Ainu. During the fishing season, which lasts about six months, several hundred fishermen are brought to these islands and employed in the fishing industry. In the palmy days of the Russian-American Company, most of the northern and central islands must have been inhabited, as there are the remains of old villages on Shumshir, Paramushir, Onkotan, Kharimokotan, Shiashikotan, Matau, Rashau, Ushishir, Simushir, and Urup.

Having unwisely ventured to try a winter season's hunting in the vicinity of the Kurils, I had the misfortune, on December 4, 1874, to be wrecked on the east coast of Yetorup, near Onebets, where

we lived for twenty days in an Ainu hut. We then made our way through the snow across the island to the settlement of Furebetsu, on the north-west coast, where we were housed and most kindly cared for by the Japanese. There were no means of getting away from the island at that time of year; we had to remain at Furebetsu until nearly the end of May, when a Japanese Government steamer called in, and we were taken to Hakodate in her. During this enforced residence on Yetorup (which will be described more in detail in a later chapter), and on many subsequent occasions, I saw a great deal of the aboriginal Ainu of the islands. I have also had some experience of those inhabiting Yezo, Saghalin, and the northern Kurils.

The Yetorup natives were, and are still, nearly all employed by the Japanese fish-merchants. During the spring they take cod, later on salmon trout and salmon. The winter is chiefly occupied in wood-cutting.

The Ainu houses of Yetorup are similar to those of Yezo, being made of grass or reeds lashed upon a framework of wood. Sometimes slabs of bark are placed outside the grass. The roofs are high, of steep pitch, and thatched with grass. The windows are small, and closed generally by a board, and the entrance is closed by a mat. There is a firehole in the centre of the house, and the smoke escapes through a hole in the roof. On Yetorup I never met with Ainu occupying the half-underground dwellings, like those used by the natives of the islands farther north. The remains of these pit-dwellings are, however, very common.

The clothing of these Ainu consisted chiefly of

garments made of a cloth woven from bark fibre, like those used by the Yezo natives, and of moccasins reaching to the knee, made of salmon-skins. The Yetorup Ainu have no treasures, like old Japanese lacquered bowls, trays, tubs and boxes, etc., such as used to be seen in many native houses in Yezo. These natives, like those of Yezo, are a broad-shouldered, thickset, well-set-up, stalwart race, and, if washed and combed, might be counted handsome. Their shaggy heads and beards give them a wild appearance; but all idea of ferocity is at once dispelled on making their acquaintance, when one notes the gentle expression of their large, soft brown eyes, and their low, musical voices. Many of the girls are comely and attractive, having clear, fair skins, full European-looking eyes, well-formed limbs and bodies, and voices naturally softer and more musical than those of the men. Notwithstanding the hard life they lead, working just as hard as the men, they are brimful of fun and merriment.

The hairiness of the Ainu has, I think, been much exaggerated. As a rule the Ainu men have fine beards and moustaches, which they allow to grow to the fullest extent. They are also hairy about the body and limbs, but not more so than very many Europeans. The exaggerated idea of their hairiness is, no doubt, due to the contrast between them and the smooth-skinned, hairless Japanese and Chinese. As for the Ainu women, they are practically free from any abnormal growth of hair, and I have never seen amongst them any approach to the hirsute crop observable on the faces of many women of Southern Europe.





TYPES OF YEZO AND YETORUP AINU.



The Ainu are fast diminishing, and, although a project was set on foot some years ago by influential Japanese and foreigners to take means to try and preserve the race from extinction, there is, I am afraid, but little hope of success. Their habits, their helplessness and want of spirit, and their passion for strong liquor, tell against them, and, like all other savage people who come in contact with civilized races, they are doomed to disappear. Whatever may have been the case in the past, at the present day they have no energy or ambition. Little, if any, actual tyranny on the part of their Japanese masters is witnessed, yet there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to show that they have suffered harsh and cruel treatment. Practically leading the life of serfs, and taught to look upon themselves as beings altogether inferior to their Japanese conquerors, they have for hundreds of years been so cowed and crushed as to have lost all idea of resistance or independence, and helplessness and submissiveness have become hereditary. To-day the Ainu are the most docile, submissive, and spiritless people on the face of the earth. Strike an Ainu man, and the chances are he will burst into tears. I have seen this on more than one occasion, the chastisement being nothing more than a smart cuff with the open hand. They display a curious mixture of courage and timidity; they will not hesitate to attack a bear, but they have a mortal and instinctive fear of the Japanese. Witness their dread of offending the Japanese officials by giving information about themselves to Miss Bird, as recorded in her book, "Unbeaten Tracts in Japan." Even the northern Kurilsky Ainu, who were not subject to

Japan, were in terror of the Japanese, and I have known them hurriedly shift from one island to another on learning of their approach. This fear of their Japanese masters was much more apparent some twenty odd years ago than it is to-day. It was probably as causeless then as it is now, but there is little doubt that in the past it arose from cruelty and oppression. The Japanese Government has of late years done much to help the Ainu, but, unfortunately, there is too little inclination on their part to help themselves.

With no written language, the Ainu have but little history of their own. Practically they are without any stirring traditions to put and keep heart in them, few or no doughty deeds of their forefathers to emulate, and literally nothing to make them feel proud of their race. In other words, they have no patriotic spirit, and consequently nothing to encourage them to make an effort to continue to exist as a nation. Like the Blacks of Australia, their final extinction is all but certain. And yet it is a pity that such a sturdy and comely people, so much superior in physique to their Japanese rulers, should be effaced from the earth.

The Ainu are apparently a strong and healthy people, and one would think their numbers ought to increase; but the opposite is the case. The reasons for this are several. Epidemic diseases—like smallpox, for instance, when it once gets a hold—play sad havoc. Syphilis, introduced amongst them by the Japanese, and drink, play a not unimportant part in reducing their numbers. One other cause which tends largely to prevent their increase is, in my opinion, the fact that, wherever the Ainu live in

contact with Japanese, nearly all the young girls with any pretensions to good looks become concubines of Japanese. As such they often change their masters, and are not encouraged to bear children. After they have lost their freshness and are no longer attractive, they marry an Ainu husband, and the children of such unions, as may be supposed, are limited in number. So far as my observation extends, an Ainu girl prefers to become the mistress of a Japanese rather than the wife of one of her own people. A Japanese as a rule can house, feed, and clothe her better, besides providing her with many little luxuries which an Ainu husband could not possibly afford. The offspring of Japanese and Ainu marriages are not long-lived. It is said they usually die out in the second generation. This is probably true, for there is little, if any, trace of Ainu blood in the northern Japanese.

During my stay on Yetorup in 1875, the Japanese resident doctor informed me that when the Japanese first came to the island, about a hundred years before, some 1,500 Ainu lived there. They were a fine, strong, healthy lot of people living chiefly on bears, seals, sea-lions, sea-otters, and fish, the roots of several wild plants, berries, and sea-birds and their eggs, a plentiful supply of all these being easily obtained in their due seasons. From the advent of the Japanese their numbers gradually decreased, until at that time (1875) there were less than 450. He also informed me that about seventy years previously (1805), two Hitotsubashi Yakunin (Japanese officials) were sent to Yetorup to take up their quarters. These were the first officials to reside on the island. The first was stationed at Oito, but

later on at Shana, farther up on the north-west coast, where a sort of fort or castle was built. Forty years after this there was strife amongst the Ainu of the island, the northern natives fighting with the southerners, about some presents which had to be sent every year to the Ainu chief in Yezo. As recently as 1859 there were, according to his account, 1,200 natives on Yetorup. The Japanese appear to have established themselves on the island without opposition from the Ainu.

This account of the doctor's, in some respects, agrees with that given in Mr. W. G. Aston's paper, published in vol. i. of the Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, entitled "Russian Descents in Saghalin and Yetorup in 1806 and 1807," where I find: "At this time (1807) the Japanese colony (on Yetorup) was in a tolerably flourishing condition. It had been established more than ten years before, and had then a population of more than 1,000 Ainu, and 300 to 250 Japanese, including five women. Most of the Japanese were, however, soldiers garrisoned at Shana."

The reason of the Russian descents was to coerce the Japanese Government into agreeing to a commercial treaty with Russia, the Tycoon's Government having persistently refused all friendly overtures to that end, and ordered the Russian ships bearing a letter from the Czar to the Tycoon on this subject to quit the harbour of Nagasaki. This, together with the imprisoning of fourteen Russians, "who had landed on Yetorup in hopes of being allowed to trade," so irritated the Russians that reprisals, in the form of raids upon Yetorup and Saghalin, were undertaken. In one of these raids the castle

of Shana was captured and burnt, and the stores and treasures carried away, together with some prisoners. The two Russian ships were under the command of Lieutenant Chivostoff. The Japanese garrison made little or no resistance, and fled into the hills, where the officer in command committed *hara-kiri* to wipe out his disgrace.

The islands to the north-east of Yetorup, when under Russian rule, were more or less peopled with Ainu tribes, with whom were mixed a few Aleuts and natives of Southern Kamchatka. In 1878, when I first visited these northern members of the Kuril Chain, I found natives living on Urup, Ushishir, Rashau, and Shumshir. Previous to that time several more of the islands were inhabited. There are old villages containing from ten to thirty dwellings on Simushir, Matau, Kharimokotan, Shiashikotan, Onekotan, and Paramushir. Besides these, there are the remains of a few pit-dwellings, or *yurts*, on Ketoi, Ekarma, and Alaid. These, however, were probably only used by hunting-parties from the larger settlements, and were not permanently occupied. When the exchange of these islands for Southern Saghalin took place, those natives who wished to remain Russian subjects were removed to Russian territory; those who elected to remain on the islands in their old homes became subject to Japan.

All these northern natives, besides their own language—an Ainu dialect said to be similar to that of the Saghalin Ainu—spoke Russian more or less fluently, and were professedly Christians belonging to the Greek Church. Russian priests now and then visited them, and on Shumshir, at the village of Mairuppo, stood a church built of pine boards

brought from America. At this village there was in 1878 a storehouse built of wood. It contained several rooms, and was heated by a Russian brick oven built in the middle of the house. There was an upper story with a veranda in front, on which a flagstaff was set up, the building in the prosperous days of the place evidently being the official residence.

The most important settlements on the northern Kurils were at Port Tavano, Urup; Uratman, in Broughton Bay, Simushir; and the above-mentioned Mairuppo, on Shumshir. At each of these, besides the score or so of half-underground dwellings, were a church and a substantial wooden building, used in former years as a store and residence by the agents of the fur company. Nearly all traces of these buildings have now disappeared.

For some years previous to 1878 the natives depended on the visit of the Russian steamer under contract with the Russian Government, carrying mails and stores to the Kamchatka settlements, for their scanty supplies of luxuries and necessities. This vessel called once a year at some of the islands, and traded off guns, powder, lead, guncaps, tobacco, tea, sugar, knives, etc., for the peltries (sea-otter skins and foxskins) secured during the year. The catches became so small, however, that it no longer paid the steamer to call at any other place than Mairuppo on Shumshir, in Little Kuril Strait, that place being on the direct route to Kamchatka, and not taking her out of her way.

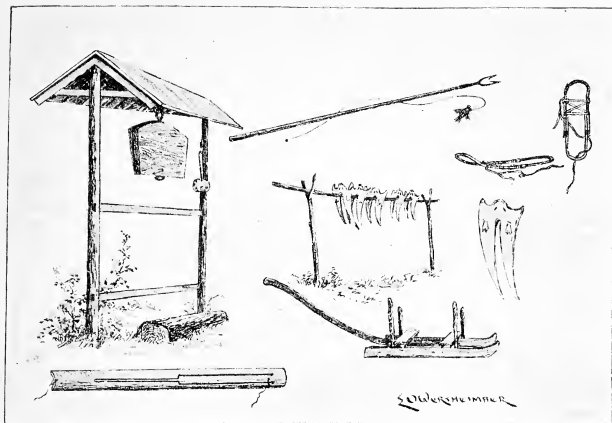
These poor natives were very hard pushed at times for food, particularly in the winter, and when they had used up all their ammunition. A visit



from an otter-hunting craft was therefore a godsend, as it gave them an opportunity of obtaining a supply of what they most needed. For a couple of pounds of powder, a box of caps, some lead, and a couple of pounds of tobacco, one could get a fine sea-otter skin, and for a foxskin a plug of tobacco was the usual exchange. However, they always got something else. At the end of the season we used to make a point of calling at their islands and giving them all our old clothing, as well as a supply of sugar, matches, tea, biscuit, and any other little luxuries we could spare. The women always begged for needles, thread, and soap, but I must say I never saw them use the latter article.

Some of these Kurilsky Ainu were similar in appearance to their confrères on Yetorup and Yezo. Others were evidently of mixed blood ; they were less hairy, had smaller eyes, and the open lips and " blubbery " appearance of some of the Kamchatkan tribes. Besides their uncleanness, their fondness for strong drink, their fear of the Japanese, and their language, they had hardly anything in common with their brethren of the south. Their clothing, dwellings, weapons, etc., were all different, no doubt due to the fact that the materials differed from those used by the southern Ainu. Their old Ainu customs were in all probability abandoned at the instigation of the Russian priests when they became converted. I never saw with them the carved wooden knife-sheaths and household utensils, and the peculiar salmon spear or gaff, as used by the southern Ainu ; nor did I ever witness any bear-feasts or dances, or the custom of raising the moustache with a stick when drinking, so universal in the south.

The dwellings of these people were constructed by hollowing out a shallow pit, usually in a sandy soil, planting posts around it, and, if they could be got, an inside lining of boards. Poles were laid across the top, forming a flat roof, and more poles again laid at an angle from the edge of the roof, so as to give the sides a sharp slope. The whole was then covered with reeds or grass, on which were placed earth and turf. The entrance was closed by a roughly-made wooden door, which opened into a small lobby and low, narrow passage, with another door opening into the main compartment. Around the sides of this, bunklike recesses were constructed under the lean-to side-walls. These were thickly strewn with dried grass, and used as sleeping-places. Sometimes these dwellings consisted of two or three rooms, each one being separated by a short, low, narrow passage, with a door at each end. These larger houses are found more particularly on Shumshir, where the natives were much better off than those of the central Kurils. In the house of the chief man on Shumshir, which was one of three rooms, I saw plates, cups, and saucers, and was invited to take some tea—an almost unheard-of luxury with the natives of Ushishir and Rashau, etc. Rough tables, seats, and shelves, were fitted up inside the better houses, and each house had a kind of small altar, on which was placed a brilliantly coloured picture of Our Lord and the Virgin Mary, and in some a picture of the Czar. Their worldly possessions were very limited; some pots and pans, a few tools, a knife or two, an old muzzle-loading rifle, and a few odds and ends, completed their outfit. Some of them had dogs, and



SOME YETORUP AINU IMPLEMENTS.



KURILSKY AINU BOAT.



there were usually at each settlement a couple or more boats, which appeared to be common property. Even amongst these poor people there were different grades, certain families taking precedence of others.

The food of these people consisted of the flesh of the seal, sea-lion, sea-otter, sea-fowl and their eggs, berries, a few roots, and fish. They did not, however, appear to be large eaters of the last-named. Food was plentiful during the summer, but, being [improvident and very lazy, they were often hard pushed during the winter and spring, sometimes having to subsist on the few limpets and mussels they could gather around the rocks on the beach. This usually happened when the weather was too cold and boisterous to get about, or when they had used up all their ammunition. The flesh of the sea-otter, which is very rank to a civilized palate, was their favourite food. The intestines of the animal, put into a saucepan just as they were taken from the carcass, without any attempt at cleaning, and stewed, were considered a great delicacy. Like all the rest of the northern tribes, they were extremely fond of spirits. I have, however, met a few who would not drink. On Saghalin I have seen a native Ainu woman give her baby at the breast neat rum, which the little one appeared to enjoy, for it cried for more, and would not be quieted until supplied.

The dresses of these natives were made of bird-skins, sewn together with sinews of the sea-lion. The feathers were worn inside, next the skin. The outside of the dress was usually adorned with the yellow plumes and brilliantly coloured beaks of the tufted and horned puffin. The edges, and around

the neck, were trimmed with narrow strips of fur-seal skin. In shape the *parka* was like a large shirt. It was put on over the head, and had an opening halfway down the front. At the neck it was fastened by strings, on the ends of which were ornaments made of puffins' beaks and a small piece of fur. A girdle of sea-lion hide was used by the men to tie in at the waist. The women generally wore theirs loose, and it was made longer than the men's, because, I suppose, they did not wear trousers as a rule. The overhanging fold above the girdle was used instead of a pocket. It was a receptacle for everything. In bringing off skins to trade, they would invariably be stowed away inside their *parka*, and produced one at a time; and when the bartering power of that one skin was exhausted, another would be produced, and so on. Everything got in exchange, that would go inside this garment, was put there, and it was common to see tins of powder, boxes of caps, pieces of lead, tobacco, tea, sugar, cooked rice, beef and pork, old shirts and trousers, etc., all stowed away, indiscriminately mixed up, around a man's waist. Sometimes they would bring off sea-fowls' eggs, and not a few would get broken. The state of things inside their *parka* can be imagined. For lower garments they wore trousers which, when they could not obtain any old ones in trade, were made of birdskins also. Trousers and shirts were much in demand; but coats, waist-coats, hats, and boots, were comparatively useless to them. A cap of sealskin, and moccasins reaching to the knee, the uppers made of sea-lion or seal hide, and the feet of the rubber-like skin of sea-lion flippers, completed their outfit. One or two of the

Shumshir natives possessed a suit of foreign clothes and a Russian peaked cap.

The boats used by these Kurilsky Ainu were peculiar to themselves. They were most ingeniously constructed, and, considering the poor tools, the materials of which they were built, and the way in which they were put together, were good, serviceable craft. Some of them were about 30 feet long,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet broad, and about 4 feet deep. They were built with considerable sheer. The stem and stern posts were made of a thick plank bent into a rounded form, extending from the keel plank and carried up about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet above the level of the gunwale, the ends or heads being shaped into a spear-head form. Inside, the boat was strengthened by frames and knees. The broad planks outside were placed edge to edge, shaped to coincide with the sheer, and made to meet as neatly as their rough tools would allow. Over the seams half-round battens, about an inch wide, were placed, and kept in position by lashing of whale sinews or whalebone fibres, which passed through small holes made in the planks just above and below the batten. These lashings were continued all along the seams, at intervals of about 6 or 8 inches. Each one was finished off separately, not carried on from one to another, the sinews being passed round and round over the battens and through the holes. The holes were then tightly plugged with wooden pegs, and the seams inside caulked with moss. In the same manner lashings were passed through holes in the planks round the timbers and knees. The gunwale, thwarts, strengthening pieces, etc., were all fastened in this way, and so a good serviceable, though rough,

boat was constructed, without a nail or a piece of metal of any kind being used in it. Short oars, worked on pins or in grommets of sea-lion hide, were used to propel the boat. A mast and an old sail, probably got out of some wreck, completed the outfit.

Previous to the removal of those Kurilsky who chose to remain Russians after the exchange of territory, these natives possessed skin-covered *bidarkis*, such as are used by the Aleuts. All these, however, seem to have disappeared with the Russian contingent.

The Kurilsky inhabiting the central islands frequently shifted their quarters from one island to another. When this "fitting" took place, it was a matter of serious consideration. The weather had to be watched very closely, both for storms and fogs. Should the latter set in when they were at sea, there was great risk of their not being able to find their destination, as they possessed no compass, and the currents were strong and uncertain. On these voyages the women and youths did most of the rowing, whilst an old chief captained each boat, steering with an oar.

The natives who remained on the northern Kurils after they became Japanese territory continued to reside in their old settlement for several years, and then, much to their sorrow, were removed by order of the Japanese Government to the island of Shikotan. Their dogs were all killed and their boats left behind. They were located at Shakotan, a small bay on the north side of the island. Here a village was laid out and built. They were made to work, and encouraged to cultivate plots of land. Some



cattle and sheep also, which they had to attend to, were placed on the island. They were allowed so much rice, and a doctor and teacher were provided for them. Notwithstanding this change—for the better, one would think—they were very unhappy, and pined for their northern home with all its dirt and discomforts. The change from an almost wholly animal diet to one of rice and a few vegetables and fish did not suit them, and many died the first year. The Japanese officials placed over them were very arbitrary, and the poor creatures were in great fear of them. They told me they dare not leave the settlement, go out in a boat, kill a seal, or do anything out of their ordinary routine, without first obtaining permission from the officials.

The last time I saw any of these natives was in 1889. I was lying in Anama Bay, some six miles or so from their village. One of them, hearing that my vessel was there, secretly left the settlement, made his way over the hills to where we lay, and came on board. He had learnt to speak Japanese fairly well, and could also speak a little English. He told me his woes, and how they all longed to get back to their former homes. He finished his story, in the most plaintive voice imaginable, in these words: “Shikotan no good; Ushishir *dobrey* (good)—sea-lion ple-e-nty, sea-otter ple-e-nty, fur-seal ple-e-nty, bird ple-e-nty; Shikotan no-o got, Shikotan no-o got.” After he had been on board some time, a boat, manned by several men, was noticed pulling into the bay. He recognized them, and said they were coming to look for him, and asked to be hidden until they went away; so he was sent into the fore-

castle. Those in the boat came on board, and, after a short stay, left without finding or inquiring for our Kurilsky friend. After their departure we landed our visitor, making him happy with a present of tobacco and a few trifles.

The Kurilsky Ainu on Shikotan in October, 1891, numbered but fifty-nine men, women, and children. They were visited at that time by a Russian missionary priest from Japan. Amongst the Kurilsky, judging from appearances, there were few, if any, of pure Ainu blood; they were a mixture of Ainu, Kamchatkales, and Aleuts, these last having been taken to the Kurils in the days of the old Russian-American Company.

The pure Ainu do not extend beyond Yetorup. Some ethnologists have considered the Ainu race to have had a northern origin, and that this people penetrated to Yezo and Japan, advancing southwards and westwards until they were met and turned back by the Japanese advancing from the opposite direction. The researches of Basil Hall Chamberlain, Professor of Japanese and Philology in the Imperial University, amongst old Japanese writings, and his study and explanation of many of the place-names of the country, prove beyond a doubt that the Ainu once inhabited Central and Western Japan, and may have had a more extended southern range.

There is little or nothing to lead one to assume a northern origin for the Ainu; indeed, there is a certain amount of negative evidence which, I think, tends to show that they were not a northern race. The Ainu had no marked characteristics, customs, utensils, weapons, boats, etc., peculiar to most, if

not all, primitive races inhabiting a rigorous climate—as, for instance, a fondness for raw food, oil, and blubber; the use of dog-sledges, snow-shoes, boats and canoes made of skins, ornaments and weapons made of walrus ivory; the almost universal use of skins and furs for clothing; and houses constructed to keep out cold. The Ainu always cooks his food. He is a great flesh-eater, but not fond of oil or blubber. Although he has dogs, and Yezo and Yetorup during the winter are suitable, he does not make use of dog-sleighs. He uses, or formerly used, bamboo to tip his weapons, and he does not possess ornaments or weapons or charms made of walrus or mammoth ivory, some few of which would surely have been preserved and handed down had his race originally come from the north. His clothing is chiefly made of a coarse cloth woven from the bark of a tree. His house is such as would naturally be used in a warm or mild climate; it is not even adapted to the climate of Yezo, to say nothing of regions farther north.

The Ainu say that Yezo was formerly inhabited by a people whom they call Koro-pok-guru (dwellers in holes), and whom they say they destroyed. They also speak of these ancient inhabitants as Koshito (small people), because, they say, they were a very diminutive race. It is possible that the Ainu belief that the Koro-pok-guru were a diminutive people is a comparatively modern one. The inside of the dwellings of the Koro-pok-guru are very low, and the entrance door and lobby passage still lower, being only about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, so that an ordinary man has to stoop considerably on entering. It is quite conceivable that the Ainu should imagine

that such dwellings would only be used by a people of very short stature. The Koro-pok-guru, probably, were never very numerous, and the Ainu, when they were driven by the Japanese into Yezo, would have had no difficulty in exterminating or driving these people away. Similar *yurts*, or pit-dwellings, are found all along the Kurils, in Saghalin, in Kamchatka, and on the Aleutian Islands, and at one time it was thought that they were a northern race who penetrated to Yezo and Japan via the Kuril Islands. After visiting Kamchatka a number of times, however, and also the various islands of the western part of the Bering Sea right up into the Arctic Ocean, I have come to the conclusion that there were no such special race of people, but that the pit-dwelling, or *yurt*, was the natural result of the conditions existing in certain places, no matter who or what the tribe or people were who found themselves in such places. In the northern and central Kurils and the Aleutian Islands, for instance, where warmth and protection from the elements were of vital necessity, the uncivilized people resorting to them in those early days would be obliged to construct these *yurts*, as the available materials to be found on these islands would not allow of any other kind of suitable shelter being made, for there is no growth of timber on any of them. Some few of the larger northern Kurils have a growth of short scrub pine and alder, but on the others there is nothing but mosses, and, in the more sheltered parts, a growth of coarse vegetation.

The idea of the pit-dwelling is easily conceived after one has seen these places and the quantities of driftwood piled up on many of the beaches and

amongst the sand-dunes near the shore. The wood is of all sizes up to logs of 50 feet or more in length and a couple of feet in diameter, and gets piled up in places, leaving hollows beneath, which form natural shelters. Against these, and partly over them, sand gets drifted and blown; then follows a growth of grass, and there you have a rough sort of pit-dwelling constructed by Nature. It was easy to improve upon this, and this, I take it, is how the pit-dwelling originated. Thus the *yurts* of the Aleutian Islands, and those of the Kurils, could easily have been evolved independently, being but the natural outcome of circumstances. It may be said that this drift timber could have been used to erect log or boarded huts, but for such constructions the natives did not possess the necessary tools.

This explanation of the probable origin of the pit-dwellings will not, however, account for their being found in the southern Kurils, Yezo, and Northern Japan. That they had a northern origin I have no doubt, and I can quite conceive that, when the Ainu penetrated to the central and northern Kurils, they were compelled to construct *yurts* to live in, there being no materials for making the kind of dwelling they inhabited in the south. Finding these *yurts* dry, warm, and cosy, in the severest weather, with no chance of getting blown down in a storm, flooded by heavy rains, or destroyed by fire, and, above all, constructed in a day or two at most, it is evident that the Ainu who had lived in them would, on their return south, construct similar dwellings for their winter-quarters, as being much more comfortable than their own style of house above-ground. The winters in Yezo and Northern

Japan being very severe, the advantage of the *yurt* as a winter-dwelling would be apparent, and so the example set by those who had been north would be followed by others, and thus the pit-dwellings spread southwards, later to be discarded, perhaps, as their contact with the Japanese enabled them to improve their ancient style of above-ground hut.

## CHAPTER III

### HOW I HUNTED THE SEA-OTTER

So far as I am aware, no account has hitherto been published dealing with the sea-otter and sea-otter hunting which does not contain many errors, not only in the description of the animal, but as regards its habits, food, methods of capture, and other particulars. All drawings of the otter that I have ever seen are simply grotesque. Even Steller, the Russian naturalist (always quoted as the chief authority on the sea-otter), who was with Bering when he was wrecked on the island which now bears his name, is partly inaccurate in his account of the habits of the sea-otter, as he certainly is when dealing with the sea-lion and fur-seal. Possibly, however, the inaccuracies are due to those who elaborated his notes (they were not published until after his death) or to faulty translations.

Most accounts of the sea-otter appear to have been written from the appearance of stuffed specimens found in museums, all of which, so far as the writer has seen or heard of them, are set up in a way which gives a wrong idea, not only of the general shape of the animal, its head, tail, and hind-quarters more particularly, but also of its attitude when out of the water.

I claim to have considerable knowledge of the subject, having taken over a thousand pelts in the course of more than twenty years' hunting in the vicinity of the Kuril Islands and Kamchatka. Nearly all accounts of sea-otter hunting and hunters hitherto published have dealt more particularly with the methods adopted by the Aleuts, "the spearing surround," and clubbing on the rocks in winter during stormy weather, when, owing to the large beds of kelp (in which the heaviest seas never break), where he usually takes refuge in boisterous weather during summer and autumn, having rotted off near the bottom and disappeared, the otter "hauls out" to get some rest elsewhere. Now and then mention is made of other modes of taking the sea-otter, such as by setting strongly-made nets in places frequented by them, and by what is described as "surf-hunting," which means that the hunter watches for a chance to shoot the otter with a rifle from the shore when the wind is blowing and the sea running dead on to the land, trusting, if he kills his quarry, to have it washed ashore by the surf.

No one that I am aware of except myself, in the "Notes on the Kuril Islands" published by the Royal Geographical Society, has written a description of the methods of hunting the sea-otter as practised from a schooner fitted out for the special purpose. In the following pages I propose to describe in greater detail this manner of hunting the sea-otter, so that the reader may have some idea of the general nature of the work when I come to describe my own personal adventures.

Each vessel carried as a rule three hunting-boats. In the early days, when the otters were compara-



tively tame and plentiful, each boat was manned by two or three men and the hunter. At first all used paddles, but these were soon abandoned for oars. As the otters got scarcer, faster, and more difficult of approach, bigger boats were used, with more men, so that in later years most of the boats were manned by six men, including the hunter. Four men rowed, and the boat-steerer used a paddle, with which he also helped the boat along when chasing an otter. From these fast boats, so long as the water was smooth, no otter could get away, and its capture was only a question of time.

Hunting cannot be pursued when the sea is the least bit rough, or during foggy weather when the fog lies right down on the water. A "lifted" fog—that is, when it hangs some 50 or 60 feet or more above the water, leaving it clear below—makes ideal hunting weather, as it gives the sea a milky appearance, and a black object like an otter can be then seen a long way off. Generally speaking, the night will give indications of what the next morning will be like. If it promises to be hunting weather, all hands are warned to be on the alert and ready to lower boats at daybreak. The cook has to be up and have breakfast ready an hour before that. The boats are lowered, rifles, ammunition, boat-compasses, lunch-boxes, a keg of water, oilskins, fog-horn, etc., placed in them, with some spare food to provide against such contingencies as not finding the vessel on the return, owing to fog, or having to haul out on shore in consequence of bad weather coming on unexpectedly when a long way from the vessel; but often this precaution was neglected, as hunters dislike to lumber up their boats. In case

of fog, which may settle down at any moment, it is safer for the vessel to be at anchor, so that, when the boats return, they may know her whereabouts.

Whilst the boats are away, it is the duty of those remaining on the schooner—generally the shipkeeper or captain, cook, steward, carpenter, and a spare man, on the best-equipped vessels—to look after the vessel and attend to the skins already secured. In event of a sudden storm, they may have to put to sea, or run down and pick up the boats if the weather is clear and the wind against them. When the boats leave the vessel, it is usual to tell the shipkeeper in which direction they propose to hunt. The boats take up their position in line abreast, about 600 to 800 yards apart. The hunter stands in the bows of the boat, on the look-out. He usually has a pair of good marine binoculars, two rifles, and a plentiful supply of ammunition.

In the early days (1872-73) Kentucky muzzle-loading rifles, specially made for the business, were used. They were very heavy, weighing from 12 to 16 pounds, and having a very small bore. From a boat very much better shooting can be made with a heavy rifle than with a light one. Its own weight keeps it steady, there is little or no recoil, and it has not to be gripped and pressed to the shoulder like a light weapon. When a hunter gets used to standing in his boat, he can keep perfectly steady, and shoot as well as on land, no matter how violent the motion of the boat. His ankles, knees, and hips, act like gimbals, and take up all the motion of the boat, and his rifle, when pointed at an object, can be kept on it with ease. The muzzle-loaders were soon discarded,

and breech-loaders adopted. Winchester rifles were the favourites, but Sharps, Remingtons, Marlins, Spencers, and others, were also used. All these, however, were made especially heavy, fitted with hair-triggers, horn-shaped rearsights, and a bright metal foresight. The advantage of a hair-trigger is great. When I first commenced hunting I did not use it, but having once done so, I had no desire to return to the other. A bright or white foresight is a necessity for shooting at objects on the water, as it is difficult to see a black sight. Some of the hunters used an ivory foresight, but I preferred a silver one, and cut up a silver dollar for the purpose, keeping it brightly polished.

The boats pull along parallel with the coast as a rule, the hunter and boat-steerer keeping a sharp look-out for otters. An experienced man will distinguish an otter a long way off, never mistaking a seal, a sea-lion, or a bird, for one, which a "green-horn" invariably does. When an otter is "raised," as it is styled in hunting parlance, the boat-steerer lifts his paddle high above his head as a signal to the other boats that one has been sighted, the signal being acknowledged in the same way. The otter will probably be lying asleep on its back, but, like the proverbial weasel, with one eye open. The boat "raising" the animal makes directly towards it, the other two boats pulling into positions about 700 or 800 yards astern, and on the quarters of the boat going for the otter. The otter will probably "stand," as it is termed—that is, drop his hind-quarters and raise his head—when the boat has got, perhaps, within a few hundred yards of him, take a view of the situation, and then dive. The hunter will have

fired as soon as the otter "stood," not stopping his boat, but pulling right on for several hundred yards beyond where the otter was sighted. The chances are that the otter, knowing that the boat was coming in his direction, would dive in the opposite one (a very favourite trick of this animal), pass under the boat, and come up just where he was wanted—in the middle of the triangle formed by the three boats. The idea is to keep him there, and the boats are manœuvred with that object in view. Experienced hunters can tell pretty well how an otter will behave after he has made a few dives. His actions will indicate in which direction he wishes to go. If there is no wind, it will be with the current, as in that direction will probably lie a tide-rip in which he knows he will be safe. If there is a breeze, he will take up wind, for he seems to be aware that a boat cannot travel so fast against the wind. If there is no wind or current, and the sun is shining, he will take right up the sun-streak, apparently realizing that it is more difficult for the hunter to sight and shoot him in the sun-glare; and if hard pressed near the shore, he will often make right for the breakers amongst the rocks, and is then hard to get out or to hit.

The otter is a very cunning animal, and will try all sorts of dodges to get away. He will hide behind rocks, and sometimes, after making a series of short dives for the purpose of getting the boats to close in, he will make an exceedingly long one in order to get out of range. He stakes his all, so to speak, on this manœuvre, for unless he gets away altogether—which he sometimes does—he is soon despatched, the long dive having played him out, and he can



“RUNNING” A SEA-OTTER.



AIRING SEA-OTTER SKINS.



then only make short ones until the end. Sometimes when an otter succeeds in getting outside the boats he will take to "breaching," like a salmon or a fur-seal, jumping clear of the water, and going straight away at a great pace, getting his breath as he breaches. It is then the duty of the nearest boat to follow directly in his wake. The other two boats drop into place on each quarter astern, as before described, until the otter is turned back, and again comes up within the triangle formed by the boats. This he is sure to do when he finds himself being overtaken, or when he is struck by a bullet, or it strikes so near as to scare him. Occasionally, however, he is too fast for the boats, and gets away. Sometimes this is owing to the men being tired out, and sometimes to the otter resorting to this dodge as soon as a breeze springs up, when he goes straight in the wind's eye.

When in pursuit of a breaching otter, not more than 100 yards or so ahead of the boat, the hunter shoots at him the moment he sees him break water, keeping his rifle to his shoulder all the time. Should he be several hundred yards in front of the boat, it is necessary for the hunter to fire before he sees the otter breach, or the bullet would not reach him before he again got under water. I have killed many otters in this way. It is easier than it appears, for a full-grown animal will breach as regularly as a clock ticks, and will invariably go right away in a straight line. The boat-steerer keeps the boat straight in the wake of the fleeing otter, the boat-pullers rowing for all they are worth to try to gain on him. The hunter stands in the bow of his boat, with his Winchester to his shoulder, and fires

every time the otter breaches (generally about every six or seven seconds). A movement of the lever, and the old empty shell is thrown out and a new one in. Sometimes, in chasing a breaching otter, so many and so rapidly are the shots fired that the barrel of the rifle becomes too hot to be touched with the naked hand. When this happens, the soft lead bullets strip or slither, and naturally the shooting becomes very inaccurate. Sooner or later, however, the otter is turned back. This is known the moment the regular breaches cease, and a signal is made to the boats following, which stop, whilst the pursuing boat still goes on for some distance beyond where the otter last appeared.

The most difficult breaching otter to kill is one three parts grown. He will keep fairly close to the boat, and will breach in every possible direction but the one expected, so that your rifle is never on him, and his jumps are so short that there is no time to swing and snapshoot him. This is dreadfully trying to the temper, as he appears so easy to secure, and yet is so difficult, sometimes costing more time and ammunition than two or three big ones. I have known an otter "run" for four hours before he was secured, during which time about 400 shots were fired; and though this was quite exceptional, I have personally had a three hours' chase after one, with an expenditure of about 300 shots. Taking it altogether, about an hour would be a fair average to allow for the capture of an otter, with an expenditure of forty or fifty rounds of ammunition. It is the "breaching" otters that take the greatest number of shots. In the early days, before they became "educated," it was much easier to secure



them. Now and then an otter is killed by the first shot fired, but not often.

To a sportsman, sea-otter hunting is one of the most exciting and fascinating of pursuits. No other offers such a variety of incidents. In running an otter, there is no particular choice of position, except that the boat "raising" the otter has the privilege of going for it and taking the first shot. Each boat must keep its place, and move into its proper position when the otter dives. The nearest boat to the animal when he comes to the surface has the right to shoot first, no boat being allowed to spoil the chance of another. Although the hunters are paid by a "lay"—that is, a proportion of the whole catch—so that it does not matter in this respect who kills the otter, yet there is keen competition, as each one naturally likes to have the credit of being what is called "high boat" at the end of the season. This gives him a reputation, and he can command a higher lay when shipping for another season.

A successful hunter must necessarily be a good shot. He likewise requires good judgment, a cool head, patience, and good sight and hearing. A man must also be keen, resourceful, active, able to stand exposure, have a knowledge of the habits of the animal, know how to handle a boat, be well versed in weather-lore and currents, and a keen observer of the ways of the wild generally. It is not always that the best shot will come out "high boat." The hunter who notes the ways of an otter, who keeps his boat's crew in order, never allowing them to talk or make a movement that will cause any sound when the boat is at rest awaiting the appearance of the

otter, and who, the moment the otter dives, quickly gets his boat into its new position and stationary, with its head pointing in the direction in which the otter is most likely to appear, will be the most successful, the probabilities being that the otter will come up nearer to his boat than to either of the others if they have not followed the same tactics. The reason of this is that the otter when under water can hear very distinctly any sound made in a boat, and will naturally turn away from it. Often have I had to draw the attention of my hunters to this, when they have remarked: "The otters always seem to come up nearer to your boat than to ours."

The sea-otters of the Kuril Islands are particularly fine, some of the handsomest skins which find their way into the London market being taken there. The favourite haunts of the animal are off the rocky points and reefs where kelp is plentiful. Here the otter will find abundant food, and, when unmolested by the hunter, can lie up in comfort in the kelp-beds, where it is always smooth, no matter how heavily the sea may be breaking outside. The ends of the islands on the Pacific side are the most frequented places. Otters are rarely found on the Okotsk or north-west sides of the islands. The reasons for this are that the south-east or Pacific side is the lee side during the severe winter and spring weather, and they are not so liable to be hemmed in by ice-floes. In the summer it is the foggy side, thus offering greater protection against their human enemies.

After a period of rest from being hunted, the otters will "school up." When this is the case, the boats may pull for many hours without "raising"

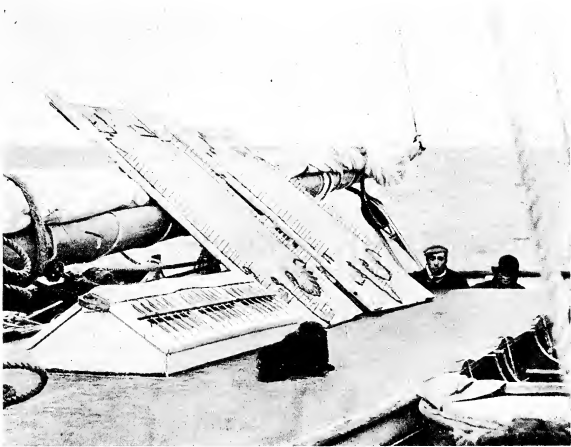
a single otter. The constant strain of being on the look-out begins to tell, and the hunter gets dull and the boat's crew listless. To give a better chance of seeing something, the boats have probably spread out to double the usual distance, so that the "raising" signal cannot be readily seen, and the boat, which has at last come across an otter or a "school" of them, has to go on without support from the others. Suddenly a shot rings out from this boat, and the others, hearing it, wake up, and all hands settle down to oars and paddles, and make the boat fly through the water to get into position. All fatigue is forgotten the moment the music of the rifle-shot is heard.

The chase of the otter is not the only thing which makes sea-otter hunting so attractive. When there is too much wind to hunt, it is usual for the schooner to seek shelter under the lee of the land, and anchor. Here, whilst the crew is replenishing the supply of wood and water, the hunters take their rifles or shot-guns, and try for a bear, reindeer, mountain-sheep, or some geese, duck, grouse, or other feathered quarry, whilst others engage in fishing. If the season is right, sea-birds' eggs are gathered in thousands, and stored in barrels in sand, each egg being stood on its end, as in that position they will keep for a long time. Birdskins and insects may be collected, and photographs taken, and in the berrying season one can go on shore and feast on delicious wild berries of several kinds.

There is a reverse to all this, of course—the thick fogs, the heavy blows with thick, dirty weather, the rainy, dark, stormy nights, in which one must get under way and beat off a lee shore, etc.—but the dis-

comforts only tend to heighten the enjoyment of the pleasant times, which are all the more appreciated after a bad spell.

The vessels used for sea-otter hunting were fore-and-aft schooners, ranging in size from about 40 to 100 tons. The best-equipped ones carried three hunting-boats and a spare or stern boat. A plentiful supply of anchors and chain was carried, as seldom a season passed without the loss of two or three anchors and a quantity of chain cable, owing to the anchors becoming inextricably jammed in between the heavy boulders of the rocky places in which at times the vessels were compelled to anchor. In trying to break them out the chain sometimes parted. Where, however, it was too strong, a length of it had to be unshackled and slipped. We never anchored without buoying our anchors, so that if, in a heavy gale off the land, over which the wind would sweep with hurricane force at times, our cables parted, as was often the case, and we had to go to sea and "lay to," we could run in again when the blow was over, and recover our anchors and chains; or if a gale suddenly sprang up, and blew right on shore, giving us no time to heave up our anchors, we had to slip our cables (buoying the ends of the chains as well in that case), and beat out to sea for safety, or run to some shelter until we could return and pick up our gear. This kind of thing on a dark night, with the shore close to, and reefs and rocks in the vicinity, with strong tides running, which often prevented the vessel from being canted in a direction so as to head her out on the right tack for clearing dangers, was ticklish work, and not one of the pleasures of otter-hunting.



SEA-OTTER SKINS ON FRAMES AND "PUP."



THREE-QUARTER GROWN SEA-OTTER.



Between the years 1872 and 1895 fifty-two vessels were engaged in sea-otter hunting in the vicinity of the Kuril Islands. A detailed list will be found in the last chapter. The largest number in any one year was twelve. Some of these were fitted out from San Francisco, others from Japan. Of these fifty-two, thirteen were lost with all hands (ten on this side the Pacific, and three on their way back to America); seventeen others (twelve on this side, and five elsewhere) were wrecked, with a loss of twelve lives. Five were seized by Russian cruisers, whilst fourteen others gave up the business, so that in 1895 only three were left. Since that time no vessels have fitted out solely for otter-hunting in these waters. Occasionally two or three of the vessels engaged in sealing, on their way to the Bering Sea, drop in at some of the islands, and try their luck at otters, but their catch is always a very small one.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIRST EXPERIENCES

SOME thirty-seven years ago a few sea-otters were still to be found off the California coast, in the neighbourhood of the Santa Barbara Islands. They were hunted by men who lived in Santa Barbara and neighbourhood, most of whom were Mexicans or half-breeds. Boats were employed, manned usually by four men, including the hunter, whose position was in the bow of the boat. All used paddles. After the hunter, the boat-steerer was the most important man, the others being styled boat-pullers. Each hunter carried two long and heavy Kentucky muzzle-loading rifles. All were expert boatmen and excellent shots, being able to shoot as well from a boat in motion as the ordinary man on *terra firma*.

In 1872 an old otter-hunter, Captain Kimberley of Santa Barbara, who owned a small schooner called the *Cygnets*, was the first to rediscover, if I may so term it, the sea-otter in considerable numbers on the southern Kurils. It came about in this way. Otter-hunting on the California coast being no longer a paying pursuit, Kimberley decided to try a sort of mixed venture across the Pacific, with several projects in view. The chief of these was to attempt to find a number of whaling-vessels which,



in the previous autumn, had been caught in the ice in the vicinity of Bering Strait and frozen in, the crews having to desert them and leave them to their fate. A rich prize in whalebone awaited anyone who should be fortunate enough to find these deserted vessels, if still afloat, when the ice broke up in the following summer.

In order to get as early as possible into the Arctic, it is necessary to advance along the Asiatic side of the Bering Sea, which is free from ice in that quarter much earlier than elsewhere. Having to cross to this side, Kimberley intended to search the small islets to the east of Yezo, where it was thought there might possibly be some fur-seal rookeries, and then take a look along the Kuril Islands on his way north, on the chance of finding a few sea-otters. If these ventures came to nought, search was to be made on the return voyage among the Aleutian Islands, where sea-otters were known to exist.

Funds not being very plentiful, the equipment of the *Cygnets* was neither very elaborate nor costly. The ship's company, including the owner, Captain Kimberley, consisted of only some half-dozen men. She carried but two small boats, and for hunting weapons three or four Kentucky muzzle-loading rifles, with a fair supply of powder, lead, and caps.

