

The Travels of Alexander Markov in the North Pacific, 1839-1846

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Introduction

The halfway point of the 1800s saw major shifts in the geopolitics of the Asiatic and North American countries bordering the North Pacific, namely, on the eastern side Tsarist Russia (on both sides, actually, with the Russian Far East and Russian America) and Manchu China, and on the western side the young republics of the United States and Mexico. Since the 1600s Imperial Russia's eastward expansion had burgeoned in Eastern Siberia, initially under the sable fur trade and then peasant migration and penal exile, resulting in the growth of its hub of Irkutsk near Lake Baikal and heavy traffic eastward from Yakutsk on the midpoint of the Lena River to the Okhotsk Sea and farther east to the peninsula of Kamchatka and farther yet to New Archangel (Sitka), the colonial capital of Russian America (Russia's sole overseas colony), whose commercial reach extended as far south as Fort Ross just north of San Francisco Bay. Meanwhile, Spain's colonies in the Americas had gained their independence, Alta (Upper) and Baja (Lower) California becoming part of the Mexican Republic; and in the Russian Far East the need for a easier and faster route from the continental interior across the mountainous Okhotsk Seaboard exerted growing Russian pressure on isolationist China to relinquish the Amur River via the first of a series of unequal treaties between a weak Peking and predatory Western powers.

Some of these events were experienced directly by Alexander Ivanovich Markov (17??–1853?), who served the Russian-American Company (hereafter the RAC) some fifteen years aboard its ships. Information about him is meagre and uncertain. He was either a petty bourgeois of Moscow or a literate peasant of the village of Antipino in the Galich District of Kolomna Province (or was born the latter and became the former). He served the RAC from 1838 as a supercargo, especially on the steamship *Nikolai I*, which frequented the straits of the Alexander Archipelago to trade with the native Tlingits. In 1846 he was ordered to return to Russia but seems to have remained in the company's 'colonies' (colonial districts) until 1853 (possibly the year of his death) with the connivance of Governor Mikhail Tebenkov, who, apparently, valued his painting ability! His brother, Irakly Ivanovich, also served in Russian America from the 1840s until 1865.¹

Alexander's travel account, which appears to be an amalgam of recollections of parts of several of his travels on land and by sea in the RAC's service and were selected either by Markov himself or his publisher from his notes, were published twice: the first time in 1849 as a series of five articles in the Moscow journal *Moskvityanin* and the second time in 1856 in St Petersburg in a corrected and enlarged version (used here) as a book entitled *Russians in the Eastern [Pacific] Ocean*.² The English translation that follows has been subdivided into more subtitled chapters (of quite variable length) than the original.

¹ Grinyov, *Kto yest kto*, pp. 332-333; Pierce, *Russian America*, p. 342.

² [A. Markov], *Russkie na Vostochnom okeane* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya A. Dmitrieva, 1856). 2nd ed. Markov also published two articles, both in 1849: 'Eastern Siberia . . .', *Moskovskiya vedomosti*, nos. 75-76 and 'The Shipwreck of the *Neva* . . .', *Moskvityanin*, August, pp. 97-120.

The Travel Journal of Alexander Markov, 1839-46

Chapter 1: Eastern Siberia

From Irkutsk to Okhotsk

After having crossed all of European Russia, stretching from Moscow to Yekaterinburg [in the Ural Mountains], and then all of Western Siberia — a region that is very interesting but already well-known to Russian travellers and fur traders — I approached Irkutsk, Siberia's principal mercantile city.³

More than 3 miles from Irkutsk stands a monastery, where the magnificent shrine to the relics of St. Innocent the Miracle Worker rest and where all passersby deem it their duty to stop without fail to worship at the relics of this saint. Siberians are absolutely convinced that if you pass the monastery without praying for the saintly miracle worker, then inevitably some misfortune will befall you on your journey. According to the local residents, God's merciful saint has protected them against all ailments, plagues, and conflagrations — but so far nothing has been heard of any such events, which here on earth are deemed to be celestial intrigues.

Irkutsk has been built on the right bank of the Angara River, which flows so rapidly that the severe frosts which are characteristic of the local climate do not spoil it [for navigation] with a cover of ice until January. But there was a year when, I was assured, all winter they were able to lighter (or, as they say locally, 'barge') across the Angara. Its banks are steep; along it one meets many sharp turns and rapids, but with skill and familiarity it can be navigated safely. The Angara flows from Lake Baikal all the way to the Yenesei River; it also facilitates communication with China and serves to enrich the merchants of Irkutsk. Vessels loaded with wool, furs, and metalware move along it to Kyakhta⁴ and return with teas and provisions, especially meat, which abounds in Transbaikalia, where stock rearing flourishes [among the native Buryats]; equally, fish from Lake Baikal, particularly omul⁵, is an important article brought via the Angara.

Irkutsk is Siberia's hub and depot; from it large amounts of both domestic and European products are conveyed throughout its hinterland. With the coming of spring everything is animated with exceptional energy: goods are dispatched to Yakutsk, Okhotsk, Kamchatka, and the Russian-American colonies.⁶ The chief goods are: Circassian tobacco, flour, various kinds of groats, wine, gunpowder, and sundry manufactures — all articles that are essential to Eastern Siberia, for in the remote eastern settlements of this territory there is no cultivation whatsoever, let alone manufacturing.

All goods are packed in bags, boxes, and flasks, each weighing no more than 90 pounds in order to accommodate their transport by horses on the Okhotsk Trail; the packs are wrapped in rawhide to protect them against soakage during fords by the caravans of pack horses.

³ Presumably Markov began this trip in 1838, when he was hired by the RAC.

⁴ Kyakhta was a mart on the Russian side of the Russian-Mongolian frontier south of Lake Baikal.

⁵ The omul (*Coregonus migratorius*), considered a delicacy, is a whitefish species of the salmon family and is endemic to Lake Baikal.

⁶ Russian sources invariably referred to the possessions of the RAC (founded in 1799 as a chartered monopoly) in the plural, not the singular, because they were subdivided into a number of 'counters' (districts, i.e., 'colonies'), each with some degree of autonomy (e.g., the Kodiak District, the exclave of Ross in Alta California, and so on).

Irkutsk also conducts substantial trade with the Buryats, or Brats,⁷ who live in large “uluses” — communities of encampments — surrounding the city and engage in grain growing and hunting and fishing, as well as stock rearing, from which they derive considerable wealth, as well as many favours from the Russian emperor in the form of caftans, sabres, and medals.

These natives are strongly attached to Circassian tobacco and wine. Some of them have several wives, each of whom lives apart in her own yurt. The men spend all their free time visiting them by turns, living with each for several weeks before proceeding to the next. In winter they hunt and fish in the vast Siberian steppes and forests, finally assembling at Irkutsk to sell or barter their catch.

When passing through some place and stopping at an inn or entering a shop, a Buryat invariably tries to steal something. If he is able to pilfer something from the Russians, then he will take as much as he likes. He acts with aplomb, but if he is recognized by the police and threatened with arrest, then he will curse and plead and implore them to keep beating him — just so long as he is not exiled to some unfamiliar place. On the other hand, Buryats will not go into debt to the Russians, who would find the defaulters in their encampment and pitilessly seize all of their possessions.

In the middle of May all the roads [to the north] out of Irkutsk are full of strings of loaded carts right up to Kaluga⁸ on the bank of the uppermost Lena River. Many vessels of various kinds moor there, including boats and rafts; one sort, for example, is similar in form to rafts but has a much smaller capacity.⁹ It takes a whole month for all these conveyances to haul goods from Irkutsk for 1,867 miles down the Lena [eastward] to Yakutsk [on the river’s “big bend” to the northeast]; the return trip [upstream] requires up to 2 months of laborious towing by horses and people.

The Upper Lena River

The Lena is one of Russia’s greatest rivers. When boating it, one feels immersed in a dream and particularly disinclined to activity. The riverbanks are lower and more level than those of the other great rivers [Dnepr, Volga, Ob, Yenesei]; its flow is quiet and calm, and no sharp turns or rapids are encountered. Occasionally gigantic cliffs come into view, and the calm water mirrors their silent menace . . . everything around is wild, barren, primeval . . . there is neither sign nor sound of humankind. The Lena thaws in May and carries its huge ice floes to the Arctic Ocean; during break-up it rises to a depth of up to 18 feet, flooding low-lying places and forming lakes.

The inhabitants are scattered in small settlements along both sides of the Lena, quite widely separated from each other and generally very much in want of provisions. In some years they lack even grain and other cereals on account of the climate and the soil, which are inimical to cultivation. Mostly they use imports brought by trading vessels, both grain and other goods that they barter for furs, mica,¹⁰ cedar nuts, and sackcloth (which is quite coarse and mostly suitable for packing).

⁷ ‘Brat’ may have been derived from the noun *brat*, ‘brother,’ or perhaps even from the verb *brat*, ‘to take.’

⁸ Kaluga was the head of navigation on the Lena River.

⁹ These craft were termed *paozki* (or *pauzki*, *pavuki*, or *pavozki*), keelless and undecked vessels with pointed bows and sterns, sails, four oars, and a rudder for conveying either freight or passengers (see Gibson, *Feeding the Russian Fur Trade*, p. 74).

¹⁰ The mica may have been used in windows in place of glass.

Stock rearing is in very poor condition along the banks of the Lena, but to make up for it there is an overabundance of fish: a sterlet [small sturgeon] measuring 21 inches in length costs only 25 paper kopecks or one small packet of Circassian tobacco.

The principal occupation of the riverbank's inhabitants is the hunting of fur bearers, especially squirrels, for which they travel far from their villages into the forest and remain there from the Feast of the Protection of Our Most Holy Lady and Virgin Mary on 1 October until the spring equinox of 21 March, only rarely visiting their families to stock some provisions before returning to their makeshift shelters in the forest. Their dogs, which are well trained in squirrel hunting, are very helpful; they scent the whereabouts of the squirrels, and if they see them in a tree they bark until their master arrives and shoots them with a rifle. During a successful hunt he bags more than 100 squirrels per week.

It has been observed by the locals that generally, if there is a bumper harvest of cedar nuts, then that year will also see many squirrels. The best squirrels along the Lena are distinguished by both their dark colour and their fluffiness; the large ones that are bagged along the Olyokma River are sold there for 25-40 paper kopecks per pelt.