The first land visited on the Japan side of the Pacific was Shikotan, or Spanberg, as it was marked on old charts, an island lying off the extreme east of Yezo, and then uninhabited. It is about seventy square miles in extent, and contains many small land-locked harbours. Names were given to these harbours by Kimberley, such as "Frying-pan Bay,"

“Clam Bay,” “S.E. Bay,” which they retained for many years; and amongst hunters they are still so known, notwithstanding the new names given to them by the Japanese.

Sailing thence, the *Cygnets* crossed to the coast of Yotorup, where, running along close to the land, numbers of sea-otters were sighted, lying up in the kelp-beds. This was sufficient for an old otter-hunter like Kimberley. An anchorage was sought and the two boats got out, he in one and a hunter in the other, each pulled by one man. They were soon in the kelp-patches, and found the otters not only very tame, but inquisitive, even coming towards the boats and “standing,” as the term is, with their heads and fore-paws out of water, offering the easiest target imaginable. In a few weeks over two hundred were taken, and twice as many could have been secured; but, as the skins had to be “staked out” and dried, more could not be attended to. With this catch they decided to proceed to Hakodate, where they arrived in due course, shipped their skins, refitted, and ran back again to Yotorup. Here they secured nearly one hundred more, and again returned to Hakodate, where the *Cygnets* was laid up for the winter, her owner going back to America.

On first touching Hakodate, some disagreement arose amongst the party, and several left the schooner, some returning later to America, and two to Yokohama. It was from the latter that I first heard, through an old skipper of my acquaintance, of the sea-otter and sea-otter hunting. He told me that he had met two men just back from Hakodate, who had left an American schooner there which had been hunting sea-otters in the vicinity of the Kuril

Islands. They described the otters as existing in large numbers, and as tame as cats, with skins worth from \$80 to \$90 each.

At that time I had been in Japan some four years, and, though a sea-life had always had a certain amount of fascination for me, I knew nothing whatever about seamanship or the manner in which an undertaking of the kind described should be carried out. However, the hankering after a life at sea, my sporting instincts, fondness for an open-air life, and the apparently brilliant prospects of making a pile of money in a short time, caused me at once to make up my mind to enter into a sea-otter hunting venture, if I could find a suitable vessel and get people to go with me. I was then twenty-four years of age, strong and healthy, and with a few thousand dollars at my command, which I did not mind if I lost, since, being young and steady, with lots of good friends, I considered I could soon make good my position again, should the venture not turn out a success.

My first step was to consult my old skipper friend, and ask him if he would take command of a vessel, and could induce the men who had been on the *Cygnets* to go, as without someone who knew where to look for the sea-otters, and knew one when he saw it, it would not be of much use starting out. I informed him that I would buy and fit out a vessel on my own account, or that he and they could take shares if they had the money and so desired. The result of the proposal was that the two men consented to go as hunters, and take a small interest in the vessel, the old skipper agreeing to take command, and an interest if he could raise the money. After

the understanding had been come to, my old skipper friend set out to seek for a suitable craft, and, after some little delay, found one in Tokyo, or Yedo, as the city was then called, for the modest purchase price of \$2,000. She was an old fore-and-aft rigged schooner of about 118 tons, built in Nagasaki, and belonged to some department of the Japanese Government. She was very roomy; her copper had been recently renewed, but she was undoubtedly "hogged." However, the old skipper was satisfied, and quite willing to take her to any part of the world. I thereupon paid \$500 bargain money, on the understanding that the vessel should be turned over to me in the course of a few days.

Then the trouble began. Repeated applications failed in getting the craft transferred, because, it was said, there had been a change in the Government, and it was only through the intervention of H.M. Consul that the matter was put through at all.

The old *Swallow*, as she was named, needed some alterations in her cabins, and boats had to be built. These having been completed and the vessel got ready for sea, I found there was no money forthcoming from the old skipper and the two hunters, so the whole undertaking fell upon myself; and they shipped on lays—that is, a share of the catch. Our fit-out was a somewhat scratch affair in every respect, arising partly from inexperience, and partly from the impossibility of obtaining more suitable material. Of my two hunters, I afterwards learned one had been cook on board the *Cygnet*; the other had headed one of the *Cygnet's* boats, and was a fairly good shot, but this was his only otter-hunting experience. He had previously been mate of a whaler, and knew nothing

of "running" an otter; while as for myself, I was absolutely green as regards the life I was embarking upon, but a fair shot both with rifle and shot-gun, and, as already indicated, a keen sportsman. The crew were a mixture of Europeans and Japanese, with a Japanese cook who, by chance, could sometimes make decent bread and boil a potato. His great stand-by was dry hash, which he gave us three times a day for the whole voyage.

Our battery consisted of a couple of Snider rifles, one "Spencer," one English muzzle-loader, two .44-rim-fire Winchesters, and a 12-bore C. F. shot-gun.

We were late in starting, it being June 20, 1873—on an unlucky Friday, too—before we sailed. Three days out we met a heavy gale, in which, just as the worst of it was over, we were dismasted. The sea was running very high, and, to make matters worse, we were in a heavy current-rip, the vessel pitching and rolling considerably owing to a sudden lull in the wind. While at dinner, about half-past twelve noon, there was a tremendous crash, and the débris of the skylight covered the cabin table. A rush was made on deck, where we found a complete wreck of everything. Both masts were down; one had broken off level with the deck, the other about 6 feet above it. The galley with most of its contents, and the skylights, were completely smashed by the masts falling on them, and the mainboom was broken in two. Part of the wreckage had gone overboard, the heavy seas causing the broken spars to pound against the schooner with a deafening noise.

For a short time great excitement prevailed, on the part of the old skipper and the mate more

particularly, as they feared the pounding of the wreckage against the side would start a leak, and axes were got ready to cut away everything hanging overboard. Not being of an excitable nature myself, I took things more quietly. It struck me that there was no immediate danger, and that it would be advisable to save all we could for purposes of refitting. The mainmast, broken off close to the deck, for instance, would be long enough for a foremast. I pointed this out, and the general excitement having somewhat subsided, nearly everything was got on board. It was fortunate the accident happened in the middle of the day; had it occurred at night, the chances are that we should have suffered more severely. At the time the masts fell, nearly all hands were below, getting their dinner.

Jurymasts were rigged out of the foreboom and the main-gaff, on which we set some small sails, and made towards the land, about 100 miles off. The wind which again sprang up, was light but fair, and on the third day after our disaster we arrived off the small islands at the entrance to Matsu Bay. Some native boats towed us into the harbour, where we anchored and communicated with the authorities in order to be allowed to repair damages there. Before leave could be obtained, however, it was necessary to make application to the Governor of Sendai, so next day I set out with an official to make the journey to the city of Sendai, distant some twenty-five miles. I was kindly received, and the necessary orders were given to supply me with workmen and materials necessary for the repairs of the vessel. Altogether we were some three

weeks in getting fixed up again. The old mainmast was utilized for a foremast, and a new mainmast and mainboom were made. After all was completed I asked for the bill. I had previously explained that I had no money with me, and that I should have to give an order on my agents in Yokohama for whatever the cost might be. Some difficulty was experienced in getting the account, but when it was finally produced, it amounted to about \$104, an absurdly small sum for the work done and material supplied. I thought there must be some mistake, but was assured there was not; and if everything was done satisfactorily, I was at liberty to leave when I pleased. I thanked the officials, and said I wished to have the account in order to sign it and give an order for the amount on my friend in Yokohama. They informed me this was not necessary; that the Governor of Sendai felt very sorry we had met with misfortune, and no charge would be made. He hoped that, should it ever be in my power to render assistance to any Japanese in a similar predicament, I would do what I could for them.

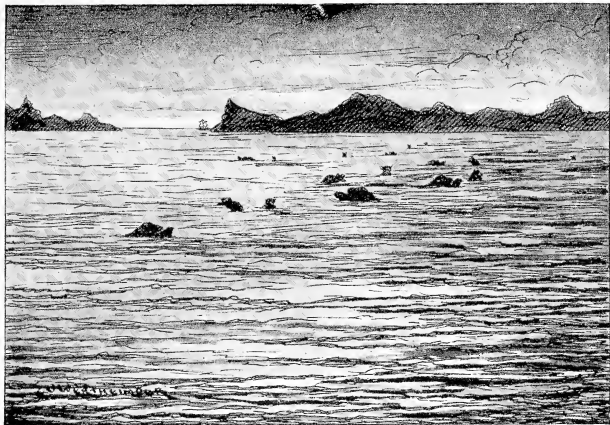
With this I had to be satisfied. I could not understand why I was being so kindly dealt with, and, my knowledge of Japanese being indifferent, I thought I must have misunderstood the official through whom the affair was conducted. This was not the case, however, and I left on July 19 after writing a letter of thanks to the Governor of Sendai. On the way up to the sea-otter grounds, we called in at the island of Shikotan in order to set up our rigging afresh, it having stretched considerably. We got on the hunting-grounds on July 31, and on

the following day lowered boats for hunting. We had small boats, 15 feet long by 5 feet beam, which, according to my hunters, we should have no difficulty in filling up with otters on a fine hunting day. We lowered three boats, the two men who had been up the previous year and myself each "heading" a boat, with one man each to pull us around. After lowering the boats, we heard constant firing going on to the north-eastward; and although some otters were seen near us, we pulled in the direction of the bombarding, as one of my hunters said there was probably a "school" of otters there. Approaching the spot, we saw three boats in line, and before the shots were delivered something was being called out. On getting closer, we made it out to be, "There she blows—my shoot!" then bang, bang, bang, from the three boats: they were "running" a half-grown otter.

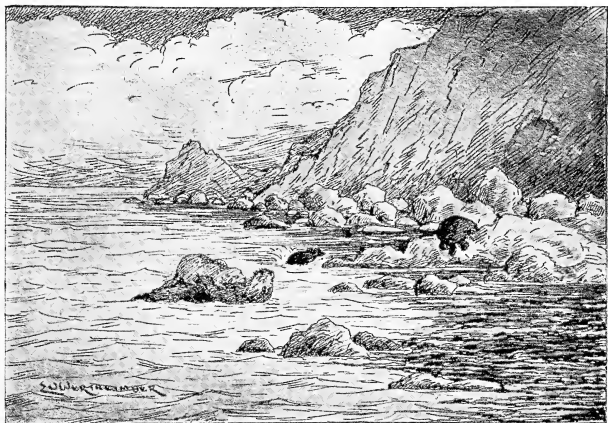
These boats belonged to the schooner *Caroline*. The hunters were old whalers who had never hunted sea-otters before; they knew nothing of "running" an otter, and I afterwards learned that, after three and a half months on the grounds, they got three otters only, and then left in disgust.

There being no "school" of otters, we pulled away; and coming to a large patch of kelp, we saw two or three otters in it, one carrying her pup. On firing, they all disappeared under water, and a head popping up shortly afterwards, some 60 yards away, I fired at it, and scored, killing, not a sea-otter, but a sea-lion. I soon learned to distinguish the difference, and shortly after I killed our first otter. The mother and pup came up near my boat. Firing too quickly I missed, but the bullet went so close that





A SCHOOL OF SEA-OTTERS.



SEA-OTTER WITH "PUP."



the pup was dropped, and lay on the water mewing like a cat. Thinking I had wounded it, I pulled up and took it into the boat, only to be rebuked by my hunters, who said I ought to have let it lie, as the mother would be sure to come for it, when she could be more easily "kept run of" encumbered with her pup. That lesson being learned, I did not offend again. Our day's hunting resulted in three large otters and three or four small ones.

After this we each hunted independently, with but poor results, as the otters could nearly always get away from one boat. We fell in with other schooners (there were seven of us altogether), and I noticed those which had proper hunters were "running" their otters; that is, all three boats turned their attention to the one otter, systematically keeping it in between the boats, which lay several hundred yards apart in the form of a triangle. Their boats were manned by three or four men (including the hunters), who used paddles: we had only two men in a boat—the hunter, and one man pulling a pair of sculls.

Recognizing that a change in our methods had to be made, I manned our boats after this with two men besides the hunter, leaving only the cook, cabin-boy, and skipper, on board. One day, whilst lying off the coast of Yetorup, anchored with a kedge in a large patch of kelp, we left in our boats at daylight, and pulled to the south-west some eighteen or twenty miles, taking a bottle or two of water and our lunch. When off what we named the Pinnacle Rocks, it commenced to blow, the gale rapidly increasing with a heavy sea. Being so far

off the vessel, we resolved to haul out on the rocks until the wind moderated ; but the gale increased, and the rain came down in torrents. After lunch we had nothing left to eat, and all our water was gone. That night we slept under the boats, turning them over so as to act as a protection from the rain. It blew a gale all the next day, making it impossible to launch our boats. We had no means of making a fire ; the raw flesh of an otter we had killed the first day was tried, but, hungry as we were, it was too rank for our stomachs. Another night passed under the boats, with the gale still blowing and everyone in the worst of humour. In the morning a small fish thrown up by the heavy surf was eaten raw by the man who secured it. Still another night under the boats, and then a change. We quickly launched boats and pulled to the north-eastward, to try and find the schooner. My boat-pullers had chewed a quantity of tobacco, and, being without water, they suffered severely from thirst, so much so that one of them had to give up rowing. About twenty miles up the coast we saw a hut in a small bight, and landed. Here we found some Ainu, who gave us food ; and with boiled rice, seaweed, and dried fish, we made a kind of soup, which we declared to be the finest meal we had ever eaten. Refreshed, we started for the schooner, which we could just see a long way out at sea. After three or four hours' pulling, we got on board in time for another blow, which compelled us to run for what was then called by the hunters " Jap Bay," its proper name being Hitokapu Bay, a large inlet in about the middle of the Pacific coast of the island.

This bay we frequently used afterwards ; for

whenever it came on to blow, shelter could always be got there on one side or the other.

It was whilst lying on the eastern side of this bay that I bagged my first bear. Bears at this time were very numerous on Yetorup. The species is the same as that found on Yezo. Siebold, in his "Fauna Japonica," calls it *Ursus ferox*, as also does Professor Rein in his work on Japan; whilst Wallace, in his "Island Life," gives it as *Ursus arctus*.

It happened in this way. The weather being fine, we lowered boats and started out hunting towards the east point of the bay, where the high land approaches to within a few yards of the beach, which here consists of large and small boulders. On nearing the point, I saw a large bear some 200 or 300 feet up the steep slope of the mountain, apparently feeding on berries or roots. It being impossible to land near him, on account of the heavy surf, I pulled back into the bay and landed near the vessel, about two miles from the point, taking my rifle (a handsome sporting Snider, of which I was very proud) and a dozen cartridges. Making my way along the beach towards the place where I had seen the bear, in my hurried eagerness I fell several times over boulders, and, much to my sorrow, succeeded in scratching and somewhat spoiling the spick-and-span appearance of my rifle. At last, much out of breath, I sighted Bruin at just about the place I had first located him. When I was within about 80<sub>2</sub> yards or so, he turned his head, offering a broadside shot. I was somewhat excited and very much blown, and was afraid I could not hold my rifle steady on him. However, I inhaled deeply, and held my breath as I pointed for his shoulder and fired. Down he

came head over heels right on to the beach, within 20 yards of me. I slipped in another cartridge and advanced cautiously. He lay still, with his legs towards me, and, after making a *détour*, I approached him from the other side, carefully keeping the rifle pointed until I got close enough to kick him. He stood this indignity, so I concluded he was dead. On examining him, I found my bullet had entered at just the right spot behind the shoulder, and, as I found later, had gone clean through his heart. The .577 Snider bullet, with its plugged base, made a hole as clean-cut as if it had been bored out with an auger. My boat, which had fallen in with and killed an otter on its way towards the point, now came up. It was impossible to land, or for me to get to the boat, so they hove a line with a club attached to it into the surf. This was thrown up on to the rocks, and I soon had it round the bear's neck. Fortunately, the slope was considerable, and by dint of my heaving, and those in the boat hauling, we got the animal into the surf, where he was soon dragged clear, and, being too big to be got into the boat, was towed away to the vessel. Neither skin nor flesh was in very good condition. At that time of year the bears live chiefly on fish, and the flesh becomes very rank.

From time to time whilst pulling or sailing along the coast we saw many bears, but I did not bag another that season, as, although I killed one from my boat, on the top of a cliff, it was not practicable to land and secure it. We had many heavy blows, and constantly had to run for shelter to "Jap Bay." Towards the end of the season we ran over to the east side anchorage, and there we found a small



MY FIRST BEAR.



"NELL" CATCHING SALMON-TROUT.





sloop called the *White Falcon*. She was manned by four men, two of whom had run away from the American otter-hunting schooner *Lizzie*, and had made their way to Hakodate in a junk, where they persuaded the owner of this sloop to fit them out and go to Yetorup, otter-hunting. They had one small boat on board, and intended to winter on the island. Fate was against them. They anchored rather too near the beach, a heavy swell began to roll in, and, though they attempted to get under way, there was not enough wind, and the vessel was thrown on the beach, where she soon broke up. We took the men on board, and not long after started to return to port. We had forty-six large and twenty-five small otters.

The constant strain caused by the heavy blows had affected the old *Swallow* so badly that the planking under her fore chain-plates began to open up. This was well above water, and she did not leak except when lying well over in a strong breeze. We sailed down to the island of Shikotan, putting in to what the hunters called "Frying-pan Bay," where we lay for some days, the old skipper being very sick. Some of the crew did not like the idea of venturing to return to Hakodate in the vessel, so it was resolved to make for Nemuro, on the east coast of Yezo, distant about sixty miles. On arrival there the intention was to beach the vessel, take everything out of her, and have it sent down to Hakodate by junk or steamer, if one should come in, while all hands went overland. The old skipper advised that the vessel should be burnt after all her copper and other fittings of value had been taken out of her. This was one of the most absurd proposals ever made.

How anyone having the slightest knowledge of ships could have suggested such a thing I cannot imagine, but, as I was then absolutely ignorant of what ought to be done in such matters, I could only bow to the decision of those who, I thought, should know. The greatest fault with the vessel was that the frames on both sides, through which the fore chain-plates were bolted, were more or less rotten, so that when the rigging was "set up" the bolts "gave" in the rotten wood. This caused the outside planking to open slightly, so that the oakum came out. Before leaving Shikotan chains were passed round the schooner abreast of the foremast, under the keel, and across the deck, and wedged up taut, and the fore-shrouds set up to them; this, of course, took the strain off the chain-plates, preventing any further opening up of the planking. I knew afterwards that the old craft thus fixed would have been perfectly safe for the voyage back to Hakodate, distant about 500 miles; but the fact was, the old man had lost his nerve, and the others, who ought to have known better, didn't care.

The authorities stored all our gear in go-downs, and provided us with horses and two men to take charge of us on our overland journey of 500 miles to Hakodate. We left in two parties, one a day ahead of the other, one horse with the first party being loaded with our otter-skins. Although horses were provided for all, I decided to walk. The stations were from 10 to 12 *ri* (25 to 30 miles) apart. The first day I walked from Nemuro to Hachijiu-schibets, where we remained the night. Next morning we started for Hamanaka; the road lay through the forest, a mere track. The mounted part of the

company soon got ahead of me, with the exception of the official in charge of us, whom we styled the "Captain"; he walked his horse near me, and every now and then would utter a series of loud yells, intended, as he said, to frighten away the bears, in which he certainly succeeded, for we saw none. That night I arrived very tired some hour or two after the others, who had had a bath and their "chow," and were enjoying a comfortable smoke. I began to think walking the distance was a thankless task, and resolved on the morrow to ride like the rest.

At Hamanaka I had some shooting, getting a few ducks, teal, golden plover, and several other kinds of birds, including two spoonbill sandpipers (*Eurino-rhynchus pygmæus*); all these went into the pot, and I learned after I got to Hakodate what an expensive morsel I had eaten in the shape of these two sandpipers. Captain Blakiston, R.A., the chief authority and collector of the birds of Japan, who was then living in Hakodate, told me they were very rare, and had not been found in Japan before; as specimens they were worth about £5 apiece.

Our next stage was Akis, situated in what was then named on the charts "Good Hope Bay"; thence we followed the coast-road, having fine weather most of the time. Twice we were stopped by the rivers being in flood, and had to lie over a day. These occasions gave me a chance to get some deer-hunting with the Ainu hunters. These men were wonderfully skilful in "picking up" deer a long way off. Although I had excellent sight, I had much difficulty in distinguishing the animals when their exact location was pointed out to me. Deer at that time were

very plentiful in Yezo, but later on, and before the Government stepped in, the slaughter was so great that they were almost exterminated; now there are comparatively few. The method of killing was to drive them in winter, when they congregated in large herds in the warmer valleys, into deep, soft snow, where they could be easily got at and slaughtered by the hunters with spears and clubs. Their skins at the time I am writing of were sold for about 35 cents each. A Hakodate firm bought 10,000 at that price, and shipped them to Europe.

On two occasions when weather-bound I was the guest of an Ainu chief, in whose house I spent the night. Like all Ainu houses, it was a primitive structure built of saplings, grass, and bark, with a hole in the roof. Large slabs of bark were placed outside the grass, but no nails were used, lashings being the only fastenings. In the ordinary Ainu houses the floor—that is, the ground—was covered with straw mats, but in the chief's place part of the floor was raised, and Japanese mats were used. Both the headmen in whose houses I put up had quite a number of beautiful old Japanese lacquered utensils, consisting of large boxes of various shapes, as well as bowls and other things, which were kept on a sort of daïs on one side, and made quite a display. The exteriors were mostly black lacquer with gold ornamentation, the insides being of red lacquer. These articles, of which the Ainu were proud, were presents from the Daimiyo of the district in former times. The villages at which we stayed stood some distance off the road, and our Ainu hosts were particularly kind, giving us the best of everything they

had, and the most comfortable places to sleep in. No Japanese lived in these villages.

It was on this trip I witnessed an instance of what has often been denied, and that is an Ainu woman suckling a young bear. The name of the village I did not take down, but it was to the eastward of Muroran, and was inhabited by Ainu only. They had some big bears in cages, but this little fellow was allowed to run about the village quite free. The woman came out of her house, and called to the cub, which ran to her; she squatted down on her heels, bared her breasts, and, holding one between the palms of both hands, allowed the young bear to suck for some minutes. I had often heard of this being done, but this was the only time I ever saw it.

The Ainu of the present day, I am told, deny that this was ever customary with them, but there is no doubt about it. The reason they now deny it is, in my opinion, because they have been taught that it is an unnatural thing to do, and are ashamed to own that they ever practised it.

Sometimes on the journey we had to put up at places where food was very scarce, especially when I had not been able to shoot anything for the "pot." An evening meal of salt salmon roe and plain boiled rice, washed down with weak Japanese tea, with the prospect of a similar meal for breakfast, was not all that could be desired after a hard day's journey. Fortunately, this only happened two or three times. On other occasions we fared sumptuously on game, fish, soup, and other luxuries, washed down with good Japanese saké; and the saké was good in those days, unlike the vile stuff manufactured now, chiefly with imported alcohol.

When passing through the woods, we found in many places wild fruits in abundance; the wild raspberries were delicious, as were also the wild grapes and the *kokowa*. The *kokowa* is a fruit growing on a vinelike creeper, light green in colour, in shape something like the top joint of one's thumb, but not so large, and growing on a single stalk. The inside consists of a pulp not unlike a very ripe gooseberry. These and the grapes we ate to such an extent that the skin of our lips and tongue came off, making them so sore as to put a stop to further indulgence in the fruit until they had healed again.

We arrived in Hakodate on the twenty-third day out from Nemuro, after what was on the whole a very enjoyable journey. We were formally handed over to the British Consul, who duly gave a receipt for us, and our escort, the "Captain," started on his return journey to Nemuro. On the arrival of the rest of our party, an inquiry into the loss of the vessel was held, after which the various people belonging to her were paid off. The sea-otter skins which I brought down with me were purchased by Mr. Haber, the German Consul, who had recently established himself in business in Hakodate, and thus ended the first of my hunting ventures.

There is a melancholy interest in recalling that some time afterwards Mr. Haber was murdered by an anti-foreign Japanese fanatic. The Consul and a friend, a German doctor, had gone a few miles out of the town for an afternoon stroll, and on turning back had an argument as to which of two roads was the shorter way into Hakodate. To test this they separated, Mr. Haber taking the upper road, and the doctor the lower one. The road taken by

Haber led through some gardens, but there were no houses near. Haber was carrying an umbrella. Suddenly he was attacked from behind by a Japanese armed with a short sword. Haber was not much hurt, and ran away until he became exhausted, and turned into one of the gardens. The Japanese caught him up, and struck him repeatedly with the sword, nearly cutting his arms off. Haber begged him not to kill him, but to get him some water. This the Japanese did, and then hacked away at him again until he was killed.

The murderer confessed to all this at his trial, and said that he first followed the doctor; but he being a big man, and armed with a stick, he thought he had better attack the smaller man. He had been a schoolmaster, had lost his employment through the introduction of foreign ideas which he hated, and had resolved to kill a foreigner on the first opportunity. He was tried and executed in Hakodate. I arrived in Hakodate soon after the murder had taken place, and the foreigners there were naturally much excited over it.

## CHAPTER V

### EARLY ADVENTURES IN THE "SNOWDROP"

THE taste I had had of sea-otter hunting, notwithstanding the results, made me wish for more, so before leaving Hakodate I arranged with Messrs. Thompson and Bewick, *compradores* and ship-builders of that port, to build me a schooner of about 60 tons for the next season's hunting. I then left for Yokohama to spend the winter.

Whilst there, a young friend of mine and keen sportsman, whose engagement in the Japanese railways would shortly expire (the line between Yokohama and Tokyo had only been opened about a year), wished to make a trip otter-hunting. We came to terms—he to take a small interest in the vessel, and to head one of the boats. Another friend, a young Scotsman, but a naturalized American citizen, agreed to go as skipper and hunter, and also take a small interest in the venture. These two, with the mate and shipkeeper, who had been in the *Cygnets* the previous year, and myself, completed the foreign part of the ship's company, while the rest were to be Japanese picked up in Hakodate.

In Japan nothing is ever finished in contract time, and the building of the schooner was no exception to this rule. It was not until the middle of April that we got word to proceed to Hakodate,



and it was another three weeks before the *Snowdrop*, as she was named, was ready to sail.

One delay after another occurred, and when everything else was ready the Consul refused to give the vessel a flag, as her master had not an English master's certificate, even though this was not necessary or required by law, as she was of small tonnage, and not sailing out of a British port. The schooner was promptly put under the American flag, a mortgage being given, and we sailed away under the Stars and Stripes on May 10, 1874.

Our first mishap after leaving was to lose one of our best men overboard, a Japanese sailor whom we called "Dandy Jim." A hard gale, accompanied by heavy rain, had been blowing all day. The night was pitch-dark, with a mountainous sea running. Soon after midnight the wind moderated, and the order was given to shake out some reefs. "Dandy Jim" got astride the mainboom to let go a reef-earring, when the vessel gave a heavy roll and jerked him off into the sea. It was so dark that it was impossible to see anything a foot off. Notwithstanding the dangerous sea running, a boat was got out and manned as quickly as possible, lights were burned, and search made until daylight, but in vain. "Dandy" was heavily clothed, and had on long sea-boots, so he probably went down as soon as he fell overboard. His loss cast a gloom over us all. He was a great favourite on board, an excellent sailor, and had had two trips hunting, thus making him a valuable hand as boat-steerer.

A few days afterwards we entered the port of Nemuro in order to obtain the anchors, chains, sails, and other gear, taken out of the old *Swallow*, which

had been stored for us, and for which I held receipts, the arrangement being that these things should be handed over to me when I came for them in the spring. Nemuro was then, and is now, the chief port on the east coast of Yezo, and the seat of the headquarters of the district, which includes the Kuril Islands. It has increased since those days considerably in size, population, and importance. We arrived just about the time the herrings were "running" on the coast, and immense catches had been made. Hundreds of thousands were piled up in rough enclosures on the beach, people being at work boiling them down and putting them in presses to extract the oil, the residue, which is afterwards spread out and sun-dried, forming what is called *kasu*. This *kasu* is shipped away to the south, where it is used as manure, fetching a high price.

I did not contemplate having the least trouble with the authorities about obtaining my goods, but I found I had reckoned without my host. First of all I was asked if I had brought a permit from Hakodate, which I had not done, not deeming it necessary, holding as I did their own receipts and guarantee to deliver up the things whenever I should call in for them. They insisted on communicating with Hakodate, a proceeding that would take three weeks.

Finding I could do nothing with them, I returned on board, wrote a letter to the Consul in Hakodate explaining the whole matter (this letter never reached its destination), and then wrote out a vigorous protest in English, stating I should hold them responsible if anything happened to the vessel, as I had only one anchor and a small cable on board,

which was not sufficient to hold the schooner if it came on to blow. I had not provided more, as I fully relied on getting those belonging to me when I arrived in Nemuro. They then decided to let me have my anchors and chains. These were stored in a wooden shanty on the beach, and two officials were sent down with the keys of this go-down to enable us to take them out. We landed the whole of our crew in three boats, and the go-down being opened, we carried out all our anchors and chain cables, depositing them on the beach close to our boats. When the last of the chain was out, I ordered the sailors to take out everything else they could get hold of belonging to me, and ropes, tackles, blocks, tools, lamps, tins of paint, and other articles, were carried away. The officials tried to prevent this, but it was of no use; two of us put our backs against the sliding go-down doors, and prevented them being closed, until the Government office, being informed, sent down reinforcements, and we were eventually, after a hard struggle, ousted, and the go-down closed, but not before we had got all we wanted out of it. We left a lot of pig-iron, wire rope, iron knees, and old copper sheathing, but that was of no consequence.

I must say I was surprised at the way in which our Japanese crew backed us up. They would scarcely do it nowadays.

After we had stowed everything away, the officials sent on board, and asked for a receipt for what we had taken. This appeared very comical after the way in which we had obtained possession. However, I gave them a receipt, and also with it a demand for the rest of my property, which included some cooking utensils, crockery, cutlery, and table-ware,

which we needed badly, and which, unfortunately, was stored in another go-down. I informed them I would wait one day for them to make up their minds, but would then leave, and should hold them responsible, and lay a claim for damages against them on my return to Hakodate. No further sign being forthcoming, I waited the twenty-four hours, and then sailed away for the otter grounds.

Falling in with several other vessels, we gradually made up a sufficiency of cooking utensils and tableware to last us the season. We soon found otters, and started hunting in the orthodox way—that is, “running” our otters with all three boats. For a time, owing to the want of experience of my two companions, we lost a number of otters, but gradually improving, we succeeded in making a good catch. In “running” an otter my companions became fairly proficient, but neither got thoroughly used to the motion of the boat when shooting, so that the bulk of the catch fell to my rifle.

All went well for a time, and then we had the bad luck to get lost in a fog when out hunting, and could not find our vessel; however, we made the land, and hauled our boats up on the beach in a little bight we christened Mosquito Bay. We had taken six otters that day. We made a fire, sat around it, and awaited daybreak. The weather remained fine and calm, and soon after dawn the fog lifted. We launched our boats, and proceeded round the point, sighting our schooner about a couple of miles away. We pulled for her, and went on board, had a good breakfast, and then started out hunting again. After pulling some miles to the south-west we sighted a steamer standing towards us, which I made

out to be the *Capron Maru*, belonging to the Kaitakushi Department of the Government, under whose jurisdiction Yezo and the Kuril Islands then were. When she got near us, she lowered two boats with some armed marines in each. They rowed towards us, but, as they were only two to our three boats, I pulled away, although they hailed me to let them on board. They put some armed men into our two other boats, and took them on board the steamer, whilst I pulled away and reached my own craft, becalmed some few miles up the coast. The *Capron* steamed up to the schooner, and ordered me to go on board ; this I refused to do unless they sent a boat for me, which they eventually did.

I was ushered into the saloon, and found a sort of court of inquiry being held. My two friends were being questioned and cross-examined in the usual Japanese style, names, ages, residences, business, country, birthplace, parents, age of parents, and a lot of other particulars, being asked for and taken down. The Governor of Nemuro, a youngish man, was apparently in charge ; with him on board were the Governor of Yetorup and some other officials, including the two who had opened the go-downs in Nemuro when we had the struggle to get our belongings, as already related. An interpreter who spoke English fairly well was present. There were also an officer and a number of marines, and some Japanese coolies, besides the ship's company. The captain of the *Capron Maru*, an American, was the only foreigner amongst them. He came into the saloon to ask our skipper about the depth of water in the bight (Mosquito Bay), as he wished to anchor ; but the Governor rather brusquely told him to leave

the saloon, an order which I could see he very much resented, as it was given in anything but a polite way.

The inquiry proceeded, and, according to our ideas, was most farcical. I told the skipper that he had better reply to the questions, as I could not rely on my own temper. For a couple of hours all sorts of questions, such as, "Where do you come from?" "Why did you come otter-hunting?" "Have you hunted near the land?" "Do you not know that it is wrong to hunt otters here?" and many others of a similar nature, were repeated so frequently that I lost patience, and said I would now answer the questions myself. Whereupon they turned the inquisition on me in the same way. They asked if we had killed any otters in Japanese waters, and said that if so we must give them up. I replied that I had never measured the distance off shore where we had killed them, and that if they got any of our skins they would have to take them by force. They then threatened to take us prisoners to Hakodate. I said I hoped they would, as it would probably pay me better to get damages from them than to go on hunting. After I had informed them that I did not consider it at all wrong to hunt there, that we had hunted in the same place the previous year, that we had fitted out quite openly, the crew signing articles and the vessel clearing for the special purpose, they said: "Well, will you write down that you think it right to hunt here, and we will write down that we do not think it right for you to hunt here?" This I refused, as it would lead to nothing. The altercation continued until I said to the interpreter that I would not answer such foolish questions any more, so they had better do what they intended

to do with us, and finish. This was interpreted to the Governor, and I am afraid it was put in such a way as to make the Governor think I had called him a fool, for he flushed a rosy red and retorted in a very angry manner. The interpreter thereupon informed us the Governor said he would take us to Hakodate.

I must here explain that we were sitting at the saloon table, which had on each side of it a long seat with a shifting back, which could be moved so that one could sit facing the table or with one's back to it, and at either end was a chair. In the middle, on one side of the table, sat the Governor of Nemuro, on his left the interpreter, on his right the Governor of Yetorup, and next these some officials taking notes. I sat opposite the Governor, and next me, one on either side, were the two officials with whom we had had the struggle at the go-downs in Nemuro. Next to them was my young friend, at the end of the table sat the skipper, and behind us on both sides were a number of Japanese, standing.

When the interpreter said that the Governor would take us to Hakodate, I told him we would not go willingly; he would have to take us by force, and we were now going to return to our vessel. All three of us then got up to attempt to leave, whereupon the two officials who sat by me grabbed me by the shoulders, and in doing so each put one foot on the seat. On being handled, I am sorry to say, I fairly lost control of myself, and the consequence was both these officials went flying over the back of the seat amongst the people standing behind. We made for the door, but it was blocked by armed marines. At this point the interpreter appealed to

us not to make a disturbance, and they would only ask us to do one thing more. Calming down somewhat, and recognizing I had been very foolish to lose my temper, I apologized for my roughness, and we resumed our seats.

“Will you acknowledge that you have received notice that you are not to hunt in Japanese waters, as it is prohibited by the Japanese Government?” I replied: “Certainly; why did you not ask this at first, instead of keeping us all here for hours, making us lose half a day’s fine hunting weather?”

After signing the document, the Governor said through the interpreter: “You may now go to your vessel, but you must leave the coast at once.” “Thank you,” I replied; “so you do not intend to take us to Hakodate?” “No, not this time.” We then returned on board the schooner, which was anchored near by; and a light breeze having sprung up, we got under way and stood out to sea.

We afterwards learned that before coming to us the Governor and his party had fallen in with an American schooner, the *Sanborn*, had taken eleven skins from her, and towed her out to sea. She gave up hunting, and sailed back to San Francisco. In those days, in dealing with the Japanese, there was nothing like being strenuous. If you were only sufficiently persistent, you could nearly always gain your point, as I proved on several occasions. Later on we heard that the *Capron* boarded some other hunting vessels, but without effecting very much, except to cause them to avoid running into places where they were likely to meet the steamer again, a plan followed by ourselves.

One night in August, about nine o’clock, we were



running down the coast of Yetorup with a fresh westerly breeze; the weather was perfectly clear, the stars shining brightly. When abreast of "Jap Bay" we sighted a steamer's lights in the bay, and immediately after a gun was fired, and we could make out the vessel standing towards us. We thought we were being chased, and gave the schooner all the sail we could get on her, easing off the sheets to her best sailing point. On came the steamer, still apparently following us. We then ran off and jibed over, standing up to the north-eastward. To our relief, this manœuvre shook off our pursuer, as we thought, and she passed away out of sight to the southward. An explanation was forthcoming later on; she had not even seen us. It was customary in those days for a Japanese vessel carrying mails to fire a gun whenever she arrived at or departed from a port, and this steamer had been following the practice on leaving Onebetsu for Hakodate just as we happened to be passing.

We continued hunting a short time after this incident, and then made up our minds to return to Hakodate. We had 143 large and a number of small skins on board, and we expected to arrive at our destination about August 24. We had been on the hunting-grounds for eighty-two days, out of which sixty-five had been foggy. One reason of our early return was that my companion A. wanted to make sure of getting home to England early in December, whilst I had determined to refit and return, and hunt through the winter if feasible.

Our troubles, however, were not yet over. Fate in the form of a typhoon lay in wait for us. We had been running before an increasing gale all day,

and as we approached Tsugaru Strait it blew with almost hurricane force. We kept on before it under small sail, heading for the middle of the strait, until we dared run no longer, and, watching for an opportunity, brought the vessel to the wind. The foresheet was hauled well in, the wheel put halfway down and lashed in that position, and we "lay to" under a close-reefed foresail. The full force of the wind then fell upon us; a mountainous sea was running, heavy driving rain-squalls struck us, and the night was black as Erebus. It was impossible to stand on deck without holding on to something. To get along the deck we had to crawl, hauling ourselves along by the rigging, the rail, and ropes. But the *Snowdrop* was a grand sea-boat, and she rode the seas like a gull, taking very little water on board. We reckoned we were somewhere about the middle of the strait, and nearly up to Low Island. Being pretty well tired out, and knowing we were comparatively safe unless we hit something, I took the opportunity to go below to lie down, and soon dropped off to sleep. I was awakened by my friend A., who urged me to turn out, as the foresail had blown all to pieces with a sudden shift of wind, and we were being driven towards the land.

Having no sail on, we were rolling tremendously. Clad only in pyjamas and a pair of rubber boots, I went on deck. It was still intensely dark, but the tops of the combing seas, apparently higher than our mast-heads, could be made out, as they thundered towards us; the schooner rose to them like a duck, and no heavy water came on board, but our drift was considerable, every huge sea appearing to drive us many fathoms. The wind had got to the north-

west, with no sign yet of "letting up." About 3 a.m. we could hear the roar of the breakers under our lee, and could just make out the loom of high land. I called the men aft, told them we should in all probability be driven ashore, and they must look out for themselves; but before that happened we should try and stand off by hoisting the close-reefed mainsail and fore-stay sail, and they were to "stand by" ready to run it up as soon as the word was given; further, it had to go up with a run, without being allowed to slat, or it would be blown to pieces.

We waited as long as we dared before doing this, in order to give the wind a chance to lull, as we thought it would when we got fairly close in, and not blow "home" to the high land. The looked-for lull came when we were within about a quarter of a mile of the beach, as near as we could guess; then the word was given, and the sails went up like a flash, all hands being at the halliards. The little vessel behaved splendidly, heading up and hanging for a few moments, and then she began to move through the water. On easing the sheets she gradually forged ahead, and, knowing the coast trended away from us farther down, we kept her going easy. With the first signs of dawn the wind moderated, and soon afterwards we were able to shake out a reef. Daylight revealed the strait full of floating timber, with half a dozen large dismasted and capsized junks in sight. We passed close by two, but there appeared to be no one left on board; they had probably been laden with the timber which was all around us. Away to the south was a topsail schooner with fore-topmast, jib-boom, and bowsprit

gone. Some hours later our old friend of the Kuril Islands, the gunboat *Osaka Kan*, passed us, bound for Hakodate, with two of her masts gone and much damage about the decks. Not having a spare foresail, we set a spare fore-staysail and jib between our fore and main masts, and headed for Hakodate, which port we reached next day, thankful to have saved ourselves and our vessel, including the spoils of the hunt. The storm had caused the loss of many ships, hundreds of native craft, and a considerable number of lives. It had passed from one end of Japan to the other, Nagasaki suffering severely.

On arrival in Hakodate, I found that the Consul had not received my letter from Nemuro, or any word of our having been there. I therefore wrote out a report and a claim for damages, which I handed in. The crew were paid off, and the skins shipped to Europe. The British Minister, Sir Harry Parkes, happened to be in Hakodate on a visit at this time, so I took the opportunity to call on him and inform him what had happened when we called in at Nemuro, and also of our adventure with the *Capron Maru*. Sir Harry said he would see the Governor of Hakodate about it, and informed me there had been some correspondence with the Japanese authorities about hunting vessels, and that they had been warned not to interfere with any British vessel without very good cause. He asked me to call on him again in a couple of days' time. I did so, when he informed me that he had seen the Governor, who expressed his regret and said that it was all owing to some mistake, and he would have all the *Swallow's* things sent down to Hakodate at once.

This, I assured Sir Harry, was quite satisfactory, whereupon he said he presumed I did not wish to push the claim I had sent in, as the Japanese had been very good to me when I was dismasted off Sendai the previous year. I replied that I had only put in the claim in order to make my protest against the action of the Nemuro people more emphatic. Sir Harry was leaving Hakodate for Yokohama the next day, so he requested me to call on him when I got to Yokohama, and let him know how things went.

Sir Harry, as is well known, was a strenuous man, and that no doubt accounted for the quick decision of the Governor in the matter, so utterly unlike the usual Japanese style of doing things. No sooner had Sir Harry departed than I was sent for by the Consul, who informed me the Governor had called on him, and said he was very sorry, but he was afraid there were no means of getting my gear at Nemuro brought down, but if I would go there with the schooner he would see that I got it. This, I informed the Consul, was out of the question, Nemuro being some 500 miles or so away in the opposite direction to that in which I was bound. Then more parleys took place, and finally I said I should be satisfied if the stuff was sent down whenever opportunity offered, and left it at that. During the next six months or so some of it turned up. On my return to Yokohama I reported to Sir Harry what had taken place. He listened with a smile, and I am inclined to think he had had a shrewd suspicion of what would happen after his departure.

Both my friends had had enough of sea-otter

hunting, so I took over their interests, and then sailed for Yokohama, intending to refit there, and sail again for the north as soon as possible. The run down to Yokohama was an uneventful one, and our arrival in port ended my second sea-otter hunting venture. It had been in a way a great improvement on the first, but still left much to be desired.

## CHAPTER VI

### SHIPWRECKED ON YETORUP

My third sea-otter hunt commenced on November 18, 1874, when the *Snowdrop*, after refitting and making every preparation for a winter's cruise in the cold and boisterous north, sailed from Yokohama.

For a week after leaving we had very mild weather, and then ran into cold water, the temperature dropping below freezing-point. About 2 a.m. on Friday, the 27th, we were between the islands of Shikotan and Yetorup, when the hook of the mast-head block of the main peak halliards carried away, and down came the sail. It was very dark and intensely cold, with an increasing north-west wind accompanied by snow and sleet, every drop of spray that came on board turning to ice immediately. We were under mainsail and jib only at the time, so the foresail was hoisted, and we set about getting another block up. The men aloft had a cold job, the block having finally to be fixed with a lashing round the mast-head. By daylight it was blowing a whole gale, and we had to "heave to" under a double-reefed foresail. After noon the weather moderated, and we reached our old anchorage in "Jap Bay" at two o'clock the next day. The skipper and I went on shore, and interviewed some

officials of the Kaitakushi who were stationed at Onebetsu. Onebetsu, I may mention, is a fishing-station, and consisted at that time of an Ainu grass house, a wooden storehouse, and a wood pile. Three Japanese had been sent to superintend the otter-hunting, and were supposed to go out in the boats themselves, which they seldom did, however, leaving it to the Ainu and a Japanese who had been a sailor on one of the foreign hunting vessels. They used short Spencer carbines for hunting, poor weapons for the work. They said they had seen no other vessel on the coast, and that their instructions were to warn vessels not to hunt within the three-mile limit. We told them we should leave as soon as we had repaired our damage and had a suitable breeze. We did not get away for several days, as there was too much wind outside. Our Japanese friends on their daily visits appeared to appreciate foreign food immensely, and were not at all anxious for us to leave.

On December 3 we went out and killed one otter. The weather, however, was quite unfit for hunting, and, the wind strengthening, we were compelled to return to the schooner. By midnight the wind increased to a gale, and we had to get under way and seek better shelter on the farther side of the bay. It was necessary to make one tack, but owing to our being under reefed sails in a heavy sea, and our anchor buoy, a log of wood, in spite of efforts to clear it, being foul of our keel, we could not "go about." There was no room "to wear," so we had to let go both anchors and trust to riding out the gale. At times the seas broke right over the bows, great masses of water sweeping from one end



of the schooner to the other ; but she held on bravely, and, the wind shifting to the north-east and then to the north after daylight, we were able to pick up our anchors and stand over to our old anchorage again.

The wind then shifted to the north-west and blew with terrific force. Sleet and snow fell, and everything became iced up. Several inches of ice lay on the deck, and all our running and standing rigging became doubled in size with ice frozen hard. The ropes would not run through the blocks, the sails were like boards, and it was impossible to get sail on the vessel and put to sea. She soon commenced to drag her anchors, and, as we were in danger of being carried on to a reef off the point, where the seas were breaking 40 or 50 feet high, we deemed it prudent to slip our cables and let the schooner go up on the beach, which was somewhat steep and covered with big masses of rock and boulders. Before slipping, the crew were told what was decided upon, and to look out for themselves when she struck. We cut the lashings of our boats, and then slipped our cables. I threw off my outer clothing and boots, and with a short piece of rope took a turn round my body and the main rigging. A tremendous sea carried the schooner right over the first line of breakers, and then she bumped heavily, successive seas washing over her and lifting her higher up the beach. Her rudder was knocked up through the stern, a big hole made in her bilge, her fore-foot and false keel carried away, and other minor damage done. A weaker vessel would have gone to pieces with such a pounding, but the *Snow-drop* was built as strongly as a "man-of-war."

The second mate, the cook, and three of the men, were washed or jumped overboard when the seas swept over us, suffering only a few bruises in getting ashore. With their aid we soon had lines ashore, and landed blankets, clothing, and other stores. The second mate and one sailor came on board again on the line, but the others failed and made their way down to the Ainu house, about a mile distant. All were more or less frost-bitten about the hands and feet. I remained on board the vessel. She was lying over at an angle of about 40 degrees, and was half full of water. About midnight the tide had fallen, and the heavy seas only struck us occasionally. Fagged out, we tried to get some rest whilst awaiting daylight; so I turned into my bunk, which had fortunately remained dry. The sky had cleared, and the stars were now shining so that it was fairly light. On the reef running off the point, about a quarter of a mile from us, the seas were breaking as heavily as ever. The skipper, who had imbibed somewhat freely, no doubt to try and keep the cold out, and who when under such influence was inclined to be talkative, was fascinated by the enormous breakers, and annoyed me considerably by repeatedly asking me to go on deck to look at them, while congratulating himself that we had not been carried on to the reef amongst them. I stood it for a while, but eventually put an effective stop to his ranting, and got some rest.

After daybreak the Ainu and Japanese from Onebetsu came down to us, when we saved many things from the vessel. Some of our stores, such as rice and potatoes, were spoiled, but we secured, among other things, all our clothes, bedding, rifles,

ammunition, and, what proved a great blessing, all our books, chessmen, draughts, and cards. Boats, sails, and other tackle, were also got on shore, and most of our things put in the storehouse. Had means been available, the vessel could have been repaired without much trouble and got off, but, unfortunately, there were no suitable workmen or tools with which to do it. After we had taken up our quarters in the Ainu house, word was sent over to Furebetsu, on the other side of the island, where the Governor lived.

The wind continued to blow from the north-west for the next three days, with snow-squalls at intervals, but we worked every day, getting our salvaged gear down to the storehouse. On December 10 the Governor arrived. He took down all particulars of the wreck, and I made a formal application in writing for assistance to get the vessel repaired if possible. He appeared quite willing to assist, and said there were a carpenter and blacksmith living in Furebetsu, who, though they knew very little of their business, would be placed at our service. After the Governor's visit we received the second in command and the doctor; then the chief merchant of the island, whose headquarters were at Furebetsu, and another official. We entertained them right royally on our foreign stores and liquors, which they appreciated so highly that a big inroad was made upon them. All but the Governor drank like fishes.

All the coolies on the island were in the employ of Mr. Ebeko, a merchant owning the principal fishing-stations on the island. He promised that sixty coolies would come across next day in order to pack our provisions and whatever else we required,

and take them over to Furebetsu. Only about forty turned up, and it was not until about eleven o'clock next morning that they made a start, each one carrying a load. Our party did not get off until after noon. The road lay along the beach for about a mile, then up on to a bluff with level land for about five miles in a north-westerly direction, thence to Furebetsu over hills and valleys for another six miles or so. With so many people passing along the track, the snow had been trampled down fairly hard, so that walking was easy. We straggled in from four to five o'clock. After a hot bath and some Japanese food we turned in, feeling pretty tired. We had an ordinary Japanese house to live in, consisting of three large rooms, including one for cooking. We four Europeans had a ten-mat room; the cook and steward had another in which our cooking-stove, brought over from the wreck, was set up; and the Japanese crew had the third. A big bath-tub was built for us, and we were well provided with wood and charcoal.

Furebetsu was then a small village of about fifteen Japanese houses, a few Ainu huts, and a number of small wooden go-downs for fish and other stores. It lies in a narrow valley on a small stream which flows into the harbour. Right across the mouth of the valley is a high wooden loop-holed wall, built of heavy logs. The harbour is formed by a small indentation of the coast, with a reef of rocks extending from the southern point of the bight. There is a depth of from 4 to 14 fathoms inside, but only room for two or three small vessels. On the hill above the village I came across a couple of old dismantled guns. The people of the village had little

or nothing to occupy them at that time of year except the cutting of firewood. A great deal of drinking was indulged in. Japanese saké was plentiful, and the coolies and others had no difficulty in getting all they wanted on credit, payment being deducted from their earnings later on when the fishing season commenced.

About Christmas-time the people were busy making *mochi* for the New Year. The making of this stuff formed quite a ceremony. Into several large wooden mortars made out of tree-stumps boiled rice was put, and six men stood around each mortar, pounding the rice with heavy wooden mallets, while one man turned and wetted the mass. This turning and wetting job is a dangerous one for the man's hand, as the mallets follow each other with great rapidity in the pounding process. Time was kept by a drum, a fife, bells, and a hollow muffin-shaped metal instrument. The drummer was an old blind man, who plied his drumstick with intense vim, and in his excitement gave vent, every now and then, to a yell like that of a Scottish reel-dancer, whilst the fifer would stop playing and go through a dancing performance, keeping time with the pounders. The scene was a most animated one, thoroughly enjoyed by everybody. It went on all night and part of the next day, as they were making *mochi* for all.

Christmas Day we celebrated by having a special dinner. We had saved a joint of fresh beef, taken on board the schooner in Yokohama seven weeks before, and it had been frozen and was in prime condition. The mate had been fortunate enough to shoot a duck, so, with some potatoes, cakes, rolls,

and a gooseberry tart, we made up a very fair Christmas feast.

Our indoor amusements consisted chiefly of reading and chess. We had also cards and draughts. All our reading matter—about 120 volumes—had, fortunately, been saved, and proved one of our greatest boons. It would have been difficult to pass the time without them. On fine days I usually went out with my gun, but there was very little to shoot, nearly all the birds having migrated to warmer climes. Occasionally we got a sea-duck of a sort, or a merganser, or a peregrine falcon, and, needless to say, they all went into the pot. Falcon makes excellent curry, quite as good as chicken. One day, in following up a fox, I nearly met with an accident in trying to climb a cliff. The slope was covered with ice and snow, and from below looked negotiable, so I worked my way up by zigzagging, and nearly got to the top, when I began to slip. Right below me, at a short distance, was a perpendicular drop of about 60 feet or more to the beach. I was carrying my shot-gun, both barrels at full cock, as I expected to get a shot at the fox the moment I put my head above the top of the bluff. As I slipped I threw the gun across my arms, and, lying on my stomach, dug my fingers, knees, and toes, into the ground; still I slipped, tearing my knees out, and also my gloves, and breaking off my finger-nails down to the quick. Within two or three feet of the edge I luckily held on, and, edging off sideways, I got to where it sloped again, and let myself slide down to the beach. The fox took a look at me over the edge of the bluff, but I concluded I had no use for him.

My skipper T. was a youngish man, and very fond of practical jokes (except when played upon himself). A number of dogs roamed about the village, ownerless and otherwise. One old Ainu lady had half a dozen or more, and nothing pleased our skipper more than to entice some of these up to our quarters, and then, harnessing two together with straw rope, tie old tin cans to their tails, and send them careering through the village, yelling and howling and raising a terrible racket. All the other dogs would join in ; the old lady would run out of her house when she heard the rumpus, and release the dogs from their encumbrances, slanging the skipper in a high-pitched voice.

The Governor had a couple of good-sized pigs, and on one occasion T. put two of these dogs into the pig-pen. They began to worry the pigs, and bit one so severely that it had to be killed to save its life, as the Irishman said. The Governor sent down to us, and, explaining that some of the village dogs had got into his pig-pen and bitten one pig so badly that he wanted someone to kill and dress it, asked if either our cook or steward understood anything about butchering. At the same time he sent a man out with a rifle, with orders to shoot all the ownerless dogs, and a number were killed. Fortunately he knew nothing of T. being the cause of the mischief. Our darkey steward killed and dressed the pig, and our reward was a fine leg of pork.

Various other foolish antics were indulged in by T. He caught a tartar at last in the form of one of the Governor's servants, an Ainu nurse-girl who looked after the Governor's children. T. was constantly teasing and playing practical jokes on this

girl, and one day she "lay" for him. He began his usual pranks, when she suddenly turned on him, striking him hard in the face with a branch of a tree in half a dozen places at once, and taking off several pieces of skin. He let her alone after that.

One morning about this time I found tracks in the freshly-fallen snow near our house, which appeared to be much larger than those of a dog. The natives declared them to be tracks of a wolf which had come down from the hills during the night. After breakfast I took my rifle and followed up the track for some miles, but, getting tired of tramping through the snow, returned to the house. The second mate R. then borrowed my rifle, and started on the same quest, returning in the evening fagged out. The story he told was this: He had followed the tracks for miles over the hills, and finally down to a valley, where, amongst some trees, he caught sight of the wolf, stalked and shot it, and found it was a fine beast, light grey in colour, and weighed some 50 or 60 pounds. He slung it across his shoulders, intending to bring it to the village; but it was a heavy load to pack through the snow, and he was tempted many times to abandon it. Eventually he met some Ainu, who on seeing him broke into roars of laughter. He thereupon threw off his burden, and discovered that he had not shot a wolf at all, but a big Ainu dog belonging to a small Ainu settlement some few miles away. I saw the dead animal afterwards, and I must confess the man could hardly be blamed for mistaking it for a wolf. It was a beautiful beast, fat, in splendid condition, with a handsome coat of fur. There was no trouble about the killing of this dog; it was looked



upon as a good joke. The natives of the island make no practical use of their dogs.

On New Year's Eve our old merchant friend, Mr. Ebeko, brought us a tub of Japanese saké and some *mochi*. There was no sleep for anyone until the New Year had been ushered in; it is the Japanese custom. New Year's Day itself was spent in making calls and being called upon. The quantity of saké consumed was enormous, all the male population being more or less intoxicated, but good-natured withal. Just as we commenced dinner, old Mr. Ebeko and several of his assistants called on us. We asked them to join us, which they did with avidity, and our roast pork disappeared like magic. To begin with, the old merchant emptied the whole of the contents of our butter-dish into his soup, and ate it. Later on the Governor and all the officials returned our call of the morning, and we filled them up with "Old Tom," chocolate, tinned fruits, and similar delicacies. As the New Year festivities were kept up for several days, big inroads were made into our stores, and short-commons were threatened.

The weather now became very severe; everything that could be was frozen. Preserves, vinegar, sauces, and ink, froze solid. High winds with snow-storms prevailed, and we sat around the charcoal brazier all day in our overcoats. One day whilst we were all huddled round the brazier, T. dropped a loaded Spencer cartridge into the fire; everybody jumped away, of course, and the cartridge exploded, sending the brass shell into the ceiling, and the charcoal all over the matted room. T. then realized the madness of what he had done, and started to pick up the red-hot pieces, and put them back in

the brazier. I am glad to say he burnt his fingers considerably in doing so. The house was a very cold one; on the front side of our room there was nothing between us and the elements but paper, and in this there were many holes. At night we used to pile up the brazier with charcoal, and turn into bed clad in our overcoats. In the morning congealed ice appeared on the blankets where we breathed. My moustache and beard stuck together, so that I could not open my mouth until I had crushed the ice with my fingers. However, we all enjoyed excellent health. What the temperature was I could not tell, as our thermometer did not register lower than 12° F., and the mercury disappeared within the bulb.

On January 5 I started with seven sailors, Mr. Kono, and two of his men, to go to Onebetsu to bring over some rice and other stores from the supplies left there. The snow was so deep that it was necessary to don Ainu moccasins and snow-shoes. The moccasins are made of dried salmon-skin, with a narrow band of sealskin round the top; they reach to just below the knee, where they are tied with strings; a bunch of dried grass is placed inside the bottom for the foot to rest upon. They are comfortable, dry, and warm. The snow-shoes are made of two U-shaped pieces of wood, lashed firmly together. A strip of seal or sea-lion skin is crossed over four times for the ball of the foot to rest upon, the remaining parts of the lashing being crossed over the instep, round the back of the foot above the heel, and under the ankle-bones, and fastened in front. They are of considerable help where the snow is fairly firm or has

been partly trampled down ; in soft snow they are useless.

We found the schooner at Onebetsu as we left her. The next day it blew a gale, with heavy snow from the north-west, so we had to remain in the Ainu house all day, and suffered frightfully from the wood smoke getting into our eyes, making them smart and run with water. On the 7th we got things ready for the men to pack across. We started at 10.30 a.m., but the road was very bad, causing us to sink up to our knees in many places, notwithstanding our snow-shoes. Mr. Kono, two men, and I, arrived at 5.45 p.m., having been seven and a quarter hours doing the twelve and a half miles. Half an hour later five of my men turned up ; two others did not come in at all that night, but, as they were carrying blankets, we did not think any harm would come to them. Next morning the men I sent out to seek for the missing sailors found them under a snow-drift. They had lost the path in the darkness, and thought it better to turn in under the snow and await daylight. They appeared none the worse, but it was fortunate they happened to be the men carrying the blankets.

We had to send to Onebetsu on other occasions also for rice and various things, and the journeys were never agreeable. On the return from a trip we made on January 18 we had a very unpleasant experience. Our party consisted of the Governor, the mate, the darkey steward, six sailors, and myself. We arrived at Onebetsu about 2.30 p.m., and put up the rice and other things into convenient-sized packages ready for the morrow. The next morning we sent the men off with the packages, and the rest of us then went down to the schooner, only to find

that she had been damaged beyond repair by recent heavy gales and high seas. We started to return to Furebetsu soon after noon. Crossing the river, the mate went through the ice up to his thighs, and the Governor went through with one leg. On arrival at the bluff, where the track leaves the beach for the high land, we found our sailors, who had not been able to strike the path owing to the deep snow. The Governor found it, and we proceeded, reaching the halfway hut about half-past four. It was difficult to keep to the track owing to the "blazes" on the trees marking it being covered up with snow. The sailors, unable to proceed, remained in the hut until the morning. The Governor, mate, steward, one sailor, and myself, pushed on. About an hour later we lost the track, and at every step sank up to our waists through the snow which covered the *sasa* (bamboo grass). The snow having obliterated all traces of the road, we kept facing the wind, which when we started was north-west, the direction in which we wished to go. Later we found the wind had shifted to about west, and consequently we were heading for the coast on the other side, some miles below Furebetsu. The steward was carrying a rifle in a wooden case; I shouldered a large canvas bag with some clothes and our last two bottles of "Old Tom." The poor old darkey was almost played out, and we had constantly to wait for him to come up.

It was a heart-breaking journey. The snow-shoes kept catching in the *sasa*, thus adding to the difficulty we had in lifting our feet. We progressed at the rate of only about half a mile an hour. About 1 a.m. we came to the edge of the plain, with valleys several hundred feet below us, and the sea in the distance.

Here we relieved the steward and the sailor of their burdens, placing them in a conspicuous tree, so that they could easily be found again. We now descended into the valley, crossed it, and climbed up on the other side ; it was terribly tiring work, but we finally reached the coast, and found ourselves about three miles below Furebetsu. The land hereabouts ran out in high bluffs to the sea, with no beach along which we could walk. We now had to cross several deep gullies with steep sides ; sliding down to the bottom was easy, but the climb up the other side was most difficult ; we would often get halfway up, and then come sliding down again to the bottom. Needless to say, we still carried the two bottles of "Old Tom," but inside of us instead of outside.

Although some of us were somewhat frost-bitten, we did not feel the cold. An intense desire to take just a few moments' sleep possessed us all at times, particularly when we fell. It appeared to me on such occasions, that if I could be let alone and allowed to sleep for just five minutes I should be all right again. Of course we kept each other going, and finally arrived at the village soon after three o'clock in the morning. We had been fifteen hours struggling through the snow, were all thoroughly played out, and could scarcely crawl into the house. The last six miles had taken us ten hours to accomplish.

About ten o'clock next morning our five sailors turned up. After we left them at the halfway hut they made a fire, and turned in to sleep. During the night they piled on too much wood ; the place caught fire, and was burned to the ground.

Except for a slight stiffness, none of us was apparently the worse for the fatiguing journey across

the island. On going out that morning, we found the ice had set in on the coast, the sea being covered as far as could be seen from the hill. We sent out an Ainu to find and bring in our rifle and the other goods left in the tree on the edge of the plain, but he returned without them. The steward and an Ainu next day went out, and brought in the rifle and rice. The Ainu, knowing the country, followed a much easier route than ours, but it took them from early morning until half-past two to get to the place and back again.

Wood-cutting in the hills was now in full swing, the cut-up wood being brought down into the village on sledges. These sledges were made of five pieces of wood—namely, two runners turned up at one end, two cross-pieces, and a shaft fastened to the cross-pieces, and projecting several feet beyond the runners. Both the Ainu men and women worked hard, commencing very early, and keeping at it all day. The sleighing was done chiefly by the Ainu women and girls, and it afforded us lots of fun helping (?) them. Where there was a fair slope, the sleigh with its load, including those in charge all piled on to it, was allowed to slide without any control, and it slid at a great pace until it fetched up at the bottom of the incline. Sometimes the whole thing would capsize, and wood and riders be upset in the snow, causing great fun to the Ainu girls, who were a merry, happy lot, notwithstanding the hard work and small pay.

The village bell, if I may so call it, sounds before daylight, rousing everyone to breakfast, so that they can be at work as soon as day dawns. About ten o'clock it sounds again, and another meal is taken,

the third meal of the day being served between three and four in the afternoon. This "bell" is a slab of hard wood hung in the open on a built-up wooden stand with a roof over it. It is struck with a wooden mallet. One hundred blows are first given, commencing slowly, then increasing in rapidity up to the hundredth, when the hour is slowly and deliberately struck, with equal intervals between the strokes. Thus, it serves as a clock as well as to rouse the inhabitants in the morning and to call them to meals.

The Ainu, both men and women, are not blessed with many changes of clothes; those they wear are not taken off at night, and the consequence may be imagined. During the midday rest the women-folk organize hunting-parties, and, from what I saw, they appeared to have fairly good sport, the game being eaten as soon as caught. On one occasion of the kind, about a dozen women and girls were resting, sitting on a bank in the bright sunshine; a hunt was on, each one having a companion standing behind her, and carefully searching the hair of her head. Every now and then "something" would be taken from amongst the hair, and put into the hand of the girl whose head was being exploited, as she held it palm upwards over her shoulder. This "something" would be instantly put into the mouth, then a movement of the jaws, and I suppose all was over. I watched this for some little while, and then said to one of the girls in Japanese, "What dirty girls you are, to eat those things!" to which one of the "hunters" replied, "Oh, they are good, all the same as American sugar; just you try—here is a big one," holding out her hand to me. This

was greeted with peals of laughter from them all. I noticed that the game was not distributed ; each one appeared to be entitled to all that was taken in her own preserves.

When the harbour froze over, the Ainu women made holes through the ice for the purpose of catching fish. They used no bait, but a lure made of grass, a piece of red rag, and some glittering object, such as a piece of shell or glass. This was attached to a line, and moved up and down in the water ; the fish followed it up to near the surface, and were secured by spearing, a barbed fork-headed spear being used. Sculpins and a sort of rock-cod were caught, but in small numbers. I understood the natives to say the fish would not take bait at that time. With the wind blowing off shore, the ice would open up, leaving lanes of clear water, or if the wind lasted long enough it would be blown off out of sight. With a shift of wind the ice would be brought in again, and pack solidly all along the coast. It was all blown off on March 14, and the sea remained clear for some time. On April 18 it beset the coast again for a week, the last of it for that season in the neighbourhood of Furebetsu.

During the first week of April preparations were made for cod-fishing, and on the 11th the first fish were taken. We were glad to get some fresh fish, as our foreign provisions had practically given out, and we were reduced to a diet consisting chiefly of salt salmon and rice ; a little flour that was left we eked out by mixing it with ground-up barley and rice. We converted the barley and rice into flour by grinding it in a stone handmill. The bread made of this mixture was hard and heavy, but it was a



change from boiled rice at every meal. A barrel of biscuit, in reserve at Onebetsu, we found had been broached, and the contents stolen.

Water-fowl were now becoming more plentiful, and we succeeded in getting some mallard and teal ; also some fresh trout, frozen into the ice. The natives say that when the ice melts in the streams these fish are still alive, and appear none the worse for having been frozen up. Swans were to be found on the lakes, in the patches of open water where streams ran into them. I tried to secure some, but failed to get a shot ; some ducks, however, were a welcome addition to our meagre larder. Bears were reported to be out ; two or three had been seen, and some tracks were observed close to the village. The Ainu succeeded in shooting one and capturing a cub. They sent us some of the meat, which proved excellent eating.

On March 21 we heard that the Japanese had found some foreigners near the south-western end of the island, who had landed for the purpose of hunting. The Governor appeared annoyed to find we had been told this. He left next day for the place, and refused my request to be allowed to go with him, nor would he take a letter. We learned that nearly 300 sea-otters had been taken during the winter, chiefly on the ice when it set in on the coast of the south-east side of the island. On the Governor's return he told us there were five Europeans and two Japanese in the party landed, which originally consisted of nine, but two Europeans belonging to the schooner *Jupiter* had been drowned by the capsizing of their boat. They had killed five sea-lions and two foxes, but no otters. They were

landed on February 22, and their vessel left for Shikotan with only two hands on board.

On April 26 we heard that some foreigners had been found living ashore at the north-east end of the island, and that they were being brought down to Furebetsu. The following day the skipper and I went over to Onebetsu, and on reaching the bluff overlooking the bay we were gladdened by the sight of a schooner becalmed outside, but evidently bound into the bay. She proved to be the *Fanny* of San Francisco. From the people on board I got all the later news, and, what was more substantial, a good square meal, a thing I had not enjoyed for many weeks. The hot coffee, hot rolls, excellent butter, corned beef, pork and beans, soup, fresh fish, pie—good American pie!—were all delicious. I told our story, and the captain offered to make room for our mate if he cared to ship with him.

The next morning the skipper and I went on board, and remained until evening. Coming back, only the two of us, T. and myself, were in the boat, and T. had accepted the hospitality of the *Fanny* to such an extent that he was in one of his talkative moods, and not over-steady on his legs. As a high swell was setting in, we had to get through two or three lines of breakers, which extended out about 150 yards on a shoal. The bottom being wavy, the sea broke on the shoals, which were wide apart, and, in order to negotiate them without being capsized, it was necessary to be very careful and keep the boat "end on." I suggested that one of us should face the stern, the better to see when the swell was coming, and "back" or "pull" as was required; but before this could be put in practice an extra

heavy swell came along, breaking farther out than it had been doing, and turning the boat over on the top of us. We struggled out and held on to the keel. T. threw off his coat and made for the shore. I got on to the bottom of the capsized boat, and was nearly washed off several times. As I did not want to lose the boat, I called out to T. as he swam ashore to get some men and launch the other boat, and come and pick me up. Becoming terribly cold, and no sign of the other boat appearing, I was just about to throw off my clothes and swim for it, when my rescuers appeared. On getting ashore we were chilled to the bone, and even within dry clothes it was two hours before the warmth of our bodies returned, our teeth chattering like castanets all the time.

I then let the mate know that the *Fanny* was in the bay, and that Captain Worth had offered to ship him. He, of course, was only too glad of a chance to get employment and leave the island, so he packed up at once and left for Onebetsu, in spite of the Governor's objections. In matters of this kind the Japanese have extraordinary ideas. One would think they would have welcomed an opportunity to get rid of people, situated as we were. On the contrary, certain regulations and instructions must be carried out to the letter, which meant, in our case, keeping us all until we could be sent down to one of the open ports of Japan and delivered over to the British Consul. Time is, or was then, of no importance to a Japanese, who cannot understand why it should make any difference whether a thing is done at once, next day, next week, or next year.

In exchange for some rope and Spencer car-

tridges, I got a supply of beef, pork, flour, sugar, butter, coffee, ham, and biscuit; so for the rest of our stay on the island we fared sumptuously. On May 1 we returned to Furebetsu. On the way I noticed large numbers of wild-geese passing over.

The natives were now busy cod-fishing. They use small hooks without any barb, and 100 of these are attached to a long line by short lengths of other line, tied on at intervals of about 2 feet. The line is paid out from a boat, one end being buoyed, and allowed to lie along the bottom for some time. It is then hauled up, and the fish caught taken off the hooks. Off Furebetsu they fished in a depth of 60 fathoms of water. Each boat only got about twenty to twenty-five a day, but farther down the coast one boat would take from 100 to 150. Skate, rock-cod, and several other kinds of fish, were taken when fishing for cod. The cod were split up the back and belly, the backbone taken out, the head cut off, and then strung up over poles and dried in the sun. They were then tied up in bundles and shipped south to Japan.

On May 11 word came from Onebetsu that the *Capron*, now renamed the *Karafuto Maru*, had arrived, and would leave in about six days. The Governor and other officials went across, and returned on the 13th, bringing me some letters from Hakodate, the news of the loss of our schooner having been reported by the schooner *Lottie*.

On the 15th the party that had wintered in Bear Bay, at the north-east end of the island, arrived, consisting of a hunter named Runyon and three men. They had fifty-three sea-otter skins, all salted. We acted as interpreters in the negotiations

that took place between the officials and these men. The story they told was that they had been left on the island in the late autumn by the schooner *Otsego*, to hunt during the winter. The schooner was to return in April and take them away again. I learned privately from the *Fanny's* people that they had been commissioned to call in at Bear Bay and take them off, as the *Otsego* was not coming over this year, but they were two days too late. The officials would not seize their skins, but tried very hard to induce them to give them up voluntarily. This they refused to do, and kept possession of them. Eventually they sold the skins in Hakodate. Runyon the hunter reported that the winter in Bear Bay had been very severe, north-east winds mostly prevailing. No ice came in there until March. They saw numbers of otters, and shot most of their catch on or in between the floating masses of ice.

Taking our baggage, we all left Furebetsu on the morning of May 17 for Onebetsu, and arrived about 1 p.m. Nothing had been put on board the steamer pending the Governor's appearance. The Ainu house and the storehouse were both full up with people from the steamer, so that there was neither place to sit down in nor anything to eat. We had got wet through up to the thighs in fording the river, but could get no change of clothes. Eventually we turned in on some wet sails in a dilapidated shed, and spent a miserable night. Next morning the Japanese attempted to take a large cargo-boat into the river to get water for the steamer. There was considerable surf, and through bad management she went on the rocks, knocking holes

in her bottom. They left her, believing she could not be repaired; but, knowing it was the only boat capable of taking off our heavy things, we Europeans took charge, and got her hauled up, repaired, and afloat again, before dark. Next morning we loaded part of our stuff and sent it on board. On taking a second load alongside, those on board, although the vessel was practically empty, refused to ship it. The boat was sent back, but, after much hard work and wrangling, we got it off again at the last minute, and with great difficulty reached the steamer, the wind and sea having increased considerably. At last everything was got on board, and we sailed for Nemuro. We were put in the " 'tween decks," the Governor being with us.

Our sojourn on Yetorup, taking it " full and by," as Jack says, had under the circumstances been by no means unpleasant. Of course, where people are thrown together for many months in idleness, differences will occasionally arise over very small matters. We were no exception to this rule, but no bad blood was engendered, the differences being soon adjusted, without recourse to lethal weapons, but not without recourse to " arms," loaded, however, with nothing more formidable than fists. The cook and one of our sailors were the first belligerents, fuel being the cause; the mate and the steward were the next, the cause in this instance being what sailors variously term " lip " or " back talk." Then the steward and the cook got to loggerheads, and I happened to overhear what led up to it. The steward, I may mention, was a mulatto who, in his earlier days, had been a slave in the Southern States of America, but had escaped in some vessel, and

had been at sea in various capacities ever since, finally drifting to Yokohama, where he shipped with me. He was a good-natured soul, full of talk, and had all the characteristics of the southern darkey. Our cook was a Chilian.

On the occasion mentioned, the steward was relating to the cook how on one occasion, when he had shipped as a sailor on board a big sailing-ship, they got into a thick fog and nearly ran down another vessel, which they only missed by a few feet. "And where do you think I was at the time, and I never see dat ship," said the darkey. "Oh, I guess you was on de look-out," said the cook. This was too much for the darkey's dignity, and they were soon at it hammer and tongs. They were preparing our dinner at the time, a matter of much more concern to us, so we stepped into the breach and restored peace. Our part of the house did not escape differences. The mate and second mate got into an argument one day about the temperature. The thermometer had fallen so that the quicksilver was all in the bulb; but as the argument proceeded friction was set up, and the temperature increased to such a degree that they had to come to blows before they could cool off. The mate weighed 200 pounds, and the second only about 160 pounds. Weight told.

Before leaving Yetorup I called on and thanked all our Japanese friends, who had certainly been most kind to us, notwithstanding the trying formalities which they, in accordance with official red tape, had to inflict upon us. The Governor in particular had been most considerate. We were excellent friends, and saw a great deal of each other. He was an old Tokugawa retainer. Most of the other

officials were Satsuma men. Only a few years previously, in the Revolution days, they had been in opposite camps, and it was easy to see that the old antipathies had not altogether disappeared, although kept under by the wonderful self-restraint inherent in the Japanese character.

On several occasions, when he was a bit "jolly," the Governor twitted me about the incident on board the *Capron* related in a former chapter, when the two officials (they were Satsuma men) were sent flying over the back of the seat in the *Capron's* cabin. He would stand up, give a heave first with his right arm and shoulder, then with his left, grunting at the same time, and then roar with laughter, saying: "Abunai Snow-san abunai."\* It appeared to amuse him considerably, but I must say I felt somewhat ashamed of the incident.

The theft of 1,500 brass cartridges and 20 pounds of powder was another episode of our stay at Yetorup.

We arrived in Nemuro on the 19th. On the 20th the Government officials put us all through the usual amount of questioning, and then requested us to make, in writing, formal application to be sent to Hakodate. On the 21st, in order to provide food for us Europeans, they slaughtered a bullock. They attempted to kill the poor beast by striking it on the head with a topping mall, which infuriated the animal, and they finally had to shoot it. On the 22nd more inquisitorial proceedings took place at the Government office, when I signed a paper to the effect that I would not hold them responsible for the wreck, or any property left behind, or anything

\* "Take care, take care, Mr. Snow."



stolen, and again applied to be sent to Hakodate. Next day the Governor of Nemuro appeared on the scene, and we were put through the mill again, all the same old questions being asked and the same old answers given. One needs to be a philosopher with the patience of Job to endure Japanese procedure in matters of this kind.

We sailed at last on the morning of the 24th, arriving in Hakodate on the 26th. My friend Captain Blakiston came on board, and invited me to stay with him. On the 28th an inquiry into the loss of the vessel was held at the British Consulate, and a day or two after that the crew were shipped off and affairs were settled up. So ended my third venture. I am glad to say that subsequently the British Government recognized the kindness shown to us during our long stay on the island by the people of Yetorup, and sent presents to the value of £100 to the Governor and a number of others concerned.

In connection with the foreigners, whom I have mentioned as being found by the Japanese, wintering on the south-west end of Yetorup, the following story of them, told by J. C. Werner, and published in a Yokohama paper some years ago, may be found interesting. Poor old Werner was a most melancholy-looking man—a man on whose face I never saw a smile, although he was endowed with a keen sense of humour. A very capable man, a good seaman and navigator, and not afraid of work, he yet never appeared to succeed in anything. He was a specimen of Nature's unlucky ones. His only luck was of a negative kind, for he had served through the American Civil War without being shot, and suffered shipwreck and other maritime misfortunes

without getting drowned. He died in Yokohama as poor as the proverbial church mouse. But to the story :

“It is not necessary,” Werner was reported to have said, “to explain that twenty years ago I was a younger man than I am now, but I may preface the relation of the following dreadful incident by saying that in those days I was fond of adventure, and ready to join almost any enterprise—any, indeed, that promised novelty, excitement, and profitable employment—and the consequence was that one fine day I found myself one of a party of otter-hunters bound for the north. I need not say anything about the voyage, but will proceed to relate our terrible experience on the island of Yetorup, where we had proposed to put in a hunting season in winter. The affair happened in the early days of sea-otter hunting, before Winchester rifles and large hunting-boats had made their advent in those regions, and when, though otters were still numerous, a good muzzle-loader and a steady hand were required to insure success. We were originally two different parties ; we had landed about the same time, but in different places ; and after the Japanese and Ainu had driven us away from our first hunting-quarters, we had consolidated our forces, and had selected a spot inside of Otter Island, inaccessible from the shore, where we had erected a tolerably good shelter with the scanty materials at hand, and which we now occupied in common. The winter was very severe ; the ground was already covered with snow when we landed, and we soon had our house partly embedded in it. The nights and mornings were especially cold, and we had to keep a fire constantly burning to prevent ourselves from

being frozen. Our fire was made in the middle of the hut, with an outlet for the smoke above it in the roof. Surrounding the fire on three sides, the floor was covered with skins of foxes and bears, which served us as seats and beds. We had had considerable trouble with these our nocturnal visitors at first, until we had thinned their ranks with our rifles; now they seldom bothered us. Farther back were our provisions, solid and fluid, ranged on shelves resting on boulders round the sides of the cabin. We had two kegs of powder besides several tins and powder-horns, all inside with the provisions. Our rifles were slung from the rafters. We had landed on the last day of October, and had now arrived at December 24. Our hunting, so far, had been very successful, as we had already 172 skins dried, and six more on the frames; the dried skins being folded up, bundled fifteen together, and sewn up in canvas. The skins on the frames were during the night piled up close to the entrance, and near the fire; during the day they were taken outside to get the benefit of the little sun we occasionally got a glimpse of.

“Our party now consisted of nine persons, all Europeans, young, strong, and fearing neither man nor beast. We had to be up before daylight every day, and after a hasty cup of coffee had to get out in the boats, no matter how fierce it blew, as the water was always smooth, the wind being off shore, and, after pulling for half a mile, land on a cluster of rocks, where the otters generally hauled up during the cold nights, as they could no more stand the cold than we could. Here we had to wait for daylight, and, as soon as we could distinguish anything,

crawl along the slippery, frozen rocks, sometimes on hands and knees, until we got up to the object of our visit, when the struggle would be hard but brief, as a few blows with the butt of the rifle would be sufficient to end the combat. But sometimes the otters would resist with teeth and claws, and our boots would suffer proportionately. Now and then one would escape us altogether by making a dive into the water. Some mornings we got as many as ten otters, and other mornings nothing. Back to camp, where we always skinned the otters as soon as possible, before the heat had left their bodies. Then breakfast, and, if the day was fine, out with the boats hunting round Otter Island, and sometimes as far up as Pinnacle Rocks; but, as we had but a very limited number of fine days, our hunting with the boats did not amount to much. We spent the evenings scraping skins, cleaning rifles, and spinning yarns. We were all in good spirits, as our expedition promised to be a lucrative one, and everything we made belonged to ourselves.

“ So stood affairs on this memorable December 24. The morning had been calm and cloudy, no sun to be seen, and in the afternoon a steady downpour of snow set in, coming in heavy flakes, but, as there was no wind, falling vertically to the earth. We had clubbed one otter in the morning—five had got away from us—and this one we had duly skinned and staked out. We had arranged to celebrate Christmas in good style by a dinner on Christmas Eve, with rum punch and beer *ad libitum*. I must say that we were an abstemious crowd, as we had all kinds of liquor with us, but nobody ever took any advantage of that circumstance. We were all

cooks, and to-day everyone tried to outdo himself. John could cook an otter cutlet to perfection, and Jack, again, could make a sea-parrot (puffin) stew that makes one's mouth water to think about; and so on, everybody having his special dish to concoct—the whole to wind up with a dessert of currant fritters. We did not have many cooking utensils, and consequently the viands had to take their turn in preparation. We had improvised a table—we generally did without one—of a few empty boxes and some boards belonging to the boats, covered with boat-sails, and on it stood now a tempting array of bottles of beer, rum, and gin. Some of the boys had already laid in a good priming in opening the festivities, and tongues were wagging in all directions.

“It was about six o'clock in the evening. All the dishes were ready except the fritters, which were now about to be prepared by the skilful manipulation of Mr.—let us call him Jenkins—who had mixed the dough, and, with a pan of boiling seal-oil before him, was showing us his dexterity in frying them to a turn. I don't know exactly how it began. I believe somebody had insinuated that to immerse the fritters in boiling oil was not the most palatable way to cook them, but that they should be fried with very little fat, and they would then keep their flavour, and not taste so much of the rank seal-oil. Of course Mr. Jenkins, an old experienced cook and seaman, could not stand any nonsense from anybody, and strongly repudiated the idea of anyone making an improvement in his cooking; and while the rest of us were listening to a yarn of how the Mexican otter-hunter, Pelillo, shot seventeen otters standing on two 2-inch planks, while his boat was

paddling round picking them up as fast as he shot them, the two rival cooks got from words to blows, and before they were aware of it they had upset the pot of boiling oil, and, good God! in one moment the whole place was one mass of fire. Tongues of fire seemed to be shooting up everywhere, and licking rafters and beams; fiery serpents springing up suddenly amid lurid flames, and breathing fire; heavy explosions scattering bottles and tins. Our very clothes on us were on fire; it seemed as if we had been thrown into the jaws of hell without a moment's preparation or warning. The shock was so unexpected that we were completely unnerved, but it was only for a second. Collecting our scattered senses, we made a rush and a plunge through the frail sides of the burning cabin, grabbing the first things we got hold of in our hurried exit, and escaped out of the pandemonium. We made but a sorry sight as we gathered around the ruins of our so lately happy home. Curses both loud and deep were heaped upon the two contestants for culinary honours, who now with bowed heads submitted to all the execrations which were bestowed upon them.

“Some of the party even proposed to make this their funeral pyre. Several of us were half naked, and all insufficiently clothed. We stood there, not bemoaning our fate, for, strange to say, dismal jokes were bandied about, and queer comments made on our forlorn condition. With the energy of men accustomed to meet any emergency, after having rescued everything we could, we began to construct a shelter for the night. By heaping up snow and pieces of driftwood under the lee of a neighbouring cliff, and close to the still burning fire, we obtained a roof

over our heads, and by making use of the skins we saved we had good beds ready for us. Of the 172 dried skins, we had lost forty-five completely, and several more or less burned, besides all the skins on the frames. Of our provisions, we had saved a bag of hard bread and a few tins of preserved meat, and part of a keg of rum. Fortunately, we had managed to get the two kegs of powder out before they had ignited and blown all to pieces, but our rifles were gone, and the powder was therefore useless. What were we now going to do? "Take a drink," somebody proposed, which we accordingly did, and I think Gough himself would have taken a drink if he had found himself in a similar fix. We had either to pull around to the Ainu settlement and deliver ourselves up to the Japanese, in which case we would lose our dearly-bought skins, or else wait for the arrival of the schooner; but we could not expect her for some time yet, and in the meantime how were we going to exist? We adopted the latter alternative, after all, and concluded to make ourselves as comfortable as we could. Of pieces of blankets and sails we made enough covering for our bodies, and we kept a good fire going night and day, as we had plenty of driftwood on the beach.

"Next morning we started out as usual on our hunt, and got one otter; but it was dreadfully cold work. No matter how we wrapped up our feet, they were freezing, and constantly reminding us that we had no boots. The weather, too, for the next two days was very bad, snowing and blowing, and we suffered terribly. As long as the keg of rum lasted, we kept our spirits up pretty well, though artificially; but on the 29th we had the last drink,

and that night we went to sleep with heavy hearts.

“It is said that a special Providence watches over drunkards and fools. I don’t know in which category we might have been included, but somebody must be watching over the otter-hunters also, for, as we were sitting on the morning of the 30th, moody and disconsolate over the fire, we perceived a schooner under easy sail about six miles off shore, standing to the north-east and evidently bound for our first hunting-station. With a joyous shout we launched the boats and started out for her. The oars were pulled with a will, and in a short time we were on board of her. It was our own vessel, coming before her time to take us away from the island. As she was well supplied with wood and water, there was nothing to detain her after we had brought our belongings on board, and at noon we were squaring away for Yokohama, wing-and-wing, with a fresh north-east breeze at our heels. Our Christmas dinner cost us about 500 dollars each, without taking our sufferings into account; and, after all, we did not have any dinner—not any to speak of.”



## CHAPTER VII

### FRUITLESS NEGOTIATIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

My vessels had been appropriately named. The *Swallow* had swallowed up part of my finances, and the *Snowdrop* caused me to drop the rest. Neither was insured. When in Hakodate, my friend Captain Blakiston asked me if I intended to continue otter-hunting or give it up. My reply was that it had given me up, for my funds were exhausted, and I had no choice. With his usual generosity, he said that need not trouble me, as I could have all the money from him I wanted to buy and fit out another vessel, if I still thought there was something in it. That was exactly what I did think, and on arrival in Yokohama, although the season was far advanced, I set about seeking for a vessel, but could not find a suitable craft.

The hunting-vessels that were up that season did fairly well, but not without some casualties. The sloop *Dolphin*, whilst lying in a harbour of Shikotan, lost her captain and owner. He was overcome by the fumes of a charcoal fire in his cabin, and, falling across the brazier containing the charcoal, was dreadfully burned about the groin and stomach, his intestines being exposed. The poor fellow lingered for some days, begging those with him

(there were only four on board altogether) to shoot him and put him out of his agony. Later, while returning to Hakodate, the *Dolphin* was capsized in a gale and all hands drowned. A Japanese steamer, bound up the coast, sighted the capsized craft, tried to right her and tow her into port; but owing to rough weather they had to abandon the attempt. The *Jupiter* lost three men, and the *Buffandeau* one, by drowning. Another was shot through the body. The casualty occurred in this way: While the vessel was lying in Shikotan, some of the hands went ashore, amongst them being the cook, who was a Chilian. Two of the hunters remained on board. One of them went on deck, and called to the other, who was below, to bring his rifle, as there was something to shoot at on shore. As he came up, his attention was directed to something moving on the edge of the stream which ran into the harbour. It was partly concealed by shrubbery, so that it was difficult to make out exactly what it was. The hunter took aim and fired, without any result. He then threw another cartridge into his Winchester rifle, and fired again. This produced a yell from the shore, the other hunter exclaiming: "Good God! you have shot him! It's the cook!" He afterwards confessed he knew all the time it was the cook, and thought the other hunter knew also, and fired, not to hit him, but only to give him a scare. When the man was brought on board, it was found the bullet had gone right through his body from one side to the other just below the ribs, without, however, cutting his intestines or penetrating any important organ, and he quite recovered in a few weeks. In addition to



ENTRANCE TO ANAMA BAY, SHIKOTAN.



AN OTTER-HUNTER'S GRAVE, SHIKOTAN.



these mishaps, the schooner *Kaiso* drifted ashore in a calm, and became a total wreck ; and the Japanese gunboat *Tabo-kan* was lost on the south-west end of Yetorup.

There being no chance of getting away for the hunting season of 1875, I turned my attention to trying, in conjunction with a Japanese merchant of Hakodate, backed by my friend Blakiston, to secure hunting rights on Yetorup from the Japanese Government, for which we were prepared to pay a handsome sum in cash yearly, or a percentage of our catch, the Government to give us assistance in protecting the hunting-grounds. The catch was to be limited so as to prevent the extermination of the otters. Whaling from the shore was also to be undertaken. Negotiations dragged on, and money was expended, as is inevitable when endeavouring to get anything of this nature (or any other, for that matter) put through in Japan.

In July, 1875, the merchant interested informed me that the concession for hunting had been secured. This was good news, and I sat up all night drawing up agreements. Five days later some Japanese documents were brought to me, more money being wanted. I did not think it wise to pay up without making inquiries at the Kaitakushi Office in Tokyo, but after some delay agreed to make another advance. No further progress was made, so I went to Tokyo and had an interview with Mr. N., the chief of the Kaitakushi Department. Time being of no consequence in Japan, negotiations dragged on into 1876, and finally, at a last interview, I stated that if no concession could be granted I would be willing to act as adviser, superintend, and take

charge of the industry. All the information that could be got out of me was noted, and then my acquaintance was dropped. From subsequent events I know that my information was made use of. Fortunately, or unfortunately, what I considered the real essentials for the successful working of the industry I withheld, and in a few years the business, so far as the Japanese were concerned, practically failed from a want of knowledge as to how to manage it, and a very valuable industry was lost to the country.

The year 1876 proved for me a wasted year in the way of otter-hunting, as I spent the greater part of it in Yokohama over the negotiations just referred to. However, obtaining something to do to keep me going, I found the time pass quickly; and as those were the good old days when I was young, and when the east was east, and not "east by west," if I may coin a new point, as it is now, I enjoyed life thoroughly. Towards autumn Captain Blakiston asked me to join him in Hakodate, and later on to take charge of the business of Blakiston, Marr and Co., while he went away for a holiday. This I did, and spent the autumn, winter, and spring there. Soon after arriving in Hakodate I made arrangements, in conjunction with a friend, to get another schooner built by Thompson and Bewick for the next season's hunting. The keel was laid, and for a time everything went along swimmingly.

In the meanwhile I took life pleasantly, and about this time I find one or two little incidents recorded in my diary which may perhaps serve to relieve the monotony of my story, as they have nothing to do with otter-hunting.