The mining of mica is considered an important occupation by the Lena's inhabitants, but they seldom prospect for it; they are firmly convinced that this treasure can be found only by chance, not by just anyone. If a local decides to try, he dresses in clean clothes and, without telling anyone of his intentions, he sets off. When, through special signs, he succeeds in finding mica, he alone tries — without the help of anyone else — to exploit the treasure, but often it is very difficult to extract from the cliffs that contain the mica, in which case he assembles a party of friends to help him.

Cedar nuts¹¹ are abundant along both sides of the Lena. At the end of the summer the locals collect the cedar cones, dry them, put them in bags, and crush them until the seeds are released, whereupon they separate them from the shells. In bumper years the cedar nuts are sold for no more than 2 paper rubles for 36 pounds [5 kopecks per pound]; a large number are sold in Irkutsk, where they are pressed into oil.

Boating on the Lena River offers an unbroken vista of picturesque views of wilderness that lend even more beauty to this grand river. But wait, there in the distance is seen a low bank, lined with vessels from Irkutsk with sundry goods. This is the town of Yakutsk. It stands on the Lena's left bank and has 9 churches, a bazaar (quite well built), and a candle factory — this is about all that can be said about this place, where life is boring and monotonous. On the other hand, in the month of June during the open fair this quiet, remote town comes alive with crowds, noise, and activity. Traders assemble from both nearby and faraway, and mammoth ivory is stocked, too.¹²

Tunguses and Yakuts

Yakuts and Tunguses also gather in Yakutsk and conduct considerable trade with the Russians. Both the Yakuts and the Tunguses profess Christianity and are extremely timid, particularly the Tunguses. When they are riding on reindeer to move from one valley to live in another and happen to encounter Russian travellers, they stop their antlered caravan, doff

¹¹ Actually, these 'cedar' nuts were pine nuts from the Siberian stone pine (*Pinus sibirica*). They were favoured by sables.

¹² In 1851 the geologist Karl von Ditmar estimated that some 7,200 pounds of mammoth ivory (from some 50 carcasses) were exploited annually in Siberia (Von Ditmar, *Poezdki i prebyvanie v Kamchatke*, pp. 31-32).

their wedge-shaped hats, and respectfully hail them. How strange it is to see a humble throng of these half-savages¹³ quietly making their way through wild, barren places!

In summer the Tunguses lead a nomadic life, moving from place to place in order to provide enough feed for their reindeer and berries for themselves to store for the winter. Migration is not very difficult for them; their yurts, fashioned from birch bark and shaped like a peaked cap, are collapsible. The Tunguses roll them up and pack them on their reindeer, which they themselves with their wives and children ride, moving in a long caravan to their next abode, which they will eventually leave like the previous camp.

The Tunguses and Yakuts make good use of birch bark; they boil it, embroider it with horsehair, and craft various utensils from it. More than once I happened to boat in Tungus so-called "branches," in which they go fishing; these are flat-bottomed, birch bark boats with pointed ends and hulls strengthened on the inside by interwoven slats. They are very fast and gentle, and at almost 12 feet in length and more than 2 feet in width each boat holds 4 passengers.

With the first snowfall the Tunguses set off to their winter quarters, where they have fairly well-built log yurts, which are strewn with earth and quite warm. In winter their reindeer forage under the snow and browse tree moss; the Tunguses themselves consume reindeer milk and meat, dried fish, and berries. They do not engage in cultivation, having no need of it. Reindeer constitute all of their wealth; prosperous households sometimes have up to 200 head.

The principal occupation of the Tunguses is the hunting of sables, foxes, martens, bears, hares, and chipmunks, whose pelts they take to Yakutsk (and some to Okhotsk), where they sell them cheaply. Good, quite dark sables, for which we might pay 100 rubles [presumably in European Russia], they sell for 25. Generally all furs are bought or bartered very profitably from the Tunguses.

The Tunguses are shy with other people, but they do make bold and dare to fight bears! Armed with only a rifle or a knife (and unaccompanied by any comrade because he does not want to share the prize), a Tungus enters the uneven fray and overcomes the giant beast; rarely does he fall victim to the ferocious brute. The Tungus treats it as an equal but meets it as an unwelcome guest in that vastness stretching from Yakutsk to Okhotsk in which he, as the head of his household, never gets lost, as if nothing is unfamiliar.

The Yakuts closely resemble the Tunguses, both in features and dress, but they differ greatly in their way of life. The Yakuts live permanently in small settlements scattered around Yakutsk; they engage in stock rearing and have large herds of horses, on which they pack goods from Yakutsk to Okhotsk. The Yakuts make cow's butter, which they sell in large amounts in Yakutsk, where they render it and pour it into birch bark containers in the shape of knapsacks (of not more than 90 pounds each for convenience on pack horses) and transport it to Okhotsk and other places. At the present time the Yakuts are becoming accustomed to grain growing, but it is a pity that the local climate does not allow the grain to ripen fully. However, they still gather the immature grain, dry it, mill it, and obtain a small amount of flour.

The favourite foods of the Yakuts are butter, horse meat, and koumiss, or fermented mare's milk, which is prepared from the milk of either cows or mares. Among the Yakuts special respect is paid to those who can bear to eat or drink a lot; during a binge they remark anyone who can eat up to 27 pounds of horse meat or drink a three and one-quarter-gallon

¹³ The Russian word for 'savage' or 'barbarian' is *dikar*, from *diky*, 'wild' (in modern Russian *diky* can also mean 'timid').

pail of koumiss, and so quickly as to be unbelievable to any bystander not familiar with the capacity and activity of the stomach! From childhood the Yakuts become addicted to tobacco, and they love to gamble at cards and dice; it not infrequently happens that a Yakut will even lose a herd of horses or cattle by gambling, then make some money as a worker but lose it, too. He does not bemoan his misfortune; for him his habit is as necessary as air or food.

In spring the Yakuts assemble in Yakutsk to bid for contracts for transporting goods. Here contracts or conditions are agreed because it is not possible to do any business with the Yakuts on the honour system, as they will without fail deceive or steal, particularly during the conveyance of goods on the difficult and horrid Okhotsk Trail, where sometimes horses with their goods go missing.

The Yakutsk-Okhotsk Trail

The transport of goods from Yakutsk to Okhotsk commences at the beginning of May. Butter and candles, as Yakutsk's own products, constitute the first dispatch, followed by goods brought on boats up the Lena River (Circassian tobacco, wine, gunpowder, flour, groats, and various silks). Some items are crated, some are baled; they are stowed in boats and lightered to the riverbank opposite Yakutsk, where they are packed on horses in caravans for the month-long trip to Okhotsk.

What a lively picture now forms on this bank, as if it were suddenly awakened from a deep sleep of eleven long months! Tents are illuminated by the campfires laid around them, mixed voices hum, and horses stamp and neigh — everything animates this barren spot. At sunrise everything is in motion. Travellers, after having stayed briefly in dismal Yakutsk and hurrying to Okhotsk or Kamchatka or farther to the colonies of Russian America, are taking their tents down, packing their horses, and — so that they don't scatter — tying them in single file in ranks of 12 horses each, with a Yakut sitting astride each lead horse. Nothing, however, can restrain the half-wild animals; having forgotten last year's burden but now feeling it weighing on themselves again, they are eager to get rid of it, so they scatter, throwing off their packs and running in all directions. Now the Yakuts display their skill, dashing headlong down valleys and through brush and leaping across gullies to catch the fleeing animals, find the cast-off packs, and restore order before calmly continuing the journey — until the next time the pack horses stampede.

And what is there to say about the passengers? They are sufferers in the full sense of the word. It is especially impossible to look without pity at those who find themselves on horseback for the first time; it is then that they begin to greatly repent their resolve. But going on foot is hindered by marshes and rivers and going by carriage is simply not possible.

The trail is still good as far as the Aldan River. There are few marshes and rivers, and for the most part one encounters extensive meadows, which are filled with ricks of hay that the Yakuts stock for winter for their horses. Here and there Yakut yurts with wives and children can be seen, for in summer the Yakut men disperse to engage in various occupations, leaving behind their wives and children, who, upon sighting in the distance a long caravan with people approaching them, abandon their yurts, run to the woods, and watch what the travellers will do. To call to them would be quite in vain, as this might only frighten them more. On occasion some experienced passengers, having been to these places before, calmly enter the forsaken dwellings and do whatever they like, even entering the underground storehouses (where berries, milk, and koumiss are preserved) and taking what they need before continuing their journey without a second thought.

This timidity on the part of the yurt Yakuts also stems from the fact that formerly on many occasions escaped convicts from the Okhotsk saltworks¹⁴ sometimes pillaged and ravaged their yurts, as well as waylaid the caravans. So, upon sighting travellers the Yakuts still wonder whether or not they are fugitive convicts. Now, however, these escapes have ceased with the closure of the saltworks, and the encampments of yurts and the strings of caravans on the Okhotsk Trail no longer face this peril.

By the evening the caravans have halted at a spot affording water and forage for the horses. The passengers pitch their tents, make campfires around them, and try to smoke as much as possible in order to kill the mosquitos, which are so numerous all along this trail that without head nets it is impossible to remain in one place. In this respect one cannot envy the Yakuts: they do not wear head nets, do not erect tents, and sleep almost half-naked under the open sky, but the mosquitos do not touch them, as if they know that they, too, reek of smoke.

How joyful it is during a long, desolate journey to come across some sort of habitation! The first to be encountered on the way to Okhotsk is a small village located on the left bank of the Aldan River near the mouth of the Maya River, where passengers cross to the right bank of the Aldan.

Here the trail completely changes its appearance: now it comprises winding paths running through thick woods or lashing brush or across marshes, where the horses sink up to their bellies; then it climbs a long slope or a steep, rocky mountain and runs up to its snowy summit; then it descends right into a river; now it climbs a broken cliff face, where the unshod horses have to tread carefully amidst sharp stones; then it suddenly encounters trees scorched by the heat, which in July sometimes becomes extreme here and greatly eases the fordings of the caravans. God forbid that they should be caught in prolonged rain; then the marshes become impassable and the rivers overflow and become unfordable, and there are no ferries. The caravans have naught but to wait until the rain stops and the rivers subside; this occurs very often enroute, especially on the Belaya River, which flows in twisting channels and has to be crossed in more than 30 different places.

The government has paid attention to the condition of the Okhotsk Trail, but not much success can be expected, precisely because high water occurs at a bad time of the year. In some places logways, or corduroy roads, have been built across the marshes, but they are broken by the high water. Now it becomes evident how much unbelievable labour is required to transport goods to Okhotsk. By this time the caravans have lost all of their onetime lively aspect. The passengers, depressed and exhausted, impatiently await their longed-for arrival in Okhotsk; their horses, after a month of indomitable courage, have been transformed into moving phantoms, so to speak, and are barely able to bear a 180-pound [*sic*: 90-pound] load. It is all to the good if the transport includes numerous spare horses that are able to serve in place of the spent horses, which are left to recover in some meadow at the mercy of fate (but on the return trip the Yakuts invariably find them, as if they sense where their horses await).

Upon crossing the Stanovoi Range¹⁵ one encounters another small settlement on the left bank of the Okhota River not far from Okhotsk. It is the dwelling of a [posting] station master and a ferry crossing. It lies up to 70 miles from Okhotsk, and the trail thence is much better than that from the Aldan River to here. Just over 6 miles from Okhotsk one hears through the forest the muffled roaring of waves striking high ocean cliffs and spilling onto the shoals of the port. In the forest you already feel a breath of fresh sea air and you can

¹⁴ This saltworks existed on the coast of the Okhotsk Sea just south of Okhotsk for an indefinite time in the first quarter of the 1800s.

¹⁵ More specifically, the Dzhugdzhur Range, a northeastern extension of the Stanovoi Range.

almost see in the distance the masts of the navy ships standing in the estuary of the Okhota River. If the caravan manages to approach the coast during the incoming tide, then it crosses the river to the port; when the tide is outgoing, it is quite dangerous to set out across the wide overflow of the river because the convoy could easily be carried away by the swift current.

The Port of Okhotsk

Formerly the port of Okhotsk lay on the left bank of the Okhota River, 20 miles upstream, but, because the river's banks were in large part low and level, then during high water the buildings of the residents were flooded. To avoid this inconvenience the port was transferred to the slope of a headland between the sea and the bow-shaped mouth of the river. But this site also proved disadvantageous on account of the following circumstances: (1) the fierce winds blowing directly from the sea and in winter covering all of the port with a blizzard of snow; and (2) the residents being in dire need of fresh water, as from the constant influx of salt water from the sea into the river, the latter's water is unfit to drink, and for fresh water the Okhotskians have to travel 20 miles upriver to the old port. There is a well in the relocated town that has been sunk by the state on a chosen site, but in winter it is frozen.

The port of Okhotsk serves as the guardian of the eastern side of Siberia. It contains a maritime directorate, 2 batteries with huge cannons (brought by round-the-world navy ships), 1 church, 13 shops, and up to 100 wooden houses. There used to be a state saltworks here, but it produced very little salt, and since salt is obtainable from ocean water on a considerably larger scale not far from the Okhota River, the works was moved to Ina, 40 miles away [to the south].

The Okhotsk Fleet comprises 4 brigs and 2 boats, which anchor in the river; in winter, when the river freezes, they are pulled ashore. It is very difficult for ships to sail either from the sea into the river or vice versa because a gravel bar extends across the entire estuary, and its depth constantly changes in accordance with the amount of gravel brought by the irregular breakers. Except for the strongest floodtides, the water seldom rises up to 12 feet on the bar itself, which ships must cross — and even then with the help of an experienced and skilled pilot. It occasionally happens that some arrogant ship captain, without knowing the actual depth of the channel and without the help of a pilot, decides to cross the bar and grounds his vessel, so that without unloading it is not possible to free it; meanwhile, a large wave strikes the ship's bottom with such force that it topples the masts and spars and causes a leak, and after being pulled off the bar the ship requires major repairs or otherwise remains unseaworthy. At the same time, its cargo is removed at great risk onto a cutter and not infrequently lost in the murky waters of the Okhotsk Sea.

At Okhotsk on the cape itself the Russian-American Company has a factory for the storage of its goods, but its inconvenience with respect to both the shipment of furs via the Okhotsk Trail and the risky navigation of the Okhota River's channel by most of its ships has induced the company to move its factory to Ayan.

The residents of Okhotsk engage neither in grain growing nor stock rearing; they consume imported grain, and cattle are driven from Yakutsk for them. Their principal occupations are fishing and the hunting of fur bearers. A fair is held here in August. From Okhotsk goods are dispatched to all surrounding places and the islands of the Okhotsk Sea, where they are sold or bartered for furs, reindeer skins, or walrus teeth. At present it is not profitable for the merchants of Okhotsk to send goods to Kamchatka because Northwest Coast trading vessels have begun to visit this region, and the Russian-American Company has opened its own store in Petropavlovsk.

All the goods of Okhotsk's merchants are transported on navy ships stationed there; they do not have their own ships out of fear of shipwreck. But how advantageous it would be if the Okhotsk merchants were to form their own company and acquire their own ships, which could then sail across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans to Europe and embark European goods or — depending upon profitability — take certain goods from the islands of these oceans and bring them to the Okhotsk Sea. Thereby they would open incomparably more lucrative sources of wealth than their present commerce, which is limited to the vicinity of the Okhotsk Sea only. There are no obstacles to this prospect; moreover, the government for its part could assist with such a project, which would inevitably extend Russian enterprise to distant seas.¹⁶

Here is a short list of the prices of goods at Okhotsk:

rye flour	from 8 to 10 rubles per pud ¹⁷
buckwheat groats	" 12 " 14 " " "
7-ruble canvas	18 per arshin ¹⁸
a plain 2-ruble woollen shawl	8 " "
a 36-pound copper kettle or boiler	" 120 " 130 " " "
36 pounds of iron nails	" 40 " 50 " " "
36 pounds of Circassian tobacco .	" 50 " 55 " " "
36 pounds of butter	" 25 " 30 " " "

Given these Okhotsk prices, it can be imagined how high they are in places near Okhotsk where the inhabitants are engaged solely in hunting and fishing.

From Okhotsk to Kamchatka

Finally, taking my leave of *terra firma*, I set off into the open sea. Ahead of me lay a voyage in a Russian-American Company ship to the island of Sitka [Baranof Island], with a stop at the port of Petropavlovsk. To tell the truth, it was not without fear that I boarded the brig, whose interior I now saw for the first time. Before me stretched the Okhotsk Sea in its dreadful magnitude, and with distress I looked at this vast, wet graveyard, from which I would be separated by only weak planks. The day of departure came; the anchor was raised, the sails were set, the fort was saluted with seven guns, and we set out into the huge crests of heady waves. The day was clear, and a favourable wind blew. Every hour we were 5 miles farther from land, and by the evening we could barely see the high shores of Morekan,¹⁹ which from afar appeared like a thick cloud and then disappeared completely from the horizon.

The moon rose and the wind faded, barely filling the sails; the sea was bright, calm, quiet. A whale played in the silvery waves; it plunged through them noisily, spouting a high fountain like a lazy diver, displaying its huge nose, and then plunging to the depths of the sea for a long time. But this portrayal of nature with its magical charm did not transfix me, as I was tormented by sea sickness, which afflicts nearly everybody on their first voyage, especially when it has been aggravated by rum, butter, and sugar. After three days out of

¹⁶ This suggestion is the first sign of Markov's unrealistic business sense.

¹⁷ A pud is a Russian measure of 36 pounds.

¹⁸ An arshin is a Russian measure of 28 inches.

¹⁹ Presumably a corruption of the Japanese name of one of the more than fifty Kurile Islands.

Okhotsk, my anxiety disappeared and my torture ended, and I longed to see the shores of Kamchatka.

Throughout our voyage on the Okhotsk Sea we encountered no storms or prolonged contrary winds; otherwise, it would have taken us three weeks or even longer to sail to Kamchatka. The winds were usually favourable, and the weather favoured our ship's successful run. On the 8th day of our voyage we saw an unbroken range of mountains with snowy summits that came into view in the distance like the white tents of a pitched camp.²⁰ It was the coast of Kamchatka.

Petropavlovsk

After rounding Cape Lopatka,²¹ we neared the port of Petropavlovsk, where from Avacha²² we encountered adverse winds, which soon abated and later ceased. Finding shoreline all around us and not being able to tack, while awaiting a favourable wind we were forced to anchor in a large roadstead in order not to be drawn to shore by the current. The sky thundered, and the rumble rolled along the length of the high mountains. It was quite dark; light was visible from volcanic peaks somewhere to the side. A deep silence reigned all around us, and the solemn stillness of the night was only broken now and then by the fall of a rock tumbling from a cliff and softly hitting the water or the howl of a hungry wolf that echoed in the mountain valleys, whereupon everything was again immersed in a deep sleep. The calm continued all night.

On the distant horizon sunrise loomed. We notified the inhabitants of Petropavlovsk of our arrival, signaling with a volley from our cannons, and requested a pilot with a cutter to tow our ship. Soon a pilot appeared with 2 cutters, which conducted our ship into the harbour. We passed a sandy point. The first feature that we encountered was the battery, made of earth, like a wall with windows, from which four copper cannons peered. Then we entered the circular, quiet harbour and anchored in a depth of 8 fathoms. On the right side of the harbour lay about 80 houses, one church, and a boat for various missions. The entire shore abounded in dogs, which serve the inhabitants of Kamchatka in place of horses. Such was the fortress of Petropavlovsk.

In summer it is not possible to reach Kamchatka by a land route because of the large rivers, and in winter it is impossible to dock a ship because the shores of the Okhotsk Sea are frozen over to a great distance with quite thick ice, rendering communication between Okhotsk and Kamchatka very difficult in winter.

But necessity has taught the inhabitants of this land to cross such a large expanse with dogs harnessed to sleds. A sled is nothing more than a long sleigh, 28 inches in width, with thin, wide runners. It is very light and does not sink into the deep snow. 13 dogs pull a sled with 108 pounds of freight, and on a good trail they travel 100 miles per day. Howling, the dogs reluctantly allow themselves to be hitched to the sled. They are harnessed in six pairs, with the thirteenth, a single lead dog, showing the way to the others; it knows the commands for right and left, and it senses storms, signaling to the driver that he should look soon for a suitable place in the mountains where they might shelter for three or more days lest they become snow-bound. A good lead dog senses the very day when the snowstorm will begin

²⁰ These were *sopki* – the cone-like summits of the peninsula's volcanoes.