I fell in love—it was always happening in those days—with a nice-looking Japanese girl, a student in a certain missionary school. She was of a rather romantic disposition, and I remember we used to talk about the stars a good deal in our moonlight rambles through the pine-groves on the slope of the hill called Hakodate Head. She could speak, read, and write English very creditably. Some of her letters were very quaintly worded. One, written just after my return from a ten-days trip up the coast, was as follows :

“ MY DEAR S.-SAN,

“ I am very glad to hear you come back ; when you are away I think of you every day, and sometimes twice a day. If you will come to the Hachiman temple to-night at half-past eight, I will sit on the top step.

“ Yours with love.”

Needless to say, I went to the temple and sat on the top step. Later on our affection cooled, after which we did not see so much of each other. One afternoon I received a note worded thus :

“ MY DEAR S.-SAN,

“ I want to see you very much. If you come my house at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, my parents will be all absence.”

Now, this was awkward, as I had been summoned at that hour to the British Consulate to sit on a court of inquiry into the loss of the chief engineer of a British steamer then in port. I set out about

a quarter to ten next morning, " my parents will be all absence " pulling much harder than the court of inquiry, and, risking the wrath of H.M. Consul, took the opposite road to that leading to the Consulate. I arrived at the house sharp on time. It stood in a large garden surrounded by a high fence. It was lovely and lonely. My friend came smiling to meet me. I took off my shoes, and was ushered into a matted room, where, although " my parents were all absence," my grandparents were not, and I was introduced to " my grandmother." My temperature fell several degrees. Then my lady came to the business of the meeting: she wanted a loan of a thousand yen. The mercury fell to freezing-point, on which I suddenly remembered I had an important engagement at the Consulate, and, excusing myself with the promise to see her later, I rushed off there. On arrival, I found the proceedings had already commenced. H.M. Consul looked severely at me over his spectacles, as he said: " So you have arrived at last. I suppose we must now begin all over again." I made profuse apologies, assuring him that I had not been able to come earlier, owing to some pressing financial business that had cropped up. The lady did not get the thousand yen. I did not possess so much. After this our relations, somehow, were not nearly so cordial as they had previously been.

The young lady married a year or so afterwards, and if she is still alive must be a woman of nearly fifty. She is not at all likely to see this, so will not feel hurt at my " giving her away " as I have done.

The winter passed pleasantly. About the middle of January (1877) the Mitsubishi Steamship Com-



pany wanted to send a steamer to Nemuro and vicinity for a load of fish, but some doubt was entertained as to whether it was safe to make the voyage at that time of year, on account of the ice. The captain had never been into that port, and the charts of the coasts thereabouts were not very reliable, while the insurance agents would not insure the cargo unless a pilot was taken. The agent applied to me, and I consented, for a consideration, it being too early for the ice to have set in, and therefore quite safe. On arrival I called on the old friends of my former visits, who were apparently glad to see me. The day we arrived, the captain and I went for a walk, dropping in on the way to have a peep at a large Japanese school. As we entered the lobby, a handsomely-dressed, good-looking young Japanese woman came up, and said in excellent English, "Won't you please come in and take a look round the school?" and she conducted us round, explaining methods and pointing out the different classes. Whilst this was going on I noticed the head-master, with a black scowl on his countenance, looking at us out of the corners of his eyes. On bidding adieu to our fair conductress, she said: "I shall see you again, as I am going down to Hakodate in your ship." "Only too pleased to have you for a passenger," replied the captain as we left.

Next day we steamed over to a fishing-village called Nishibets, where we loaded over a hundred thousand salted salmon, and then returned to Nemuro. Here we took on board some more cargo, and passengers—amongst them our fair friend and her servant. She was elaborately dressed, wearing

a gold watch and chain, gold rings and bracelets. These things are common enough now (except the bracelets) among Japanese women, but in those days it was otherwise. On the voyage back I was attentive to her, and learned that the head-master of the school was her husband; that she came from Sendai, but had been educated at a missionary school in Tokyo. She was going back to her parents in Sendai. On her arrival in Hakodate, she put up at a Japanese hotel with her servant. She appeared to be well provided with funds, and in no hurry to return to her parents, for she remained some months in Hakodate, and became the talk of the town on account of her un-Japanese-like actions. Riding was her favourite amusement. She would don *hakama* (Japanese "divided skirts"), and, sitting astride her horse, ride like a centaur, delighting to gallop the animal until it was nearly exhausted. Her pranks were many, and somewhat unsettling to her friends. Eventually she went to Yokohama, where a friend of mine persuaded her to go to her people in Sendai, since which time I have neither seen nor heard of her. It appeared that her husband had sent her away as being somewhat too wild and gay for a quiet schoolmaster's wife.

Although Hakodate was a most uninteresting and dull place, yet incidents occasionally happened which tended to break the monotony. One I may relate, in which my friend the Consul and I had a slight difference. The Japanese issued regulations requiring that all dogs should be registered, and carry a ticket with the name and address of the owner. This ticket was made of wood, about 2 inches wide and 3 inches long, and all dogs found without one

were liable to be slaughtered. I had a handsome cocker spaniel bitch, of which I was very fond, and, as I strongly objected to those signboards for her, I went to the Consul, and told him the dog had a collar with my name and address on it, and I was quite willing to pay the fee half a dozen times over if necessary, but I would not tie on her one of those wooden tickets. Although the old gentleman had no children, both he and his wife, strange to say, disliked animals, and they had not even a cat in the house. I therefore got no sympathy or help. I told him, however, that, if I found anyone interfering with my dog, I would take the law into my own hands and stand the consequences.

Some time after this the office-boy came running in to tell me that the dog-killers had enticed Nell outside the compound, and were about to kill her. I dropped my pen, and, hatless, ran out and on to the vacant "compound" next ours, and there saw a crowd of children and others, among whom were several dog-killers with their clubs. As I ran towards them, one of the dog-killers left the crowd and bolted down a street. Thinking he had killed the dog, and, seeing me, had run away, I started after him, and caught him at the end of the street. I was so angry I could not speak, but caught him by the neck and seat of his trousers, and rushed him back to the place he had left, as I wanted to make sure about the dog before I did more. As I ran him up, my dog came out from amongst the crowd, unhurt and wagging her tail. This was a pleasant surprise, but embarrassing. I let the man go, and, to relieve the situation, gave the dog a beating for being off the compound. Poor Nell died some

months after this, of worms in the heart, a common disease with foreign dogs in Japan.

Perhaps the reader has had quite sufficient of these little personal matters. The new schooner, christened the *Otosei* (Fur-seal), followed in the footsteps, if I may so term them, of her predecessor, the *Snowdrop*. Delay after delay occurred in getting her finished and launched, and it was not before June 25 that we set sail for the hunting-grounds, having lost nearly three months of the season. We arrived off Yetorup on July 2, and the same day lowered boats and got two otters. I had only one good hunter with me, the third boat being headed by an old Portuguese boatswain known in Yokohama as "Old Portuguese Joe," who had never before in his life handled a rifle.

On July 9 we fell in with the *Flying Mist*, with a catch of fifty-three otters. She reported the loss of three of her men, drowned. Their boats were returning after the day's hunt to the vessel, which was anchored in Roko Bay. The weather was calm and foggy, and they had some difficulty in locating the schooner, which every now and then fired a gun. Two of the boats outpulled the third, and got on board. The oarsmen in the third got into an argument as to the direction from which the sound of the signal-gun came. One word led to another, and they commenced to fight, capsizing the boat. They were about 500 yards from the shore, and three of the men who could swim struck out for the beach; the other man, who could not swim a stroke, hung on to the keel of the boat. This boat not arriving, the captain of the schooner despatched the two others to look for her, and they came across the

overturned boat, with the man in an unconscious condition clinging to her, his fingers being hooked on to the keel. He was taken on board, and after much trouble restored. Search was made for the other men, but no trace of them was found. Doubtless they succumbed long before they reached the beach, owing to the intensely cold water. Some weeks later I was in Roko Bay, and, noticing an eagle on the beach pecking at something, I pulled in and landed, and found the skeleton, minus the skull and feet, of a man. On further search along the coast I came across the leg and arm bones of another. No doubt these were the remains of two of the *Flying Mist's* people. We buried them in the sand. The *Flying Mist* also reported the loss of the schooner *Banner*, another hunting-vessel, in "Jap Bay."

We had a small mishap one day while hunting off the Black Rocks. A bunch of otters had been "raised" and scattered. Reckoning they would go seaward, I pulled off shore, waited, and was not disappointed, for two or three came up between me and the other two boats, which were inshore. I secured one, and fired a few shots at the others; then my boats pulled out towards me, one being about 300 yards off, when an otter with her pup came up right in line with my second hunter's boat, and about 80 yards from me. She offered a good chance, and I took the risk, standing on the covered-in part of my boat so as to shoot down as much as possible. I was using a heavy Sharp's 45-90 rifle. After I fired I heard a yell from the boat in line. As I had shot the otter through the head I took no notice of it, but pulled up and hauled the dead

otter into the boat. More shouting from the other boat caused me to pull up to it, when I found one of the boat-pullers looking very pale, with his trousers off, and examining his thigh. My bullet, after passing through the otter's head, had struck the water, ricocheted, passed through the side of the boat, ploughed along the front of the thigh of one of the boat-pullers, and struck the handle of his oar, before dropping. The wound was not serious, being only about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch deep and 2 or 3 inches long.

Of course it might have been worse. No doubt anyone but an otter-hunter would say it was a piece of gross carelessness, but I am afraid if hunters never took any risks of that kind their catches would not be very fat ones. All otter-hunters are used to bullets flying about close to them, and they have a saying, that "there is no danger in a bullet you can hear." The danger has passed when the sound reaches your ears.

It set in foggy on the 12th, when we were out hunting, and owing to the tide having changed we lost track of our vessel, and pulled for hours away from her instead of towards her. We landed about midnight through the surf amongst some rotten seaweed, "Old Joe's" boat being capsized, though, fortunately, nothing was lost. A thick wet fog concealed everything. We did not know where we were. It was miserably cold, and we tried to light a fire with driftwood, making shavings of it to start it burning. It was damp, and would not burn. Then our matches gave out. Then we tried to light up by firing a piece of rag out of a rifle (we were using muzzle-loaders as well as breach-loaders), which only smouldered. Thinking a little powder

would help matters, I poured some out of my flask on to the rag amongst the shaved-up pieces of wood. My hunter had the same idea, and he did the same, neither of us, owing to the darkness, knowing the other had done so. We then both stooped down, one on each side of the wood, and blew at the smouldering rag. Suddenly there was a flash, and the wood was scattered. For several minutes I was blinded, and thought I had lost my sight altogether ; then I realized that my eyebrows, eyelashes, and one side of my moustache, were burned off, and one cheek singed. Fortunately, the blindness was only temporary. My hunter fared somewhat similarly, and we decided to give up trying to make a fire. It was a long, weary wait until daylight, sitting all huddled together on a big log of driftwood, with the boat-sails wrapped round us ; but daylight came at last, and with it the fog lifted, and we found we were about twelve miles from the schooner down the coast. We returned cold, wet, and hungry.

Some days after this came another disagreeable experience. We had pulled out to sea some eight miles or so, leaving the schooner anchored under the land. It came on to blow off the shore from the north-west, increasing to a smart gale. We had turned back before the worst came on, and got within nearly two miles of the vessel by about one o'clock p.m., when the tug came, and it took us six hours to make those two miles. Needless to say, we were wet through, tired out, and not in the best of tempers. I was not over-civil to my skipper, who ought, of course, to have got up anchor and run out and picked us up, as two other schooners in sight just above us did for their boats.

This experience taught me it was not safe to take too great risks with such a man left in charge. The men in the boats lose confidence unless they know the shipkeeper is on the look-out all the time to render them assistance in case of need.

Otters were fairly numerous, and on July 23 we ran into a "school" of about forty, and succeeded in getting seven before the breeze spoiled the hunting. From August 5 to 23 we had no hunting weather. In that interval we had the misfortune to get into a heavy tide-rip in the straits between Yetorup and Kunashiri. It was dead calm, and we could not work out of it. The vessel rolled to her rails. It was impossible to stand on deck, and nothing could be cooked in the galley. For a day and a half we had to put up with this, and then, a little breeze coming, we at last worked into the coast, and let go anchor amongst the rocks, glad to get a rest and a chance to cook some food. Some of the tide-rips in these straits are exceedingly bad and dangerous. No one who has not seen them would ever believe the water could get into such a turmoil of swirling and combing waves without wind to create them. An open boat would not have the least chance in one of these rips.

On September 18 we were lying in a small bight called by the hunters Miller's Hole, the schooner *Caroline* being there also. A heavy swell was rolling in, caused by a south-east gale, which had just abated, the wind shifting to north-west. Across the mouth of the bight was a reef with about 12 to 15 feet of water on it. With the high swell, it was breaking right across in big combers, except for a few feet in the middle. The *Caroline* had fouled



her anchors, the chains getting round some rocks, and as she rose on a swell both her chains tautened up and parted. She had no other anchor to let go, so had to get up sail and risk the reef and combers, or go ashore. Being pointed for the best place, she had almost cleared it, when a tremendous sea swept over her, washing everything movable off her decks, and half filling her cabin. However, she had sufficient way on to get through it. Those of her crew who were on deck took to the rigging when they saw the sea coming, so no one was washed overboard. She "lay to" until next day, and then came in again. We lent her an anchor until she could drag for and pick up her own.

On October 15 we left the hunting-grounds and ran for Shikotan, where we intended to thoroughly air our skins, clean up the vessel, take in wood and water, and sail for Hakodate. This was our usual proceeding in those days at the end of the season. In the bay next to ours the *Caroline* was lying, making similar preparations, but she was bound for Yokohama. Her catch was 183 large skins and a number of small ones. "Old Joe" wanted to go direct to Yokohama instead of to Hakodate, so he went to the *Caroline* to find if he could get a passage. He was told to fetch his things, and be on board in time to sail early in the morning. He started back, and on the way called in at the one Japanese house, where they filled him up with saké, the result being that the old man lost his passage, but in doing so saved his life.

The *Caroline* sailed in the morning, and we later in the day. That evening we sighted her to the southward of us, running before a fresh breeze, with

all sail set. That was the last ever seen or heard of her. It was thought she had "carried on" too long, and then, in attempting to "heave to," had got swamped. Her captain was notorious for his recklessness in carrying sail. I saw his schooner once, when struck by a squall off Yetorup, on her beam ends, her sails lying flat on the water. The great breeze now gradually increased to a gale, which developed into a typhoon. We ran before it, and got into Muroran Harbour for shelter, where we anchored under the lee of a small island.

On the 22nd the weather moderated, and we left for Hakodate, entering that port on the following evening. Our catch was sixty-four large and twenty-four small otters, a very good catch considering the short season we had, and that we were short of a hunter. Poor "Old Joe" was of no use as a hunter; he did not get one otter the whole season. Notwithstanding this, we kept nearly even with all the other vessels while we were on the grounds, they having secured quite half their catch before we got there.

"Old Joe," whose picture is here given, was quite a character in his way. He came to Yokohama in the early days, when the foreign settlement was first located there (it was originally in Kanagawa). He often told the story, in his quaint way, of how he once owned a lot of land in Yokohama, it having been given to him when the Japanese were disposing of pieces of land to any foreigner who applied for one. The best lots were sold, whilst others were given away. He "squatted" on his lot, and ran a coffee-stall, which was on wheels, and "Old Joe" used to take it down to the *hatoba* (landing-place),



"OLD JOE" AT THE WHEEL.



THE "WATCH" ON DECK.



and supply hot coffee and rolls, with perhaps something else of a more potent nature in bottles, to merchant-sailors and men-o'-war's-men, of whom there were then always a considerable number in port. "Old Joe" declared his Consul "did him" out of his lot, and in finishing his yarn would say: "He was all same dam thief, Mister Snow—all same dam rascal!" "Old Joe" continued to go to sea with me for several years, not, however, as a hunter, but as "bosun," and an excellent "bosun" he was. He was also a first-rate "sailor-man," and knew his business from A to Z. He could neither read nor write, and used to pass his spare time doing some sailor's job about the vessel or attending to the skins, or, if there was nothing else to do, he would make sinnet for hours on end. He was never idle. When a gale was blowing, "Old Joe" was in his element. With a quid of tobacco in his mouth, he would take the wheel, and remain at it, not only all through his own watch, but through a second, or even until the gale was over, unless we had to "heave to." He was wonderfully careful, as there was need to be, when heavy "wollies" would strike the vessel, and almost lay her on her beam ends. When chaffed about his life being saved through getting drunk on Japanese saké, on the occasion when he missed his passage on the *Caroline*, he used to say that if he had been aboard he would have been at the wheel, and she would never have been lost.

The poor old fellow met with an untimely end. He shipped on board an American ship as "bosun," and one day had to go aloft. He had not been in a "square-rigger" for many years, and the old man was nearly seventy. Going aloft was too much for

him. He fell from the topsail-yard to the deck, and was killed.

Thompson, who built the *Snowdrop* and the *Otosei*, was a "Geordie," and had served his time in a Sunderland shipyard. He was a first-rate shipwright, thoroughly acquainted with his business, and was, moreover, a genial soul, full of fun, wit, music, and at times religion. He settled in Hakodate after being wrecked on the coast in a sailing-ship, on board which he was taking a trip as ship's carpenter. He was in Hakodate in the early days when, so far as foreigners were concerned, it was a much busier place than it is to-day. It was then much frequented by American whalers. Regular British, American, Russian, and Danish Consulates were established there. Foreign men-o'-war from the China Station resorted to the port during the hot summer months. To-day, outside the missionary element, there are not more than a dozen foreigners residing there. Thompson was in Hakodate at the time of the Ainu skeleton scandal, which created some stir. In addition to his own business, he was acting as Consular Constable, and as such took his part in the affair officially, as he did unofficially in his private capacity. Thompson was an excellent raconteur, and could recall many an amusing story. From him I learned the real story of the affair mentioned, which is somewhat different from the official one.

Mixed up in the Ainu skeleton scandal were some junior members of the Consular service, and the exposure caused them some trouble and disgrace. At that time the anatomical museums of Europe and America were without representative specimens of skulls and skeletons of the Ainu race, the conse-

quence being a keen demand for them at high prices. Enterprising individuals set to work to procure what was wanted, and some skulls and bones were secretly secured, with the aid of some Japanese. The matter reached the ears of a Consular official of another nationality, who, it was alleged, had himself been trying to obtain specimens, but had failed; and being much put out to think others had got ahead of him, he divulged the affair to the Japanese authorities. The Japanese cared no more for the Ainu, dead or alive, than they did for their own dogs; but something had to be done, and representations were accordingly made to the British Consul, who instituted inquiries, and reported the matter to H.M. Minister in Tokyo. The skeletons had to be accounted for somehow, so it was given out that those having the bones, fearing discovery, had taken them on to Hakodate Head and thrown them over a cliff into the sea. This was not satisfactory; the bones had to be produced, and the Consular Constable was ordered to try and fish them up. Of course no bones were there.

In the end the remains of an old priest who had been recently buried in an out-of-the-way place were secretly dug up at night, conveyed to a certain compound, and the body put into a large iron caldron used for melting pitch. After all the flesh had been boiled off the bones, they were put into a sack and taken at night and thrown over a cliff into the sea. After this, of course, the Consular Constable was able to fish up sufficient of the Ainu bones to satisfy the Japanese authorities, and so far as they were concerned the incident closed. But the episode had a lasting effect upon the career of

the young official. Needless to say, the real Ainu skeletons had been shipped away, and now occupy nooks in a certain museum in Europe. Whilst "reminiscencing" about Hakodate, I may as well relate the following which came under my ken.

Formerly, owing to the Buddhistic reluctance to take life, ownerless dogs were numerous in nearly all Japanese towns. They were, perhaps, of some little use as scavengers, but often more of a nuisance. It is not so many years ago that some children, while wandering over unoccupied ground in the vicinity of the railway between Yokohama and Kanagawa, were killed and devoured by half-wild ownerless dogs. This led to the wholesale destruction of these pests, and very few stray dogs are now to be seen. Formerly, however, Hakodate was no exception to the dog nuisance, though they were probably more useful there as scavengers of the quantity of fish-refuse left about. The dogs were assisted by the crows, which were exceedingly numerous and bold. It was amusing to watch a number of crows endeavouring to outwit a dog in possession of a bone or other morsel of contention. Usually three of them would undertake the job of stealing the dog's find. One crow would take up a position on some roof or other elevation as near the dog as possible. Two, from different directions on his rear, would approach, and, if necessary, give him a peck on the hind-quarters. He would turn on his tormentors, but not go out of reach of his bone. They would attack him again and again, until he at last got angry and made a savage dash at them; then the third crow on watch would swoop down and seize the food, and fly with it to a neighbouring roof,



where he was at once joined by his two accomplices, when another grabbing match took place for final possession.

On the occasion of the visit of the Emperor to Hakodate, a crow, when flying over the imperial carriage, so far forgot himself as to commit an indignity on His Imperial Majesty. The people of Hakodate were very angry, and a price was set, not upon the head of Mr. Crow, but upon his feet, the authorities paying four cents per pair for all crows' feet brought to the police. I was in Hakodate during the winter when this regulation was in force. It soon had the effect of reducing the number of crows. A Japanese told me in all seriousness that on very cold nights the crows, when roosting in the pine-trees, got frozen to the branches, and could not release their hold until the sun rose and thawed their feet out. He thought it would be good business to go to the places where they roosted, very early in the morning, before they could get away, and so capture numbers of them. I never heard whether he tried it.

In this chapter I appear to have drifted somewhat away from the chief subject of my book—namely, the sea-otter—so to finish up I will return to it with another of Werner's yarns, which gives a graphic description of an incident the like of which I have on several occasions experienced:

“The following incident occurred during an otter-hunting expedition off the island of Yetorup: Our schooner had been for two days anchored between Otter Island and the Pinnacles, and, as the otters were very tame, we had had pretty good sport, with but very little work attached to it. It

was still early in the season—about May 20, I think. The weather had been tolerably fine for the last few days, and this day did not promise to be an exception when we started in the morning with the boats, pulling towards the north-east. The sky was cloudless, and not a breath of wind ruffled the smooth surface of the ocean. The barometer had shown an inclination to fall, and we were admonished by the captain, who was also the shipkeeper, to return immediately to the vessel on any sign of wind. A strong current was setting to the north-east offshore, and when we had shot the first otter, after having had a hard chase after him for half an hour, we found ourselves well to the eastward of Pinnacle Rocks and some distance from shore.

“At three o'clock we were about ten miles from our vessel, and it was high time to return, as a slight swell was setting in, but still no wind. Off a cluster of rocks, opposite what has since been called 'Naibo Shanty,' we sighted a 'she' otter swimming leisurely along on her back, and holding a small pup on her breast. We soon got within shooting distance, and two shots simultaneously fired told her that enemies were near. The otter made a backward dive towards the shore, but, as she was encumbered with the pup, she made but a short stay under water, and on her reappearance she was again greeted with two shots. This time the pup was wounded, but, still clasping it to her breast, she made continued dives towards the friendly shelter of the rocks, which were now close to us, and all our efforts to cut her off with the boats were fruitless. For two hours we chased this otter, pursuing her between the rocks. The pup had been

killed during the first hour, but she was holding it as firmly as ever, until a shot, striking one of her paws, made her drop it ; and in trying to regain it she was once more wounded. Again and again she made the attempt, all the time giving utterance to the most plaintive and sorrowful cries, but to no avail. To our mortification, however, we had to abandon the chase, and to be satisfied with the body of the dead pup, which we picked up. In the excitement of our eager pursuit of the otter we had failed to notice the rapidly rising sea, which was coming now in heavy rollers, and breaking with a thundering noise over the rocks. The murky look of the atmosphere and the black overhanging clouds at the horizon told us plainly what we had to expect if we lingered much longer here, at least eight or nine miles from the schooner, and, though the prey was still in view, we had to give up the chase and return to the vessel.

“The sun had disappeared behind the island, and it was getting dark as we neared the Pinnacles. A peculiar whistling sound, the sure precursor of wind, intimated that we had no time to lose ; so, putting forth our whole strength at the oars, we made the light hunting-boat fairly spin over the water. We had travelled some distance, when all at once, right under our stern, we heard the most unearthly cry imaginable ; so unexpectedly did it come, and so weird and piercing did it sound, that we were momentarily bereft of motion, until another cry alongside showed us the dark form of the otter we had been chasing, which was now following the boat, lamenting the loss of her offspring. At the same time the wind was over us : not a squall, but

half a dozen squalls rolled up into one—a real avalanche of wind. Had our boat not been heading to the tempest, she would undoubtedly have been swamped. As it was, for about five minutes our lives hung in the balance—under us seething, boiling water, and around us a dense expanse of flying foam ; no sign of the other boat—no sign of anything except the confused and raging sea. In the midst of all this tumult were heard those fearful cries from the wounded otter, now on one side, and now on the other, reproaching us, as it seemed, for our cruelty in depriving her of her young ; for, not knowing which moment would be our last, we were each mentally cursing our folly in keeping up the chase for the sake of getting one otter.

“Our only hope now was that the captain and the cook, the only two persons on board, had got under way before the squall struck the schooner, and would be soon coming to our assistance. It was as much as we could do to keep the boat’s head to the wind and bail her out at the same time, as she was constantly shipping water, and all our exertions were required to keep her free. We were fast drifting towards the rocks astern of us, and in an hour’s time, at the utmost, our fate would be sealed, as we could make no headway against the wind and waves. Still those dreadful cries continued to disturb us, penetrating even the uproar of the elements, and sounding shrilly and mournfully on our ears. ‘Is it really an otter we hear ? Or is it the Evil One in the shape of an otter chasing us to our doom ?’ Our feelings were highly excited, and in a kind of frenzy I seized the otter pup and flung it out in the direction of the cries. Then followed a

tremulous wail from the watery waste, and all was still.

“Almost at the same moment the wind subsided; the flying spray and the sharp, biting, sleet-like foam hurtling through the air ceased; blue sky began to show through the mist, and the violent squall was over. The wind, shifting to the westward, scattered the remaining clouds, and in ten minutes more we had a clear sky, with a full moon lighting us on our way. Talk about the magic of a moonlight night at sea! The sudden change from our late misery, and our unexpected deliverance from imminent peril, made the scene so much more enchanting to our eyes, and one to be indelibly engraved on the memory. The sea went down slowly, but a long swell remained for some time, and our boat was like a cork bobbing up and down between the waves as we pulled against them in our endeavour to find the schooner. We found her at last, but it was eleven o'clock before we got on board, thoroughly exhausted with our day's work, but thankful for our escape. We got safely back to our anchorage with the schooner, but next day a heavy north-west gale blew, confining us on board, and giving us a much-needed day's rest.

“That there was anything supernatural in our late adventure I doubt; it was only one of those remarkable coincidences which occur once in a man's lifetime. Two months afterwards we shot an otter on a rock in Roko Bay, with an open sore on one of her paws, and I am almost sure it was the same which we had chased, and which afterwards chased us so obstinately during the squall—if it was a real otter, and not a spectre, which followed us.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### I DISCOVER A NEW FUR-SEAL ROOKERY

IN December, 1877, not being able to arrange for the building of a vessel with a guarantee for her to be ready for sea in time to be on the hunting-grounds early in the season of 1878, I decided to visit Yokohama to see what could be done there. I accordingly took passage in the old s.s. *Shario*, and on the trip down we ran into a "snorter," shipping heavy seas, smashing skylights and hatch-covers, and flooding the cabins and 'tween-decks where a number of Japanese passengers were sleeping. One of these, stark-naked, rushed on deck and on to the bridge to the captain, begging him to take the vessel in-shore and give him a chance to save his life, as he was sure the vessel would go down. In the deck cabins aft we were flooded up to the lower berths, but, fortunately, I had taken an upper one, and so kept dry.

After being "hove to" for about six hours, we proceeded on our way again, and arrived in Yokohama in due course. Here I found no difficulty in getting what I wanted, and arranged with Mr. H. Cook to build me a craft to be ready for sea by March 15. She was to be 61 feet on the keel, 18 feet beam, with a  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet depth of hold.

After plans were made and approved, I returned to Hakodate. The schooner's keel was laid on January 5; she was launched on March 2. On March 6 I again left Hakodate for Yokohama. All arrangements were completed, and on April 9 we sailed for the north.

The schooner was named *Otome* (which means in Japanese "a young lady"; it is also a woman's name). War between England and Russia being then imminent, she was put under the American flag. My outfit was much more complete, and I had better hunters than on former occasions. We arrived on the hunting-grounds on April 21, and lowered boats for the first time on the 23rd. At the beginning of June I resolved to go north and try the smaller islands of the chain. The 19th found us near to Shiashikotan, where we sighted many otters, and resolved to remain if we could find an anchorage.

We anchored near the middle of the island, on the Pacific side. Next morning, although the sea was rough, we lowered boats and pulled to the south-west. We saw several otters in a large patch of kelp, and started to surround them. To take up my position, I pulled down the coast several hundred yards, opposite and close in to some pinnacle rocks, with a flattish ledge extending from them to the shore, which ended in cliffs. My boat-steerer kept pointing towards these rocks, but, as I was looking for otters in the water, I saw nothing at first. Then I caught sight of a number (between twenty and thirty) on the ledge. I signalled my other boats to come, but they were busy with two other otters, which were still diving and coming up

again in the kelp patch. I pulled close up to the rocks, which were so formed that the otters had to come towards me to get into the sea. There was a heavy swell and rough sea on, and my boat was tossed about considerably, rendering shooting very difficult. I fired a number of shots, most of which missed their mark, but we secured nine otters altogether, and returned on board well satisfied with our morning's work. It was on this occasion I had a good opportunity of observing the appearance and movements of the sea-otter when on land, as described in the first Appendix.

The next day the weather was more suitable for hunting. Whilst "running" an otter, my third hunter was struck by a ricochet bullet from my second hunter's rifle, on the outer corner of his eyebrow. It cut into the bone and glanced off, fortunately doing no serious damage. It appeared to have a stimulating effect on the man, for he killed seven out of the thirteen otters we got that day. On the 23rd we killed two, on the 24th sixteen, on the 25th three, and on the 26th ten—fifty-three big otters and several small ones for the week. We had so many that we could not attend to them, and get them staked out on the frames and dried, so had to put a number in salt. Not being satisfied with the good thing we had found, I left the island and proceeded to Onekotan, where we fell in with two other schooners, the *Cygnets* and *Alexander*. The latter had secured the cream of this ground, and we got only three. Thence we went to Makan-rushir, and saw none. On July 14 we got back to Shiashikotan, to find the *Cygnets* there, she having caught thirty otters whilst we had been wasting





IN LITTLE KURIL STRAIT, JUNE.



GULL ROCK, MAKANRUSHIR.



our time elsewhere. However, she left, and we again had the island to ourselves, getting some thirty or forty more before we finally left it.

Five miles to the westward of the north end of Shiashikotan lies the island of Ekarma. We visited it on August 6, and, after anchoring under the lee of the land, lowered boats and pulled to its northern point, where, in a kelp patch, we came across a school of about twenty otters, amongst them being a perfectly white one. A strong breeze having sprung up, however, causing rough water, and making good shooting impossible, we failed to make a single catch. One shot which I fired at the white otter when he was "standing" with his head and neck well out of water appeared to strike him in the throat, going through from side to side. He immediately went under-water in the thick kelp, and that was the last ever seen of him.

Whilst lying at Shiashikotan it was necessary to fill up our tanks with fresh water, and we anchored off a small waterfall which was fed by the melting snow on the mountain immediately above it. There was nothing like even a small brook to feed this fall, which was formed by the convergence of several small streams in narrow, shallow, ditch-like channels running down the steep slope of the mountain. The cliff was about 90 feet high, and the water ran over the edge and dropped about 30 feet on to a flat ledge of about 150 square feet in area, where the water formed a shallow pool with a number of rocks in it, and from this it ran down a very steep slope into the sea. After filling our water-casks, some of us climbed, with difficulty, up on to this ledge, and found the pool full of trout from a few inches

to a foot in length. We caught two bucketfuls with our hands. How did these fish reach such an inaccessible place? The insignificant streams above contained no fish, and to ascend from below was impossible.

At the end of August we left Shiashikotan, and made our way south, reaching Yetorup again on September 14. We hunted until the 25th of the month, getting sixteen more otters, and then left for Shikotan, to clean up before sailing for Yokohama.

On September 24, when out hunting, a breeze sprang up, and, thinking it would not last long, I resolved to land and haul the boats up for a while. There was considerable surf on the rocky beach where we wanted to land. I was the first to make the attempt. Unfortunately, a heavier swell than usual capsized the boat as I ran in on the top of the breaker. The boat turned end over end, and her stem caught a rock, tearing out all the plank-ends on one side and splitting one of the planks in her bottom; but, as everything had been lashed fast, nothing was lost. We hauled the boat up, and, after making a fire and drying our clothes, we set to work to patch it up. Fortunately, I always carried some copper nails and tacks, and a small hammer and other tools, so, refastening the plank-ends and nailing a strip of canvas over the split plank, we made the boat temporarily serviceable again. Later on towards evening we were able to get off, but had a great deal of bailing to do on our way back to the schooner. The other boats returned on board without attempting to land. In South-East Bay, Shikotan, we thoroughly aired and dried our skins, filled up with wood and water, and cleaned

up and painted the vessel and boats. The weather was beautiful, and we had some wild-fowl shooting and lots of fishing. We sailed for Yokohama on October 4, reaching that port on the 12th, with 150 large and about 30 small skins. They were a splendid lot, and were classed by the late Mr. Philippeus, a well-known fur expert, who was in Yokohama at the time of our arrival, as follows : 60 No. 1, 62 No. 2, 18 No. 3, 10 No. 4, the remainder being cubs and pups. The catch realized over £3,000.

This trip was as uneventful as it was successful. Beyond the usual heavy gales and narrow shaves from getting on the rocks, nothing particularly exciting occurred. To me the trip proved interesting on account of the new places visited.

In February, 1879, I began to make preparations for my next hunting trip. Early in March I decided to go down to the Bonin Islands to get some hunters, and took passage in the s.s. *Toyoshima Maru*. We arrived at Port Lloyd, as the harbour was called at that time, on the morning of the 6th. The Bonin Islands had only recently become a Japanese possession, but already some 200 Japanese had emigrated there, and we were taking down 165 more, some of whom were convicts. Formerly the islands were peopled by only about a dozen families, mostly the descendants of European or American sailors who had married native or half-caste wives from some of the Pacific islands. They supported themselves by rearing a few cattle, growing vegetables and fruit, and catching turtle. Their produce was traded off chiefly to whaling-ships, numbers of which used, in earlier days, to call in at Port Lloyd every spring on their way to the northern

whaling-grounds. Wild pigs, goats, and deer were found on the islands, and hunted by the native young men, who became good rifle-shots; whilst their turtling and fishing in boats and canoes made them expert boatmen. For these reasons they were sought for as otter-hunters.

Whilst at the Bonins I went out turtling with one of the young Webbs, who had the reputation of being a most expert turtler. We embarked in an outrigger canoe and sailed out to sea, scanning the surface of the water for turtles. Not sighting any, we stood inshore to where a "cow" turtle was anchored as a lure to attract the other sex, and found a gentleman turtle in her company, paying her attentions. He was so busy with his love affairs that before he realized the situation he was hooked at the back of his neck; and a slip noose being passed over one of his flippers, he was hauled into the canoe on his back, where he lay helpless; his fore-flippers were then lashed together. The process appeared very simple. These captive "cow" turtles are anchored with a large piece of rock or a lump of iron, to which a line is made fast, the other end of the line being tied to the "cow," leaving her a certain amount of freedom. She lies on the surface of the water, and the "bull" turtles come to pay their court. Whilst engaged in love-making, they are approached from behind, and caught with a turtle-hook under the shell at the back of the neck, as described.

If more turtles are caught than the canoe can conveniently carry, those secured can be thrown overboard with safety, as, their fore-flippers being tied together, they cannot dive or sink or swim

away any distance, and can thus be returned for after the first load has been taken on shore. The same method is adopted when turtles are captured without the aid of a captive "cow"; they are approached when engaged in their love affairs, but more caution has to be used in "going on" to "free turtle." Many "cow" turtles are taken when they haul up on the beach to deposit their eggs. They were very plentiful at the Bonins in the days I mention, but are comparatively scarce now.

The Bonin Islands lie 500 miles south of Yokohama. They enjoy a warm climate; the temperature when I was there early in March ranged from 80° to 85° F.

Two hunters were engaged, and returned with me on the steamer to Yokohama. On March 29 we sailed for the hunting-grounds, and on April 6 ran into South-East Bay, Shikotan, and filled up with wood and water. Next day we lowered boats, and "raised" two otters, one of which we killed. We left Shikotan on April 8, the weather being very cold, with a heavy west-north-west gale on that and the following day. On the 21st it blew a heavy south-east gale. We were lying in Roko Bay on a lee shore, and before the gale reached us a heavy swell set in, with not enough wind to enable us to get under way. We were anchored in foul ground, and our cable, getting round a rock, snapped as the schooner rose on a swell. Luckily, the sails were got up, and the wind came just in time to keep us from going ashore; it was the narrowest shave imaginable, as we were practically in the breakers, and the letting go of another anchor would have been fatal. We beat

out to sea, and "lay to" all that night and next day.

On the 23rd we ran into Roko Bay again and picked up our anchor. On the 24th it blew another heavy gale from the south-east, and we ran round to "The Stake" on the Okotsk side of the island for shelter. Here we found the remains of the schooner *Dido*, which went ashore about midnight of the 21st. On the 26th we were drifting about in this vicinity, when the captain of the *Dido* pulled down to us from Windy Bay, where the *Dido's* people were staying at a small station. He reported that his chain had parted when lying at "The Stake"; that he had made sail and got out, but, having to heave to on account of the gale, the vessel had drifted inshore again, and was driven on to the rocks. One man died from cold and exposure after getting ashore. I gave the *Dido's* people some clothes, stores, and books, and arranged to take one of the hunters, a Bonin Islander, on board my vessel.

On the 27th the wind freshened from the north-west, when we sailed round to Roko Bay again. As we entered we saw a schooner on the beach, and soon recognized her as the *Eliza*. We could see a number of people on shore, and two or three boats pulling about close in to where she lay. We beat in and let go an anchor as near as was prudent, and waited for some of them to come on board, which they were sure to do if they needed our assistance. However, no one came, so we got under way and sailed up to the north-east end of the bay, where we anchored. The next morning I lowered boats and pulled down to a spot where it was possible to land, and then walked to the wreck.



Here I found all the *Dido's* crew, some Ainu and Japanese, and all who were left of the *Eliza's* people. They informed me the *Eliza* had drifted ashore during a thick fog on Thursday, the 24th. Her boats were out hunting ; she had only inexperienced men on board, who had never been in these parts before, and consequently knew nothing of the tides, currents, coasts, or, in fact, anything else. When the boats returned, they found her ashore. Since then they had been making preparations to try and get her off. Anchors had been carried out and buoyed, and to these had been attached chains and hawsers, which were then connected with the windlass on board the vessel. To do this, lines had to be got from the vessel through the breakers to the ends of the chains. Owing to the heavy surf and strong undertow, much difficulty was experienced in making the connection, and finally one boat, in which were three hunters, was capsized.

They were all good swimmers, and tried to reach the beach, but could not, owing to the undertow. They then hung on to the capsized boat until they got chilled through, and dropped off one by one and were drowned in sight and within a few yards of those on shore. The second boat, apparently, could render them no assistance, and after the drowning of the others it was pulled round to the place where I had just landed, and there it also capsized in the surf. all but one of its crew being drowned. One of the poor fellows had been my second hunter during the two previous seasons, another my third hunter on my first trip. On the 29th and 30th we got some hunting, and secured four otters, making seven only for the whole of the month of April. We had lowered

boats eight times, and spent sixty-two hours in them, pulling over a distance of about 186 miles for our six otters, mostly in unsuitable weather.

May was also an unsatisfactory month, only fourteen otters being secured, for which we pulled over a distance of about 525 miles. We were out twenty-one times, our longest time being eighteen hours, our shortest two hours. On May 25 we anchored at the north-east end of Urup, and whilst there we heard loud explosions from the direction of the Black Brothers Islands, some fifteen miles to the north-east of us. On June 1 we left Urup, and on the 2nd, when passing the Brothers, ashes from the volcano in eruption covered us. On the 2nd and 3rd we were at Simushir Island, but saw no otters. On the 4th we anchored at Rashau, and there found the schooner *North Star*. Captain Johnson came on board, and told us he had just returned from Matau and Shiashikotan, on each of which he had last autumn left hunters and a boat's crew, to hunt through the winter. The two hunters of the Shiashikotan party were said to have been drowned, and the three Japanese sailors of the Matau party were missing. There was something suspicious about the Shiashikotan affair. The Japanese crew asserted that the boat capsized whilst they were attempting to land after having been out hunting, the two hunters, who were brothers, being drowned, whilst the three Japanese got safely ashore. The boat was all right, and nothing had been lost.

The Matau party had had a hard time; there were two white men—Gannon, an Irish American, and Nebbe, a German. Their quarters were in some deserted Ainu *yurts* on a small islet (Puffin Island),

lying about a mile off the east side of Matau. They had one hunting-boat and a small dinghy. After being some time on the island, the Japanese boatmen became dissatisfied, and one night cleared out with the hunting-boat, taking with them some rice and other provisions. It was supposed they had gone over to the main island. Gannon was laid up ill at the time. Nebbe waited for a fine spell of weather, and then pulled over to the main island to try to find and bring back the Japanese. He expected to find them in the old deserted Ainu village on the other side of the island. He got across safely, and hauled the dinghy well up under the cliffs, and then went to the other side of the island (about three miles), where he found traces of the Japanese, but neither man nor boat was in sight. He made his way back to where he had landed, only to find his boat had been smashed by a snow-slide. There was nothing for him to do but return to the old village and take up his quarters there, all he had with him being his rifle and some ammunition. There he remained several weeks, subsisting on limpets and seaweed, and occasionally getting a sea-fowl of some kind with his rifle. Finally, becoming desperate, he resolved to try to get across to Puffin Island somehow in the broken dinghy, which he succeeded in doing, with great difficulty, on a calm, fine day.

On entering the *yurt* he was greeted with a frightened yell from his companion, who rose up in his bunk, grabbed his rifle, and pointed it at him. But the sick man quieted down on being assured it was Nebbe himself, and not his ghost. He had spent a miserable time, and was too weak to move

about. Soon after this the schooner came along and took them off. Gannon died on board shortly afterwards. The Japanese who ran away with the boat were never again heard of ; they were probably lost in a tide-rip in attempting to reach some other island. The Shiashikotan party secured eight otters, and that on Matau two, these ten otters costing the lives of six men. The *North Star* was very unfortunate, having now but one hunter, who was of little use. The spare hunter I had from the *Dido* would not join her, so the captain was obliged to sail down to Yetorup to try to obtain some men from the *Eliza* and *Dido's* crews to make up his complement.

To return to our own experiences. In June, July, August, and September, our catches numbered ten, thirty-two, eight, and six otters, respectively. We had no more hunting, and October 7 saw us in our old anchorage in South-East Bay, Shikotan, where we aired skins and cleaned up, sailing on the 10th for Yokohama. During the voyage we had lowered for hunting eighty-one times, and spent 670 hours in the boats, pulling over 2,010 miles of water in securing our catch of eighty otters.

For the hunting season of 1880 we sailed on April 12 from Yokohama, and twelve days later anchored in Roko Bay, Yetorup, where we landed Captain Miller and his party of carpenters and labourers, with their stores and gear, for repairing and getting off the schooner *Eliza*, which had lain there high and dry since the previous year. In May and June we secured 23 and 31 otters respectively, pulling the boats a distance of over 789 miles.

On June 12 my third hunter nearly came to grief.

We were hunting off the north end of Rashau, and had "raised" an otter which had taken to a tide-rip which formed off the point. A heavy fog-bank was drifting up towards us, and I signalled my boats to pull in to the rocks, there to wait for the fog to pass. My second hunter followed me into a sheltered bight amongst the rocks, but the third man did not turn up. Presently we heard a shot, followed by several more, fired in quick succession. Knowing he was near the tide-rip, we knew something unusual had happened, so pulled out in the direction of the firing, and found the boat in the rip half full of water. With difficulty we got the men into our boats, and towed her in to the shore, where we hauled her up and temporarily repaired her. It turned out that the hunter had foolishly pulled into the rip after an otter, where it was, of course, useless to follow the beast even in clear weather, and the rough sea had caused him to stumble in his boat, and blow a hole in the bottom of it with his rifle. He tried to stop the leak by stuffing his socks into the hole and split plank, but the water came in faster than it could be bailed out, and he then fired for assistance. It was very fortunate we went to him as quickly as we did; otherwise the whole boat's crew would certainly have been drowned. Whilst at Rashau we traded for three otter-skins and eleven beautiful foxskins, getting the lot for 8 pounds of powder, 13 pounds of tobacco, seven boxes of caps, some lead, old clothes, biscuit, soap, and a few other articles.

During July, while at Yetorup, we heard from the natives that a Sendai fishing-boat had drifted ashore in Bear Bay, at the north-east end of the island, with two men in it alive, but in an exhausted

condition, out of a crew of twelve. This boat, which was an ordinary open fishing sampan, had been blown off the coast of Sendai during a gale in October, and the poor fellows had been for *nine months* attempting to get back to the westward, living on the fish they caught, and depending on rain for their water-supply. All but two had succumbed to the hardships to which they had been exposed, and when they reached land these two were almost at death's door.

The remainder of the season passed without incident. Our total catch was eighty large otters and twelve cubs, six fur-seals, and twelve foxes, to secure which we spent 529 hours in the boats, and pulled 1,587 miles in the seventy times we lowered for hunting. After our arrival in Yokohama, hearing of an opportunity of getting some seals on an islet in the Sea of Okotsk, I sent the schooner away on November 4; and after a trip of nineteen days she arrived, to find nothing but a number of dead seals, which apparently had been hurriedly killed and left lying on the rookery. The carcasses of the seals were frozen, and 568 skins, which the cold had prevented from spoiling, were taken from them.