²¹ In Russian *lopatka* means 'spade,' referring to the shovel shape of the peninsula's tip.

²² A settlement at the narrow entrance to the caldera (drowned volcanic crater) of Avacha Bay, the site of Petropavlovsk.

and then will not for anything allow itself to be harnessed to the sled, as if it knows that the route to be taken by the driver is dangerous.

While crossing some snowy valley it is not possible to sit facing the dogs because of the blowback from the swiftly moving sled. The dogs pant hard, and if they see that one of their number is misbehaving, then the whole pack will stop and fight and become entangled in the straps of the harness, and it will take a ¼ of an hour to untangle them; also, if the driver notices that some dogs are being lazy, then at feeding time he won't give them any dried fish.

The residents of Petropavlovsk travel throughout the Kamchatka Peninsula and conduct considerable trade with the indigenous Kamchadals and Koryaks, who barter their furs, which in the size, colour, and length of the pelts and the evenness, thickness, and silkiness of the hairs are considered the very best by comparison with any furs traded elsewhere in the world.

Mostly sables, foxes of all kinds (including arctic foxes), martens, marmots, hares, wolverines, bears, and wolves are found here. All of their pelts are exchanged very profitably, such that a pair of the best sables, for which one has to pay 300 rubles back home, costs only 50 rubles here. The goods most in demand for barter are Circassian tobacco, tea, sugar, treacle, gunpowder, bullets, heavy cloth, chintz, calico, firearms, canvas, copper and iron utensils, firearms, and haberdashery, which the Koryaks re-trade to the Chukchi from their surplus.

For the merchants of Okhotsk there has never been a market here for the best sort of goods, so they are missing from the yearly expenses of the port of Petropavlovsk; also, the inhabitants are in extreme need of various domestic necessities. But the Russian-American Company has opened a store in Petropavlovsk that it rents to a local merchant on commission and stocks with 200,000 rubles' worth of goods, on which, of course, it makes its own profit from the very moderate prices (by comparison with those enjoyed by the Okhotsk merchants, who are thereby freed from the importation of goods that yield them no profit at all).

The chief occupation of the inhabitants of Petropavlovsk is the hunting and trading of animals and the re-trading of them to distant Kamchadals for furs, which the Petropavlovskians then sell to passing merchants.

The terrain, soil, and harsh climate do not allow the inhabitants to engage in grain growing. In Nizhne-Kamchatsk some places are sown but in very small tracts. Stock rearing at Petropavlovsk is in poor condition; a pound of fresh meat costs 25 rubles there. On the other hand, fish are so abundant that they can be caught by hand along the riverbanks; in summer the dogs themselves fish in the shallows, and the inhabitants stock fish for the dogs in winter. Here there are also numerous wildfowl; domestic poultry are not kept because they are savaged by the dogs. Petropavlovsk contains a Maritime Directorate and the residence of the commandant.

In late September our brig sailed from Petropavlovsk and took a course across the Pacific to the island of Sitka. After we had gone some distance from the coast, the wind began to freshen, and our brig was borne by the waves like a gentle seagull. Then 100 miles out from Petropavlovsk the wind strengthened hourly and became fiercer and fiercer; we took in the upper sails and reefed the topsails, and by nightfall we had to lie to. All around the horizon darkened and storm clouds covered the clear sky. The huge waves of the ocean grew constantly; skuas,²³ harbingers of tempests, flew with cries around our brig. Rain began,

²³The Russian term, *morskie razboyniki*, means 'pirates,' referring in this case to the fact that the main source of food of skuas (or jaegers) is that which they steal from other seabirds by forcing them to regurgitate (they will also prey upon their eggs and chicks).

lightning flashed, and muffled thunder rolled through the thick clouds. On deck all was quiet; at times we heard the orders of the navigator on watch, who stood relaxed at the helm and watched the compass. A perfect storm began at midnight; with one middle sail our brig rolled in the waves, which were up to thirty-six feet high, and their white tops spilled onto the brig. It was impossible to stand on deck, there being nothing to hold on to safely during the strong rolling. At times we scooped water off the deck; every kind of tackle made its own noise in the fierce wind; and the sea roared angrily, as if trying to pound the waves to a lower level and daring to overcome the thunder. For three days we rode out the storm in the open sea; on the fourth day at noon a hard rain fell, harder than the earlier downpour. Little by little the waves abated and the wind changed to almost a calm, although the agonizing rolling continued for days afterwards.

Whaling

Finally, the horizon began gradually to clear, the sky to brighten, and a light breeze to blow. Soon we spotted on the starboard side a large 3-masted ship, from the middle of which a steady fire and thick smoke were visible. Soon it was only a third of a mile from us, flying the American flag. It was a whaling vessel, dirty and sooty from the smoke, with several whaleboats. I was repeatedly to have occasion to see whaling during my voyages in the Pacific, where whales are numerous between the Tropic of Cancer and Bering Strait and from the Northwest Coast of America to the islands of Japan. All of this area is dotted with a myriad of whaling ships from various nations, except Russia.

This is how whaling is done. In appearance whales resemble fish, but they belong to the mammal family, having soft lips and nipples, and their young breastfeed. Whales cannot stay long under water without air, and, although they dive deeply, they soon have to surface and spout a fountain of swallowed water and again breathe fresh air. When the weather is fair, whales play on the ocean's surface. The whaling industry divides whales into two kinds: one spouts a single fountain from its upper nostrils, and the other, two fountains. The whalers try to catch the latter because from them they obtain the best spermaceti.

Generally, whaling ships are three-masted, and between the mainmast and the foremast there is a brick stove, containing a cauldron for melting the fat. Around the sides of the ship on the rails are hung no fewer than 10 whaleboats, always ready with gear to go hunting. Each whaleboat contains a coiled rope, up to 4,800 feet — just under a mile — in length and a finger in thickness; it is very strong and does not sink in the sea water. To one end of it is attached a harpoon — a smooth, straight, 7-foot rod with an iron arrowhead, sharp on both sides, affixed to one end. When the harpoon strikes a whale, the arrowhead pierces its body deeply and firmly, so it cannot be pulled out without cutting a hole around it. Spotters with telescopes stand on deck, and no sooner is a spout seen in the distance than they notify the officer of the watch. In an instant up to 5 whaleboats are on the water, ready to set off. On each are six men, all smart and nimble seamen; four of them row, one at the stern steers with a long oar for quick turns, and the sixth — the most important — harpoons. All the launched whaleboats are rowed swiftly to the place where the spout was seen, while the ship follows without losing sight of them for even a minute. When the whaleboats approach the terrible beast, each man tries to throw a harpoon into the whale's back, close to its tail, and if a harpooner succeeds in doing so, then all the whaleboats with incredible quickness row in the opposite direction. The animal, feeling the wound, plunges deeply into the sea, and then it suddenly surfaces completely and begins to dash in all directions and scatter the waves before swimming off. Meanwhile, the harpoon's rope is uncoiling out of the whaleboat that is

following the whale. As soon as the whale decides to rest, then the rope is pulled in and recoiled for immediate use when the whale dives again. Woe to the whaleboat that fails to evade the whale: one light blow of the beast's tail will turn it into kindling, and the men will face certain death if help does not come in time from their comrades in another whaleboat nearby. This struggle of the huge beast with man — in essence the strong versus the weak but at the same time so powerful in and of itself — continues sometimes for days, and, when the whale can no longer continue, it accepts its fate. Once the animal is reduced to exhaustion and is no longer able to dive, the ship approaches it, lies to, and begins the operation. A huge block and tackle with a hook, hung from the mainmast, grips the whale's body, and from the side of the ship the men cut off slices of blubber with special knives. After flaying all of it, they take the whalebone (baleen) to use in place of firewood to melt the blubber. On a successful whale hunt 300 tons of whale (train) oil is taken in up to 10 months. All of a whaler's hands share in the proceeds, from the captain himself to the last deckhand. The best hunts occur in April, when herring appear, which are hunted by the whales for food. Besides man, the whale's other enemy is the "sea pig," or killer whale (orca). It attacks in pods and wounds it with its sharp teeth; the whale inevitably dies because the salty ocean water, instead of healing the wounds gradually infects it, and the whale wastes away. During our crossing from Kamchatka to Sitka we met many whaling vessels, mostly American, which sometimes stop at Sitka for sundry repairs to their ships or for fresh water; however, none of them dares to trade with the natives there for fear of confiscation.

Chapter 2: The Russian-American Colonies

On the 40th day of our voyage from Okhotsk we noticed that the sea was changing from clear and bluish to turbid and dirty, and fewer birds, seals, and sea cabbage were to be seen. All of these signs indicated that we were approaching a coast.

Whoever has been at sea can readily understand the joy — after all the inevitable unpleasantness and difficulties of a long voyage — of hearing the word "land!" It has some sort of magical strength that revives the weak and animates everyone; even the sick, who have scarcely stirred throughout the voyage because of the constant rolling of the sea, climb up to the deck to look in the distance and satisfy themselves with their own eyes of the truth of hearing the comforting word "land!" They stare at the distant horizon in disbelief, thinking: was it a seductive figure of a cloud that fooled the impatient seafarers into thinking that they saw land? — which not infrequently happens at sea, when sailors, not having calculated how far away the land lies, take it to be a thick cloud, moving imperceptibly.

The Island of Sitka

But I knew that our brig was 80 miles from the coast and that the first peak to be seen would be Mount [or Cape] Edgecumbe with its active volcanic summit. Having seen a sketch of Sitka's shores in an atlas, I could easily recognize on the horizon the outline of the island of Sitka, which became clearer and clearer as we approached. Finally, we sailed up to the very foot of Mount Edgecumbe and leisurely admired the picturesque islands scattered by nature in various directions throughout Sitka Sound. A favourable wind gradually drove us to a

small roadstead where, while turning into the harbour, we met a contrary breeze. At the same time it became quite dark, and we had to stand at anchor not far from a Kolosh²⁴ hut.

At sunrise we saw the port of New Archangel [Sitka] beyond the Kolosh settlement and the savage Koloshes sitting in many canoes around our brig. One of them came to sell us berries, wildfowl, and various trinkets made of argillite and the others out of sheer curiosity to see the newly-arrived ship. But it is likely that all of them were as consumed by curiosity about the sight of new guests coming to them from faraway countries as I was to see this savage, motley, noisy crowd, which was constantly increased by newly-arriving savages from various parts of the sound. They were all dirty, ragged, and half-naked, and among them were many who were in an utterly primitive state or, as is said, in their birthday suit. Many of the Koloshes had regular features, but all of them were painted in various colours. They all talked in their own particular way, and each tried to be heard above all the rest.

One of them, it seemed, was distinguished by his particular gift of the gab. He could be called an irrepressible orator, shouting louder than all the rest and giving an uninterrupted speech while standing on the stern of his canoe, completely naked, in a tattered hat of feathers and a tailcoat without a collar. In front of him stood an elderly savage woman in a small loincloth, a soldier's jacket, a night cap, and — to complete the outfit — feathers all over her. It was noticeable that she listened attentively to the orator. Unfortunately, I didn't know their language and could not understand what our young savage dandy was saying. Curiosity forced me to ask an interpreter the subject of his speech, and he replied that the speaker was reprimanding the elderly woman for being dressed indecently!

Alexander Baranov

But this curious spectacle was short-lived. Soon a cutter arrived and conducted our brig into the harbour. I went ashore, and, stepping on land after a long voyage at sea, it seemed that it was rolling underfoot. I remember having read a little about the first Russian settlement on the island of Sitka, where the Russians built the port of New Archangel. The founder of this port was the legendary Baranov,²⁵ who with 30 families had been sent by Empress Catherine II. Initially Baranov settled on the island of Kodiak as a member of a private company. With firearms he subjugated the Aleuts. Then he took the trouble to energetically expand his foothold, which he extended 500 miles from Kodiak to the island of Sitka, where he built a redoubt, surrounded by numerous Koloshes, who were at odds with the Aleuts. Owing to the intemperance and carelessness of the redoubt's occupants, it was destroyed by the savages. All the defenders, young and old, were slaughtered or brutally tortured. The Koloshes gave vent to their anger on the incautious victims as revenge for their having willfully settled on Kolosh land. Knowing that sooner or later a Russian ship would come and take revenge for such bestial acts, they took all of their own belongings and those pillaged from the Russians and hastened to their own settlement, where they lived perhaps several years before crossing the mountains some distance from the site of the killings and settled in the most inaccessible places, so that the Russians could not reach them to avenge their countrymen.

²⁴ The Russian term 'Kaluschian' became 'Kolosh' in English, derived from the Aleut [Aluutiq] word for 'labret.' Here the Koloshes are the Tlingits, although not infrequently the Russian primary sources use the term to refer to the 'northern' coastal natives, including the Tsimshians and Haidas.

²⁵ Alexander Baranov (1746-1819), the first governor of Russian America in (1802-18). For biographical details, see Grinev, *Kto est' kto*, p. 44 and Pierce, *Biographical Dictionary*, pp. 20-23.

In 1800 Baranov arrived on the island of Sitka in the ship *Neva*²⁶ and saw that the site of the onetime redoubt was white with ashes and strewn with Russian bodies, their disfigured corpses bearing all the signs of an agonizing death and mockery at the hands of the savages. Baranov checked their settlement but it was empty; the culprits had long since gone into hiding from just retribution and criminal prosecution. Baranov hid his grief, buried the bodies with due ceremony, and on the site erected a cross bearing the names of the hapless victims. This cross still exists not far from New Archangel, and the site of the former redoubt is called the Old Artel.²⁷

Given his bold, just, and decisive nature, Baranov was loath to forsake his undertaking and leave Sitka unoccupied. He left in the ship for another Kolosh settlement, where the savages had built a palisaded fort 3 miles from the Old Artel, destroyed it with cannon fire and drove off the Koloshes, who for their part defended themselves stubbornly, but, lacking firearms and other means of defence, were forced to yield the place and saved themselves by going into hiding in the forest. Within three nights the fort had been emptied by the siege.

Near the Kolosh River the ruins of the thick, moss-covered logs with which the savages had built their fort are still visible; another cross has been raised there, and under it are buried three sailors from the ship *Neva* who were killed by the savages at the time of the landing.

Baranov went to work tirelessly, choosing a suitable site for the construction of his fort on a cliff, so that on all sides everything in the vicinity could be seen for some distance. Pitching tents for himself and his men, he surrounded everything with a double fence, which he bolstered with boulders. Soon it was a fortress. At the present time on this site a fine, spacious governor's house has been erected and a battery with a number of cannons has been built, and not only savages but Europeans, too, approach it cautiously.

Baranov himself was a leader, a worker, a cook, and a sentry. He always tired of the incessant rain that falls almost daily at this place, which rarely enjoys prolonged clear weather. He did not fear the savages, who every minute threatened him with attacks, which, in fact, occurred repeatedly, but his experience and prudence successfully repulsed every attempt by the savages, having guessed their intentions and taken the strictest precautions. He severely punished any Kolosh plotters with whippings but not mortally, showing them that he sympathized with them and had no desire to kill them.

In order to more strongly impress the superstitious savages, Baranov always wore armour under his leather clothing in such a way that they could not detect it. He would give a captive a bow and arrows and order him or her to shoot at him, saying "your arrows will not kill me"; the savage would aim right at the heart, but the arrow would be deflected. So he would pick another, examine its tip, again draw the bow — and again the arrow would have no effect. The Kolosh, after being freed from custody, would relate this baffling miracle — whose authenticity was guaranteed by himself as a witness — to his countrymen. Wanting to convince the savages of his invincibility, Baranov showed them several such tricks that terrified them; indeed, the Koloshes considered him a great shaman and concluded that they were unable to not only attack the fort but even to shoot Russians at work in the forest, so they decided not to stand in Baranov's way.

Thus, the Koloshes came to respect and fear Baranov, so much so that many of them even began to help the Russians with some tasks. But, despite the changing disposition of the

²⁶ The well-armed *Neva* was the consort of the flagship *Nadezhda*; together they accomplished the first Russian round-the-world voyage in 1803-06 under Captain Ivan Kruzenshtern.

²⁷ An *artel* is a co-op or collective, usually of peasants or workers.

savages, Baranov did not trust them, and whenever Russians left the fort to work, each of them had without fail to take a rifle, and they even had to be armed in the fort while eating or napping.

In order to accustom his men to being always ready to repulse an attack by the savages, Baranov did still more: he forbade any of his men from bringing a pot of rum into the fort, and he decreed that they could drink as much as they liked but he had to drink with them. Having noticed that all of them overdrank, Baranov would suddenly sound the alarm, whereupon each of them had to be in readiness at his post; if any of them were unable to get to their post and stopped enroute sober with all of their weapons, Baranov would always thank them, but woe to them who stopped enroute drunk without their weapons, for they would be punished for their blunder. Baranov often said: “drink but stay alert; if you are dead drunk with your rifle, a savage will never trouble you, fearing that you are feigning, but if you are dead drunk without a rifle, then the savage can overcome you, knowing that you are defenseless.” These habits were characteristic of the Russians at that time and enabled them to relax after prolonged hard work.

At that time, too, the savages were frightfully numerous in all of the straits,²⁸ but their vulnerability to catching smallpox from the Russians ravaged them by the thousands. The Koloshes did not know how to avoid the disease and did not understand how it was spread. Feverish with the contagion, they threw themselves into cold water, and entire families died. They moved their residences, they moved far away from their families, they even abandoned their children — but nothing saved them, and every day claimed many new victims. Thereafter they were unable to reproduce as much as before. Also, being scattered in various places at some distance from each other, they constantly quarrelled fatally among themselves.²⁹

Thus did Baranov energetically, independently, and intelligently secure our sway over these islands of the North Pacific. He died aboard a ship in the South Pacific during a voyage to Russia, leaving his name in the chronicles of the Russian-American Company as an unforgettable testament to the founder of the port of New Archangel, which now has none of its former features. We have already said that on the site where tents were pitched to accommodate the original founders, who were alarmed every minute by the savages, there now rises the enormous residence of the governor of the colonies with large, finely furnished halls, from which all sides of the port are visible. The entire settlement is surrounded by strong batteries with corner towers, from which peer two rows of 20-pounders, and from one of the towers flies the flag of the Russian-American Company.

The Port of New Archangel and the Russian-American Company

There, where a thick coniferous forest once grew, the Church of the Archangel Michael and a chapel for Lutherans now [late 1840s] stand.³⁰ Upon the arrival of the mission of Archbishop Innocent³¹ a monastery was built, with a seminary and a clerical office alongside. In addition,

²⁸ The ‘straits’ were the numerous channels (often narrow and winding) among the islands of the Alexander Archipelago.

²⁹ Here Markov seems to be conflating Baranov’s tenure (which ended in 1818) and the smallpox epidemic of 1835-1838, which reduced the Tlingit (Kolosh) population by 40% — from 10,000 to 6,000 (see Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, rev. ed., p. 314).

³⁰ For services for the Swedo-Finns and the Finno-Russians in the company’s employ.

³¹ I.e., Ivan Popov (Veniaminov) (1797-1871), a talented and versatile priest from Eastern Siberia who missionized extensively in Russian America from 1823 to 1838 and again from 1841 to 1849. In 1868 he was

New Archangel boasts the following remarkable buildings and institutions: a boy's school, where navigation and other subjects are taught; a foundling hospital for girls, whose well-being is indebted to former governor Etholen's good-natured and caring wife,³² who decided to marry the girls to respectable men and pay the girls to teach the foundlings handicrafts, which were then studied in this beneficial institution; a good arsenal; an observatory; a class in music; a library, which annually receives books and journals from subscriptions paid by donors from Sitkan society; 2 hospitals with an excellent pharmacy; a sawmill; a water mill; a very well-appointed club, where unmarried ship captains, mates, and midshipmen live; a pier with a stone foundation, built by Etholen, and on it a warehouse that ships can reach and discharge and embark their goods; and 3 barracks for bachelor workers, married workers, and Navy seamen, up to 50 of whom (with legal privileges) are always present just for the defence of the port as well as foreign voyages. The Russian-American Company has 8 ships, ranging in size from 100 to 350 tons, one steamboat (with 14 cannon) for the straits, and a smaller one for various dispatches to company redoubts.