The season of 1881 commenced somewhat inauspiciously, inasmuch as I lost my second hunter just before I was ready to sail. He was burned to death in a fire at the boarding-house where he was staying. Then I lost about 3 tons of salt owing to a lighter leaking whilst the schooner was "hove down" to have her bottom cleaned; after that a boat was stolen, but recovered later.

We sailed on April 5. On the 16th, when off Cape Yerimo, Yezo, the temperature of the sea-

water was 32° F., indicating ice in the vicinity. The next day we ran into ice-fields, and stood away to the southward to clear them. On the 18th we felt the effects of some submarine disturbance, the vessel trembling and a low rumbling noise being heard. Immense fields of hummocky ice were passed, extending some thirty miles offshore. On the 19th we got beset with thick ice all round as far as the eye could reach; but the following day we reached open water, steering south and south-east.

In the evening we altered our course to north-north-east, the sea being clear in that direction, and we thought we had at last got away from the ice; but about 2.30 a.m. on the 21st we again ran into an immense field. We were running with a fair six-knot breeze, winged out. The night was clear, and the moon, in her last quarter, was low, so that the ice could not be seen until we were close upon it, although much of it was 6 to 8 feet above water. The mate whose watch it was got "rattled" when he realized that he was running full tilt into what looked like solid ice, and put his helm just the opposite way to that in which he ought to have put it. The schooner crashed into the floe, making a tremendous noise to those below, who rushed on deck thinking she had run on the rocks; the well was sounded, but she was making no water. Fortunately, the ice all along the edge of the field, although it was in large masses, was soft and spongy; we went into it with such force that, had it been hard, solid ice, holes must inevitably have been knocked in the vessel's bows, if not more serious damage done. It took some hours to work out of this ice, and we again ran away to the southward,

and then east. Next morning we sighted Shikotan, bearing west by north. Some of our planking about the bows was nearly chafed through from contact with the ice. In the evening we were off Yetorup; the whole country was covered thickly with snow, its appearance being quite different from that which it presented the previous year at the same time. On the 23rd we put into "Jap Bay," when we had a visit from Captain Miller, who had wintered on the island. He had not succeeded in getting the *Eliza* afloat, and she had broken up.

Cruising up and down among the islands, on May 24 we had a narrow escape at Shiashikotan. We were anchored on the Pacific side, near the middle of the island. Soon after midnight, a heavy swell setting in and the breeze freshening, we deemed it prudent to get under way, as the wind was blowing right on shore. The night was very dark, and we had to make two or three short tacks in order to clear a reef which lay to the south of us. On the third tack, finding ourselves right up to the outer breakers of the reef, with no room to go about, we took the chance of passing between the breakers and the end of the main reef. We got through the narrow channel without touching anything, but the few minutes it took to clear the danger were very anxious ones. In broad daylight, with a fair wind and smooth water even, no one would think of attempting the feat.

When at Shumshir we visited the natives located there. There were but twenty-two of them, and they seemed much better off than their fellows on the central islands of the group. Off the coast of Shumshir we had lots of cod-fishing, laying in a good supply, which we salted down.



On June 24, in the afternoon, we arrived at the Srednoy Rocks, lying between Ushishir and Rashau. This is a very ugly place, full of rocks, reefs, and heavy tide-rips. From Ushishir towards Rashau a rocky ledge extends, with from 3 to 16 fathoms of water upon it, and here and there rocks showing above-water; the two largest, about three miles from the north point of Ushishir, are called the Srednoy Rocks. This reef has almost perpendicular sides, soundings going from 16 to 100 fathoms, with no bottom. The currents setting through the channels between the islands, some 5 or 6 knots strong at times, strike this ledge, and a boiling, swirling, seething tide-rip results, rendering a vessel helpless in it without a strong breeze. Around these rocks on the ledge are immense kelp-beds much frequented by otters, but it is only for an hour or so at a time during slack-water that the place can be safely hunted. We had made a number of attempts, but always had to leave without doing much.

On this occasion we anchored in a kelp-patch, and lowered boats, pulling round the largest rock, about 200 yards in extent. The sea was smooth, but a south-east swell was rolling in, causing heavy breakers on the rocks. There were probably seven or eight thousand sea-lions hauled out on the rock, and when passing the south-east end of it I noticed, in a depression, a pod of fur-seals. This was an unexpected find, and I signalled my other two boats to close in. Landing was difficult and risky, but the temptation was great. Lashing my rifle and other gear fast, I resolved to go in on the top of a breaker, and shoot the boat in between some rocks where, if we were not capsized, we should be safe, and could land with

ease. Instructing the other two boats to stand by in case of an accident, I went in on the crest of a breaker, steering with an oar, and, fortunately, at the right moment swept the boat in behind the rocks just as the sea broke. We were safe, but my people in the other boats thought we had been swamped, as the rocks hid us from view. Whilst they were pondering how to save us, we were seen running towards the pod of seals, armed with the boat's oars for clubs. The seals, nearly all "bulls," stampeded, rushing into the sea, knocking down and running over some of my men, one of whom was bitten in the arm; we killed, however, fifty-six. Whilst this was going on, the other boats, not liking to follow my example, pulled round to the other end of the rock, where they landed in a long narrow crevice, hauling their boats up on to the rock.

It was eight o'clock before we skinned and got our seals on board. We were now prepared to take any amount of risk, with the prospect of a big catch of seals before us, so we let go another anchor, and held on to our position. Next morning at about five o'clock we landed, and remained on the rock until noon, securing fifty-eight seals. My second hunter, in attempting to club a big bull seal, missed his aim, the seal swinging under his club and gripping him by the thigh. Fortunately he had on long boots, reaching to the top of his legs. The leather was bitten through, as were also his trousers and underclothing, and a strip, about 6 inches wide, was torn away from top to bottom; but his leg escaped with only a small wound. On the 26th we got sixty-three, on the 27th sixty-eight, on the 28th seventy-four, and on the 29th eighteen. We then ran over to Ushishir.

The sea-lions had greatly hindered us from getting many seals. The first time we all landed together (on the second day) we charged the mass, shouting and clubbing right and left. There must have been some eight or ten thousand animals on the rock at the time, and their rush into the sea was like an avalanche. When we again attempted this manœuvre the big sea-lion bulls stood their ground, and as they bounded towards us we had to give way. Luckily, they did not follow us up; as soon as we were off their domain (each bull has a certain space, which he and his harem of from four to eight, or more, cows occupy) they came no farther. Although these sea-lions are immense beasts (the largest bulls weigh, perhaps, some 1,500 pounds), they are easily driven off the rocks at ordinary times; but the breeding season makes all the difference. They then fight fiercely amongst themselves, ripping each other with their formidable teeth, and tearing huge gashes in their skins, usually about the neck and shoulders. They are of a fierce aspect, with small, wicked-looking eyes. So troublesome did they become that we had to take our rifles, and shoot those near where the seals hauled up. The Ainu of Ushishir told me that on one occasion a boat's crew went over to the rocks to get some young sea-lions for food. As they were landing, the animals became frightened and stampeded, rushing over the rocks on to the boat, which was smashed to pieces, and all the occupants except a small boy were killed.

On the fourth day of our sealing I injured my arm in attempting to drive off a big bull. Shouting, throwing pieces of rock, and pretending to rush at

him, but keeping out of his reach, had no effect except to make him angry ; he would make two or three bounds in my direction, causing me to retreat. At last I picked up a good-sized piece of rock, and, letting him come within easy distance, I threw it with all my might at his jaws, breaking some of his teeth. This was my last attempt ; it made no difference to him, but the muscles of my shoulder were so badly sprained by the force with which I threw the rock that I could not use my arm properly again for a long time ; indeed, I feel the effects to this day. This put a stop to my sealing, and I had to remain on board the schooner. Later on, when hunting, I had to shoot from my left shoulder for some time.

We gave Srednoy a rest until July 8, as the weather was too bad for us to venture there. On July 8, in the afternoon, we ran across and anchored. There was too much surf to land, but we killed two otters in the kelp-patch. We could see large numbers of seals, at least 2,000, hauled up. The next day we landed, and during the following seven days secured 1,960 seals, which were as many as we had salt for. On July 10 there was some unfortunate waste, about four or five hundred skins being spoiled. Not being able to go ashore myself on account of my arm, I sent my shipkeeper, who wanted to show his smartness and beat the record of our day's work. Instead of killing pods of about 100 at a time, and getting their skins off before they began to heat, he made a drive of over 700. By the time 350 were skinned the carcasses of the rest had heated so much that the fur loosened, and could be stripped off with the hand ; if a carcass were trodden upon, great patches of fur were stripped off. These all had to

be left, and were wasted. The day was very warm, with bright sunshine.

We left for Hakodate, intending to ship our catch, and return with more salt for another lot. It took a fortnight running down; we remained two weeks in port, and then returned to Srednoy, which we reached on August 27. More seals than ever were hauled up. In three days we took nearly 1,200, and then had to leave on account of the weather. Returning on September 10, we got nearly 1,200 more in five days. Our salt was again all used up. Not thinking it possible that so many more seals would haul out on Srednoy, I took salt enough only for about 2,500, and expected to have a lot to spare, whereas I could easily have secured a couple of thousand more. The day after we left we met the schooner *Khiva Elizabeth* bound northwards. She made a catch of 1,700 seals at Srednoy, having shipped in Hakodate some of my runaway sailors, who told her captain where we had found the seals.

When about to leave Srednoy, I resolved to capture a couple of well-grown seals, and take them down to Yokohama alive. We had a salmon seine on board, with which we could easily secure the seals we wanted. Taking it on to the rookery, we selected a two or three years old female, and soon had her rolled up in the net, and carried on board, where we released her in the hold. Returning to the rookery, we secured a male of about the same age, and treated him in the same manner. We also captured a couple of three-months-old "pups."

On the voyage down, a few days later, we took the seals out of the hold by means of the net, and placed them in a large spare boat on deck, fastening battens

across the top so that the beasts could not get out ; the boat was then three-parts filled with water, which made our captives feel happy. The small pups were fed with condensed milk, but we had nothing for the large ones ; however, as the fur-seal is capable of fasting for two or three months when in first-rate condition, I thought we should be able to get them down alive. We made rather a long passage to Yokohama, and on the thirteenth day the male died. The sixteenth day out we bought a number of flying-fish from a fishing-boat off the Japan coast, and our seal ate four of them, the pups eating some pieces of another. On arrival at Yokohama I offered to present the seals to the Zoological Gardens in Tokyo, if they would send for them ; but no notice was taken of my letter, and, after waiting for more than a month, I sold the big seal to a Japanese, who intended to exhibit it ; the pups I gave away, but they did not live long. Some months later, when passing through a part of the Japanese city where shows are held, I saw over one of these places a large picture of a seal being captured by a Japanese boat in a rough sea ; inside I found our old friend in a large tank of water, now quite tame and very fat. The public paid a few coppers to enter, and could purchase small fish with which to feed her.

On the run down with our first lot of skins to Hakodate we took two young wild-geese from Ushishir, where a few resort to breed. We fed our captives with wild celery and other greenstuff. These birds became very tame and impudent, even disputing with the dog over his food. Before sailing for Yokohama, we ran over to Ushishir in

order to give our Ainu friends all our old clothes and whatever else we could spare. They had never fared so well before ; we were liberally inclined after a good catch, and gave them a quantity of stores and luxuries, besides tools, ammunition, a shot-gun, and other things such as they had never possessed.

On the night of the 15th-16th we passed the volcano on the south-west end of Simushir in eruption. The red-hot lava running down in small streams made the mountain look as if covered with lanterns. When off the north-east end of Urup we encountered a heavy west-north-west gale, with high seas and a very bad tide-rip. In stowing the jib one of our sailors fell overboard. He kept afloat until we got the vessel round and ran up to him, when a line was thrown, which he grasped, but could not hold on to. Before we could get to him again the poor fellow went down and was lost. It was impossible to lower and man a boat in such a sea and tide-rip.

We arrived in Yokohama on the last day of September. When beating up the Uraga Channel the previous night, we had a narrow escape from collision with the Emperor's yacht, which, disregarding all the rules of the road, very nearly ran us down. We were close hauled, and the steamer as she approached us kept altering her course to cross our bows, a common habit with Japanese vessels in those days, and a habit from which they are not altogether free even now. To avoid being run into, we had at the last minute, when about a dozen yards off, to put the helm hard down and let the schooner fly up in the wind. As may be imagined, "greetings" were exchanged with those in charge of the yacht. We had a valuable catch on board,

or I would have taken the chance of being run down by holding my course, and trusting to recover damages if sunk or injured.

There were eleven foreign schooners hunting during the season of 1881, most of which made catches of seals as well as otters, the total capture amounting to 300 otters and about 14,000 seals. This season was marked by some of the hunting-vessels extending their venture into the Bering Sea, three or four paying Bering Island a visit, and securing several hundred seals. Some people from the American schooner *Diana* attempted to land near one of the seal rookeries on Copper Island, but on approaching the shores were fired upon by the natives. Several Japanese sailors were killed, and other Japanese and two European hunters badly wounded. The boats were got on board with difficulty, and the schooner ran for Petropaulsky in order to get the wounded attended to and the occurrence reported. The Russian officials confiscated some 500 seals, which they claimed had been taken in Russian waters, but did not take away her sea-otter skins, of which she had ninety-one. These, with her seals, had been captured in the vicinity of the Kuril Islands and elsewhere prior to her visit to Copper Island. On the *Diana's* return to Yokohama an inquiry into the affair was held at the American Consulate. It was also reported to Washington, and claims for redress and compensation made, but without success.. When attempting to land on Copper Island, the *Diana's* boats' crews were entirely unarmed; they knew the natives were there, and their object was to obtain some seals from them if arrangements could be made.



In 1882 I paid a visit to England via the United States, and, as I had discovered the new fur-seal rookery and made a good catch, I was the recipient of more than ordinary attention from those interested in the fur-seal trade, both in America and in England. I made all arrangements before leaving Japan to send away my vessel again as soon as the season opened; I also took shares in another vessel then being built for the business.

Thirteen schooners sailed for the hunting-grounds that season, but otter-hunting was very much neglected owing to nearly everyone hanging about the vicinity of the seal rookeries waiting for the seals to haul up. Finally several entered into a compact to go away hunting the sea-otter, the others to remain and exploit the rookery when the seals arrived, the catches to be pooled and divided up at the end of the season. Hunters were changed over into the different vessels in order to check the catches made, and each went its way. About 120 otters were taken altogether. The syndicate of schooners got 1,050 seals and 16 otters each as the result of their pooling. Two boats' crews were lost in a heavy tide-rip whilst hunting an otter off the south-west end of Urup.

The otter-hunting season was free from any stirring incidents, but before returning to port several vessels visited Robben Island for seals, the story of which I hope to record elsewhere.

## CHAPTER IX

### A PRISONER IN RUSSIAN HANDS

ON May 5, 1883, we left Yokohama in the *Otome* for another voyage. On the way up we had a narrow escape, nearly running on the rocks off the east coast of Yezo during a thick fog. Although a good look-out was kept and the lead hove at intervals, we suddenly found ourselves with reefs, rocks, and breakers, all round us. Fortunately, being midday, with smooth water and a moderate breeze, we had no difficulty in "going about" and clearing the dangers. We reached Yetorup on May 17, and lowered boats for hunting next day, but saw no otters; the following day, however, we killed one.

On May 20, when about forty-five miles from the north-east end of Yetorup, loud thundering and explosive noises were heard. It proved to be the volcano at the north-east end of the island in violent eruption, and soon after we saw vast quantities of smoke issuing from the crater. As we got closer thick fog obscured the view, and when we passed to leeward of the mountain we were covered with fine volcanic ashes. Passing Simushir, we could see that the volcano on the south-west end of that island had also recently been in eruption, and much black-looking rocky matter thrown up,

from which a great deal of smoke was issuing. When off this island, to the eastward of Prevost Peak, we experienced the effects of a submarine disturbance of some kind, a low rumbling noise being heard, accompanied by considerable trembling of the vessel.

On the south end of Paramushir we fell in with the natives who used to inhabit Ushishir and the neighbouring island, their last place being Shiashikotan. Some of them came on board, and told us a Japanese schooner had called in at Shiashikotan in June, made them drunk, stole the few skins they had, and ordered them away from the island. These poor Ainu, being terribly afraid of the Japanese, had left in a hurry, making their way in their boats up the islands, intending to get as far as Shumshir or Kamchatka. Up to this time the season had been the finest I had ever experienced on the Kurils, there not being more than eight or nine days of fog a month.

Otters were very scarce. In May we lowered boats ten times, getting seven otters, and having seven blank days out of the ten. In June we were out nineteen times, getting nine otters, and having fourteen blank days. In July we lowered six times up to the 17th, for nothing. We were 217 hours out in the boats, and pulled 657 miles, getting sixteen otters only. This poor result made me resolve to try the Bering Sea, so, leaving the Kurils on July 17, we ran along the coast of Kamchatka. On the 24th we anchored to the north of Cape Kronotski, filled up our water-tanks, and got some firewood from the driftwood on the beach.

Here an amusing encounter took place with a

bear, who suddenly appeared round a point close to where the men, in charge of the second mate, S., were filling up the water-casks. S. fired, wounding the bear, which ran up the steep sides of the bluff, 100 feet or more high. S. and three or four of the sailors, the latter armed with axes and clubs, followed up the bear, and when they reached the top, and entered the low scrub pine which grew there, the animal suddenly stood up on his hind-legs within a few feet of them. Without putting his rifle to his shoulder, S. pulled the trigger, and then the lot ran to the edge of the cliff, where one man threw himself over, rolling head over heels down the steep slope from top to bottom. I had been along the beach to the westward, but, hearing the firing, returned just in time to see what looked like a bundle of clothes roll down from the top of the bluff. Seeing the bear did not follow them, they cautiously returned, and found him dead, the chance shot fired by the mate having entered his throat and broken his neck. We killed another bear shortly after, and saw several more. A "school" of walrus was also seen near the vessel. The next day we left, and ran over towards Bering Island. On the 29th we lowered boats and pulled along the coast of that island near the south end, landing and capturing two young blue foxes, which we took on board.

The weather was very foggy. We knocked about near the coast, sailing to the northward and then along the north coast of the island. When off the latter, on August 3, the scent and roaring of seals wafted off to the schooner indicated the proximity of a rookery. Lowering boats, we pulled towards the direction of the sound, and came upon an im-

mense fur-seal rookery, there being tens of thousands hauled up. On pulling closer, we made out a crowd of natives on the shore, armed with clubs and rifles, and, their actions not appearing to be of a friendly nature, we pulled back on board our vessel. Our men had a great scare, fearing we should be fired upon. Later on I learnt that the topmasts of the schooner, which had been seen above the fog, informed the natives of our presence in the vicinity.

The weather continued foggy. On the 12th there was a southerly breeze, with passing fog-banks. We lowered boats and pulled along the coast, prospecting, and landed about a mile or so from the rookery. Leaving my boat's crew, I went along the beach in the direction of the village. Ascending a bluff which formed a point, I saw spread beneath me the immense rookery of seals, with the native village behind it, and below, on the near side from the main rookery (our side of the point), I saw about a thousand bachelor seals hauled up. This looked like our chance, so, hurrying back, I got the boats afloat and pulled towards this place, hugging the beach so as to keep out of sight. We soon got to work and killed nearly 600 seals, and proceeded to skin them. It was about four in the afternoon when we landed. Our three boats had been left amongst some low rocks, 100 yards or so from where we had made our "drive" of seals, and, the skinning being nearly finished, I ordered two boats to be brought nearer, so that the skins could be put into them.

We were congratulating ourselves on our success, when suddenly, about half-past eight, just as it

was getting quite dark, someone shouted out, "Here they come!" and on looking up I saw some thirty armed natives coming towards us. A general stampede took place, most of my men running for the single boat lying farthest away. I ran down to my own boat, which was one of those which had been brought round, but, unfortunately, none of my boat's crew followed me. Hundreds of seals were taking to the sea, which was dotted with rocks hereabouts, and I took to the water with them, and, when up to my thighs, squatted behind a rock, trusting not to be seen in the darkness. Someone, however, must have seen me, for a man came to the edge of the water and called out; but I kept quiet, and he went away again. By this time I could see nothing, and edged my way towards where the single boat had been left, but it was gone. After waiting awhile I cautiously returned to where the two boats had been left; they, too, had gone, but I found all the skins lying as we had placed them, with no trace of the natives. I came across skinning-knives and several coats belonging to the sailors, which they had taken off whilst working, and had left when they ran for the boat. These I made into a bundle and slung over my shoulders, as I knew the men had none too many clothes.

Taking the direction in which the schooner lay, I started along the coast, falling many times over boulders and crevices in the rocks, the night being very dark. Foxes, which are plentiful on the island, were yapping close about me as I proceeded, and I picked up pieces of rock and hurled them in their direction whenever they annoyed me by coming too close. The shore provided such bad going that

I tried the hills, but they were just as bad. I abandoned the clothes and took off my long boots, but that made no improvement, and I was glad to put them on again. Before dawn I got down to about where I reckoned the schooner to be, and when it grew lighter sighted her. When it was sufficiently light I hailed the vessel, the wind being offshore and favourable for being heard. On my second hail I was surprised to hear another a short distance away. I crept into cover amongst the high growth of umbelliferous plants at the foot of the cliffs; and no one appearing, I ventured out again, when I saw one of my sailors farther down the beach. He had taken to the hills instead of the boat when the natives appeared, and, like myself, was now making for the vessel. On again hailing the schooner, a boat came to fetch us off.

When I got on board, I found that all were there with the exception of the second mate, S., who had not turned up, and that my shipkeeper had been at the liquor-locker, and was hopelessly drunk. I then called the Japanese boatswain, who was my boat-steerer, and gave him a thrashing for deserting his boat. Hungrier than I had ever been before in my life, or have been since, I ate all the cooked food there was in the pantry, and drank a dozen cups of coffee, and still my craving for food was unsatisfied. Instead of getting under way, I gave orders to remain where we were, in case S. should turn up on the beach, and to have a boat ready to fetch him off. I then turned in, thoroughly tired out. I had not been asleep for more than an hour or so when "Old Joe" awoke me, with the news that a steamer had rounded the north-west point of the

island, and was standing towards us. I replied, "Let her come; if she is the *Alexander*, she will only order us away," and went to sleep again. About an hour later I was awakened again, with the report that the steamer had anchored near us, and was lowering a boat. I turned out, and we were boarded by the Governor of the island, a Lieutenant Gribnitsky, two Cossacks, Captain Sandman of the *Alexander*, and some others. This steamer was under the Russian flag, although belonging to the Alaska Commercial Company, an American enterprise.

A number of questions were asked, and our ship's papers and articles examined. We were accused of having been on shore, and were told that the natives had captured several of our men, and that more were in the hills. I wondered how they knew this, but later ascertained that the village people had sent to Nicolski, about ten miles across the island, where the steamer was lying, and informed them of our being off the north end of the island. They were somewhat nonplussed to find that the number of hands on board agreed with the ship's articles. The schooner was searched, but nothing found except some half-dozen sea-lion pup skins, belonging to the sailors. They were in a quandary as to what steps to take with us, so I tried to persuade Lieutenant Gribnitsky that the information he had received must apply to some other ship's boats. Finally, they decided to take our rifles, the ship's papers, and myself. I protested, but nevertheless thought this was an easy way out of the difficulty; so, after being assured by Captain Sandman that I should be properly treated, I packed



up some clothes and went on board the steamer. Before I left the schooner, the shipkeeper heard that they intended to take me to Petropaulsky, and that, if he wished to get me on board again, he must go there too. I little thought he would be fool enough to go.

The action of the *Alexander's* people, indeed, took us somewhat by surprise, as she was but a merchant-vessel, without any special authority. We could easily have got away, had we so chosen, with the breeze then blowing, the *Alexander* being only able to make eight knots.

Both vessels now got under way, the schooner proceeding to the westward, and the steamer in the opposite direction, anchoring off the rookery and village. Here we took on board 13,000 sealskins, which had been salted and bundled ready for shipment. I was perfectly comfortable on board the steamer, being given a berth off the saloon, and messing with the captain. Next day S. and my two boats were brought on board, and we left the rookery and steamed to Nicolski, the chief place on the island. Owing to thick weather, we could not make the harbour until the evening. When S. was brought on board he did not recognize me, nor I him. I learned later that he had been captured through running back into the arms of the natives, as he thought he heard the word given to stand by the skins. They took him to the village that night, and locked him up in an old *yurt*, from which he tried to escape by setting fire to it, but without success. I ascertained that the natives had been on the watch for us night and day, but, as we had put off landing so long, thought we had

given it up. On the day we did land, it was only by chance that our boats were seen by some natives who were crossing the island, who returned to the village and reported it.

From Nicolski we sailed for Petropaulsky, arriving there two days later. I was asked to give my word not to leave without permission, which I did. Next day I went out berrying with a party of native girls and men from the ships, and on returning found the Russian flagship *Skobeleff* had arrived, with the Admiral on board. I spent the next day on board one of the steamers in port, the *Kamchatka*, and in the evening called on Mr. Malavenski, the principal trader of Petropaulsky. He happened to be a Freemason, and, as I am a member of that fraternity myself, he could not do too much for me. By his advice I called on the Admiral. On the 21st I handed in a protest against the action of Lieutenant Gribnitsky, with a request to be sent down to Vladivostock, and thence to Japan by the steamer which was to leave in a day or two. The Admiral, I afterwards heard, censured Lieutenant Gribnitsky for taking me out of my vessel, telling him he ought, if taking any action, to have seized the vessel.

The following is a description of Petropaulsky as it then was, which I sent to a friend, and I do not think the place has altered much since :

“Petropaulsky contains some 350 to 400 inhabitants. The town, consisting of about a hundred log houses and a few clamp-boarded dwellings, storehouses, church, and other buildings, stands on the north side of the harbour. All the best buildings have been erected by the Alaska Commerical Com-

pany, the church included, which was presented by the company to the clergy, who, of course, bestowed a blessing on the donors. There is but one store in the town of any pretensions, where something of everything can be obtained. The proprietors also trade in furs. I saw lots of sturdy-looking ponies, and cattle are fairly plentiful. Good beef, milk, and butter, are to be had. The natives, I understand, are allowed to take up and cultivate as much land as they please. Many of the houses stand in gardens devoted chiefly to the raising of potatoes and turnips. Hay for the winter food of the cattle is cut in a large valley some two or three miles to the north of the town; haymaking had commenced when we left. Berries are plentiful on the hills; several kinds are delicious and make excellent preserves. Fish, particularly salmon, abound in the rivers and bays; quantities of salmon, herring, cod, flounders, and other kinds of fish, were caught alongside the vessel as we lay at the wharf. The country around is rich in fur-bearing animals. A few sea-otters are caught on the south coast; white bears and wolves abound in the northern parts; while brown bears, wolves, foxes, sable, ermine, land-otter, reindeer, and mountain-sheep, are found in most parts of the peninsula. Copper and coal exist, and gold also, but it has not been worked, owing, it is said, to its being too far away from the settlements.

“The natives of Petropaulsky appear to be good-natured people, taking life very easily, and being, in common with all the inhabitants of these parts, wonderfully fond of vodki. The women do the greater part of the work, except such labour as the

loading and discharging of vessels, which, of course, happens but seldom. When at this the men earn from one and a half to one and three-quarter roubles a day. There is a police-station in the town, but the natives do not trouble it much—although, from what I saw, it appears to be rather advantageous than otherwise to be ‘run in’ and undergo a term of imprisonment here, the prisoner being allowed to go at large and attend to his business or work during the day, merely having to sleep at the prison, for which inconvenience he gets paid sixteen kopecks per day to find himself in food. One man was being ‘punished’ by a term of this kind of imprisonment for a little trouble with a Russian sailor, whom he had cut in the neck. During my sojourn here I made the acquaintance of Dr. Dybowsky, a gentleman who had spent many years in these parts. The doctor had worked hard in the interests of science, making collections of the beasts, birds, insects, plants, minerals, fossils, etc., of Kamchatka, obtaining also many things from Manchuria, Saghalin, the Commander Islands, and other places, and discovering a number of birds and plants not hitherto known to naturalists. The doctor’s attention was also given to various native languages and dialects, of several of which he compiled vocabularies. Unfortunately, he lost a valuable lot of specimens by shipwreck when on their way to Europe.

“Subsequently Dr. Dybowsky was offered a professorship at home, and left Petropaulsky by the *Vladivostock* in company with the retiring Governor. On the occasion of their departure a ball was given at the police-station (that being the most suitable place), to which all the village was invited. Every-

one attended in gala attire, several of the men sporting swallow-tails and white 'chokers.' Dancing was kept up till well into the small-hours, to the accompaniment of a fiddle and accordion, which just managed to squeak out a few notes to enable the dancers to keep time. Although most of the votaries of the Terpsichorean art were about as graceful in their movements as young elephants, they heartily enjoyed themselves. What the dances were supposed to be I could not say, but it appeared as if each one danced what he liked, a cross between a polka and Highland schottische being the favourite. Eating, drinking, and smoking, filled up the intervals between dances. Vodki flowed freely, and several fine specimens of Kamchatkales were found next morning lying around preserved in alcohol. Nor was the drinking confined to the men; the ladies took their share, and one or two youngsters of not more than twelve or thirteen were helplessly drunk.

"I believe in many parts of Russia the natives are noted for their economical use of water, both inwardly and outwardly. A teacup or oyster-shell is, I believe, the usual thing in which many of the Czar's subjects take their morning bath. These, however, have to take a back-seat compared with some of the Petropaulovskians. Of course the steam bath is an institution here as in other parts of Russia, and all indulge in it more or less, but the everyday ablutions of many of the natives here are performed as follows: A quantity of water is taken into the mouth, the hollows of both hands held before the face, the water ejected into them and rubbed over the parts to be washed. This is doubly economical, as it does away with the necessity

of a wash-bowl, and also warms the water without the expenditure of fuel.

“The harbour of Petropaulsky is on the east side of Avatcha Bay, and is formed by a narrow point of wooded bluff about half a mile in length, running out into the bay in a southerly direction. At the end of this point, on the harbour side, is a flat piece of low shingly ground, on which the Alaska Commercial Company have built three go-downs and a small wharf. The water being deep up to within a few feet of the beach, vessels can lie alongside this and discharge their cargoes. It is about half a mile to the shore on the opposite side of the harbour, where the hills rise with a gentle slope to a height of over 1,000 feet, with plenty of timber about their sides towards the summits. From the shore on the eastern side there runs out, almost at right angles, and very nearly across the middle of the harbour, a natural breakwater, a low, narrow, shingly spit with deep water close to it on both sides; the space between the end of this spit and the opposite beach is sufficiently wide and deep to allow a large ship to get into the inner harbour, as it is called, where she can lie as if in a dock. On the spit trees have been planted, and an iron monument erected to commemorate the defeat of the British and French here in 1854. Beyond the village, under the northern end of the high bluffs which form the western side of the harbour, are two large mounds enclosed by a wooden fence. Beneath these mounds lie the remains of many of those who fell during the fighting here in August and September, 1854. (September 4 is a red-letter day in Petropaulsky, a day given to much rejoicing and a vast consumption of vodki.)

On one of the mounds stands a large roughly-made iron cross with a Russian inscription. On the others there are two—a wooden one with a metal plate on which is cut, ‘To the memory of the officers, seamen, and marines, who fell at Petropaulsky, August, 1854;’ and an ornamental iron one with the following: ‘A la mémoire des marines Français tués au combat de Petropaulsky, le 24 Août, 1854.’

“ ‘Unis pour la victoire,  
Reunis par la mort,  
Du soldat c’est la gloire,  
Des braves c’est le sort.’

“There is also a white marble slab to the memory of the French officers and marines who fell on September 11, 1854. In a hollow in the ridge of bluffs on the west side of the harbour a large wooden cross is erected to the memory of La Pérouse, who was, I believe, last heard of from this place.”

On August 23 I went on board the s.s. *Vladivostok*, and arranged for a passage down. We sailed on the morning of the 25th, and when some ten miles or so outside Avatcha Bay sighted a schooner almost becalmed. The captain of the steamer came to me, and said: “Your people on board the schooner are very foolish for coming here.” I replied, “It may not be my vessel;” but a closer approach dispelled all doubt.

I thought for a few minutes the captain did not intend to stop, and as we steamed by S. shouted: “Clear out, you — fools!” The shipkeeper, who was on deck, raised his hand in response, and commenced to haul in his sheets and change his course. However, it was too late; the steamer ran by and rounded to under the *Otome’s* stern, sent on

board, and took her in tow back to Petropaulsky. This was, of course, "nuts" to our friend Gribnitsky, as he now had something tangible in hand.

The authorities took possession, and all hands, except three Japanese sailors and the boatswain, were put on board the s.s. *Vladivostock*. A thorough search of the vessel was made, but nothing was found on board but the outfit and stores, two young blue foxes, a raven quite tame, and a lot of specimens which I had collected for scientific purposes. These consisted of the skins and skeletons of hair-seals, sea-lions, foxes, and other animals, a number of bird skins and eggs, and some sea-otter skeletons. The sixteen otter-skins we had taken on the Kuril Islands had, fortunately, been got rid of before venturing near Petropaulsky. These skins were wrapped round with blankets, put into a large cask, and the cask buried under a heap of boulders and débris at the foot of a cliff on Cape Shipunski. They were recovered the next year in perfect condition.

I had a lot of arsenic on board, and also a bottle of bichloride of mercury used in preserving specimens. These poisons made the Russians suspicious, and they emptied every drop of water out of the casks and tanks, and threw overboard all my specimens, and everything else that poison might be likely to affect. They also confiscated the young foxes, and wrung the raven's neck. Most of the things on board were sealed up. My notes, charts, and sketches of the Kurils, were seized, with the remark: "We shall take these, as it will prevent you coming up here again."

Two Russian officers and six Russian sailors were put on board the *Otome*, with orders to take her



down to Vladivostock. Our steamer sailed the next day, and we reached Vladivostock in due course. S., having been captured on Bering Island, was sent down in charge of a Cossack guard. The leave-taking of this guard, who was a big hulking fellow about 6 feet in height, was most grotesque. He was a native of the place, and was only going to Vladivostock and back, but from his actions one would have believed he was going to be executed. Both he and his friends cried as if their hearts would break, not shedding quiet tears, but absolutely roaring with their blubbing.

On September 3 we arrived in Vladivostock, but, as none of the officials would assume the responsibility of taking charge of us, we were kept on board the steamer. The Admiral on board the *Skobeleff* declined to deal with us; then the Admiral of the port, who acted as Governor of the city, was asked, but refused, and turned us over to the Governor of the district, whose headquarters were at Habarovka; he also would do nothing, and referred the matter to the Governor of Eastern Siberia, who was at Irkutsk. After various telegrams had been exchanged, that official gave orders for us to be brought on shore and kept under arrest.

On the 4th I wired my friends in Yokohama to arrange for a bank credit, as I was informed I should have to give security not to leave Vladivostock without permission. Mr. Dutton, of Messrs. Kunst and Albers, the principal merchants of the place, came on board and acted as interpreter. He was most kind, and gave the necessary security.

On the morning of the 5th the Japanese sailors were taken ashore and put up in a sort of barrack

near the Japanese Commercial Agent's place, an armed guard of soldiers being placed over them. Later on Flag-Lieutenant Abaza, who was attached to the Governor's staff, informed me he had been deputed to take charge of us. He spoke English perfectly, and half a dozen other languages as well. He was one of the handsomest men I have ever seen, and was as genial as he was handsome. We went on shore with him, my skipper and two hunters being accommodated in an unused schoolroom in the soldiers' barracks; they were not allowed to leave the enclosure unaccompanied by guards. Lieutenant Abaza and Mr. Dutton introduced me to the Naval and Military Club, where I got my meals and enjoyed its other privileges. A room was secured for me in the house of the manager of the club, and thus, allowing for the circumstances, I was personally very comfortably situated; moreover, I soon made lots of friends.

The British fleet (China Squadron) was known to be off the coast, and was daily expected. My friend Dr. D. informed me of this, and also that the officials had discussed the advisability of sending us into the country out of the way before the British ships came in. He offered to take charge of a letter and deliver it personally to the British Admiral, if I wished to let him know of our situation. I wrote one, explaining to the Admiral what had happened, and asked him, as there was no British Consul or other representative in Vladivostock (no Consuls being allowed there) to whom I could apply for assistance, to do what he could for us. Next morning, the 5th, the fleet came in, consisting of the *Audacious* (flagship), *Cleopatra*, *Curaçoa*, *Pegasus*, *Daring*,

*Linnet*, *Albatross*, and *Zephyr*. As we had not been sent away, the doctor brought back my letter.

The next day I informed Lieutenant Abaza I would like to call on the British Admiral, and, no objection being made, I went on board, and over a glass of sherry and a biscuit told him my tale of woe. When I finished, he said: "Well, I was expecting this visit from you. I have seen the Governor, who told me all about the affair, and spoke of you in a very kindly manner, and I think, from what he said, that when your schooner arrives she will be given back to you, and you will all be able to return to Japan in her."

I told him I was afraid, from what I had privately heard, it would not be so, and that Russian official machinery worked so slowly that probably months would elapse before the affair was settled, in which case, as the port would be closed by ice early in December, we should not be able to get away until the spring. I then asked if he could not use his influence in a friendly way to get things put through quickly. He replied that he did not see how he could do anything; he merely came there on a visit of courtesy, and as the officials and people always received him and his ships very cordially, and gave them the best of times, it would be very awkward for him to attempt to interfere, and so on. With this I had to be satisfied, and took my leave. Next day I sent my skipper on board to tackle the Admiral, but with no better result.

I then wrote out a vigorous protest, and sent it in to the Russian authorities, and a written statement of the whole affair was sent to the British Consul at Yokohama by the *Zephyr*, which was about to leave

for Hakodate. The British ship left on the 11th. On the 13th I went to Lieutenant Abaza, who asked a number of questions about the seizure of the *Otome*, and took down my replies in writing. On the 17th I received the following telegram from Yokohama :

“ British Consul advises ignore Pelikan’s notice ; question *Alexander’s* authority.”

This I had already done. The notice referred to was one issued by the Russian Consul in Yokohama, Mr. Pelikan, at the instigation of the company, which had sealing privileges on the Russian islands. It was not issued by the proper Russian authorities, nor even sanctioned by them, and when my case was put before the Russian authorities at home, they explained that it was considered a local police regulation.

On the 20th the *Otome* arrived in port flying the Russian flag, having been twenty-three days on the trip down. The three Japanese sailors were put with their compatriots, and “ Old Joe ” was sent to the barracks to join the skipper and hunters. Next day the schooner was dismantled, everything being taken out of her and put on board a store hulk lying in the harbour. The authorities were afraid some of us might get on board at night and clear out with her.

Day after day passed, and nothing was done. I could get nothing from the authorities but evasive verbal replies to my letters and personal inquiries, the most frequent one being that they could get no orders. At the end of September I sent a telegram of ninety-four words to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, giving full particulars of the seizure, and stating we had been one month in Vladivostock, that no

charge had been made against us, no inquiry held, we could get no redress whatever, and there was no British Consul to appeal to for help. On October 3 I received this reply :

“ Vessel and property seized pending result of trial for contravention of Russian hunting regulations.”

I waited another fortnight, nothing being done in the meanwhile, and then sent another telegram to St. Petersburg :

“ No trial *Otome* taking place ; over seven weeks nothing done ; is said authorities can get no instructions what to do in matter ; have protested, and claim \$50,000 for illegal seizure and imprisonment of crew. If not soon released will be frozen in for winter. Seizure, delay, imprisonment, most unwarranted, unjust, illegal, and serious. My presence urgently required in Japan ; please use influence for our protection, and report British Government.”

To which I got this answer :

“ Have urged immediate release and referred the matter home.”

On the 28th we were all told to attend at the “ Staff ” at 8.30 the following morning. The Japanese sailors were marched down under a guard of twenty-two soldiers with fixed bayonets, and we were all ushered into a large court-room. Here were General Prince —— (who was known as the “ Wicked Prince,” and who, rumour said, had been sent out to Eastern Siberia for the good of his morals), the Chief of Police, and Mr. Dutton, who acted as interpreter. The General read out a document in Russian, which Mr. Dutton interpreted to us. It was to this effect : “ That the British schooner *Otome*, her cargo

and all the property of the owner on board, were confiscated to the Russian authorities, but that the property and effects of the captain, hunters, and crew, were to be returned to them, and all were to be set at liberty. Reasons : That the vessel had been captured whilst hunting in prohibited waters, with a large number of seals and otters on board, and that the notice forbidding hunting in those waters ought to have been known to the owner, as it had been published in Japan."

I protested against this decision as being contrary to facts, the vessel not having been captured hunting in Russian waters, nor had she any seals or otters on board. I was told it was useless protesting there ; if I wished to protest, it must be done elsewhere ; these were their orders, and all they had to do was to carry them out. I then asked what they intended doing with the crew and others. Were they to be thrown on the streets destitute ? To this they replied that it was not their business. Word was then given to the guard to "right about face, quick march" back to barracks, and we were told we could leave. I sent up the Japanese crew to the Japanese Commercial Agent, who cared for them, the skipper applying to the authorities for assistance to enable them to return to Japan. The same day I wrote out a strong protest against the decision, giving reasons, and sent it on to the proper quarter.

The day after our release I sent the following wire to St. Petersburg :

"*Otome* confiscated without trial ; all hands thrown on streets destitute. Authorities refuse food and shelter, or passage to Japan, but have arranged for same privately."

I had some good friends "at court," and when the property and personal effects of the captain, hunters, and crew, were restored, there was nothing left but the bare hull, sails, and boats, to be confiscated. We got possession of all the stores, ammunition, guns, rifles, nautical instruments, chronometer, barometer, and other articles, selling the stores in Vladivostock, and taking our remaining possessions back with us, with the exception of one Winchester rifle and some ammunition, which went to the Chief of Police. We left by the s.s. *Baikal*, which sailed at midnight on November 1, our stay in Vladivostock covering two months all but two days.

On November 5 we arrived at Nagasaki, where the skipper and hunters went to the British Consul, who took charge of them as distressed British seamen, and sent them on to Yokohama. My object in this, as in my other actions, was to get the British authorities interested in the matter as much as possible, so that the case would be taken up by the home Government. On November 10 I arrived in Yokohama, and next day received a letter from the British Chargé d'Affaires, Mr. Trench, asking me to call on him. This I did without delay. He asked me to give him full particulars in writing, saying that he would put the matter before the home Government, and would do what he could personally when he got to England, which he expected would be soon. I put in a claim for the vessel and loss of season, and compensation to captain, hunters, and crew, etc., amounting to \$50,000. This was duly presented, and correspondence went on for some time between the two

Governments over the affair. Finally my agent in England, a barrister who had formerly been an official attached to the British Legation in Tokyo, wrote me that the Government officials had informed him that there were political reasons why the claim could not be pushed, and they advised me personally to take the case to St. Petersburg. This I did not think it worth while to do, and so the matter ended.

At the time of my sojourn in Vladivostock it was quite a different place from what it is now. Then it had only about 10,000 inhabitants. The houses, which were mostly built of logs, were scattered over about three miles of hillsides on the northern side of the harbour, no particular order having been observed, apparently, in laying out the town. There was no decent hotel, no butcher, no chemist, no tailor, no dry-goods store, and no bank. But there were two or three general stores, the principal one being that of Messrs. Kunst and Albers, who were in every kind of business, as merchants, bankers' agents, insurance agents, steamship agents, storekeepers, Government contractors, etc. Personally I had a very pleasant time there, made lots of friends, enjoyed some riding, driving, and shooting, Lieutenant Abaza obtaining for me possession of my gun and ammunition. Pheasants, woodcock, wild-fowl, and snipe, were fairly plentiful. One day I got into a warm corner for snipe, and had already secured half a dozen couple, and had five more birds on the ground, when I saw three policemen making towards me on the run from different directions. I wondered what would happen ; they all reached me about the same time, and with much gesticulation and talk in Russian, and threatening attitudes, gave me to



understand it was forbidden to shoot there ; so I got out as quickly as possible, not even waiting to pick up some of my birds.

Time hanging heavily on the hands of those confined to the schoolroom and barrack grounds, they amused themselves by drawing with soap, on the windows of the room in which they were quartered, caricatures of their gaolers and Lieutenant Gribnitsky, with inscriptions beneath, which some of the Russians took seriously. When they went out for a walk under guard, each would start off in a different direction on purpose to lead their custodians a dance. A mutiny occurred one day amongst the Japanese sailors, who attacked their guards, breaking the heads of a couple of them with bottles and taking away their arms. The guards were reinforced and the men subdued, after which the guards were doubled. The cause of the trouble was that they were allowed six and a half kopecks per day to buy food, and out of this small pittance the guards used to make a squeeze, and the men got hungry and desperate in consequence. I reported the matter to my friend Lieutenant Abaza, who took action at once and had the guards punished, and the sailors' allowance increased to thirty-six kopecks a day.

Some little time after my return to Yokohama, at a dinner-party given by some French friends, I met and was introduced to the Russian Admiral and some officers of the *Skobelev*. Needless to say, no reference was made to our previous meeting in Petropaulsky !