The port of New Archangel is the Russian-American Company's chief settlement. It is the permanent residence of the principal administrator of all of the colonies, or, as he is called here, the governor, at the rank of captain, 1st class. He must without fail come from the naval service, and he assumes his duties for 5 years, with military and civilian rights and privileges, and receives an annual salary of 10,000 silver rubles and returns to Russia upon the expiration of his gubernatorial term. The governor's assistant comes from the ranks of lieutenants and is appointed the captain of the port; in addition, there are several officers of the fleet for navigation. The island of Sitka [Baranof Island] serves as the depot for furs, as well as other goods brought from Russia across the Okhotsk Sea on company vessels and around the world on English ships under an agreement with the Hudson's Bay Company [hereafter the HBC].³³ The enormous quantity of goods, only a few of which are never in demand in the colonies, has risen to millions of paper rubles' worth annually, and they are sold in accordance with one's position, i.e., no more than the amount allotted to everyone, despite their duties (otherwise, the imported items would be quite insufficient, particularly rum).

With the advent of spring the goods are distributed from New Archangel by ship to all of the company's settlements, namely, to the islands of Kodiak, Unalaska, Atku, Kenai, [St.] George, [St.] Paul, Urup, Simusir, and Shumshu, to the redoubts of Konstantinovsk, Aleksandrovsk, Nikolayevsk, and Mikhailovsk, and to Kamchatka and Ayan. From these places their managers distribute the goods in either "baidaras" (umiaks) or "baidarkas" (kayaks) to various nearby points. In like manner furs from all of the colonial "counters" (bureaus) and districts are brought to Sitka, where they are sorted and packed in boxes of 90

appointed the head (Metropolitan) of the Russian Orthodox Church, and in 1977 he was canonized as St. Innocent. For details see Grinöv, *Kto est' kto*, pp. 95-96 and Pierce, *Russian America*, pp. 521-27.

³² Arvid Adolf Etholen (Adolf Karlovich Etolin) (1799-1876), a Swedo-Finn of the Russian Navy, served as governor in 1840-45. His wife was Magaretha Sundvall, a Finlander. For details see Grinöv, *Kto est' kto*, p. 624 and Pierce, *Russian America*, pp. 136-39 and 140-42.

³³ This 'Russian contract' was signed by the two companies in 1840 for a period of ten years; under its terms the HBC acquired exclusive rights to the furs of the *lisière*, or Stikine Territory, a coastal strip stretching north and south of Fort Stikine, in return for an annual rent of 2,000 of its land otters and specified amounts of various provisions that were to come from the company's Oregon Country farms, but their output was soon curtailed by the loss of most of them to the United States under the 1846 boundary settlement, prompting the HBC to shift to round-the-world supply. Thus, the American 'coasters' lost their profitable Sitkan market for provisions and goods and were forced to withdraw from the Northwest Coast fur trade. The agreement was renewed in 1850 but without the provision clause.

pounds (including packaging) and wrapped in rawhide for both convenience of transport and protection against moisture on the route from the coast of the Okhotsk Sea to Yakutsk, and by the 1st of May they are embarked on a ship and dispatched to Russia [on the new route] via Ayan. Furs constitute the chief article of the commerce of the Russian-American Company.

With the arrival of company vessels from the various districts to winter at Sitka, the port is enlivened, becoming crowded, merry, and noisy. In the club a theatre opens and stages various small plays and evening parties, to which all of Sitka's respectable and semi-respectable society is invited. The social divide depends on the amount of one's salary. At these evening parties on a remote island of the Pacific Ocean in a place a couple of thousand miles from the civilized world you will encounter more cordiality and more genuine cheer than at the imperial capital's most brilliant ball. Here people, who from their position in the world would perhaps never meet, amicably shake each other's hands; the remoteness brings them together, and each guest, remembering his kinfolk and others dear to his heart, is induced by the circumstances not to forget them but to try for several hours to suppress his thoughts of bitter loss and replace them with a sincere acquaintance with new faces brought together by fate.

In 1845 the use of all spirits was forbidden during one's stay in the colonies, except on naval cruises. This ban, which was trying for many, was announced during a gathering of colonial employees, some of whom upon hearing the news were unable to suppress tears.

Those born locally to Russian fathers and native mothers, or vice versa, are called Creoles, who really are very capable. Many of them are distinguished by very regular and pleasant features, and they are in general very timid and bashful. Some arrivals in the company's employ marry Creoles, and upon the expiration of their contracts — provided they are not in debt to the company — depart to Russia with their Creole wives.

The surroundings of the island of Sitka are barren and wild; here one does not see green meadows or shady gardens. Nature has not endowed this distant land with lush vegetation but has bounded it with an unbroken chain of mountains with a verdure of spruce, larch, and so-called Nootka cypress.³⁴

The climate of the island of Sitka is not at all salubrious. The sun is a rare guest in the local northern sky, which is almost uninterruptedly obscured by thick fogs. Most of the time hard rain is falling and severe winds are blowing. In general, the soil is stony and unfit for any crops, except berries. Very few vegetables are grown, so that they are insufficient for year-long needs; some crops are unable to grow at all. Nobody tends livestock at New Archangel because there is no fodder for them. The governor has a couple of cows, but they are fed hay with difficulty in winter.

At New Archangel, from the youngest to the oldest, there is nobody who is not dependent upon the company or whose duties are not overseen by the company for a certain payment or reward. After serving the company for 15 years, they have the right to settle wherever they like in the Russian colonies; some have even been sent at their own request to Kenai with assistance for one year from the company. But, on account of various inconveniences encountered there or personal reasons, they returned to Sitka. That is why after leaving the company nobody wants to have to provide for himself and start some sort of enterprise for his own benefit.

Everybody who comes to serve at Sitka is issued a rifle from the arsenal to help protect the port against the savages and occasionally (on the governor's orders, but not with

³⁴ *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*. Markov's Russian term is *dushnik*, meaning 'the scented one.'

the strictness of Baranov's time) during a sudden alarm. I was obliged repeatedly to ready myself during an alarm with a flintlock rifle. However, it was not possible to expect any real danger from the savages because cannon from both the fort and the ships were trained on their huts from all directions; besides, few Koloshes live close to the fort, and only in the spring do as many as 1,500 of them gather to catch herring, from which they render oil for food. Fish abound in Sitka Sound, but it is difficult to reach some places by boat. While fishing the savages make an incessant noise by singing and dancing, but they keep the peace among themselves until daybreak.

The Koloshes

The Koloshes themselves do not know their origin, but it can be assumed that they are derived from the Indians living on the mainland of North America. The Indian tribes are very much alike, but the Koloshes have more regular features than the others. It is not nature but the Koloshes who disfigure themselves, especially the females. From birth the upper part of the heads of the female infants are compressed into the shape of a spade, making them seem broad-faced; their nostrils are pierced to hold rings; and their ears are punctured with several little holes, through which hair is threaded. In their lower lips are cut small slits, into which some sort of metallic plug is inserted, and then the slits are periodically enlarged, so that by adulthood a shell measuring at least 1½ inches in length can be inserted, as if to serve as a little dish for the nose.³⁵ Moreover, their faces are painted with vermilion and soot, with which various fanciful or becoming designs are made. The hair of the Koloshes is generally black and wiry like a horse's mane. Some of them bunch their hair into a clump at the top of their head and tie it in the form of a bun or try as much as possible to braid it, rubbing it with oil and powdering it with down. All of these adornments give the features of the savages a fearful appearance that can easily alarm the uninformed. The everyday attire of the Koloshes consists of a cloak of animal hide or a woollen blanket of various colours, which they simply wrap full length around themselves, tying them at the neck to prevent them from falling off. Whenever a Kolosh wears a sort of embroidered cloak [Chilkat blanket?], he does so only when he takes it into his head to dress foppishly, when he wears it inside out, so that one cannot look at the dandy without laughing. Some goods are essential to all of the savages, such as tobacco, gunpowder, ammunition, rifles, calico, and various kinds of clothing, supplied by the company in exchange for furs. The Koloshes dwell by bays or rivers in log huts, which they build in the shape of a box with a flat roof, in which they hack a hole for venting smoke; fires burn permanently inside the huts, so that the clothes of the savages always smell smoky, and it seems that even their bodies are impregnated with soot.

The Koloshes pay tribute to nobody and do not submit to any civil authority. Wealthy Koloshes buy individuals from other wealthy Koloshes and own them for life. These wealthy Koloshes are called "toyons" (chiefs) and those whom they bought are called "kalgas" or "kayuras" (slaves). When a chief dies, his relatives kill several of his slaves, so that they can serve him in the afterlife, of which the Koloshes have the vaguest and most inconsistent notion. If any of those slaves from whom lots were drawn for sacrifice should flee, all means are used to find them before the funeral; if any of them appears afterwards, then he or she is freed.

³⁵ Here Markov is describing a labret.

When a toyon who has been held in special respect by his tribesmen dies, then not only one of his own slaves but also the slaves of other toyons who want to honour him are sacrificed. They adorn the toyon's corpse in his best clothing, paint his face red (and the attendants rub their own faces in soot), display all of his riches (hanging his weapons, furs, and blankets in front of him) and seat themselves around his body, whereupon a shaman, beating a drum — and with various affectations — begins a dirge, and all of the savages from the deceased's hut (who must attend) clap their hands or the like in time with the drumming. This ceremony continues all day, whereupon the corpse is dragged into the woods and burned, its ashes rising with the smoke to the sky.

The first time I happened to watch the funeral of a Kolosh toyon I admit that I could not watch the ceremony without shuddering at all of its barbaric features, performed in a wild, godforsaken wilderness, and — to crown my astonishment at this frightful display — at nighttime. Once, while returning from hunting, I met many savages taking various paths from their village into the woods and carrying the deceased. They walked in dead silence, as if overwhelmed by a feeling of uncertain fear. My curiosity aroused, I followed them from a distance, wanting to see how they would cremate the body. Finally, the savages stopped by some firewood that had been readied, placed the corpse on it, and surrounded the pyre. Silence reigned for more than half an hour, broken occasionally by sighs of pity for the deceased; then they lit the greased firewood, whereupon a loud, wild song woke the sleeping woods and echoed repeatedly in peals far away in the high mountains, and the bright flames illuminated the noisy throng of savages — then suddenly all was silent, and only the shaman beat his drum and danced with various affectations. Meanwhile, the firewood crumbled, revealing the charred corpse, which had been reduced by the heat to a skeleton and made horrible, spasmodic convulsions. The deceased's relatives righted the fallen firewood and, after the flames had consumed the whole body, the singing resumed and continued until the remains had been transformed into a black, incinerated mass, indistinguishable from charcoal.

This is the funeral ceremony of all unbaptized and notable toyons. Their slaves are not favoured with such respect: they are simply drowned without ceremony. It is impossible to watch these unfortunates without profound sadness when they are sacrificed in honour of a deceased toyon; they are thrown to the ground, a thick stick is laid over their necks and pressed down on both ends, and the victims thrash their legs once or twice and stop breathing.

After the ashes from the burned deceased have cooled, his smouldering bones are gathered into a pile and put in a box, which is placed on top of posts erected on a high site. Every year the relatives of the deceased hold a wake: they don their best clothes, daub their faces black, and sit at the site, talk about former times, and walk to those places where he loved to walk, ending the rite with a meal.

Whenever any Kolosh wants to take a wife, he must pay whatever her father and mother demand for her. Kinship among the Koloshes is matrilineal, not patrilineal. And the Koloshes do not forget insults; even the most distantly related members of the clan always stand up for their kin. If any offender does not want to pay for his insult, then the Koloshes — as is common among all savage peoples on the globe — hold him to the rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Kolosh tribes have settled along all the northwestern coast of America. Their chief settlements, where they live in large villages, are: Sitka, Stikine, Khutenov [Hutsnuwu (Angoon)], Iltu [unidentified], Keku, Kaigani, Yakutat, Chilkat, the Icy Strait, Tankasakh

[possibly Tongass], and the Columbia.³⁶ All of the tribes are well-nigh constantly at odds with one another, this enmity having originated with their forebears. When Koloshes assemble in one place from various villages, each of them has to conduct herself or himself as carefully as possible in relation to those who are their kinsmen but live in a different village. Should even the slightest circumstance give rise to disagreement, the matter will not pass without a bloody and often fatal fight. When the Koloshes gather at Sitka to catch herring and sockeye salmon³⁷, they cannot distribute themselves on the nearby islands without the permission of the Sitkan Koloshes and must first send hostages to them to attest their friendship, and in turn the Sitkan Koloshes have to send their own hostages to them as a sign of their agreement and peace. Upon the fulfilment by both sides of these preconditions, the visitors erect huts where they wish and begin to dance and sing as a sign of the general merriment; nevertheless, each dwelling has its sentinel, who remains continually at his post to defend against any attacks from neighbours.

The Koloshes use mostly fish as food. They dry it and eat it with herring oil; in addition, they eat wildfowl and berries, especially so-called “sarana.”³⁸ It was with much curiosity and amazement that I watched how the Koloshes catch herring. One or two of them sit in a dugout, i.e., a boat made by hollowing out a tree; instead of a paddle, they have in their hands a long pole, into one side of which they have driven nails one inch apart. The savage quietly paddles it in such a way that with each stroke up to 5 herring are gaffed. In this way in a short time he is able fill up to half of his dugout.

Kolosh-Russian Trade

The Sitkan Koloshes do the residents of the port of New Archangel a great service by bringing them fresh provisions. They supply the Russians with a nearly sufficient number of fish, viz., halibut, cod, and sockeye salmon; in addition, they provide wild ducks and geese and *yaman*, or wild deer.³⁹ For these transactions a market has been established inside the fort’s walls, where at certain hours the savages assemble to sell their catches to the Russians. For the largest deer, weighing 144 pounds, they give 10 yards of calico, for a duck 1 bunch⁴⁰ of American [Virginia] tobacco, and for a goose 2 bunches. Fish are not priced by size. All of these transactions are subject to surcharges, set by the captain of the port.

Furs are purchased at a shop at the same market; however, the savages are not allowed to enter the fort, trading instead through a window that has been hewn just for this purpose and made in order to prevent the savages from committing any theft (for which they have a passion) and to observe the caution that dates from Baranov’s time. Circumstances no longer necessitate such severe measures, as the Koloshes are at present fairly submissive; nevertheless, as Baranov always said, “cultivate friendship with them, but remember our grievances.”

³⁶ Northwest Coast natives generally, particularly Chinooks, did extend as far as the Columbia River but not, as far as is known, Tlingits or even Haidas and Tsimshians, both of whom the Russians sometimes included with the Tlingits under the rubric of ‘Koloshes.’

³⁷ Markov’s Russian term for sockeye (from the Coast Salish ‘suk-kegh’) is *krasnaya ryba*, meaning not only ‘beautiful’ fish but also ‘red’ fish, referring to their bright red colour when spawning and bright pink flesh when eaten.

³⁸ Sarana is not a berry but the dried bulb of the yellow, or Kamchatka, lily (*Fritillaria camschatcensis*).

³⁹ I.e., Sitka black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis*), a subspecies of mule deer.

⁴⁰ Markov’s Russian term is *papusha*, a bunch, probably referring to ‘hands’ or ‘heads’ of tobacco, meaning several leaves bound into a bunch.

During my stay in New Archangel the Koloshes repeatedly wrangled with the Russians over some trifle and approached the fort with rifles and threatened to attack. They could not do anything, of course, against such a stronghold and in such small numbers as lived on the island of Sitka because one good volley from the fort would have been sufficient to kill all of them — but the Russians will not relent and dare not do so until none of their compatriots is ever killed by any of the savages. I was a witness to how the Russians dissuade the Koloshes in the event of any hostility on their part. If they become noisy and gather at the fort, then the Russians sound the alarm, lock the fort, and try to persuade them verbally not to quarrel, and if the exhortation has no effect, then a cannon volley is fired over their heads, and its whistling drives the rebellious throng into the forest or elsewhere. The only consequence of these wrangles is the fact that the savages do not come with provisions to the market and do not want to trade. This obstinacy on their part sometimes lasts a whole week, during which the Russians, against their will, have to remain without fresh foodstuffs. Finally, out of necessity the savages themselves are forced to make peace with us because they eventually run out of the necessities of their own lives, particularly tobacco, to which they are so addicted, as well as gunpowder, without which they cannot manage.

At present the Russians provide nearly all of the necessities of the Koloshes, who then re-trade these essential goods to other Koloshes in the distant interior for a profit. To facilitate transport the Russian-American Company annually sends a ship with goods to all of the Kolosh villages that belong exclusively to the Russians. At the settlements of the savages where, by an agreement with the Russians, the English [HBC] have posts and pay rent, the Russians do not have the right to trade with the Koloshes and do not profit from the pelts traded at their own Kolosh villages by Koloshes from the English posts, just as the English do not profit from the skins traded at their Kolosh villages by Koloshes from the Russian villages. It sometimes happens that the Koloshes, not understanding this allocation, bring furs to any nearby village (whether of Russian or English Koloshes), in which case after a year the Russians and the English exchange any such furs at a fixed price.

Several times [as supercargo] I had to trade from a ship in various of the Kolosh Straits. For this duty the ship was armed and ready for battle in order to secure itself against any hostile attempt on the part of the savages. Boarding nets of thick, tarred rope were stretched along the sides, and a battery was mounted on the prow that was covered or draped with, sails so that the savages would not notice it — otherwise they would not entice the ship to trade and would think “is this not some sort of deception on the part of the Russians bent on killing us”?

How ceremoniously did the savages assemble on the ship on the day designated for their entertainment! They paddled to the ship from various parts of the straits in large canoes, in each of which sat 20 savages, painted, feathered, and dressed in their finest. Drumming and singing, they approached the ship. The canoes stopped not far from it in a row and indicated their friendly disposition with dances, consisting of various affectations, during which they constantly scattered eagle feathers. Then in order of rank they climbed aboard, where they were treated with rice and molasses. Now they began to talk noisily and to dispute heatedly, each trying to drown out the other. Feathers flew everywhere, and the deck was crowded and hot, with an unbearable smell of grease and smoke. All of this motley throng prided itself on its sociability. At the end of the feast, as the savages began to disperse, it was necessary to give each of them a leaf of tobacco for the road, and while they were leaving some of them very matter-of-factly pilfered something.

The next day at 8 o'clock a flag was raised on the Russian ship to let the savages know that they could come to the vessel to trade their furs. Firstly, the Koloshes traded their

sea otters, over which for a dreadfully long time they muttered, argued, advised, and quarrelled, as if they had mistaken their value. If we had set all of them the same high price, they would have thought that it was low. Although the skins cost us almost as much as we gave for them, the Koloshes nevertheless demanded a supplement.⁴¹ Sometimes they will argue all day about the price, examining the goods while trying to steal something, and the next day they will leave without having sold anything. The following day sees the same arguing and talking, such that the most composed person would lose patience. Finally, we tell them that they are truly being spiteful and do not want to sell their skins to us and that tomorrow we will leave and never return to their village. These words, more than anything else, weaken their resolve. Then one of them is sure to try to sell a [sea] otter, and, if it is sold, then all the rest follow his lead and proper trading begins, and all the goods are exchanged at the fixed prices, including surcharges.

The Koloshes grade their own furs, and they evaluate our goods in their own way, preferring some of the cheap goods to the dear items and rating some dear goods on a par with the cheap items. But we do not disagree, and we pay them the fixed prices for the goods. For example, for a large river otter skin we give them one 18-ruble blanket or, instead, 4½ pounds of gunpowder and 1 nine-pound slab of lead, worth 10 rubles together; for the skin of a sea otter pup 2 blankets worth 36 rubles, or 1 rifle worth 25 rubles; and for a large black bear skin 4 [one-ounce?] packets of vermilion worth 3 rubles, or 1 axe worth 5 rubles. But these figures don't really matter. If only one leaf of tobacco is added for some sort of skin, then it is necessary to do the same for all such skins that have already been traded, otherwise they will demand their skins back.

A sea otter of the 1st grade costs 7 woollen blankets, including one red blanket (to the Koloshes equal to two of the others), worth 126 rubles; 4½ pounds of gunpowder are worth 5 rubles; 9 pounds of buckshot or one slab of lead costs 5 rubles; 4 packets of vermilion cost 3 rubles; 1 skein of red wool is worth 50 kopecks [½ a ruble]; and 2 flints and 3½ ounces of tobacco are worth 50 kopecks, making a total value of 140 rubles. It sometimes happens that a sea otter skin is worth less because of a change in the cost of goods, but one ought not to pay more than 140 rubles.

Formerly, for furs we paid the Koloshes in rum, but in 1841 it was forbidden to give them this alcoholic beverage because of the excessive drunkenness (when, because of various reproaches, drunken quarrels arise among them that not infrequently end in killings). At first the Koloshes greatly disliked this prohibition, but eventually they were persuaded of the benefits of the measure and now no longer demand rum.