## CHAPTER X

### SOME NARROW ESCAPES

THE steamer which I had ordered when in England in 1882, and in which two friends had taken some shares, arrived out at the end of 1883, but, not being suitable for hunting purposes, was employed on the China coast. She proved an unlucky craft from start to finish. First our agents at home failed, which involved us in some loss; then the builders with whom we had contracted became bankrupt, and we had to take over the vessel and finish her ourselves, thus losing more money. By the time she arrived in the Far East she had cost just double the amount originally estimated. This did not end the run of ill luck, for the first two charterers, Chinese, got into difficulties, and we did not get all our charter money. Then for a time she paid expenses, but was finally laid up and sold at a heavy loss.

Even in selling her we had fresh misfortunes. While the transfer was being arranged, it was found that the legal firm in London who drew up the documents had made a mistake in spelling the name of one of the partners, and through the delay caused by this mistake the sale was cancelled. After all had been put right, which of course took some months, she was finally sold at a much lower figure than that originally agreed upon. We then purchased the

Russian schooner *Nemo*, which was sold by order of the Russian Consul to pay off her crew and other liabilities. We fitted her out for hunting for the season of 1884, and sent her away, I remaining in Yokohama to look after our business, whilst my partner took a trip home.

This year showed a further decline in otter-hunting, most of the schooners paying more attention to sealing. Several ventured into the Bering Sea and visited the Pribyloff Islands, the *Nemo*, after she had visited Cape Shipunski and recovered the skins buried there the previous year, as already recorded, being amongst them. She returned at the end of the season with nineteen sea-otters and 500 sealskins, but minus two hunters, who had gone on board another vessel, the *Adèle*, and been captured by an American revenue cutter. They, together with the vessel, were sent to San Francisco, where after an inquiry they were released, and returned to Japan, the vessel being restored to her owner in Yokohama.

November, 1884, saw me down with typhoid fever, my case being considered hopeless. Thanks, however, to the unremitting care of those who nursed me, I pulled through. This was followed by more losses in business, and I got out with just enough to take over the *Nemo* and fit her out for the hunting season of 1885. We were late in starting, not clearing the port until May 23. It was just about a fortnight before we left that the sensational incident occurred when the Russian Admiral's ship, the *Vladimir Monomack*, when lying at anchor off Yokohama, beat to quarters and ran out her guns as H.M.S. *Agamemnon* came abreast of her,

steaming into the anchorage, accompanied by the *Sapphire* and *Swift*. At this time the relations between England and Russia were very much strained, and the British ships had been shadowing the Russians wherever they went. The Russians were consequently very angry. The British vessels coaled and dropped outside again that same night, ready to follow up the Russians again should they leave Yokohama. In the course of the day the Japanese anchored one of their warships alongside the *Vladimir Monomack*, as a sort of protest against the threatened violation of the neutrality of the port. I was on the *Nemo* at the time, watching the British ships coming in, but was not close enough to the *Vladimir Monomack* to see what actually took place on board.

We arrived on the hunting-grounds early in June, but had no hunting until we reached Urup; there we were out three times before getting our first otter. During the month we lowered boats nine times, pulling some 225 miles for four otters. July and August were worse; we got very little hunting weather, and, when we did get it, saw no otters. Gales were frequent, and we had narrow escapes from being wrecked and losing some anchors and part of our chain cable.

Otters being so very scarce, I resolved to run down to Shikotan to repair sails, fill up with wood and water, and then go north again to try for seals. On the way down to Shikotan, when off the south-west end of Yetorup, a peculiar phenomenon occurred. About 9.40 o'clock on the night of September 4 a very light, unsteady south-west wind was blowing, with a somewhat rough sea. It was cloudy,



OTTER-HUNTING SCHOONER AND BOAT.



SCHOONERS "NEMO" AND "ADELE."



and there was no moonlight, it being within four days of the new moon. My attention was called to a brightish glare to the southward, which appeared to be approaching the vessel. At first in the distance it looked like bright moonlight shining through a rift in low clouds. As it came nearer, which it did at a considerable rate, in a fitful, darting manner, it took the form of a luminous cloud, about a hundred yards in extent—a sort of gigantic *ignis fatuus*. This remarkable cloud of light was anxiously watched by those on deck, who, with some disquietude and trepidation, wondered what effect would be produced should so uncanny-looking an object strike the vessel.

On it came, and suddenly enveloped the schooner, the light being sufficiently bright to show the time by my watch. The phenomenon, whatever it was, appeared to move independently of the wind. Some eight minutes later it returned, passing the vessel a short distance off, in the opposite direction. I may here mention that nine years after, when returning from a sealing voyage, something similar was seen by the watch on deck on the night of October 3, when we were almost on the same spot. On the latter occasion my room was right aft, close to the companion-way which led up to the cockpit. I was lying in my bunk, awake, and heard two of my hunters, who were standing in the cockpit, discussing the appearance of a light they saw some distance away. One said, "There is no lighthouse anywhere about here," and the other, "It looks more like a ship on fire through fog." I jumped out of my bunk and went on deck. I was too late to get a sight of the light myself; they said it passed

away to the eastward, not coming near the vessel. No one on board knew of my having witnessed a like spectacle some years before. Clark Russell, in his novel "Marooned," describes a phenomenon of a somewhat similar character.

Arrived at Shikotan, we put into Anama Bay, a beautiful little land-locked harbour on the north-west coast, where we remained eleven days, getting some fishing and shooting on shore, and thoroughly repairing our sails and rigging, ready for our trip north again, on which we expected to experience some heavy weather. We were not deceived, for we nearly drove ashore on the north-east end of Yetorup in a heavy easterly gale on September 19-20. On the 28th we visited the Mushir Rocks, and secured 212 seals. On October 1 and 2 we fell in with another heavy gale, which finished up with snow. The season so far had been a very bad one, so I decided to look up again our friends at Bering Island. On October 11 we arrived off that island, abreast of the southern seal rookery. A boat with half a dozen men came off to us, offering to trade sealskins for clothing, watches, provisions, and tobacco. We ran in and anchored, and S. went ashore with three men in our own boat, three of the natives, amongst whom was the headman, staying on board as a guarantee of good faith. They remained all night. The barometer had dropped to 28.85, which made me apprehend a heavy blow.

Our guest the headman, seeing me constantly studying the barometer, remarked: "That all same devil: by-and-by plenty wind, just now all right; to-morrow night plenty blow, star plenty." Here



he opened and closed his hand rapidly, to indicate twinkling. About 4 a.m. a swell and breeze began to come in, so we got under way and stood off-shore; then in again and landed two more of the natives, keeping the headman on board by their advice. He was then asleep, and when he awoke, to find himself at sea with a gale coming on, he was somewhat perturbed. We had arranged to run in again that evening, land the headman, and finish up our business, if the weather allowed. But the wind increased to a gale, so we ran round the south end of the island in the night, hoping to be able to get into soundings and anchor under the lee of the land until the gale moderated. The barometer was now 28.52. To the eastward of the island the wind swept down off the mountains with hurricane force, and, although under double-reefed sails, we were thrown on our beam ends, and had to down all sail and run before the gale under bare poles for a time, finally heaving to under a close-reefed foresail.

Our Aleut guest was in a very bad way, fearing the vessel would be lost. He said that in a similar gale an American schooner had been capsized off the coast and all lost. I tried to reassure him, but he continued to pray to the Virgin (these natives belong to the Greek Church), and by the time the blow was over it had cost him thirteen and a half roubles, he told me, for candles which he had vowed to give to their Church if we came out all right. It was not until the 15th that we were able to get back to the rookery. There were not many seals left; we only got 235 from the natives. Our guest landed, and at once harnessed up his dog-team to go to the village, Nikolski, distant about twenty-

five miles, to fulfil his vow at the church. We gave our Aleut friends all the clothing and stores we could spare. They would not accept money, being afraid it would betray them; and we made arrangements to visit them again next season at the same time, taking a list of their requirements, which we promised to bring them. The weather continuing rough, with indications of another heavy gale, nothing more could be done, so on the afternoon of October 20 I set the course for the Kuril Islands.

Whilst we were at sea with our Aleut guest, S. had had an adventure ashore. The first thing the natives did when he went to stay with them was to kill a seal and rub the skin all over his clothes, which they said was to make him at home with the dogs; they would bark or be alarmed if he smelt different from themselves. Fur-seal skins, particularly those of the big bulls, have a strong musky sort of odour which is very persistent, and after handling fresh skins one must wash one's hands many times before the smell can be got rid of. It is not unpleasant. To resume: The next night but one after we had gone to sea, the dogs gave warning of the approach of visitors, which, the Aleuts informed S., would probably be someone from Nicolski in a dog-sleigh, and he must clear out and hide in the hills until they had gone. This was a cold job in that climate; however, it had to be done, and S. spent a miserable seven or eight hours in the open. The visitor turned out to be one of the Cossacks, who was on his way to a small settlement some twenty or thirty miles farther on. He remained until daybreak, and then left without his suspicions

being aroused, the Aleuts accounting in some way for the absence of their chief man.

When the chief man first came on board, a somewhat comical situation arose. He always addressed me as Captain Miles, though how he arrived at this name I never knew. One of the first questions he asked was where we came from, and was told from Japan. His next was if I knew Captain Snow. I replied that I knew him very well, and inquired why he asked. He said: "Oh, he son of a gun! He have got steamer and two schooner; he come here catch seal." I told him I did not think that was quite true. He said: "Yes, I 'savez'—I know. We look out for him. You all right—you very good man; Captain Snow son of a gun!" As may be imagined, we had the greatest difficulty in restraining our risible inclinations. I may mention that before we left Yokohama telegrams had appeared in the papers to the effect that an Englishman named Snow was fitting out a steamer and two schooners for the purpose of seal-hunting in the Bering Sea. This news had apparently travelled to Kamchatka and the Komandersky Islands, and the natives had been warned to be on the look-out.

On October 26 we were at the Mushir Rocks again, where we found a number of seals hauled out, but it was too rough to land. Next day, however, we managed with difficulty to get on to the rocks, and were rewarded with 172 fine seals. We then got under way for the Srednoy Rocks, where we arrived on the 29th, capturing twelve seals. Here a small accident happened. We had to shoot some of the seals with rifles, and a bullet fired by S. missed and struck a rock, glancing off and

entering the thigh of one of the men ; it went well into the flesh, but did not strike bone. I tried to reach the bullet with a probe, but failed, so dressed the wound, which healed up quickly, and the man was none the worse. I now resolved to take a look at Robben Island, on the other side of the Okotsk Sea, off the coast of Saghalin. We arrived there on November 2, and found three schooners at anchor, the *Rose*, *Felix*, and *Penelope*, each with 420 seals ; another, the *Otsego*, having just left with 500 seals. There were many seals in the water, but not inclined to haul up. The chances of getting anything appearing small, I headed the vessel east again, the winds being light. On the 5th a gale from the south-east sprang up, the barometer falling to 28.68. It blew with terrific force, and we had to heave to under a double-reefed foresail, which, in jibing over to put the vessel on the other tack when the wind shifted, was ripped right across at the second reef, through the carelessness of the mate in not hauling the sheet in sufficiently before jibing.

We now lay to under a close-reefed foresail, the wind shifting to south-west and blowing a fearful gale all day on the 6th. About 4 p.m. that day we sighted high land on Yetorup, bearing south-east. During the middle watch on the morning of the 7th a heavy sea broke on board, tore one of our boats from its lashings, and carried it overboard. Towards noon the wind moderated. Sights placed us nearly seventy miles to the north-east of our dead reckoning, so we kept away to pass the north-east end of Yetorup. Next day the gale abated, and we bent our spare foresail. In this gale the

*Felix* and *Otsego* were lost with all hands. The wreck of the latter was found on the north-east end of Yetorup, but no trace of the *Felix* was ever met with; she was supposed to have capsized. Both the *Penelope* and the *Rose* had a very bad time, but, fortunately, weathered the storm without serious damage.

From this time until we reached port we had rather more wind than we wanted, but it was fair, and we arrived in Yokohama on November 14. Thus ended the season of 1885. Our total catch was 674 seals and four otters.

The year 1886 commenced unfavourably, the man whom I had engaged as shipkeeper being accidentally shot through the throat by a hunter, and dying from the effects of the wound. I shipped another man, and we sailed on April 20. When in latitude  $38^{\circ} 54'$ , longitude  $142^{\circ} 6'$ , approximately, we passed close to a submarine disturbance. From the vessel it had the appearance of a boiling spring in the midst of the surrounding water. The sea for a space some 70 or 80 yards in diameter was forced up in a confused, bubbling, jumping mass, above the level of the water around it. A slightly sulphurous odour was noticed. We passed within a hundred yards of the disturbance, but were going too fast to take any soundings.

We arrived on April 29 off Yetorup, and got one small otter. Three weeks later we got our second. On May 22, whilst lying off the north coast of Ketoi, we had a remarkable escape from being wrecked. Where we were anchored was bad holding-ground, the bottom being covered with round boulders about the size of a man's head. The high

land at the back of the shore hereabouts formed a large semicircle of almost perpendicular cliffs, no doubt part of an old crater, with low, flat land filling up the hollow, so that the coast-line was nearly straight; high mountains rose behind. At night a heavy swell set in from the north, which was dead on shore, but there was not a breath of wind with it to enable us to get under way. By morning the swell increased to heavy seas, and it was evident there was a hard blow outside; but still no wind reached us, the peculiar shape of the high land not allowing the wind to blow home. We had two anchors down with 75 fathoms of chain out, but we gradually dragged until we were close in to the breakers. All sails were set, cables were prepared for slipping, with a line to the stern to make sure of the vessel canting in the right direction when we slipped, in readiness to take advantage of the wind the moment it came. It was a very anxious time. Every now and then a sea would break on board and sweep our decks from stem to stern, when we had to hold on for dear life. One unusually heavy sea filled our boats, which we carried on deck, and smashed our cabin skylights. This was caused by a sea driving the vessel astern with such force that her cables were strained almost to breaking-point; then, after the sea had passed, there being no wind, the weight of the cables and the strain on them caused her to plunge ahead and dash into the next sea, which, as it broke on the bows, swept over us.

My shipkeeper, who was an old deep-water-big-ship sailor, said there was no chance for the vessel, and got some men with axes and wanted to cut away

our masts, which I would not allow, of course. Presently a little puff of wind came, then another, and I knew the wind was veering. Everyone stood by ready, and even the main-topmast staysail was bent on, ready to run up at the right moment. As we were a very big crew—twenty-five—for a small craft, everything could be attended to at once, so to speak. Some minutes later the breeze came without a lull, the cables were slipped at a favourable moment, and the main-topmast staysail run up; the sails filled, and away she stood out to sea, a cheer going up as a sort of relief to our somewhat overstrained feelings. After clearing the end of the island, it blew so hard that we had to heave to. We were now short of anchors, and had only a hawser and about 30 fathoms of chain left; for, in addition to the two anchors and cables just slipped, we had left another and 45 fathoms of chain farther down the coast two days previously. Two days later we returned and recovered the anchors and chains, which we had buoyed before slipping. Needless to add, I never anchored in that spot again. While hunting in these parts risks have to be taken. Good anchorages do not exist. Of course, some places are better than others, but it is not always possible to reach them; so, rather than be drifted off and lose the chance of hunting, we get our “hook” down wherever soundings can be found. It is hardly necessary to say our vessels are uninsured; no insurance company would care to take the risks, except, perhaps, at prohibitive premiums.

Towards the end of May we fell in with several other schooners, and learned of the arrest of the

captain of the schooner *Arctic* and the paymaster of the United States s.s. *Ossipe*, who was a passenger on board. The paymaster happened to be under arrest on board his ship in Yokohama Harbour for misappropriating funds in his charge. Some of his friends on shore, with the probable connivance of some on board the ship, arranged for his escape. A boat went alongside the warship at night, took off the paymaster and put him aboard the schooner, which had cleared the port and dropped outside ready to sail for the north on a hunting voyage. The skipper in charge of the schooner had been approached, and had agreed for a certain sum to take the paymaster as a passenger. All came off as arranged, but some days after the schooner had sailed, one of the men who had been instrumental in getting the paymaster away gave information as to what had become of him, and also told the authorities that the schooner would probably put into Shikotan on her way north.

Acting on this information, two or three of the American ships sailed for the north in order to recapture the fugitive. In the meanwhile the *Arctic* had put into Anama Bay, Shikotan. Whilst lying there, some warships appeared off the entrance to the harbour, flying the Russian flag. At this time the American warships on the China Station were all of the old-fashioned type, and painted black, as were also the Russian men-of-war, and it was easy to mistake one for the other. However, the paymaster was not deceived; he knew the ships, and promptly hurried ashore and took to the hills. One of the ships came into the harbour, and a party from her boarded the schooner and made inquiries, but could get no information. That night



a violent earthquake shock took place on the island. The discomforts of being out all night, as well as the scare the earthquake gave him, so affected the paymaster that at daybreak he came down to the beach and gave himself up. He and the skipper of the *Arctic*, and about \$3,000 found on board, were taken back to Yokohama. The skipper was tried before the United States Consul, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The paymaster was sent to the States, where, through influence, he got off, but had to leave the service.

When about to leave Yokohama, I was asked if I had room on board for a passenger, a Mr. C., who wished to take a trip north. I was informed he had been sent away by his family, as he was a hopeless dipsomaniac if within reach of liquor, but away from it excellent company and a very good fellow. He called on me, and I agreed to take him, as I had a spare cabin. I gave him to understand, however, that I would take charge of any wines or liquor he might send on board, and should only let him have a small quantity daily. This was what he wanted, he said. I found him a most agreeable companion, well educated, and his behaviour all that could be desired. He remained with me until August 18. On the day previous we had fallen in with some other hunting-vessels, and in visiting them he had been asked to drink; and he did, with a vengeance, making up for lost time. He sobered up the next morning, and, finding one of the schooners was then going south to take the owner to Yokohama, he decided to go, too. I tried to persuade him to remain, as it would be better for him, but without success. He reached Yokohama, and put up at one

of the hotels, but soon had to leave it on account of his drinking habits. He then went to another, whose proprietress was a lady with a past and of much notoriety. One evening he appeared in the dining-room in his shirt-sleeves; the lady remonstrated. He went to his room, and a little later a shot was heard, and he was found dead, with a revolver bullet through his head.

We had lowered boats over forty times for otters, pulling some 600 miles, and getting but seventeen. We had also something over 200 seals—a very poor catch for the time we had been out.

Early in October I made preparations to sail for Bering Island, to keep my promise with our native friends there, and take the things they had asked for the previous year. A quick run up saw us off the small rookery on the 10th, about four o'clock in the afternoon. The wind being favourable, we stood close in to the shore, gave the signal agreed upon, and waited, hauling our staysail to windward, and allowing the vessel gradually to drift off. We could see several thousands of seals hauled up. Some natives came out of their houses, but they did not give the proper signal in reply, nor did they show any signs of coming off to the schooner. Once more we stood in and went through the same tactics. My old shipkeeper was much excited at seeing so many seals, and wanted to lower a boat and go on shore; he said he was not afraid. But that I would not allow; I advised him to wait. Again we stood in and repeated our signal, when out marched twelve men armed with rifles, and took up positions behind an embankment. I told the old man to lower a boat and go on shore if he liked; but, needless to

say, he appeared now to be as anxious to get away to sea as he had been to go on shore. Letting our sails draw, we tacked ship, dipped our flag to the folks on shore—there is nothing like being polite—and squared away for the Kuril Islands again.

A year or so afterwards I learnt that the news of our former visit had been given away by a woman. There was only one at the station when we were there then, and she and S. (who was a strapping young fellow) had become very intimate friends during his short stay on shore, whilst we had the headman at sea with us.

On the way back to the Kurils we experienced a two days' heavy gale with tremendous seas. About this time my Japanese boatswain, an excellent sailor and one of the best men I ever had, was taken with a series of convulsive fits, and apparently died; for his breathing ceased, and, so far as I could detect, his heart stopped beating. I poured some sal volatile down his throat, and set to work to try and restore him by artificial respiration. After some considerable time he showed signs of life, and gradually recovered.

On October 26 we reached Raikoké, and, on standing in to the rookery, saw about 600 seals hauled up, but on that side of the island landing was impossible. Raikoké is an extinct volcano, about 2,000 feet high and a mile in diameter. Sailing round under the lee of the land, I went on shore, and made the ascent of the mountain up to the edge of the crater. It was very hard climbing, the sides being very steep and covered with loose scoriæ. For five days we stood off and on, hoping

to get a chance to land, but the wind and seas were too heavy.

Disappointed at not being able to get at the seals on Raikoké, I decided to visit Robben Island. After a good run over, we arrived on the morning of November 3, went on shore, and found thousands of carcasses lying about, quite a number being unskinned, as if those engaged in the work had had to leave in a hurry. The unskinned seals were spoiled; no seals were hauled up, and there were but few in the water. Here was another disappointment. I now put it to my hunters as to what we should do—go back to Raikoké, or start for Yokohama. The answer was: “Do as you think best.” “Then, back we go to Raikoké,” said I. Then came murmurs and objections: “It was little use going back there”; “Heavy snow had fallen, and the seals would all have left”; “So late in the season the weather would be too bad”—and so on. However, I was going there anyhow. We had a splendid run back, doing from 9 to 10½ knots all the way; and on November 5 we were off the Raikoké rookery again, on which there appeared to be more seals than before hauled up. The wind and sea continued as bad as ever; it was not possible to land on the island at all, except amongst some rugged rocks on the side opposite to that on which the seals were to be found. I decided to land there, and go over the mountain to the other side, make a drive of seals, and trust to getting the skins off by hauling them through the surf with lines from the boats. To do this, they would have to be carried some distance into a corner formed by a cliff, off which was a big rock which afforded some little protection from the heavy seas.

Early next morning I called for twelve men to volunteer to go with me. One hunter and a dozen men and myself landed, taking a good lunch with us, and also some food and water to leave where we landed, in case the vessel got blown off. My plan was to go right up to the crater and down the other side, as being the shortest and probably quickest way. One could not go round by the beach, as the island was bordered by high cliffs. The men failed to negotiate the climb, the cinders cutting through their foot-gear and making their feet bleed. We then worked round the mountain about halfway up, and six men and myself reached the other side about half an hour after noon. Near us was a pod of about thirty seals, which we killed and had almost completed skinning before the rest of the party arrived, much done up. After a rest we decided to drive the big lot, but they were in a very awkward place amongst immense boulders, and we could not get between them and the sea without climbing down from a ledge some 50 feet high. It was necessary to cut the seals off from the water, or we should lose the greater part of them; so one man and myself were let down over the ledge, when we succeeded in heading off about three-fourths of the lot, whilst the rest of the men made their way down from the rear of the seals. We clubbed about 400, and, having stuck them and spread them out, commenced skinning, getting through about 100.

Darkness coming on, we left off, making our way into the corner already mentioned, where the overhanging cliffs formed a sort of cave. Here we spent a miserable night, cold, hungry, and sleepless. The thirteen hours of darkness seemed endless. Day

broke at last, and we commenced skinning seals again, finishing about 150 more by noon. The men, having had no food or water, were not fit for more work, so I collected them together and started up the mountain. The ascent from this side was easier, as we could follow up an old lava stream, which offered more solid footing. Making our way around the crater lip, it was comparatively easy to go down the other side. Two sailors and myself were the first to arrive at our boat. After a good drink and some food, we pulled off to the schooner, which was lying hove to a short distance away under the lee of the land.

A good night's rest was badly needed, and we had one. Next morning I left again with a fresh lot of nine men. The wind having shifted more to the north, we were able to land, though at some risk, farther round the island, which saved us some distance in getting over the mountain-side to the rookery. A second boat, in charge of S., accompanied us, to stand by in case of a capsize in the surf while landing. We managed to get ashore and haul our boat up all right. Leaving a supply of water and food with the boat as before, we started over the mountain, and on arriving at the rookery skinned the remainder of our seals. The skinning was a lengthy job on account of their size and the awkward places amongst big rocky boulders in which they lay. It was dark before they were all taken up to the top of the ledge, from which they had to be carried to the cave. We spent another uncomfortable night under the cliffs, snow falling at intervals. At daybreak we brought the skins to the cave, and afterwards made our way back over the

side of the mountain to our boat. The boatswain and my boat-steerer did not accompany us, as they volunteered to stay there another night, and be ready for getting the skins off when the boats were sent round next morning. I arrived at the spot where we had left our boat and food about two o'clock, but, to my surprise, found part of the food gone. The schooner I could just make out to the southward, about ten miles off, with only her staysail set.

Whilst wondering who could have been at our food and water, the boat with S., and the men who had accompanied us when we landed the day before, pulled round the point and came to us. Their tale was that the shipkeeper had made sail and stood out to sea without waiting to pick them up, and they had been obliged to pull back to the island and remain all night. Some were without hats, and one was in his shirt-sleeves. They had spent a miserable night on the rocks. I asked why they had not pulled out to the schooner that morning, as she could be seen from the top of the cliff lying with her sails down. They said they had not cared to take the risk on account of tide-rips and snow-squalls; they might miss her, or the shipkeeper might make sail again. As something had to be done, I asked for five men to volunteer to go with me. We were soon off in the direction of the schooner, pulling five oars. Before starting, I told S. if the schooner turned up without me to look for us on the next island, Matau, as I should not try to get back to Raikoké against the wind. As we proceeded, the wind dropped to a light breeze, with passing snow-squalls; after nearly three hours' hard pulling, we got along-

side, and, as may be imagined, I was not in the best of tempers. The moment we got on deck I am afraid I made use of some very vigorous language, and, grabbing the shipkeeper by the back of his collar and seat of his trousers, I ran him down to his room, where I told him to stay for the rest of the voyage. We then made sail in order to beat up to the island, which we reached about daybreak, and the men came on board. The sea had gone down, and the wind was light ; a hasty breakfast was taken, and then our spare big boat and a smaller one in charge of S. pulled round to where our skins were lying. The boats went close in, and soon had all the skins aboard, getting back to the ship about noon. We then set the course for Yokohama, feeling very well satisfied with what we had accomplished. It had been, however, one of the most strenuous undertakings of the kind I ever engaged in.

The next day, November 11, the shipkeeper begged me to let him resume his duties, so, feeling in a more charitable mood now that we had 733 seals and 17 otters under hatches, I relented. Light winds for some days caused us to make a long passage down. On the night of the 18th a strong wind sprang up from the north-east, increasing to a heavy gale after midnight ; we ran before the storm under a double-reefed foresail until it was dangerous to do so any longer. About five o'clock a.m., as we were making preparations to let the vessel come to the wind, the man at the wheel, scared by the tremendous following seas, let the wheel out of his control, and the schooner broached to, flinging the helmsman up against the rail with great force. She was round like a flash, giving one heavy lurch, and



taking a big sea over the weather side about the main rigging, which tore a boat out of the davits on the lee quarter. We never saw the boat again. The foresail was slatting with a deafening noise, but we soon had the sheet in and the wheel put down and lashed, and then she rode the seas like a duck. We lay to for ten hours, after which the wind moderated and we made sail again, reaching Yokohama on November 23, thirteen days from Raikoké.

## CHAPTER XI

### AN EVENTFUL VOYAGE

ON April 10, 1887, the *Nemo* sailed again for the Kurils. We had a splendid run up, the wind being fair and strong the whole time. It was too strong on the third day out, blowing a heavy gale with very high seas from right aft, one of which pooped us, washed the man at the wheel right over the poop on to the main-deck, badly damaged one boat, smashed the cabin skylight, and deluged the cabin with water up to our knees. The sea took the vessel so squarely on the stern that she was driven straight ahead, giving us time to get control of the wheel again before she broached to. The sea broke on board because our way was partly stopped by a momentary lull in the wind whilst we were in the hollow between two long, enormous seas; this enabled the following sea to catch us up just as it broke.

Shaking out a reef, we kept on our course. The same fair wind lasted right up to the north-east end of Urup, where we anchored for a short time and put out our boats, but saw no otters. Getting under way once more, we stood on to Ushishir, where we anchored and got our first otter. Next morning we ran over to Rashau, where we killed four more; then off again to the north-east, arriving off the coast of Kamchatka amongst large icefields, which the con-

stant south-west wind had driven north-eastwards against the "Oyashiwo," the cold current setting to the south-west along the Kuril Islands. We had been just a fortnight sailing from Yokohama to Kamchatka, had called in at four islands on the way, and secured five otters. This was a good beginning. Owing to the ice off Cape Lapatka, we had to run back to the vicinity of Little Kuril Strait. Next morning we again stood to the north-east, and, picking our way through lanes which had opened out in the icefield, reached the coast, and anchored about six miles above Cape Lapatka. Here we saw several large bears on the beach, but, being after more valuable game, did not molest them. We lowered boats and saw several otters, but failed to get any that evening; next day we had three, eight the day after, four the day after that, and one the day following. This last one was lying asleep on a large cake of ice. The water kept beautifully smooth, as the icefields were outside of us.

On May 1 it came on to snow, with easterly winds; so, to avoid the chance of the ice setting in on us, we decided to run down to Little Kuril Strait, and fill up with wood and water. In getting under way we lost an anchor and some chain which parted, the anchor being foul of the rocks. On the 6th we succeeded in getting three more otters off Shumshir. On the 10th we returned to the Kamchatka coast, and recovered our anchor, which had been buoyed. During the next two days we added four more otters to our bag. Our luck was too good to last, and on May 16, when attempting to get under way in a high swell, both paul-boxes of our windlass broke, our anchor again becoming wedged in the rocks. The

windlass being now useless, I arranged to leave a full hunting-party (eighteen) on the cape, whilst I ran down with the vessel to Hakodate to get the windlass fixed. After landing spare sails for tents, and plenty of bedding, warm clothes, provisions, and ammunition, we left with a spanking fair wind. The previous day we spoke the schooner *Rose* with three otters. She reported that the American whaling-barque *Europa* had been driven ashore on Kunashir by the ice, and was a total wreck. The icefields had been carried south, and driven in on the coast by easterly winds.

We arrived in Hakodate on May 27, where the Customs authorities tried to make trouble by sealing up our skins, on the plea that an order had been issued prohibiting the bringing of sea-otter skins into the port, except under certain conditions. These regulations were absurd, and did not apply to foreign vessels, anyhow. Next day I applied to the British Consul, who caused the seals to be removed, and I got our skins packed in a case ready for shipment to Yokohama. However, the Customs refused to grant a transshipment permit, and brought a charge, through the British Consulate, against the vessel for infringing the regulations, whilst I put in a counter-charge against the Customs. The Consul decided there was no case whatever against the *Nemo*, and requested the authorities to place no further obstruction in the way of the vessel's business. I received notice that the affair was finished and the skins could be transhipped. We did not leave Hakodate until June 5, and two days later put back on account of head-winds. On the 8th I made another start, going to the westward, and up through the La Pérouse

Strait and across the Okotsk Sea, having light fair winds all the way. We anchored off the camp on the 20th, and took on board all our people and effects. During our absence they had only captured five otters. During July we killed fifteen more.

On July 20, when pulling along the west coast of Kamchatka, about fifteen miles north of Cape Lapatka, we saw five reindeer near the beach. I pulled in towards them, and shot one just before getting in to the shore. The water being perfectly smooth, with no surf, I ran my boat ashore and jumped out, firing at another, and hitting him in the back of the head as he ran away along the foot of the hills. My second boat, pulling in towards the land, killed a third, and the other two bolted up the side of the hill. Just as one of them was disappearing over a ridge, with only the top of his shoulders showing, I fired again, but did not know with what result. We then cut open our game, took out the entrails, and carried the carcasses to our boats; the animals were fat and in splendid condition. Thinking I might have hit the deer I last fired at, I sent a man up to the ridge, where he found it lying dead, my bullet having severed its backbone just between the shoulder-blades. These four deer made a splendid addition to our larder, their flesh being delicious. We then pulled down the coast to Cape Lapatka, seeing on the way several bears—one with a cub—but left them alone, for fear of alarming any otters that might be within sound of our rifles. Off the cape we killed four otters, and then had a long pull of thirteen miles back against a strong current to the schooner, which we did not reach until nearly ten o'clock p.m. We had turned out at two o'clock

in the morning for breakfast, and were very tired after our nineteen hours in the boats.

August was a lean month for otters, four only being added to our catch. In other ways it was somewhat eventful. We had lots of fishing, getting all the cod, halibut, salmon, and trout, we cared for. The waters hereabouts teem with fish. Occasionally in the smaller rivers and streams, when the salmon and salmon-trout are "running," there is more fish than water. I have often waded into the streams and kicked the salmon out on to the banks in dozens. It is then the bears have a good time, and they surfeit themselves with fish, much to the detriment of their flesh from a culinary point of view; for the meat then takes on a rank, fishy flavour by no means appetizing. At other times, when the bear lives on berries and roots chiefly, his flesh is very good.

Do animals reason? From instances that have come under my personal observation, I am inclined to believe that to a certain extent they do. I may relate what occurred with my own dog Nell: she was a nearly pure-bred Sussex spaniel of good stock, was only eight months old, and had never had any training; nevertheless, she would hunt and retrieve, and was always delighted to go on shore hunting with me. One day we landed on Shumshir, where a very small stream runs into Mairuppu Bay, to get some salmon, which were just beginning to "run." The stream was so small that in places the fish had to run over the shallows with their backs out of the water. Several of us had spears, with which we were trying to capture the fish as they came up one or two at a time. We had taken about half a dozen,

and the dog, although she had seen the fish struggling up the stream, was apparently not interesting herself in what we were doing. Getting impatient at my not going into the swamp with my gun, she kept rubbing herself against my legs and looking up into my face; and as she was doing this, I happened to spear a fish and landed it. This was enough for the dog; she appeared to realize at once that fish, and not birds, were wanted, and, running down the stream to where she had seen the salmon wriggling over a shallow, began to catch them on her own account, capturing nineteen, which was more than the rest of us got altogether. She would stand on the bank opposite the shallow spot, and, as a salmon struggled over it, dash in, grab it by the back, and bring it out. The fish were about 7 pounds in weight.

On another occasion I was out shooting, and lay down on a hillside picking and eating berries, which grew there plentifully. The dog after a while came to me, thrusting her nose into my lap and hands, as if inquiring what I was doing; several times I brushed her on one side, and went on eating the berries. Finally I gave her some, which she ate, and then went off seeking out and chewing up the berries by herself. There was something more than instinct in her actions, I feel sure. She had one fault—that of being very jealous of small children; if they attempted to pet her, she would jump up and strike them with her nose, often knocking them over, but never biting them.

Bears were very plentiful. On August 29 two of my hunters and myself landed for some shore hunting. We went about two miles up a small river

which was full of salmon, and came across wild-geese and ptarmigan in numbers, and more than twenty bears; we bagged two and took their skins, but they were in poor condition. We cut off the legs at the knee-joints, and took them on board. The flesh turning out to be good, I sent ashore for the hind-quarters, but the meat from these was so rank as to be uneatable. Evidently the extremities are the last places to be affected by the food the animal is living on. The next day we went on shore again, seeing ten bears, one of which we killed.

Alaid Island was next touched at, and then Paramushir, but we saw no otters. On September 3 we lost our boatswain. About 11 p.m. he was reported to be in a fit; I at once went to him, and found him unconscious, with no sign of breathing or heart action. I tried remedies similar to those used on the previous voyage, when he was overcome in the same way, but all to no purpose. After three hours I came to the conclusion he was past recovery, and ordered the carpenter to make a coffin. We buried him in a grave well above high-water mark, under the mountains at the southern end of Paramushir.

The boatswain was a great favourite with everyone, all hands leaving the vessel to attend the funeral. We placed the coffin in a boat, using the British flag as a pall, and towed it ashore. After lowering the coffin into the grave, we fired three volleys from our rifles over it, and then the earth was filled in by the men. Nothing was said, everyone's heart was too full, and each of us, in characteristic Anglo-Saxon fashion, walked away in different directions in order not to betray that natural emotion which one feels on such an occasion,



but which we, rightly or wrongly, think it a sign of weakness to show. A short, heavy wooden cross was planted over the grave, and the mound covered with heavy pieces of rock. On the cross was nailed a sheet of copper with the following inscription punched in holes on it :

HERE LIE THE REMAINS OF

TAKAHASHI YUKICHI

For several years boatswain of the British schooner *Nemo*. Died on board, off the island of Paramushir, September 3, 1887, aged 35 years. A thoroughly good all-round man, much appreciated, and deeply regretted by those he served and by all on board.

Although poor Yukichi lies in an inhospitable and lonely part of the world, he has a magnificent headstone to his grave in the shape of Fuss Peak, a grand volcanic cone close upon 7,000 feet high, much resembling in shape the celebrated Fujiyama of Japan.

After the burial we got under way, and "Old Joe," whom I have mentioned before, who had all an old sailor's superstitions, remarked to me that a gale would be certain to follow the boatswain's death. His prediction was fulfilled: a heavy gale came on that night, and did some damage to our sails. We ran down the islands as far as Srednoy, but saw no otters, so I made up my mind to proceed to Hakodate via the La Pérouse Strait, ship my skins, and return north again to try for some seals. On September 15 my boat-steerer, who had been laid up for some time with consumption, was found dead in his bunk, and was buried at sea. Conformably with "Old Joe's" superstition, another heavy gale succeeded, but no damage was done.

We reached Hakodate on September 16, and left again on the morning of the 27th, bound for the east coast of Saghalin, where we arrived on October 2. We remained cruising in the vicinity of Cape Patience until November 15, hoping to get some seals at Robben Island after the Russians had gone. An accident happened to the vessel that was sent to take them away, so they remained there until late in November, and our venture was accordingly wasted. On the day we left we ran close in to the islet, and dipped our flag to the Russians, an act which they acknowledged by dipping theirs. Whilst off the Saghalin coast I landed many times, and saw a good deal of the natives, mostly Ainu, who lived near the cape. They informed me that they had occasionally been troubled, and some of their friends killed, by escaped Russian convicts, against whom they were very bitter. The Russian authorities had granted them permission to kill any of these escaped convicts they might come across, on condition that they would give up the bodies. This condition, they said, they never observed, as it was too much trouble; they always burned the bodies so as to destroy all traces.

It was on Cape Patience that I saw these natives make use of a very clever method of capturing leopard seals (*Phoca vitulina*), of which there were numbers in the vicinity. The *modus operandi* was as follows: A large log, about 15 feet or so in length, was anchored by both ends off the shore, about 70 or 80 yards out. On this the seals would climb, and lie asleep half submerged. A look-out was kept, and as soon as a seal was noticed to be comfortably settled, two men would go down

into the water up to their knees and push out a long spear, jointed like a fishing-rod, one length fitting into the other very neatly and securely. The spear-head, which was barbed, was fitted into a peculiarly-shaped piece of wood about the size of one's hand, bevelled on both sides in such a way that it caused the spear, as it was gradually pushed out, to keep a straight course towards the object at which it was pointed. The spear-head was detachable, and to it was fastened a long line made of sea-lion hide. Knowing the exact distance of the log, the operators also knew when to give the lunge which should drive the spear-head into the seal. When speared, the seal was held and played on the line until he was exhausted, and then hauled ashore and despatched. I doubt if this method is in vogue in any other part of the world.

Whilst cruising off this coast I witnessed an attack by a "school" of killers (*Orca gladiator*) on a hump-backed whale and her calf. The whale protected her young one by keeping it on her back, and swimming so that the calf was half out of the water. The killers were most persistent in their attacks, and the poor whale appeared to be nearly exhausted, moving very slowly through the water. We sailed by within a few yards of the struggle, and how it ended I do not know—probably in the death of both the mother and her young one.

We were fated not to get through our season without a third death, this time by drowning. A heavy blow having come on with a nasty high, confused sea, we were shortening sail, and a couple of

hands were engaged in stowing the jib. Suddenly one of them, a very fat man nicknamed "the Elephant," lost his hold and dropped into the sea, the vessel passing right over him. He came up about 20 yards astern, and I threw a life-buoy towards him, at the same time ordering a boat to be lowered. This was quickly done, notwithstanding the high seas, and the boat pulled towards him. I could see him floating high out of the water; indeed, he appeared to be almost sitting on it at one time. The men in the boat said that as they pulled towards him he took off his coat and boots, and then started to swim towards them. The bow oarsman shipped his oar and stood by ready to grab him, but when within two boats' lengths of him a high sea broke between the boat and the man in the water, and when it had passed no trace of him could be seen.

In every case of drowning in these cold waters which I have witnessed, or which has been described to me, there has been a striking similarity. While the man in the water appears to be all right and swimming strongly, all at once a collapse takes place and he goes down like a stone. Where men hang on to an upset boat, they suddenly become unconscious, but if the water is smooth they still manage to hold on with their stiffened fingers or arms; should the sea be rough, however, they are unable to retain their grip, and that is the last of them. The cause of the sudden collapse is probably due to the cold reaching the heart and paralyzing its action, thus producing unconsciousness.

On one occasion off Yetorup, when the sea was perfectly smooth but with a long swell, one of three

boats belonging to the schooner *Helena* was capsized. They were pulling along abreast about a thousand yards apart, when the middle boat, which was plainly visible to the others every time it rose on the long swell, was suddenly missed. A search with the glasses revealed the overturned boat some distance astern. The other boats immediately pulled for it, and on arrival found four of its crew unconscious, but hanging on with a vicelike grip, and the other man, who had managed to get astride the keel, and was therefore partly out of the water, buffeting himself to try and keep some warmth in his body. They all recovered after being stripped and rubbed down. In my own case, when upset, I was not in the water long enough to reach the collapsing stage, but could not have been far off it, as, although I changed into warm, dry clothes and sat close beside a roaring fire, warmth did not return to my body for about two hours.

Leaving Robben Island, we laid a course for the channel between Kunashir and Yetorup. The weather being thick, we got no sights; and a gale of wind coming on as we approached the strait, I felt very anxious as to our position. To heave to on a lee shore would have been fatal with such a gale as was then blowing. About 4.30 o'clock p.m. a rift in the clouds for a minute or two just gave me a sight of a high volcanic peak, which I recognized as Atosa Mountain, and I knew we were headed about right. The barometer was down to 28.80, and we were running from 9 to 10 knots under very small sail. My anxiety was not at an end, as a long reef extends off the north-west point of Kunashir, for which we might be directly heading. The

weather became thicker than ever and quite dark. I had the mate, S., and two men on the lookout in the bows, but they could only see for a short distance. Suddenly S. yelled out, "Heavy breakers right ahead! My God! here we are right on top of it!" And the next minute, before anything could be done, we were into them. It was not the reef, fortunately, but the tide-rip which extends off it right across the strait, the combers in which are sometimes enormous.

I then knew where I was—between the two islands, heading through into the Pacific. With land four or five thousand feet high on both sides, the wind blew through the strait with hurricane force, and every bit of sail had to be taken off the vessel. We ran under bare poles, making 10 knots by the log between seven and eight o'clock that night. A heavy black mass, which I took to be the land of the south-west end of Yetorup, hung on our port beam. For a while I thought there must be a very strong current against us (it sometimes runs 5 knots in these straits), as we did not appear to be able to pass it; but at nine o'clock I concluded we must be well through into the Pacific, and that what I took for the land was cloud, so hove the vessel to. At daylight the wind moderated slightly, and we kept on our course again. The gale lasted four days, we alternately running and heaving to, as it increased or moderated. As may be imagined, the wear and tear on a vessel's sails and gear during a six or seven months' cruise in this part of the world is something considerable; a double suit of sails, and plenty of spare gear for repairs and renewals, are a necessity. Even so, at the end of the

season everything is tender, and we emerged from the gale with some split sails, a broken staysail boom, running gear carried away, and other damage done.

Monday, November 28, saw us back in Yokohama, the latter part of our voyage having been a complete failure and dead loss.

## CHAPTER XII

### DASTARDLY ATTACKS

THE year 1888 was a black one in my calendar. I left Yokohama for the usual season's hunting on April 8. The next day my shipkeeper, a man who when in port was somewhat addicted to drink, but who was quite steady when at sea, commenced to suffer from his shore excesses, delirium tremens developing. He had been somewhat upset by a rather sharp earthquake shock when in Yokohama, and this apparently was uppermost in his mind in his delirium. Locked up in his room, he imagined he was imprisoned ashore, and that the motion of the vessel was an earthquake which might any minute cause the building to fall and crush him. He recovered in a week and went on duty.

On the 16th, in a gale, we tried to enter Anama Bay, Shikotan, but had our jib blown away and lost an anchor in the attempt. Next day, however, we got in, had some fishing and shooting, and took in a plentiful supply of wood and water. I had a diving-pump, dresses, and gear, on board, and a desire arising to see what diving was like, I donned a diving-dress, leaden-soled boots, extra weights, etc., and went down under the vessel's bottom. Having no experience, the men at the pump were too energetic, causing me to float up in a very



undignified position. The sense of helplessness, and the struggle to maintain an upright position when lifted off the bottom by the undue inflation of the dress, were most unpleasant and exhausting, but I tried again, with better results. I had taken down a brush wherewith to scrub the vessel's copper about her keel, and worked vigorously for a few minutes; but being soon out of breath, with a headache as well, I gave up. Evidently it is necessary under water to work slowly and deliberately. I concluded diving was not my forte.

The first otter of the season fell to us on Urup on April 25. On May 1 we killed one, and on the 2nd two. On May 4 we were lying in Ottomai Bay, in Little Kuril Strait, when it came on to blow a very heavy easterly gale with thick snow, the barometer falling to 28.45. We were sheltered from the heavy seas, but a high swell came round the point, and the force of the wind was terrific. The bottom where we lay was fine sand, but only a foot or so of it, on a smooth, rocky substratum, making such bad holding-ground that we dragged on to the sandy beach. To prevent the vessel bumping, we slacked out plenty of chain and let her go well up. Next day the wind shifted to north-west, but blew as hard as ever. As soon as the weather moderated, we took everything out of the schooner, sending down her topmasts and laying out fresh anchors ready to haul her off at the height of the spring-tides, which would be in about a week's time.

On the 11th I ordered the mate S. to take a couple of boats and pick up the anchors we had let down when we went ashore, but he declared it was impossible. He also refused to help to put the

rudder in place, and persuaded the second mate to refuse duty also. They left the schooner, camped on the beach, and did no further work. On the 13th we fixed the rudder and picked up the anchors and chains. At high-water we got the vessel afloat, and by night had some of the ballast in, and all tanks and water-casks filled up. When we were ready for sea again, S. and the second mate came alongside, wanting to come on board; but I told them they had gone ashore to please themselves, and now they should stop there to please me. On this S. drew a revolver and fired at me, the bullet passing over my head. I was angry, and ran below for my rifle. Fortunately, when I got on deck again, I found S. had come on board and taken refuge in the forecastle. Cooling down, I went forward and ordered him out and into the boat, with his and the second mate's belongings. I then sent them a supply of provisions and ammunition (they had their own rifles and a shot-gun), and told them I would call in there again in about two months' time, and if they had not been taken off by then I would give them a passage to Nemuro. This left me without mates or hunters, as they had acted in both capacities. The shipkeeper was now the only European I had with me, so I turned two of the best of my Japanese boat-steerers into hunters. Not finding any otters on the northern Kurils or the Kamchatka coast, I decided to run up to Copper Island and try a reef lying some distance off its north-west point, outside the limits of territorial waters.

On May 25 we lay becalmed between Bering and Copper Islands, gradually drifting towards the

north-east. About seven o'clock next morning, when still becalmed, a schooner was sighted to the northward; she had a light, fair wind, and was standing to the west towards Bering Island; but seeing us, she altered her course and stood towards us, losing the wind as she did so. I lowered a boat, and after a pull of some miles boarded her. She was, as I had thought, the schooner *Leon*, belonging to the Alaska Commercial Company, Captain Blair in charge. She had just arrived from San Francisco, had called in at Copper Island and taken on board the Government official who had been there through the winter, and was now bound to Bering Island and Petropaulsky.

I spent a couple of hours on board, and they gave me, among other things, some late San Francisco papers and a quantity of fruit. The official showed me a number of water-colour paintings of the fur-seal life on the rookeries, his own work and beautifully done. I told him I was going to take a look at the north-west reef for otters, visit the western Aleutian Islands, then go back to the Kurils. I further remarked that his people on shore would not think we had come for seals, as it was too early, to which he said there would not be any for six weeks or more. The *Leon* got back into the breeze, and continued her course towards Bering Island, whilst we remained becalmed.

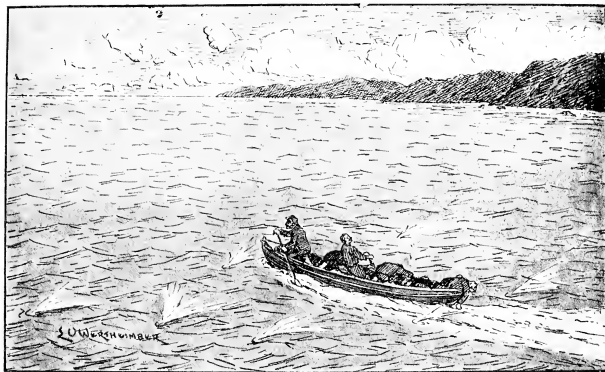
We had drifted to within about two to three miles of the north-west point, and, not wishing to go closer, dropped the kedge in 35 fathoms of water. Time hanging heavily, I resolved towards evening to lower boats and pull around, as the water was quite smooth. We remained out three hours and saw

three otters, one of which I killed. At daylight it was still calm, with a high swell, so I put out boats again and pulled to the southward; then in towards the coast, where we saw about forty otters, nearly all of which took to the heavy surf and amongst the rocks and reefs, where it was impossible to get at them. However, I captured four, and one of my hunters one. This promised well for the reef.

A light breeze beginning to come off the land, I signalled my boats to return to the schooner, and we all started for her. I was inshore boat, the other two being several hundred yards outside me. I was standing in the bow of my boat, with my rifle pointed upward, the butt resting on the small decked-over space in front of me. Suddenly two shots were heard, and two bullets struck the water close to the boat. I looked round in the direction of my other boats, thinking they had both fired at something in my direction, and that the shots had come unpleasantly near. The next moment another shot rang out, and a bullet cut the skin on the edge of my hand near the little finger, splitting the forestock of my rifle and flattening against the barrel, which was a heavy octagon-shaped one. Half an inch or so on one side or the other, and this bullet must have gone through my body. I now realized we were being fired at from the shore, but could not locate our assailants. Laying down my rifle, I gave orders to slue the boat round and get away out of range as hard as the men could pull. A regular fusillade was now opened on us, the bullets falling about us like hailstones. First one man was hit, then another, until there were but two of us in the boat left able to do anything. My boat-steerer was shot through



THE OLD "DIANA," THE LAST OF THE OLD OTTER HUNTING SCHOONERS.



FIRED ON AT COPPER ISLAND—THREE MEN KILLED.



the lower part of the backbone. He called out "Itai!" (hurt), and as I looked round at him he dropped his paddle and collapsed, his lips turning blue. Another man was hit in one leg, then in the other, but he continued pulling. After this the stroke oarsman was hit in the calf of the leg, and he dropped off his thwart and lay in the bottom of the boat. I thought he was killed. Then the other two men and myself were hit, and bullets were making holes through the boat everywhere. The man nearest me and the one next him were hit in both legs; then a bullet struck one of them in the forearm, breaking the bone, on which the poor fellow dropped his oar and grasped the wounded arm, lying over with his head on the gunwale of the boat. At that moment a bullet struck him in the top of the head, and came out at the nape of the neck. I can almost say that I actually saw the bullet strike his head, for when he cried out as his arm was shot through I turned from my paddling, and looked at him just as the bullet struck his head.

The next man to him was badly wounded in the limbs, and as he lay over, with his chin on the side of the boat, a ricochet bullet from the water entered his forehead just above his nose, and penetrated the skull, lodging just under the skin in the crown of his head. This bullet, being almost spent, had a bruising effect, for it blackened both his eyes and forehead. The man nearest the stroke received only a slight flesh wound in the calf of his leg. I was hit five times, counting the first scratch. Three bullets struck me on the felt side, but only passed across my chest and stomach through my clothing; another entered the thick part of my thigh, and came

out on the inside of my leg close to the femoral artery, but, not striking bone, gave me no pain. It merely felt like something warm being pushed through my leg. As the blood ran down pretty freely into my boots at first, I was afraid the artery had been cut; but the bleeding soon ceased, and I was satisfied it was all right, although my leg felt very flabby.

The men being knocked over one after another, only one man and myself were left to propel the boat, he with an oar, and I with a paddle. His oar was more effective than my paddle, and it was with difficulty we could keep the boat straight. As we got farther off the wind freshened and the sail was hoisted. Meanwhile the two outside boats had returned to the schooner and reported what was happening. The shipkeeper immediately cut his cable, hoisted sail, and stood towards us, sending one of the boats to our assistance. We were then out of range, but shots were still coming towards us. I could make out about a dozen puffs of smoke from behind some big boulders on the high cliffs which formed a point near which we had to pass on our way back to the vessel.

We were taken in tow, and soon came alongside the schooner. After getting the wounded men on board, I went below and hastily examined and bandaged my leg. All the men were brought down aft, and their wounds washed and dressed. The boat-steerer, who was shot through the spine, was the first man to die, two hours after getting on board. He was unconscious all the time. The next was the one shot through the top of the head, who lasted until the evening. The third man died



the following morning. I cut out the bullet from under the skin of the head of this man. Both the men shot through the head were semiconscious, for when their arms and legs were being dressed they tried to move them, so as to assist those who were putting on the bandages; but their breathing was stertorous and they could not speak. We buried these poor fellows at sea.

When we got alongside the vessel our boat was a ghastly sight: four men lying apparently dead, riddled with bullets, and the boat half full of a blood-stained liquid composed of sea-water which had leaked through the bullet-holes and mingled with the blood of the wounded men. The man whom I had thought killed was very little hurt. One bullet only struck him in the calf of the leg, but he thought it better to lie in the bottom of the boat and sham death. The casualties were 100 per cent., 50 per cent. killed, and 50 per cent. wounded—enough to satisfy anyone with warlike tastes, I should imagine.

I have often been asked what my sensations were at the time. I can remember them distinctly, as they were very vividly impressed upon me. Not being by nature of an excitable or nervous temperament, I took matters fairly coolly. I remember weighing the chance of getting overboard into the water and swimming alongside the boat, but decided we should be just as liable to be drowned as shot, as no one can stand the cold water for long. For the greater part of the time I was vigorously plying my paddle, standing facing forward in the bow of my boat, and only presenting the edge of my body, the left side, to the enemy. This is how it was that

the bullets which struck me all entered my clothing on the left side. The uppermost entered under my arm just outside the breast pocket of my coat, passed through the pocket, round my chest, and out on the right side. The next entered a few inches lower, following a similar course. The third passed across my stomach, making several holes in my clothing in its course. The fourth entered my left thigh, passing through the flesh behind the leg-bone.

I expected every moment to be shot through the body, and I could not help wondering how it would feel. Another thing that vividly impressed itself upon me was the smell of hot lead. Had anyone told me previously that it was possible to smell bullets that were being fired at you, I should certainly have thought he was drawing on his imagination. Most people know the smell of melted lead. Now, the men firing at us were using Winchester repeating rifles ; with rapid firing the barrels of the rifles soon become very hot, so hot, indeed, that with soft lead bullets, such as were then used, the outside of the bullet often becomes partly melted, and is apt to slither, particles dropping off after it leaves the barrel. This I have often proved in running a breaching otter, where constant firing has to be kept up. I reckon that over 400 shots were fired at us, sixty or more of which took effect on the boat and ourselves. There were thirty-four holes through the boat, and eleven bullets struck our oars and paddles. The balance we got ourselves, and it will thus be seen that we had a perfect hail of bullets about us. The term "to smell powder" is intended to denote danger of being shot ; "to smell lead" would be much more appro-

priate, so far as my experience goes. Our assailants had the former experience, and were unhurt, whilst we got the latter, with disastrous results.

With regard to my immunity from wounds, on my return to Yokohama I was relating my experience to a German friend who had been through the Franco-German War, and he asked me if I wore knitted woollen underclothing, as, he said, it had been constantly noticed that, during their fights, many who wore heavy knitted underclothing had bullets pass through their outer garments, as in my case, without doing further damage. It was supposed that the knitted surface of the garment, when struck at an angle, deflected the bullet in some way. Whether this supposition is correct or not I do not know, but I was wearing, over my shirt and beneath my coat and waistcoat, a knitted football jersey. The lining of my waistcoat was cut in several places by three of the bullets, but only one pierced the jersey, and that was where a fold chanced to be across the stomach.

Some few shots had been fired at the boat next outside mine, one man being hit in the forearm, the bone of which was slightly fractured. This boat, however, soon got out of range.

Leaving the Bering Sea, we sailed back to the Kuril Islands, calling in at Little Kuril Strait to take away the men left there. We found they had gone, having, as I afterwards learned, been taken on board the schooner *Rose*, which happened to put into Ottomai Bay a short time after we sailed. I then set sail for Nemuro, on the east coast of Yezo, as being the first available place where proper surgical assistance could be obtained, and where the wounded

could be sent to hospital if necessary. On the way down, when off the island of Rashau, we got into a severe easterly gale, in which we lost a boat, washed out of the davits by a heavy sea, one of the davits going with it. During this gale the barometer fell to the lowest point in the whole of my experience at sea, 27.80, remaining at this for six hours between midnight and 6 a.m. of the morning of June 5.

On arrival at Nemuro I reported to the authorities the object of my visit and what had happened. Some officials and a doctor came off; the wounded men were examined, and their wounds dressed afresh. The doctor reported that the wounds were clean and had been properly treated, that the men were quite fit to remain on board and proceed to Yokohama, but that it might be necessary later to remove some of the bone splinters from one man's arm. The next day we left, and arrived in Yokohama on the night of June 23. The following morning I reported to the British Consulate, handing in the official log containing particulars of the whole affair. The Consul ordered a court of inquiry to be held, which occupied the two following days. The finding of the court was to the effect that the men came by their deaths from gunshot wounds inflicted by a party of natives on Copper Island, that the attack on the boats was entirely unprovoked, and that, after the men were wounded, everything was done for them that was possible in the circumstances.

The local papers were filled with accounts of the affair, and as much ink as there had been blood was shed in paragraphs, leading articles, and letters to

the various papers on the rights and wrongs of the case. Efforts were made to get the British and Japanese Governments to take the matter up on behalf of the victims, but the usual "political reasons" prevented. Thus ended another bad season.

The year 1889 proved another black year with troubles all round. I had the misfortune to make the acquaintance of a man who was one of Nature's "bad eggs." He brought a letter of introduction from a friend of mine in China, where he had been in command of steamers engaged in the coast trade. He was a man of good address and appearance, musical, well educated, and spoke English, French, and Italian. He was of Italian stock, his people having settled in England, where he had two brothers, one a doctor, the other a solicitor. When he came to see me, he said he would much like to take a trip north, and, as I wanted a shipkeeper, I offered him the billet. Being a seaman by profession and a master mariner, and, so far as I could then judge, a reasonable and proper sort of man, I told him, out of courtesy, he might as well sign on the ship's articles as master instead of myself; but it had to be understood that I should be in full charge, as he knew nothing of hunting, or of the coasts, or the conditions of things in the north. This being all arranged, though only verbally, preparations were made for fitting out.

The Japanese authorities now issued regulations and instructions which made it practically impossible for Japanese to ship on board any hunting-vessels but their own. Although this was clearly a violation of foreigners' treaty rights, the fighting of the

question was not then possible, on account of delay ; so I resolved to take the schooner to Shanghai, and there ship a Chinese crew. I could easily have got a crew of Japanese sailors, who had had experience on hunting-vessels, to ignore the regulations and come aboard outside the harbour ; in fact, a number who had been with me before offered to do so. They were naturally anxious to get employment where the pay was high and the food such as they got nowhere else ; moreover, the adventurous nature of the life appealed to them. However, I thought it better to ship Chinese, in order to show the Japanese authorities the mistaken nature of their policy, which would not prevent hunting-vessels obtaining crews, and the money earned would go elsewhere, and not into Japanese pockets, as it had done hitherto.

Shipping five Europeans and a cook, we sailed for Shanghai, where on arrival we engaged sixteen Chinese, and a foreign mate, who was to act as third hunter also. We arrived on the hunting-grounds on May 5, and killed our first otter eight days later.

The true character of the skipper now began to reveal itself in his treatment of the Chinese sailors, in which he was followed by the mate, an excitable Irishman. I did all I could to prevent any abuse of power, but, unfortunately, I had given away my authority on board by allowing C. to sign on as master of the vessel, the master's authority under British law being paramount. The men were willing and obedient when treated decently, but C. appeared to delight in cruelty and in knocking them about. A climax was reached on the last day of May, when, some of the men being at work about the windlass,

the mate struck one, who retaliated by hitting him with a chain-hook. The mate then ran aft for his rifle, the men bolting below. Seeing the mate rush on deck with his gun, I followed him up and took it away. Later on in the evening, hearing a noise, I went on deck, and found the Chinese carpenter and several men armed with iron hatch battens and other instruments of defiance, confronting the captain, who was ordering them to go below and threatening them with a short wooden club. They refused to go, saying they wished to see me. Hearing this, I told them they had better go below, and I would see in the morning what they wanted. This satisfied them. They put aside whatever they had taken up to defend themselves, and proceeded to go below.

Thinking the trouble finished, I went aft and took a cast of the lead to see if we had dragged our anchors, as there was a very strong breeze blowing off the land. Whilst I was doing this, the skipper called out to the mate, who was below, and then rushed after the carpenter, as he was making his way to the fore-castle, and struck him several times on the head with the club. At this moment the mate rushed up with his rifle, ran forward, and fired, without putting the gun to his shoulder, at another man who was going below. He was part of the way down the companion-way, about half his body being exposed. The bullet passed through the large muscle on the outer side of the man's arm; then through his cheek, striking both his upper and lower molars, breaking two of them; then upwards along the cheek-bone, where it remained alongside the nose. This all took place so suddenly that there was no

time to interfere. I had the man brought aft, and dressed his wounds, which quickly healed. Subsequently, on his return to Yokohama, I sent him to a surgeon, who cut out the bullet from the side of his nose. The affair had a quieting effect, but I had great difficulty at times in preserving peace.

The weather was unfavourable for hunting, and by the end of June we had secured only five otters. Our prospects being so poor for making a season by hunting otters, I resolved to run across to Robben Island and try for some seals. We arrived at the islet on July 4, and, seeing no sign of anyone there, ran in on the western side, and dropped our anchor underfoot, lowering nothing but our head sails, however, in case of having to leave hurriedly. As no one appeared, I ordered a boat to be lowered, and, accompanied by four Chinese boat-pullers, a hunter, and a boat-steerer, set out with the intention of taking a look on shore. I carried nothing but a bag, which, if occasion offered, I might fill with sea-fowls' eggs. As we pulled towards the beach, I noticed a short piece of new-looking rope lying near an overturned boat stored alongside the salt-house. This made me suspicious, and I slued the boat partly round with my paddle, and kept on towards the northern end of the islet, thus soon shutting out the house from sight. This brought out half a dozen Russian sailors armed with rifles, who took up a position behind some iron water-tanks. The man in charge of the sailors hailed us, making signs for us to come on shore, an invitation I was not at all inclined to accept. He then gave an order, and the sailors pointed their rifles at us. By this time the boat was heading back to the schooner, the





SHIPKEEPER HUNTERS AND BOATSTEERERS.



CREW (CHINESE) AND BOATSTEERERS.



Chinamen pulling for all they were worth, whilst the hunter and boat-steerer dropped into the bottom of the boat, and lay there under the thwarts.

When the rifles were aimed at us, I held up the bag I had with me in their direction, seeing which the man in charge ordered his men to recover their rifles. But as we still kept on, they again took aim at us, on which I again held out the bag at arm's length towards them. Down went their rifles once more, and a short consultation appeared to follow. Once more the rifles were pointed at us, but the bag trick no longer worked, and half a dozen bullets went over our heads. The next minute we had placed the schooner between us and the beach, and were alongside and hoisted up in quick time, much to everyone's relief. The windlass was already manned and the anchor coming up as we got alongside. The Russians now launched their boat and started to come off. Seeing there were no more than we could attend to, I ordered the anchor to be dropped again, and the sailors came on board. With a few words of English on their part, and a few of Russian on mine, we made out that the chief officer in command, with a dozen or more men, had gone over in their big boat to the main island (Saghalin), and was expected back very soon. They then asked if we wanted seals and if we had any money. They said a great number of seals were hauled up. In reply to my question as to why they fired at us, they said they did not intend to hit anyone; they only wanted us to come on shore.

Usually I carried a hundred dollars or so with me on my trips, but this time I could only muster eight. For these, a silver watch, some tobacco,

rum, and tinned stores, they brought us off a boatload of seals (twenty), and we took our departure back to the Kuril Islands. Here, whilst beating through the straits between Onekotan and Paramushir at night, we nearly lost our vessel. The Paramushir coast being dangerous on account of many off-lying reefs and rocks which the charts did not show, and which were known to myself only of those on board, I had been on deck until midnight, and the watch was then taken by the mate. The vessel was heading south by east, a course which would have taken her out into the Pacific, miles clear of everything, and away from Cape Henry on Paramushir, which is low and difficult to see at night, and off which there are dangerous reefs. I told the mate to keep the vessel on the same course until daybreak, warning him of the dangers off Cape Henry. About 2 a.m. I was awakened by the vessel bumping heavily, and, running on deck, found we were on the reef. On my asking the mate how he got there, he said the captain had been on deck and ordered him to put the schooner on the other tack, as he knew she must be far enough through the strait to clear the cape.

The tides are sometimes irregular on these coasts, and fortunately it was so on this occasion, the water falling for twelve hours, so that at low-water the schooner was high and dry. This extraordinary falling of the tide was a godsend to us, for it enabled us to get all our ballast, water, and heavier stuff, out and on to the beach without having to put it into boats. It was not high-tide again until about six o'clock the following evening, when it rose abnormally high. The vessel floating, we set sail and bumped her over the flat reef into deep water,

and next day got everything on board, the weather remaining fine. Practically the only damage suffered was the loss of our false keel.

On July 23, 24, and 25 we hunted off the Kamchatka coast, getting five more otters and a seal. We went on shore twice, and shot three large bears. The day after leaving Robben Island, one of the Chinese sailors died of beri-beri. As his companions wished to take his remains back to China, I ran over to Rashau Island to let them burn the body. They made two attempts, but could not do it properly, so his remains were buried after all.

About the middle of August, the prospects of making a season not improving, and my hunters, who had had no previous experience, showing no progress either in the running of an otter or in their shooting, all that we got falling to my own rifle, I resolved to return to Yokohama, which we reached on the 30th of the same month. On the way down another Chinese sailor died suddenly, also of beri-beri, and was buried at sea. After what had happened, I was not surprised to find that the Chinese sailors had resolved to prosecute the captain and mate. Against the former they laid charges of murder and assault, and against the mate, of assault. The men declared that the deaths of the two sailors were caused by the cruelty of the captain. The accused were arrested and committed for trial. The charge of murder fell through; the men had undoubtedly died of beri-beri, but it is possible their deaths were hastened by harsh treatment. The charges for assault were then heard, and after two had been disposed of the Judge refused to hear more, as one of the accused had already run the risk

of being committed for murder. The captain was sentenced to two months' imprisonment, whilst the mate got six months for shooting at the sailor.

When C. first came to me, I took no trouble to make any inquiries as to his former life ; I had never heard of him or of his exploits in China. Had I known what I afterwards discovered, I would never have had anything to do with him. As showing how a woman's instincts are sometimes right in judging character, I may mention that, shortly before we left for Shanghai, C. called on me one day when my sister was present. After he had gone, she remarked : " Hal, I don't like the look of that man ; I am sure he is a bad lot, and you will have trouble with him." Of course I told her that was merely a foolish prejudice which women often took without reason. On my return, needless to say, I was greeted with, " I told you so."

C. came to a miserable end, as he deserved. After leaving Japan he went to Hong-Kong, where he shipped as mate on a steamer, but got into trouble for assaulting the captain. He next turned up in the Dutch East Indies, where he was reported to have been sentenced to penal servitude for ten years for causing the death of a Chinaman, but subsequently escaped. Whether this is true or not I cannot say ; anyhow, he was lost sight of for some years, until he turned up again in Shanghai, where he earned a living by selling some aphrodisiac nostrum to the Chinese. This failing after a time, he sank lower and lower, and finally died of want. At one time he was in charge of a Chinese transport, which carried troops during the Franco-Chinese War. After a trip or two he made arrangements

with the French Admiral to run his ship and the troops on board into the hands of the French, for a reward of some 25,000 dollars. This was carried out, but he soon got rid of the money in Shanghai. A man of a constitutionally cruel nature, he appeared to delight in punishing and knocking about the men under him. Sometimes it happens that a man of this kind is physically a coward, but such was not the case with C. He was known to go single-handed, on several occasions, into a crowd of quarrelling Chinese soldiers on board ship, and beat them into submission, laying them out right and left with anything he could get hold of, with his fists if nothing else offered. Recently I came across the captain of a steamer who had been an apprentice on one of the big clipper sailing ships running to Australia when C. was fourth mate. He told me how on one occasion he saw C. attack and drive below a whole watch. The mate who was being relieved had had trouble with the men composing his watch, who had handled him rather severely, and were in a more or less mutinous mood. C., seeing this, asked the mate if he meant to let the matter stop there; if so, he would not, and, catching up a short heaver, he went for the crowd, knocking them down one after the other, finally driving them all below.

Although the season was a failure, my usual good negative luck did not desert me. I had run more risks than I knew of at the time. C. never openly attempted any nonsense with me, but after our return to Yokohama the Chinese boatswain told me that, when we were away hunting in the boats, C. had tried to induce him, with the others usually left on board, to consent to clear out with the

schooner, take her down to South China or the Philippine Islands and sell her, and share the booty. Six months later, when the mate was released from gaol, he informed me I had been lucky, as C. had proposed to him to poison myself and the three other Europeans on board, and carry off the vessel to the South Sea Islands.

Sea-otter hunting was now practically played out, and what schooners were left turned their attention to sealing as their main occupation. The *Nemo* being large enough to convert into an auxiliary steamer, I resolved to do so, and endeavour to form a company and fit out for a whaling and sealing cruise. Whalebone at that time was worth about £2,000 per ton. The company was formed and a voyage made, resulting in a catch of about 1,600 seals, which paid the company about 40 per cent. on its outlay. Other voyages followed, chiefly sealing, some account of which I hope to record in another book. I will here relate only a couple of incidents which took place a year or two later, when I called in at the Kuril Islands to fill up with wood and water, and try for a few otters before proceeding to the Bering Sea for the second part of the season's pelagic seal-hunting.

We anchored in Ottomai Bay, in Little Kuril Strait. On the way in one of my hunters told me he had been there the previous autumn, and found a Japanese living alone in a *yurt*, which he had built amongst some sand-dunes on the upper part of the beach. Before coming to anchor we saw the *yurt*, but no sign of any human being. It was late in the afternoon of June 25, too late to start wood and watering, so we had an early meal, and then three



hunters and myself went ashore. We landed near the *yurt*, it being but a few yards above high-water level. It was constructed in the usual way, half underground, with a main apartment and a lobby, as described in the first part of this book, but without bunklike recesses at the sides. Against the door, which opened outwards from the lobby, were placed, in a leaning position, several pieces of wood, evidently to keep it closed and prevent any animals getting inside, although a bear, had one been in the vicinity, would have made short work of the flimsy obstructions. We came to the conclusion that the owner was absent, and had probably gone over to the next island, where Lieutenant Gunji and his party were located.

Opening up the place, we examined the interior. In the lobby we found tubs of water, rice, and other Japanese food, and cooking utensils. The main room was entered through a narrow opening from the lobby. Here we found clothing, books, Japanese plates and cups, a thermometer, barometer, rifle, ammunition, and various other things. It was very dark inside, light only coming in through a small opening in the end of the roof, and through the opening into the lobby. We left everything as it was and went outside. One of my hunters had a notion to go back for another look round. Presently he called out: "Oh, here he is, dead!" I went in and found the hunter had struck a match, and discovered the dead man lying under some Japanese *futon* (wadded quilts) in the darkest corner of the room. There were no signs of discoloration or decomposition, and not the slightest odour from the dead body. On the face and forehead, on ex-

aminig it closely with a lighted match, I noticed a slight mould much resembling the bloom on fresh ripe fruit. On leaving the *yurt*, I saw my boat-steerer, Reilly, an Irishman, pulling towards us. I told my hunters to say nothing of what we had discovered—Reilly would be sure to want to see what was inside—and we would await developments. Sure enough, the first thing Reilly did was to go into the *yurt*, while we remained outside listening. He had a habit of talking to himself, and we heard him say: “Hullo, here’s a d——d fine rifle; I’ll ask the ‘old man’ to let me take it. Darned good pair of rubber boots, too!” He then brought them out, and asked me if he might take them on board. I refused, and told him to leave everything as it was. He took them back, and we heard him say: “Books and bottles and a good pair of red blankets.” Then there was a shout, and he rushed from the place with his hair on end, crying out: “Holy Jasus! there’s a dead man in the bed!” We could not help roaring with laughter at the comical figure he cut. It appears, in feeling around in the dark corner, he had put his hands on the dead man’s legs. Nothing would induce Reilly to go into the *yurt* again.

Believing Lieutenant Gunji and his people to be still on the next island, Shumshir, I made up my mind to go over to their settlement the next morning, after laying in a supply of wood and water, and report what we had found. We finished our work early, and then had breakfast, after which I went on deck to take a boat and pull up to the settlement on the other island, about three or four miles away. On looking in that direction I saw a boat coming towards us. As it came alongside I was hailed in.

English by Gunji himself. Inviting him on board, and giving him something to eat, drink, and smoke, I informed him of our discovery. He said he knew of it, having been over here at the beginning of March, when they found the dead body. They had not buried it, because Japanese regulations and customs connected with such matters were very strict. The man was a sort of rival of his, an advocate for bringing back the Kurilsky Ainu to their old homes, and had been endeavouring to find the best locations for them while studying the fauna, flora, geology, and meteorology, of the islands. Gunji himself was opposed to his scheme, and intended settling the islands with Japanese. He said they had visited the deceased in the autumn, and asked him to spend the winter in their settlement, but he had refused, preferring to be alone where he was. He was a Greek Church Christian, and knew Russian, having been educated by priests of the Russian Church in Japan. Gunji said a Government steamer was expected from Nemuro in about a month's time, on board which would be some police officers, who would investigate the affair and bury the man. He attributed the extraordinary state of preservation of the body to the coolness and purity of the air.

At this time Gunji and his party had been about fifteen months on the islands. Whilst his boat was alongside, his men were throwing over fishing lines, although no fish were to be found there. We had a lot of cod and halibut on board, caught just outside the strait the day before. Seeing these, Gunji asked where we caught them, as he said his people were running short of food and could catch no fish. This surprised me, as showing a great want of enter-

prise and energy on their part, as the waters round their island simply teemed with fish, halibut and cod especially. All that was necessary was to go out into rather deeper water in the winter and spring months. I indicated the localities to him, and, presenting him with two or three dozen cod-fish and a few stores, bade him good-bye. We then got under way and left. Since then I believe cod-fishing has been one of the principal occupations of his settlers.

In 1896 I was in the same spot on a similar errand on exactly the same days of the month—namely, June 25 and 26—when all traces of the *yurt* had disappeared; there was much snow, and the place looked as deserted and barren as ever. Three boats went to the small stream which flows into the bay, to fetch water. With the party went three of my hunters, intending to go into the hills shooting, and taking with them my dog, a cocker spaniel. They walked along the beach towards the spot where the *yurt* originally stood, which was about half a mile from where they landed, and came to a halt a couple of hundred yards or so beyond, where the land sloped upwards to a high bluff forming part of the lower slope of the mountains farther inland. The dog kept close to them all the time.

Thinking I might get some ptarmigan, I took my gun and rowed myself on shore, landing near where the *yurt* had been. After hauling my boat up I turned round, and saw my dog rushing frantically towards me. She kept right on, taking no notice of me as she passed, although I called and whistled to her. With her tail between her legs, her eyes bulging out, her head turning from side to side, as

if fleeing from some pursuing horror which she feared every moment would overtake her, she looked the picture of terror. She ran straight down the beach to where the boats were getting water, then took to the sea, and swam off towards the vessel. Fearing she might be attacked by cramp and drowned, I shoved my boat off again and went after her, picking her up after she had swum about a quarter of a mile. When I got her into the boat, she covered between my legs, trembling violently, and uttering short grunts rather than barks, and still bearing that expression of intense fear. I took her on board, put her in my cabin, and did what I could to try and comfort the poor little beast ; but it had little effect : a shadow passing the skylight would start her fears afresh. In endeavouring to account for this, I thought someone had been thrashing her, or perhaps burnt her with a match or something of that kind ; so when I went on shore again I asked my hunters what they had done to put the dog into such a state of terror. They were as surprised and nonplussed as myself. Their story was : “ She kept close to us all the time, and was in amongst us when we stopped ; then she appeared to see something which scared her so much that she scooted away down the beach as if the devil were after her.”

I thought no more about the matter, went into the hills and got some birds, and returned on board. The dog was still in the same nervous state of fear. By noon our water and wood were replenished, and everyone was on board again. An hour or so later I was on deck, and saw a European, accompanied by a dog about the size of a pointer, making his way

down over the high bluff on to the beach, and down by the sand-dunes. Three hours or so later, as he again appeared on the beach and hailed the schooner, I sent a boat and brought him off. He was a hunter, an American, belonging to a schooner lying in a small bay some three miles farther up the straits, and had come across the high land to reach a swamp on the southern side of our bay, in the hope of shooting some wild-duck there. After dispensing the usual hospitality and exchanging hunting news, he prepared to leave, asking me to put him ashore on the north side of the bay, as it would save him some distance. When about to get into the boat, he remarked: "I've lost my dog; and if you should see him on the beach, I wish you would take him aboard, and when we meet in the Bering Sea I can get him again." I asked him how and where he had lost him. He said: "Well, it was mighty curious. You see, when I got down about them sand-dunes there"—pointing towards the spot where my dog had got her fright—"the darned dog, who was trotting quietly alongside me, suddenly seed somethin' that scared the critter so much that he started off hell-bent-for-election, and run up that canyon there as if forty thousand devils were after him. I whistled, and ran after him, and followed him up; but he kept goin', and is goin' yet, I guess, judging from the way he was leggin' it, and I ain't seen him since." I then told him what had happened to my own dog, but he could suggest no probable solution of the mystery. We remained until the next morning, but saw no sign of his dog.

The cause of this intense fear still remains a mystery. I have told this story to several people,

and some of the "clever" ones, of course, could account for it at once, saying: "The dogs saw or smelt a bear;" or, "Ate something that disagreed with them;" or, "Something stung them." There was nothing for them to eat or to be stung by in such a spot; and had the place even been one where it was possible that a bear could have been concealed, I am sure it would not have affected my dog the way it did, because she had been with me when I had shot bears, and showed no such fear. Anyhow, the place was so open and bare for a considerable distance around that nothing of even the size of a fox could have escaped notice. Had my own dog only been in question, I should have thought no more of it, and have concluded something had gone wrong with her, although she had hitherto always been healthy. She did not get rid of her nervousness for several days, and was never the same as before. She ultimately died in an epileptic fit on my return to Yokohama. This incident may be of interest to Mr. Stead and others engaged in psychological research, who may be inclined to connect it with the man who died and lay so long unburied on this spot. I have often wondered since, in view of the extraordinary preservation of the body, whether he may not have been in a state of trance.

In hunting the sea-otter, as in all other pursuits of a like nature, incidents of an extraordinary character sometimes occur which may be worth recording. A few such I now call to mind. One season, while hunting off the Kamchatkan coast, I killed an otter by a truly marvellous shot. The day was an ideal one for hunting; a dead calm prevailed,

with the sea as smooth as a mill-pond, and milk-white in appearance, caused by a "lifted" fog, thus enabling a hunter to see a black object on the water at a very long distance. Over a thousand yards ahead of my boat I caught sight of a small black thing, which my trained eye told me was an otter. My binoculars confirmed it, and with them I could make out the otter "standing," as the term is, as high as possible out of the water, looking towards my boat. Realizing that he was on the alert, I decided to fire a shot in his direction, trusting he might try an otter's favourite dodge—that is, dive towards the approaching boat, in an attempt to pass under it and away astern out of sight, and, miscalculating the distance, come to the surface somewhere near me. Stopping my boat, and taking careful aim so as to get the line of fire right, I elevated the muzzle of my rifle to what I thought was sufficient to allow the bullet to drop near or pass close over him, pulled the trigger, and watched for the splash of the bullet. Seeing none, I concluded my aim had been too high. The otter did not dive, but remained lying on the water. Pulling towards him, I kept my rifle at the "ready," in case he should again "stand." Although the boat was going at a good pace, it appeared an interminable time before we got a good sight of him. I then noticed he was "rounded up," with his back out of the water—the position an otter always assumes when killed or stunned—and as I got closer I saw the water about him blood-stained. Hauling him into the boat, I found that my bullet had entered his throat and broken his neck.

On another occasion we were "running" an



otter off the coast of Yetorup, and a mile or more away a set of boats was "running" another otter. Our otter was a long-diving fellow, and, judging by the time which elapsed between the firing, so was our neighbours'. After a while the other boats fired no more shots, and I noticed they were opening out over a wider area, evidently having lost the run of their quarry. Suddenly an otter broke water with a deep gasp within a dozen yards of me, and before he could realize his danger I sent a bullet through his head. For the moment I thought it was the otter we were chasing, but, after being under water a much longer time than usual, that one came to the surface in the opposite direction outside our boats. The hunter nearest him fired two or three shots, but failed to hit him, and then, observing he was "rounded up," pulled for him, and found him dead. He was not wounded, but his long-sustained effort under water had caused him to burst a blood-vessel, for, on taking off the pelt, the veins appeared to be ruptured, the whole body under the skin being suffused with blood. The otter I had secured was no doubt the one the other boats were after, the poor beast having made a great struggle, in a dive of nearly a mile, to escape from one enemy, only to meet its fate at the hands of another.

Ordinarily an otter has to be killed before he can be taken into the boat, but one morning, when we were chasing one off the north-east point of Urup, the following somewhat comical incident occurred: The water was smooth, with no wind; but away to the north-west a line of "white caps" could be seen, indicating the approach of a breeze. I was anxious to capture our prey before the wind

came down upon us, and, fortunately, one of my hunters secured the animal by snapshotting him as he broke water close to his boat. As soon as the captive had been hauled on board, I signalled an order to return to the schooner, as the breeze had now reached us. After pulling a short distance, my attention was drawn to a commotion in the stern of the boat which had secured the otter, and I saw the stroke oarsman's legs go up in the air as he fell backwards ; then something enveloped in a coat (the boat-steerer had thrown his oilskin over the otter) reared up and plunged overboard. Of course I realized it was the otter, and that probably £20 or £30 had gone. My feelings can be imagined. However, signalling the boats to spread, we were soon in position, and luckily managed to keep run of the truant, notwithstanding the now rough sea, until he fell to my own rifle. On examination, I found the first shot had only penetrated the skin, and lay against the shoulder - blade. The bullet, before wounding the otter, had evidently struck the water, stunning the animal with the concussion, but not having sufficient force left in it to do much more injury.

## CONCLUSION

### THE BALANCE-SHEET: MORAL AND COMMERCIAL

To the strict moralist some of the episodes herein related may appear to savour somewhat of the freebooter, especially when judged in the light of what has been written of late years by those who, in order to get rid of rivals, are interested in suppressing the pelagic hunter. The sea-otter hunter and sealer has been called by these people all sorts of names—poacher, freebooter, pirate, and even worse. He, however, is not nearly so black as he is painted by these unscrupulous slanderers. The only item approaching the truth in these accusations is that of hunting in prohibited waters, which, after all, may be regarded as a very venial offence, and which, moreover, carries with it the severe penalty of confiscation of the vessel, if caught within territorial waters.

It is well known that pelagic sealers have visited rookeries some of which are on islands which are permanently inhabited and leased to certain companies; others on islets which, although not within territorial waters, are guarded for a time and then abandoned; and others, again, on rocks and islets which are uninhabitable, are not within territorial waters, and on which no guard was ever placed. When the protected places have been

visited, it has been almost always with the connivance, invitation, or consent, of the natives themselves.

In the whole course of my experience I have never known an instance—and I am sure I should have heard had one arisen—of a sea-otter hunter or sealer stealing a skin, committing robbery, or assaulting or attacking a native or anyone else, in any of the places visited by him when hunting. On the other hand, scores of men engaged in pelagic hunting have been shot down and murdered while hunting near the land, without ever a shot being fired in retaliation by those attacked. Sometimes these victims have been there by inadvertence during thick, foggy weather, and at other times knowingly taking the risk.

The natives of their own accord would not shoot those who ventured near the land, as they know that much less drastic measures would be quite sufficient; but they are compelled and encouraged to do so by their employers, who arm them with repeating rifles, and reward them when they succeed in murdering someone; and these same employers are usually the people who, without ever having taken any risk themselves, either in fitting out a prospecting expedition or personally taking part in such themselves, reap the benefits of the risks and hardships undertaken, and the discoveries made, by the sea-otter hunters and sealers. They are like that pirate of the gulls, the skua, amongst the kittiwakes, who, instead of seeking his own food, watches until another bird captures a fish, and then swoops down upon him, compels him to give it up, and swallows it himself. It has always been so. Some-

one with the wander-lust upon him starts on an expedition into more or less unexplored or unknown parts of the world in search of anything that may turn up. It may be trade, or seals, or sea-otters, or fish, or gold, or guano, that he discovers; or, as more often happens, something of no value at all, and he has only his pains for his reward. Once in a while one of these wanderers does find something of value, and as soon as it becomes known, in steps authority and claims what he has found. Then some trust or company or individual with a "pull" obtains the right (?) to exploit it, the original discoverer too often being left out in the cold.

During the period over which my narrative extends, about fifty foreign vessels took part at different times in hunting the sea-otter in the North Pacific in the vicinity of the Kuril Islands. The largest number in any one year was fifteen, three of which, however, were lost before they reached the hunting-grounds. A few of the vessels hunted a number of seasons; others, three or four years only; others, again, only one or two; whilst some came to grief before they completed one season, the average for them all being about three seasons. The following is a list, nearly if not quite complete, of these vessels, with their fate:

<i>Cygnnet</i>	..	Lost with all hands in North Pacific.
<i>Swallow</i>	..	Abandoned and broken up on east coast of Yezo.
<i>Roscoe</i> ..	..	Unknown.
<i>Caroline I.</i>	..	Unknown.
<i>Otsego</i> ..	..	Lost with all hands on north-east end of Yetorup.
<i>Sanborn</i>	..	Lost with all hands on hunting voyage to Cape Horn.
<i>White Falcon</i>	..	Lost on Yetorup.

<i>Snowdrop</i>	..	Lost on Yetorup.
<i>Buffandeau</i>	..	Lost on Yetorup.
<i>Flying Mist</i>	..	Reported lost with all hands, North Pacific.
<i>Lottie</i>	..	Abandoned on Shikotan.
<i>Lizzie</i>	..	Unknown.
<i>Fanny</i>	..	Unknown.
<i>Jupiter</i>	..	Sold out of the business.
<i>Myrtle</i>	..	Lost on the Aleutians.
<i>Flying Eagle</i>	..	Lost on the Aleutians.
<i>Dolphin</i>	..	Lost off the Japan coast.
<i>Undine</i>	..	Lost with all hands.
<i>Kaisho</i>	..	Lost on Yetorup.
<i>Snowflake</i>	..	Lost on Yezo.
<i>Sea Lion</i>	..	Lost with all hands, North Pacific.
<i>Caroline II.</i>	..	Lost with all hands, and 190 otter-skins.
<i>Otosei</i>	..	Sold to Japanese, and lost the next season.
<i>Eliza</i>	..	Lost on Yetorup.
<i>Tori</i>	..	Sold out of the business.
<i>Alexander</i>	..	Reported lost with all hands, North Pacific.
<i>Beatrice</i>	..	Sealing.
<i>Banner</i>	..	Lost on Yetorup.
<i>Otome</i>	..	Seized by Russians.
<i>Dido</i>	..	Lost on Yetorup.
<i>Sarah Louise</i>	..	Lost with all hands, North Pacific.
<i>Matinée</i>	..	Lost on the Aleutians.
<i>M. C. Bohn</i>	..	Sold.
<i>Helena</i>	..	Seized by Russians.
<i>Stella (Adèle)</i>	..	Reported lost with all hands, Bering Sea.
<i>Eliza</i>	..	Seized by Russians.
<i>Diana</i>	..	Sunk by Russian steamer in the Okotsk Sea, 1904.
<i>Otter</i>	..	Reported lost with all hands.
<i>Khiva Elizabeth</i>	..	Lost.
<i>A. Cashman</i>		
	( <i>Felix</i> )	Lost with all hands, Okotsk Sea.
<i>Ada</i>	..	Sealing.
<i>Ohede (Rose)</i>	..	Seized by Russians, and lost with all hands.
<i>Penelope</i>	..	Lost in Clallan Bay.
<i>Saghalin</i>	..	Lost on coast of Japan.
<i>Nemo</i>	..	Lost on Shantraski Island, Okotsk Sea.
<i>Fearless</i>	..	Unknown.
<i>Arctic (Pointer)</i>	..	Lost on Shikotan.
<i>Benten</i>	..	Lost on Paramushir.
<i>Mystery</i>	..	Seized by Russians, and lost.
<i>Retriever</i>	..	Sold.

The loss of life amongst these was between 250 and 300, inclusive of those who died from exposure when wrecked, those who were lost overboard, and those who were drowned by the capsizing of boats.

Of the white men—some forty odd—who at various times shipped with me on my sea-otter hunting ventures as masters, shipkeepers, hunters, or mates, I know of only eight who are now alive, whilst four others have been lost sight of. Nine died in their beds, and the remaining twenty died violent deaths, such as by drowning, shooting, and suicide. Of the men who formed the crews—about 150, mostly Japanese—during the same period, the greater number have left their bones on the hunting-grounds of the North-West Pacific. These naked facts never struck me in their true significance until I came to collect and record them on paper. It will be seen that the pursuit of sea-otter hunting was a very precarious one, the prospective gain being altogether inadequate as compensation for the risks run. As in all undertakings of a similar nature, it was only the successful ventures that were talked about—the failures were never heard of—and the gains from the former were soon swallowed up in the losses of the latter.

Whatever was made out of the industry was gained by those who built the vessels and supplied the outfits, by those through whose hands the skins passed before reaching the final purchasers, and by those amongst whom the sailors and hunters—an improvident lot of men as a rule—spent their money between seasons. A great fuss was made at one time by the Japanese, chiefly through a foreign subsidized newspaper published in Yokohama, about

the iniquity of foreign vessels hunting in these so-called Japanese waters. Had it not been for the enterprise of foreigners in exploring these little-known and neglected places, including the uninhabited islands and rocks of this part of the world, comparatively nothing would probably have been known about them to this day, and the many benefits reaped by the Japanese from the knowledge gained would have been lost to them. Not only did the Japanese get the benefit of what was expended in the building, outfitting, and repairing, of hunting-vessels, of the wages and lays, or shares of profits, paid to Japanese crews and hunters, nearly all of which was spent in Japan ; but, what was of much more importance, some hundreds of Japanese sailors received a thorough training on board fore-and-aft rigged vessels just at the time when the Japanese were discarding their junks for foreign style fore-and-aft rigged schooners for the coasting trade. This training was most valuable to them, and many ultimately became captains, mates, and boatswains, on board their own new fore-and-aft craft, of which there were soon scores, quickly increasing to hundreds, and now thousands, probably, as they are found in every port in the country.

The benefits did not stop at this. I have no hesitation in saying that the spirit of adventure and enterprise which now possesses the Japanese, particularly in the way of fitting out schooners for fishing, hunting, and prospecting, all over the North Pacific Ocean and in the Okotsk and Bering Seas, is largely, if not entirely, due to the experience gained from the foreign sea-otter hunters and sealers whom at one time they so keenly denounced. At the



present time scores of Japanese craft fit out for what they term "deep-sea fishing." They are supported and encouraged by the Government, which pays them a yearly subsidy of 10 yen per ton registered. They visit the Japan, Okotsk, and Bering Seas, sealing, otter-hunting, salmon-fishing, and whaling; and the Mid-Pacific islands for sea-birds' feathers, turtle-shell, pearl-shell, coral, phosphates, guano, or anything else available. They have come into conflict on these expeditions with the Russians on the Siberian coasts of the Okotsk Sea, in Kamchatka, and at the Commander Islands; with the Americans on the Alaskan coast, at the Pribyloff and Aleutian Islands, and at one or two small islands in the Mid-Pacific; with the Koreans in the Japan Sea; and with the Chinese in the Yellow Sea, and, more recently, at Pratas Island, lying midway between the China coast, the Philippine Islands, and Formosa.

The losses, both of vessels and lives, amongst these Japanese adventurers have been very large, but seldom do any particulars get into the newspapers. It is well known amongst those interested that dozens of Japanese craft have been lost on the Russian coasts of the Okotsk and Bering Seas (thirty in about four years, with 300 lives, it is said), several on the Alaskan coast and the Aleutian Islands, and some on the Kuril Islands. The number of lives lost with these has been exceptionally large, as they all carry big crews. Quite a number of those who have ventured out to visit the small islands scattered over the Pacific between 15° and 35° north latitude have never again been heard of; but every now and then some ship, in passing one

of these out-of-the-way spots, sees distress signals flying, which turn out to be made by shipwrecked Japanese. Still, they continue to fit out, encouraged by the few who are successful. Owing to the Government subsidy, the small cost of their vessels, cheap food, and small wages, the Japanese can often make a profitable venture where a foreigner would make a dead loss. The Japanese, like the Anglo-Saxon, is fond of adventure ; the life on board these vessels suits him ; the gambling element in the venture, and the visiting of new or unknown places, appeal to him. He has spells of hard work and easy times, and in addition he gets — what is nearly always obtainable on these trips—a bellyful of good food and the capacity to enjoy it through the healthy open-air life he leads.

Yes, the life is a fascinating one, and I regret that I ever gave it up. I found life worth living during the twenty odd years I spent in hunting, and whatever other people may have to say about the morality of the calling, it is greatly to be preferred to a life spent in cheating your neighbour in trade, or in other sharp practices which are so prevalent in these days.

## APPENDIX I

### THE SEA-OTTER

IN the following account of the sea-otter, I have made considerable use of "The Fur-Seal Investigations," 1896-97, Dr. Seonhard Stejneger's "Russian Fur-Seal Islands," 1896, and Ivan Peteroff's "Report on Alaska," 1882—all published by the United States Government—correcting from my own experience a few errors which, although of no particular importance, it is as well to set right.

The sea-otter—*Enhydra lutris*, *Enhydra marina*, *Lutra marina*, and more recently *Latax lutris*, as it is variously styled by scientific men—was found by the Russians on the Kamchatkan coast towards the end of the seventeenth century. Its beautiful fur, which brought very high prices in the fur-markets of China and Russia, caused it to be so persistently hunted that in the course of the next fifty years it became very scarce ; indeed, it was reported to be practically extinct on the coasts of Kamchatka. Adventurous hunters seeking for new haunts of this valuable animal found the Aleutian Islands. Attoo, the westernmost island of the chain, was discovered by Michall Novodiskov in 1745, and year after year the Russian hunters extended their researches farther to the eastward till all the islands were visited ; Kadiack being discovered in 1763, and the peninsula

of Alaska in 1768. Thence the north-west coast of America was followed down to British Columbia. Along all these coasts the sea-otter abounded, and tens of thousands of skins were captured, traded for, or obtained by other means from the natives of those regions.

At that time, it is evident, the sea-otter ranged from the neighbourhood of the Santa Barbara Islands, California, along the coasts of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Alaska (south of the Bering Sea), the Aleutian Islands, across to the Commander Islands and over to the coast of Kamchatka, in latitude  $56^{\circ}$  north, thence south-westerly down the shores of the peninsula and along the Kuril Islands as far as Yezo, a distance of about 5,000 miles, with nowhere a bigger gap than 180 miles, which occurs between Attoo and Copper Islands.

The fur of the sea-otter being much in demand, the animal was hunted so relentlessly and indiscriminately that in many districts it was completely wiped out. This was the case first of all on the Kamchatkan coast ; then, as new haunts were discovered, they in turn suffered the same fate, until only the most inaccessible places remained where the sea-otter could defy his human enemies. The difficulties of hunting even these places were gradually overcome, and the otters resorting to them so thinned out that at the present time not more than about 200 are taken in a year's catch from all the hunting-grounds encircling the North Pacific Ocean from Japan to British Columbia, with the single exception of Copper Island, where they are closely preserved and jealously guarded, a catch of about 200 only being allowed in a season.

An adult sea-otter measures, from nose to tip of tail, from 4 feet to 4 feet 6 inches in the case of the very largest, and weighs up to about 80 pounds. The skin is remarkably loose on the body, and, when stretched and "staked out" on a frame, the largest will measure as much as 90 inches from nose to end of tail, by 36 inches wide. In a skin of this size there will be about 15 square feet (5 by 3 feet) of skin, without reckoning the head, neck, paws, flippers, and tail.

The pelage of the sea-otter consists of a very fine, dense, soft, and silky fur, from 1 inch to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, with a proportion of somewhat longer hairs which are coarser and stiffer. Near the roots the fur is of a lustrous pearly whitish colour, darkening towards the outside to black in the best skins, and in others to various shades of brown, from a dark liver colour to lighter shades. The finest skins are black, with white silvery hairs distributed evenly, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch apart all over. When a pelt of this kind is of full size, well and evenly furred and tipped, and of a uniform colour throughout (head excepted, which is often white), it is considered a No. 1 skin, and fetches a high price in the market. The next grade is not so dark, but may be quite as well furred and tipped. Then come the dark brown skins, and then those of lighter shades, which may or may not have silvery tips; then rusty brown skins, and lastly "woolly" skins, with short fur and few or no long hairs; these are sometimes of an ash-grey or mouse colour, and look as if the fur had been clipped with shears. All the above grades have different degrees of quality. Size, perfection of fur, and evenness of colour and tips, are of first consideration.

Some skins are large, well furred, and even in colour, but have the tips very unevenly distributed, some places perhaps lacking them altogether ; or there may be a "woolly" patch (often in the middle of the back), which mars the beauty of what would otherwise be a very fine skin. Others may be of a beautiful black, and evenly furred and tipped from shoulders to end of tail, but having the head and belly white, or nearly so. In some pelts the tips have a slightly curled-up, singed appearance ; in others, the end appears to be broken off. The imperfect pelts are almost always those of adult animals. Sea-otters which are not full-grown are much more even in colour and quality of fur, but the silvery tips are usually too abundant and close together. In many skins the longer hairs are not silvery, but black or brown in colour.

The head is roundish, with small ears ; the eyes are black and beady ; and the whiskers, which are white, somewhat resemble those of a cat, but the hairs are coarser and stiffer. The teeth are adapted for feeding upon almost anything. It has particularly strong molars, and finds no difficulty in chewing up good-sized crabs, which, judging from the contents of the many stomachs I have opened and examined, appear to be its chief food. The fore-legs are short and thick, and the toes, which are not webbed, have short nails and naked, black, granulated, skin-covered palms. The hind-limbs are much longer and flipper-like in form ; the foot part somewhat resembles the human hand in size and shape. The toes, the longest of which are on the outside, are about the length of the fingers, and are joined by a thin membrane of skin covered with fur on both the

upper and under sides, except on five round, naked spots, about  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch in diameter, on the parts corresponding to the balls at the ends of the fingers. The skin on these spots is black and granulated like that on the palms of the fore-paws.

The otter is very handy with its fore-paws, using them almost like hands in nursing its young, in obtaining and in holding its food while devouring it, in playing with its young or companions by boxing with them like cats at play, and in other ways. The use, however, of the hind-limbs is very limited, the toes appear to lack all muscular power, and the otter cannot place its hind-feet flat upon the ground; when it attempts to walk, the toes are doubled back under the soles. In climbing on to a rock or the beach, the otter, when undisturbed, moves its feet alternately; but when attempting to move quickly it draws both its hind-limbs up under its body simultaneously, and proceeds by a series of quick jumps, and gets over the ground at a good pace, usually, however, damaging its flippers in the process.

I once surprised and cornered a "pod" of otters hauled up on a rocky ledge on the island of Shiashikotan. On that occasion nine were secured, and I had an excellent opportunity of observing their movements. The flippers of all were bleeding from abrasions caused by their jumping about on the rocks, and I am satisfied that the sea-otter never travels voluntarily any distance on shore, but contents itself with hauling out and remaining close to the water.

The longer hind-limbs and the doubling back of the toes under the soles of these have the effect of

considerably raising the hind parts of the animal when it attempts to walk or run on shore or on the ice, and give it a totally different appearance from that usually depicted.

The tail of the sea-otter is not cylindrical, as described by most writers, but flattish, being about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide by less than 1 inch thick. It is stiff, and incapable of being bent to any great extent. It is moved from the root where it joins the body, and has a certain amount of play sideways, and more in an up-and-down direction. From the root to near its end it is almost of the same width, and then suddenly runs off to a bluntish point. The tail is almost always covered with very fine fur, often black and silvery-tipped when that on the body is very indifferent. The width and length of the tail varies in different animals, some being much broader than others. The skin on the tail, unlike that on the body, adheres tightly, and cannot be stretched much. The sides of the tail, which are thinner than the centre, are filled in with a layer of gristly fat, and before "staking out" this has to be cut out, or the tail could not be spread open and flattened out. The function of the tail appears to be to act as a rudder. On one occasion I killed an otter which behaved in a very peculiar manner; it would dive and remain under water the usual length of time, but would not go any distance, and always came up in the most unexpected places. When it was secured, its erratic movements were accounted for by the loss of its tail, which had apparently been bitten off by some enemy, probably a shark.

The female otter has only two teats, and as a rule produces but a single young one at a birth. Occasion-



ally, however, two are born. I have seen two young ones with their mother, and have taken two foetuses from the womb of an otter which I had killed. There is no particular breeding season for the sea-otter; young of all ages are met with the year round. My belief is that the otter attains its full growth about the fourth year. The mother otter is a very affectionate and devoted parent, and nurses and clings to her offspring with the greatest solicitude. Rarely will she desert her "pup" when chased, and only then when it has been drowned by her constant diving, or she has been herself wounded. The mother otter swims on her back, and carries her "pup" clasped to her breast between her fore-paws. When being chased she dives with the "pup," carrying it in her mouth, gripping it by the skin at the back of its neck as a cat carries her kitten. When she dives for food, the "pup" is left on the surface of the water, lying on its back.

The cry of the sea-otter is like that of a cat, but somewhat harsher. When an otter carrying her "pup" is being hunted, the mother's position is constantly betrayed by the mewling of the little one when they come to the surface to breathe after diving. I have had many sea-otter "pups" at different times in my possession, and have often kept one alive on board the schooner for a week or more, feeding it on preserved milk. The end was always the same; it became such a nuisance, with its constant mewling day and night, that for the sake of a little quiet it had to be killed. In crawling around on deck, a "pup" would double the toes part of the hind-limbs back under the soles when drawing its flippers under its body to make a move forward,

the movement corresponding exactly with that observed in the case of the adult animal.

The otter is very shy and sensitive, and nowadays rarely comes on shore, though, according to accounts given by Steller and others, it was formerly in the habit of "hauling out" on the rocks and beaches in large numbers. When lying up on the rocks, the otter is usually stretched out at full length if awake, but when sleeping in very cold weather it curls up and places its fore-paws over its nose. Sea-otters are particularly cleanly animals; I have never found a parasite of any description on them. They are not quarrelsome, and though I have seen "schools" of them up to over 100 on different occasions, I have never seen any signs of fighting amongst them (they would often be at play), nor have I ever taken a sea-otter which had wounds or scars that could be attributed to fighting. Wounded otters I have taken on a few occasions, but they had been bitten by sharks, as I know from finding several of the sharks' teeth broken off in the wounds.

And here perhaps opportunity may be taken to correct some of the misapprehensions which are still current regarding the physical characteristics and habits of the sea-otter. For many of these Steller is responsible, unless, indeed, as I have suggested in Chapter III., his views have been misrepresented, or the habits of the sea-otter have changed since he wrote about them. Thus, he says that the sea-lions and sea-bears (fur-seals) devour the sea-otters and injure them in every possible way, so that the latter are very much afraid of sea-lions and sea-bears, and are driven away from their haunts. I have many times seen sea-otters with scores of sea-lions and fur-

seals around them lying up in the kelp in apparent unconcern. The sea-lion could not devour them if he tried, his teeth, like those of the fur-seal, being suitable only for seizing his prey (fish, squid, etc.), which he swallows without masticating.

Steller, in speaking of the flesh of the otter, describes it as "savoury and delicious." There is no accounting for taste, of course. I have tried it on many occasions cooked in various ways, but a more disagreeable, ranker-tasting meat I have yet to find. Not a hunting season would pass without someone trying it. The sailors, both Chinese and Japanese, whom I have had at different times, ate crow, shag, gull, fox, whale, and, of course, seal, fur-seal, and sea-lion, but they always gave otter-flesh the "go-by." Among the Kurilsky Ainu, however, as stated in Chapter III., the sea-otter provides a favourite dish. I may here mention that the flesh of the sea-lion is excellent, even the fat, whilst that of the fur-seal is equally good, but every particle of fat must be carefully cut off before cooking, or it will spoil the dish.

Steller's account says: "The four canine teeth are smaller than common, just as observed in the sea-bears, seals, and sea-lions." This surely is an error, as a glance at drawings of the skulls and teeth of these animals will at once show that the very reverse is the case. The dentition of the sea-otter is totally different from that of the fur-seal and sea-lion, which is practically alike. The sea-otter has incisors and canine teeth, as well as particularly strong molars, with which it crushes up the shells of the crabs and crustaceans it feeds upon.

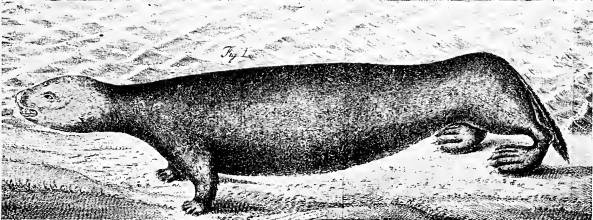
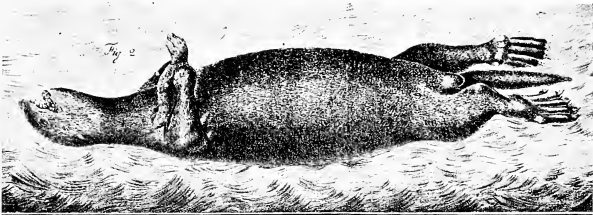
As to the food of the sea-otter, I have examined

the contents of the stomachs of hundreds. In no case did I find any trace of seaweed, and very seldom any of ordinary fish, the bones of which would, of course, immediately prove its presence. Steller's statement that the otter seeks its food, when the tide is out, on "the shallow, rocky reefs overgrown with seaweed, etc.," is either an error or the otter has changed its habits. The only food it could get on the exposed rocks when the tide is out would be seaweed, mussels, limpets, and sea-urchins. I have never noticed any traces of the shells of clams or limpets or mussels in the stomachs I examined, but found as a rule the remains of crabs, sea-urchins, sea-squirts, and what looked like fish-spawn. The crabs and other crustaceans are chewed up and swallowed shell and all. On one occasion I found the stomach of an otter I killed some eight or ten miles off shore filled with the remains of a quantity of small fish, with no signs of the remains of any crustaceans; the skin of this animal was very inferior, being mouse-coloured, with short fur and few or no long hairs. The otter dives for its food, and comes to the surface to devour it, holding it between its fore-paws. I have watched them feeding on many occasions from the shore, when they sought shelter in the kelp-patches in stormy weather.

Unfortunately, mistakes are not confined to the old writers. In the *Scientific American Supplement*, May 12, 1906, it is stated that "the eminent zoologist Pechnel-Loesche confirms the playfulness of the sea-otter, saying that they frolic like dolphins, and appear to take especial pleasure in leaping very high, and falling back into the water with a loud splash." In the whole twenty odd years of my experience I



CURIOUS FIGURES OF SEA-OTTERS FROM THE "SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN,"  
MAY, 1906.



CURIOUS FIGURES OF SEA-OTTERS FROM STELLER'S "DE BESTIS MARINIS,"  
1749.



have never seen an otter leap out of the water in play as described. It is only when one is being hard chased that he will take to "breaching," as the hunters call it. Pechnel-Loesche's remarks probably apply to the fur-seal, not the sea-otter.

Even Mr. R. Lydekker, in his most recently published account of the sea-otter, makes a few mistakes which I venture to correct. He represents the animal as feeding upon clams amongst other things. Possibly the sea-otter would eat clams, but, so far as my experience goes, the places frequented by the sea-otter are not suited for clams; moreover, clams bury themselves in the mud or sand, and could not be dug out by the otter. It loves the rocks and a rocky bottom; wherever there is much sand or mud, that place is avoided by the otter. Mr. Lydekker says: "In the earlier days the sea-otters were in the habit of coming ashore, both to feed on the sea-urchins and shell-fish thrown up by the tide, and for the purpose of repose and breeding." That they went on shore for feeding purposes I very much doubt, as in all my experience I have never seen sufficient sea-urchins or shell-fish thrown up by the tide to feed a baby otter even for a day, whilst there are myriads lying on the rocky bottoms where the kelp grows, in from 10 to 25 fathoms of water. The otter appears to prefer to get its food at these depths. I have never seen them diving for food in even 4 or 5 fathoms of water, though at times they probably do.

As to Mr. Lydekker's criticism that shooting the sea-otter is "a wasteful method of capture," I beg to differ. The rifle is used, not a shot-gun, and during the many years of my experience in the capture, by shooting, of over 1,000 sea-otters, only

three were lost, and those by being shot as they were in the act of diving, after having been chased for so long that their fur had become water-soaked. Unlike a seal, the sea-otter floats when killed. My experience does not coincide with what Mr. Lydekker says about the skin of a dead sea-otter being spoiled, if allowed to remain a few hours in the water, by the "myriads of minute crustaceans which swarm in the Arctic Sea." I have on at least half a dozen or more occasions picked up otters, which had been dead, I am certain, for several days, floating in the water; in these cases clean cuts, caused by the beaks of albatrosses and other sea-birds which had attempted to feed on the dead bodies, were the only damage done. No doubt if a dead otter were washed up on a beach the skin would be ruined fairly quickly. Netting is represented to be a still more wasteful method than shooting, on the ground that the skins are irretrievably ruined if left for any length of time in the water; but if this were so I doubt if the Russian authorities would allow netting on Copper Island, where it is the only method permitted.

Enough, however, of the correction of published misstatements about sea-otters, a task which might easily be expanded into a separate volume.

"White hunters" skin their otters by ripping them up from the end of the tail along the belly up to the under-lip, then from the middle of the breast down each fore-paw, and from the anus down the inner edge of each hind-flipper. This enables the skin to be "staked out" flat and symmetrical, as shown in the plate at page 50. On hunting-vessels, boards about 6 feet long, 1 foot wide, and 1 inch thick, are carried to make frames on which to



“stake out” the skins. The white hunters, when surf-hunting or hunting in boats from the shore, ripped their otters in the same way, staking them out on the ground, using wooden pegs.

Native hunters always skin their otters “on the round”—that is, a cut is made along the inner edge of the flippers through the anus and down the tail, and the skin is taken off by turning it back inside out over the head. It is stretched on pieces of board, which are put inside and tightly wedged; the adherent fat, etc., is then cut off, and the skin scraped and dried, after which the fur side is turned outwards. A full-grown skin treated in this way will measure 6 feet 6 inches to 7 feet from nose to tip of tail, with a girth of 20 to 22 inches at the shoulders, and 28 to 30 inches near the hind-quarters. The tail will measure about 12 by 4 inches.

There is quite an art in ripping, skinning, and staking out an otter-skin on the frame, as practised by “white hunters.” On board an otter-hunting vessel, where the captain takes a pride in having his skins look well, one man will do all the “ripping,” as it is called. This insures the skins all “staking out” in the same shape. After the ripping is done, the skin is taken off the body, a line then rove through the eyeholes, dipped overboard, and every particle of blood thoroughly washed off. A frame of suitable size is then made of boards.

Before staking out the skin, the head and tail are “leaned”—that is, the adherent fat, etc., is cut off down to the true skin. The reason for doing these parts before staking out is that the area to be “leaned” is so small that it could not be done properly after the “staking out” nails had been

driven in. "French" nails,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, are used in staking out. The first nails driven are those in the nose and under-lip, then the tail nails. The "points" are then staked, care being taken so to stretch the skin that the sides stake out in a straight line. The fore-paws and hind-flippers are the last to be staked, with the exception of a nail on each side the neck. The skin is now tightly stretched, and the process of leaning commences. This is done as follows :

A straight cut is made with a sharp "leaning knife" from the neck to the tail down the middle of the back, just deep enough to go through the fatty part, which adheres to the skin when stripped from the animal, care being taken not to cut the skin to which the fur is attached. Two men generally work on one skin. The frame is placed at a convenient height, and with one man on each side this fleshy matter is "leaned" off. Good "leaners" will take it off in one piece, leaning close to the true skin without cutting it. After the leaning is completed, should there be any bullet-holes in the skin, these are neatly sewn up, and then the nails along the sides are readjusted, and the skin stretched as tight as a drumhead. It is then exposed to the sun and dried. As it dries, the fat or oil in it comes to the surface, and is scraped off with a blunt knife. In fine weather, in about three or four days it is ready to come off the frame, being clean, white, and dry, and nearly all the oil having been got out of it by constant scraping. The fur is then well beaten up and the skin put away. At intervals in sunny weather these skins are again aired until they are finally packed for shipment to London.

## APPENDIX II

### HISTORY OF SEA-OTTER HUNTING IN THE KURIL ISLANDS

FROM old Japanese records, it is evident that sea-otters at one time were found on the east coasts of Yezo, although they have long been extinct there. The animals probably retreated from those waters to the unfrequented shores of the Kuril Islands as the Japanese advanced and established their fishing and seaweed-gathering stations along the coast. As previously stated, the Russians discovered the sea-otter on the coasts of Kamchatka towards the end of the seventeenth century, but there are Japanese records which show that it was hunted by the Ainu of Yezo more than a century earlier. Mr. J. Carey Hall, who was British Consul in Hakodate in 1892, gives some interesting particulars in his report for that year concerning this subject, the result of his researches amongst old Japanese records, and also some account of the hunting up to recent times. I have taken the liberty of making use of his information, and of correcting a few errors concerning the hunting in the early seventies, when the Japanese authorities first awoke to the value of this business.

Mr. Hall says: "The hunting of the sea-otter in Yezo and the Kurils has been going on for at least three centuries. The earliest notice of it I can find

is in Japanese records of about that date, when the feudal Baron of Matsumaye, Kakizaki Yoshihito, presented three skins to the great Taiko Sama. Again, in 1615 the chief of the Ainu of Eastern Yezo came to the castle of Matsumaye and presented three white otter-skins to the Daimyo. In the following year this noble presented two otter-skins 7 feet long to the reigning Shogun, Tokugawa Hidedata. After that skins were often presented to the reigning Shogun by the Lords of Matsumaye.

“From Yezo, operations were soon pushed on into the adjoining Kuril Islands. In 1633 four or five Ainu families from Akkishi migrated to Shibetoro, in Yetorup, and engaged in the hunting of sea-otter, bear, and eagles, whose skins they brought each year to Akkishi to barter for rice and rice-beer, etc.

“Henceforward emigration of Ainu to the Kurils continued to increase, small settlements being formed in the larger southern islands of the group, chiefly for the hunting of the otter and other marine animals. It was in 1765 that these Ainu people of Yetorup, whilst hunting near Horomushiri, Niishiri, and Urup, and elsewhere in the sea, first came into collision with the Russians. After the fight that then took place, the Russians came not again for about ten years. In 1778 the Ainu of Yetorup prevented the Russians from hunting, as they wished, at Urup and other places near. The Russians, however, used guns for fighting as well as for hunting, whilst the Ainu had only the bow and the spear. Later on the Russians came in greater numbers, and hunted at their pleasure. Soon after the Ainu had to leave Yetorup altogether, and all the Kurils became virtually Russian territory.

“ In 1796 thirty Russians, men and women, came and settled in Urup, and, having brought nets with them, took large numbers of otters, which were more abundant round this island than any other of the Kurils. Yetorup was the next best hunting-ground, and a determined effort was made in 1800 by the Ainu, led by a Japanese merchant from Hiogo, to regain their former footing on it. The Ainu were offered higher prices (in rice) for the skins, and in a few years they re-established their hunting-stations throughout the island, and were not again molested by the Russians, who, however, did not relax their hold of the neighbouring island of Urup, on which, as late as 1866, they settled some natives of Alaska as hunters.

“ During all this time the trade in the skins taken by the Ainu was a monopoly in the hands of the Daimyo of Matsumaye. Death or exile was the punishment for selling to anyone else. The skins were forwarded from Matsumaye to Nagasaki, and there sold by the Daimyo's factor to Chinese merchants. The demand for high-class furs in Northern China is unfailing.

“ After 1869, when the feudal system collapsed, and the governing power reverted to the hands of the Sovereign, the rights and privileges of the Barons of Matsumaye passed to the new Government, the monopoly of the hunting and fur trade amongst them.

“ In 1869 a Special Colonization Commission (Kaitakushi) was established for the purpose of settling and developing this outlying dependency, and a branch office thereof was established at Yetorup for the regulation and management of the

otter-hunting business, and for keeping guard against foreign poachers. At first no change was made in the old system, the skins being taken over from the Ainu hunters at the usual price—viz., about 8 bushels of unhulled rice per skin of the first quality, 6 bushels for medium, and 4 bushels for ordinary, being about equal, at the rates of value then ruling, to about 24s., 16s., and 12s., respectively.

“ In 1870 a change was made, the Ainu of Yetorup being taken into the employment of the Colonization Office, and the hunting operations being conducted under official supervision. But this experiment was not found to yield satisfactory results, and in 1874 the former system was reverted to. In that year, for the first time, two Japanese gunboats were sent to patrol the coast of the southern Kurils and keep off foreign poachers, and the practice has been kept up every year since. At the same time two branch stations of the Kaitakushi were established in Yetorup—viz., at Notsuka and Toshiuri—and whilst general permission was given to the Ainu for hunting, the sale of the skins to anyone but the Government was strictly forbidden, the official price of skins being 5, 4, and 3 yen (about 20s., 16s., and 12s.), according to quality.

“ The Ainu methods of hunting the otter were, in summer, lying on the rocks and shooting with the bow and arrow; in winter, clubbing the quarry on the ice. The Kaitakushi officials soon copied and introduced the foreign method of hunting with boats and guns. In 1877 the hunting-stations on Yetorup were increased to four, and in the following year several more officers and hunting-stations were set up in other islands, which had now become Japanese

territory by the exchange with Russia of the Kurils against Southern Saghalin. In 1880 the amount of Government expenditure allowed for the hunting business in the Kurils amounted to about £2,000.

“In 1882 the Colonization Commission was abolished, and the Hokkai Do (or North Sea Circuit), as Yezo and the Kurils were now called, passed under the control of the Department of State of Agriculture and Commerce; but this transfer occasioned hardly any change as regards the hunting and fur trade system. An idea of the extent of these official operations may be gained from the following figures, extracted from official statistical publications :

“RETURNS OF THE SEA-OTTER FUR TRADE DURING NINE YEARS OF THE COLONIZATION COMMISSION'S ADMINISTRATION.

Year.	No. of Skins taken.	Year.	No. of Skins taken.	Year.	No. of Skins taken.
1873	299	1876	285	1879	211
1874	78	1877	342	1880	137
1875	250	1878	270	1881	77

“From this it would appear that in 1877, the best year, the Government's receipts from the fur trade amounted to about £4,000, the cost of production being about one-quarter.

“The returns of the trade during the five years' administration of the Department of Agriculture and Commerce show a considerable tailing off :

Year.	No. of Skins taken.	Year.	No. of Skins taken.	Year.	No. of Skins taken.
1882	82	1884	53	1886	99”
1883	3	1885	31		

Mr. Hall gives no returns for 1887 and 1888, but in 1889 a company called the Teikoku Suisan Kaisha (Imperial Marine Products Company) was formed, with a capital of 750,000 yen. To this company

was given the monopoly of hunting sea-otter and seals in Japanese waters for five years. Its return of skins, as given by Mr. Hall, was as follows :

1889	..	..	53	otters;	33	fur-seals.
1890	..	..	47	..	381	..
1891	..	..	57	..	40	..
1892	..	..	54	..	3	..

The gap in the above returns for the years 1887 and 1888 I believe I can explain. The table should not commence with 1873, but with 1875, that being the first year the Government received a catch of sea-otters from Yetorup. These 299 skins were brought down to Hakodate in May, 1875, by the *Karafuto Maru* (*Capron Maru*). I was asked to inspect, classify, and value them, which I did on May 30 of that year, and so have a personal knowledge of the matter. Moreover, I was hunting at Yetorup in 1873, and know that no hunting was then taking place on the Government account. The few skins the Ainu captured that year were traded off to the foreign hunting-vessels. It was not until the autumn of 1874 that the hunting-stations were established. When wrecked in December of that year, I stayed for three weeks at one of these stations, but no otters were captured during that time. Later on, when the ice set in on the coast in February, they made a good haul, taking near upon 300.

In the foregoing account it is stated that a branch office of the Kaitakushi was established at Yetorup Island in 1869 "for the regulation and management of the sea-otter hunting business, and for keeping guard against foreign poachers." I venture to think this is wrong, for the following reasons: That a



branch office of the Kaitakushi was established at Yetorup is correct, but it was not for the purpose stated by Mr. Hall, but more particularly in connection with the salmon and salmon-trout fisheries of the island, which were of considerable importance. Sea-otter hunting and any other industry would no doubt come within its scope, but at that time no thought or attention was given to the sea-otter. There were then no regular otter-hunting stations established on the island, neither had any foreign hunting-vessels visited those waters. The settlements on Kunashiri and Yetorup were established, not for the purpose of hunting the sea-otter on those islands, but for exploiting their valuable fisheries. All the settlements on these islands are situated on the north-west, or Okotsk Sea, side, where there are no otters (the sea-otter is found almost exclusively on the south-east, or Pacific, side of the islands), but where are the chief rivers and streams up which the "runs" of salmon and salmon-trout take place. Having visited the island of Yetorup in 1873, and conversed with both Ainu and Japanese there on the subject, I know that at that time little or no attention was given to hunting the otter, nor had there been for many years previously.

The long rest from molestation previous to 1872 caused the sea-otters of Yetorup to become so numerous and tame that, when they were first hunted in that year by foreigners, instead of being alarmed by the approach of a hunting-boat, in very many instances, apparently out of curiosity, they actually swam towards it, and were easily secured. This tameness, however, did not last long. They rapidly became aware of their danger. The number

of sea-otters taken by the Ainu in former days was, I am inclined to think, comparatively insignificant. The inducements for hunting any beyond those required for tribute to the chiefs, and for food, were not sufficiently remunerative. There was no lack of the animals, and large numbers could have been easily secured at the end of every winter, when the ice set in on the coasts. The number of skins that found their way to Nagasaki could not have been large, or it would have figured as an important item in the commerce of that city.

It was not until after foreigners had begun to hunt the sea-otter in the vicinity of Yetorup that the Japanese authorities awoke to the importance and value of the industry. This is shown by Mr. Hall's report, there being no returns of sea-otter skins taken by the Ainu for the Kaitakushi until "1873" (? 1875). As explained in Chapter IV., the first foreign vessel to hunt in the waters adjacent to Yetorup was the American schooner *Cygnets*, of Santa Barbara, Captain Kimberlay, during the summer of 1872. She was the only vessel out that season, and in a very short time secured some 300 pelts, the otters being very plentiful and tame. Her success soon became known, inducing others to go into the business. When, in the following season (1873), I fitted out a schooner from Yokohama, and arrived on the hunting-grounds, I found six other craft engaged in the business. These had all come over from California. Their total catch for the season was about 1,200 skins, large and small. During that season the native Ainu did not hunt the otter except in a casual way, and more particu-

larly for food. They had no idea of the value of the skins, and readily parted with them for a few old clothes, tobacco, soap, etc. Two or three of the foreign schooners obtained between them about a dozen or more skins in this way.

It was not until 1874 that the Japanese authorities took any definite action to develop the industry, and then they set about it in such a clumsy and unpractical way that but comparatively poor results were obtained. In 1874 there were twelve foreign vessels hunting in the vicinity of Yetorup, nine of which came from California, and three from Japan. The Japanese sent up a couple of vessels—the gunboat *Osaka Kan* and the Kaitakushi steamer *Capron Maru*—to try and drive away these foreign hunters, but they were not altogether successful, partly owing to diplomatic difficulties, and partly because most of the hunting was done outside the limit of territorial waters (three miles). I may here mention that the otters when disturbed near the coast go offshore some five or six miles or more, and lie up during the day, going in at night and in stormy weather to feed. I saw “schools” of sea-otters numbering from a score or more to over a hundred on many occasions during the years 1873 to 1878 off the coast of Yetorup. Some of the foreign vessels took little or no notice of the warnings and threats of the Japanese, and continued their hunting throughout the season; but others, after being boarded and warned several times, left earlier than they would otherwise have done. The total catch of these twelve foreign vessels for the season was approximately 1,350 skins.

Two small schooners and a sloop were lost in

1874 whilst on their way to the hunting-ground—the *Undine* at sea, with all hands; the *Kaisho* on Yetorup; and the sloop *Snowflake* on Yezo, her master being drowned. In December of this same year the schooner *Snowdrop*, owned by me, was lost on Yetorup, having returned to try and hunt through the winter months after a fairly successful summer's hunting season. Large icefields set in on the north-west Yetorup coast in February, 1875. After these icefields passed through the straits into the Pacific, south to easterly winds drove them in on to the south-east shores of the island, compelling the otters, which the drifting ice drove before it, to take to the ice. Taking advantage of this, the Japanese succeeded in killing nearly 300 by clubbing them on the ice. The Japanese official return, as given by Mr. Hall, is 250 skins for 1875, but I myself inspected 292 in May, 1875, in Hakodate, which were mostly captured at the time the ice set in. These skins were brought down by the *Capron Maru*, on which vessel I returned to Hakodate from Yetorup, having spent six months there after being wrecked in the *Snowdrop* in December, 1874. No more attempts were made after this by foreign hunting-parties to winter on Yetorup. The Japanese, after the dismasting of the *Osaka Kan* in August, 1874, and the loss of the gunboat *Tabo Kan* in the following season on the south-western end of Yetorup, practically gave up the idea of trying to drive away the foreign hunting-vessels, which thereafter hunted without interference.

The revised record of the number of skins taken from 1872 to 1881 would therefore appear to be as follows :

## SEA-OTTER HUNTING IN THE KURILS 295

Year.		Catch.		Catch.
1872	.. One foreign vessel	300	Japanese	0
1873	.. Seven foreign vessels	1,196	..	0
1874	.. Twelve ..	1,353	..	0
1875	.. Seven ..	1,250	..	299
1876	.. Eight ..	1,150	..	78
1877	.. Nine ..	1,083	..	292
1878	.. Nine ..	818	..	285
1879	.. Seven ..	375	..	342
1880	.. Eight ..	450	..	270
1881	.. Eleven ..	350	..	211

A total of 10,102 for the ten years.

From 1872 to 1878 sea-otter hunting off the Kuril Islands by foreign vessels was practically confined to the vicinity of Yetorup Island, along its south-eastern or Pacific side, and for a short distance round each end; and over 8,000 pelts were taken from that island alone during those seven years. In 1878, otters not being quite so plentiful, I left Yetorup in the schooner *Otome*, to try the islands farther north. Otters in fair numbers were met with all along the chain right up to Kamchatka. Two other schooners, the *Cygnets* and *Alexander*, also hunted the northern islands, and secured fair catches. After this all the other hunting-vessels followed suit, and hunted the whole length of the chain.

During the next ten years (1882 to 1891) about 656 skins were taken by the foreign schooners, the Japanese catch being approximately 545—a total of 1,201 for the decade. From 1892 to 1901 about 800 were captured by Japanese and foreigners, and from 1902 to the present year (1909) some 350 have been taken.

From 1879, when one of the otter-hunters first made a catch of fur-seals, more and more attention was given to sealing, and less to sea-otter hunting,

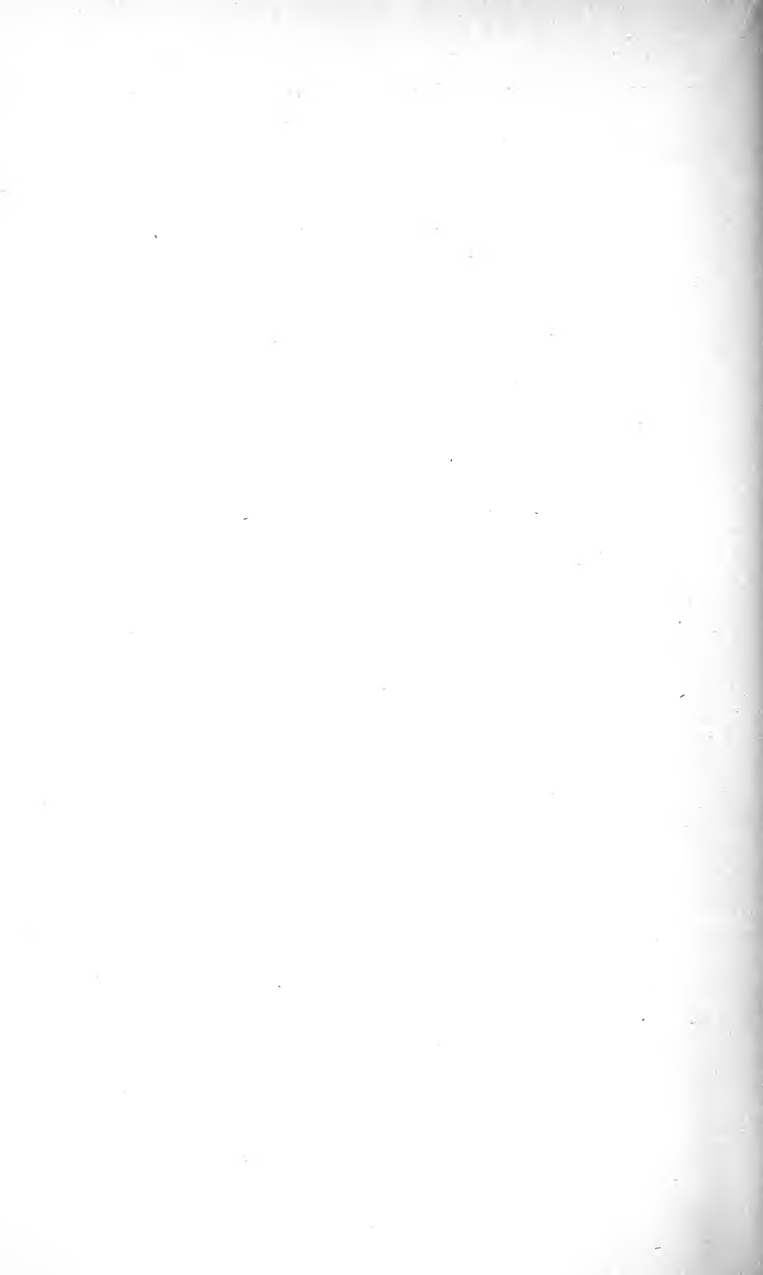
until the latter pursuit was practically abandoned. The old schooner *Diana* was the last to quit the business. She kept at it until 1893, when she also gave it up as being no longer a paying venture. Her catches for her last four years' hunting were fifty-three, thirty-five, forty-six, and fifty. After this, vessels occasionally dropped in at the islands on their way up to the sealing-grounds of the Bering Sea, and got a few pelts, whilst the Japanese each year also secured a few.

Some few scores of the skins which figure in the foregoing catches of later years were taken north of the Kuril Islands, off the coast of Kamchatka.

Soon after foreigners first began hunting in the neighbourhood of the Kuril Islands, the value and possibilities of the industry were pointed out to the Kaitakushi officials by foreigners who knew the business, and who were willing, in conjunction with Japanese merchants, to put money into it and pay handsomely for the privilege, provided they were backed by the Government in regulating, preserving, and protecting, the hunting. These proposals were rejected, and the results are too well known to need stating. Although the number of otters taken by the Kaitakushi's hunters for 1873 to 1880 appears fairly large, double that number could easily have been secured had proper measures been adopted. As it was, foreign hunting-vessels reaped the benefit, and the consequence to-day is that this valuable industry, which could have been protected and preserved indefinitely, is practically extinct.

The policy pursued by the Japanese authorities in these matters has always been of an inconsistent character. In the case of sea-otter hunting, they

knew nothing of its value, extent, or possibilities, until foreigners exploited it; and when they did know, instead of acting in a business-like way with the assistance of foreigners, and so reaping the advantage of their knowledge, they tried to work it themselves by sending up some officials who could not tell an otter from an elephant. Moreover, they made it a monopoly of the Kaitakushi, and forbade their own people to engage in it. This policy was continued until 1889, when the Teikoku Suisan Kaisha (Imperial Marine Products Company) was founded; and when the fur-seal rookeries were discovered (also by foreigners), amongst the uninhabited islands and rocks of the middle and northern Kurils, the same policy was still pursued, although the authorities were again approached by foreigners with advantageous proposals. This ended in foreign vessels getting the cream of the catches until there was little or nothing left, and then the Japanese suddenly turned round and did all they could to encourage their own people to fit out vessels and embark in the business, subsidizing them to the extent of 10 yen per ton per annum. This is still kept up, and now there are over thirty Japanese vessels, engaged mostly in sealing, which extend their operations as far as the Pribyloff Islands in the Bering Sea.





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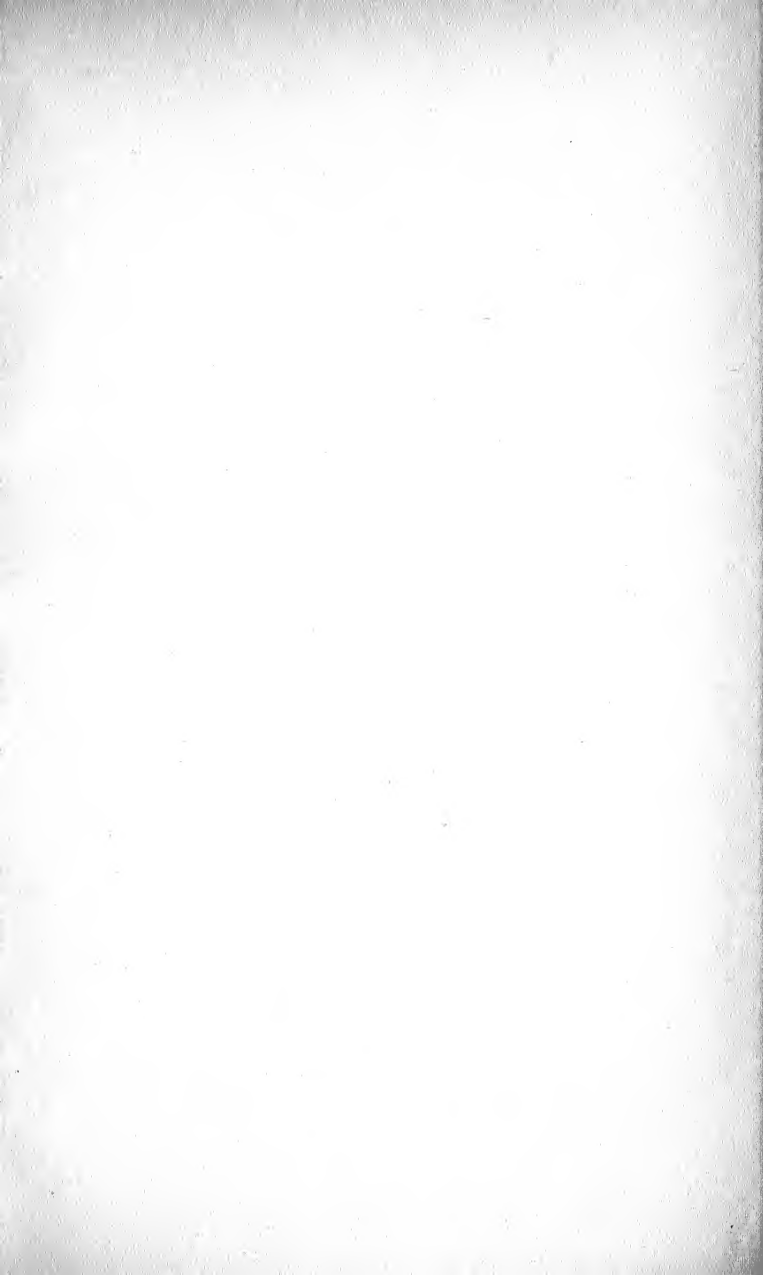
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