Besides furs, the Russian-American Company buys a large number of potatoes from the Koloshes, who have come to grow them in many places along the coast. Compared with furs, potato sales are conducted much faster and are accompanied with noisier haggling and arguing. Each savage vies with the others to sell his potatoes sooner, fearing that if the others sell theirs before him, his will go unsold. Once at Hutenov we had a rather noisy incident with the Koloshes. We had been sent on the steamboat to various straits to buy furs, and on the return voyage we stopped at Hutenov, where more potatoes are grown than elsewhere. Approaching the village, we dropped anchor and ran a rope from the stern to the shore and tied it to a tree in order to secure the steamboat. Then we invited the local Koloshes alongside to entertain them and buy their furs. When the trading ended, we told them to bring as many potatoes as possible the next morning in hopes of buying them in accordance with our

⁴¹ To the American and British coast traders these 'supplements' were known as 'presents.'

instructions from the company; however, during the night we received a letter from the governor telling us to hurry as fast as possible to Sitka on account of a row there with the savages. The cause of this uproar was the following circumstance: a Kolosh had wounded a Russian woman with a spear but not seriously, fortunately, and — fearing the consequences of his behavior — had fled. The Russians had demanded the surrender of the culprit, but the Koloshes had stubbornly resisted this just demand. The letter also told us that we were to be as cautious as possible. In fulfilling the order we had to stop trade with the Koloshes and at sunrise raise anchor and proceed to Sitka. Morning came, and many canoes, loaded with potatoes, were standing around our steamboat. The Hutenov Koloshes did not know that the Sitka Koloshes had wrangled with the Russians and that we had received orders to hurry back to Sitka. Wanting to sell the potatoes that they had brought, the savages asked to come on board, but we refused, saying that we had to go to Sitka immediately but not giving the reason for such a hasty departure. The Koloshes took this for deception, thinking that we wanted to ridicule them. All of them quickly dispersed, unloaded the potatoes from their canoes onto the beach, and in a short time assembled in much larger numbers, all armed with spears and rifles, and surrounded our steamboat, not wanting to let it out of the bay. We opened the cannon ports and showed them the fuses, ready to light, which frightened them faster than their spears and rifles frightened us. They hurried ashore, where the rope was tied, certain that the Russians would without fail come ashore with the steamboat in order to undo the end of the rope, so they decided to let us do so, figuring that in this way they could keep the steamboat there. But alas! In vain were they cheered by this hope, when, to their great surprise, they saw that all of their efforts were for nothing as we released the steamboat from the other end of the rope and calmly left the bay, knowing that the Koloshes themselves would bring the rope to Sitka — which they later did.

Generally, the Koloshes are quite shy with the Russians, although they sometimes row with them, but they do so in the certainty that the Russians will not touch them first, so long as they make no attempt on any Russian lives. Among themselves they are very brave. I have repeatedly been a witness to the frenzy with which they fight with spears during some quarrel, the cause of which is sometimes the most trifling matter. They gather in large groups within a single throng as if a general battle were about to begin. The chief is always some elder from a famous line of chiefs and, in spite of the hue and cry, his voice is heeded most of all. The whole affair is instigated by him and terminated by him.

The Koloshes are very deferential to the aged, who enjoy special respect. In undertaking anything important they will not launch it without the advice and agreement of the elderly. Once in Icy Strait, when I did not yet know much about these savages, our steamboat was surrounded by many of their canoes, loaded with various provisions. Their number included a delightful old woman. Seeing her, I could not restrain a smile. Noticing that I was smiling at her, she became enraged and heaped abuse on me; the other savages took her side, resenting the offence that I had given her. Realizing my mistake, in order to avoid further trouble I had to ask her forgiveness. I invited her to the cabin and treated her to vodka, and to each of the other savages I gave a leaf of tobacco. After this, the oldster, whose anger I succeeded in overcoming with my kindness and more vodka, became friendly and gave me a variety of quite rare trinkets.

With respect to the workmanship of the latter, one must do justice to the skill of the savages: the simplest instruments, even a knife, are carved cleanly and beautifully by them from argillite into amazing figures, pipes, bowls, and various sorts of trifles. They weave cloaks [Chilkat blankets] from the hair of mountain goats, decorating them with sundry images and designs, according to their taste (although they make them very rarely). From

[cedar?] tree roots they make fine *ishkaty* (baskets), so tightly woven that, when filled with water, they do not leak; from the same tree roots they plait beautiful mats, fine and clean. The savages often use them in place of sails on their canoes, and many Russians buy these mats to lay on floors. Little by little they are improving these products, and it can be expected that with the assistance of the Russians in the civilizing of this remote territory the Koloshes will gradually abandon their customs and — enlightened gradually by the glow of the Christian faith — change their present way of life and unite with us to enjoy mutual needs and benefits.

Here is a comforting fact that supports our hopes: with the arrival on the island of Sitka of Archbishop Innokenty, many Koloshes under his care were inspired to adopt Christianity. During my stay at New Archangel 40 Koloshes were baptized, and several others intended to follow their example. Of course, from the newly converted one cannot expect the strict observance of Christian duties, but it is to be hoped that in the course of time more and more of them will accept the true faith and that the spiritual exertions of our pastors (whose sole aim is to spread the light of evangelical teachings to a land darkened by paganism) will not be abandoned. Has it been a long time since those who adopted the Christian faith were heathens? Has it been a long time since they burned the bodies of their fathers and barbarously killed their countrymen? Look at them now, look at these infant believers when the sound of a bell tells them of the start of divine service! How keenly do they hurry to the divine place of worship, and how quietly and humbly do they stand in it! They do not yet understand the mysterious meaning of our church rites, but upon the conclusion of the divine service the priest takes them aside and, through an interpreter and in conformity with his understanding of their expressions, explains the law of God to them. All of this assures us that the savage Kolosh tribe will eventually emerge from the darkness of ignorant delusions in which they now immersed. Besides, in the seminary founded with the monastery in New Archangel by His Grace Innokenty [Innocent], boys are taught in the Kolosh language, and it is the resolute intention of the priest to build a church in the Kolosh village for divine services in their language.

One of the christened Koloshes, an insignificant chief before his holy baptism, was always distinguished from the others by his modesty, and he did not become involved in any quarrels and he traded well, even incurring debts that he always paid honestly and amicably. The Russian-American Company, having long desired to establish a dependent leader among the Koloshes but not having had in mind a particular Kolosh who could perform such a duty, did not fail to overlook this favourable opportunity of fulfilling its intention and selected the said chief and trader to become the desired authority. The company recommended his customary friendship with the Russians and his honesty and good conduct to the [imperial] government and requested that it decorate him in order to show his countrymen that they will also be honoured if they conduct themselves as well as he. The tsar emperor, as an example to the others, deigned to reward him with a caftan embroidered with gold, a sabre, and a three-cornered hat with feathers of various colours; in addition, the company made him the principal chief and gave him 10,000 rubles, so that he was able to build a modest house in the Kolosh village and to buy a slave for himself, as well as suppress rebels and inform the Russians of any hostile intentions on the part of his tribesmen. In 1844 in front of all the savages and in the presence of all of New Archangel's officials he was invested with this royal gift, and he was ordered to take an oath in the church to faithfully observe the duties bestowed on him. Oh! with what importance upon the conclusion of the ceremony did he look at his colleagues and with what pride he thought, "may I be humble!" and with what envy they thought, "just think!" Thus are the Koloshes and the Russians increasingly converging. Every day the savages come to the port and are hired to work; some of them have

even resolved to go to sea as sailors and take long voyages, and they are beginning to speak Russian.

Among the Koloshes there are many illegitimate Russian children.⁴² Their [Russian] fathers, refusing to disgrace themselves, try to raise them in the Christian faith, and they accustom them to their way of life and provide them with clothing. The illegitimates do not feel ashamed, since more and more close interrelations are being established between the Russians and the Koloshes, and one can be certain that in the course of time with the spread of Russian influence the Koloshes will be transformed in every respect.

The Russian-American Company-Hudson's Bay Company Agreement of 1838⁴³

In 1838 the English [HBC], by an agreement with the Russian-American Company, occupied for ten years certain places belonging to the Russian colonies and inhabited by Koloshes, paying rent and trading with those savages who, under the terms of the division, are found on the territory rented by them. The English hoped thereby to profit handsomely, but their rough and disrespectful treatment of the Koloshes served to hinder the progress of their ambitious trade with them, such that the slightest offence was avenged by the Koloshes with the killing of even their closest [English] friends. In concluding the said agreement with the company, the English erred in their calculations. The reason was the longstanding presence of the Russians on the island of Sitka and their more amicable relations with the savages. The Koloshes have lived with the Russians for a number of years, and the Russians know how to become accustomed to them with gentle and indulgent behavior. But the English are not well known to the Koloshes, who are aware only that during Baranov's time the English plied the Kolosh straits in ships, took some savages on board, and sailed to distant waters to hunt furs.⁴⁴ They behaved towards them in a very inhumane fashion, and it even sometimes happened that at the end of the voyage the savages were landed on unoccupied islands and left to their fate. None of these acts has been forgotten by the savages, who still regard the English as their enemies.

At first the English settled at Stikine, where the Russians had built a redoubt named St. Dionisius, which belonged to us prior to the agreement with the English. When we began to withdraw from it to Sitka in order to vacate it for the renters, the Stikine Koloshes regarded the transfer with displeasure and were very sorry to part with the Russians, with whom they had lived for several years in peace and harmony. Not understanding the reasons for this transfer and thinking that the English had forcibly displaced the Russians, they greeted the new occupants with hostility: they destroyed the flume that the Russians had made to conduct water, crying "do not make us enemies of the Russians." Several times the Stikine Koloshes even tried to burn down the redoubt's English occupants, but the latter's careful and strict watch did not allow the savages to execute their deadly scheme.

Now the English found themselves in the same situation with respect to the savages as the Russians had in Baranov's time. However, the savages' need for the goods that had become almost essential to their domestic life forced them to mingle with the English and trade their furs to them. At present, as the term of the agreement concluded by the English

⁴² These illegitimates from Russian-Kolosh unions were known as Creoles (comparable to the *Métis* of New France and the *mestizos* of New Spain), who became both an ethnic and a legal social class.

⁴³ For the details of this agreement, see Gibson, *Opposition on the Coast*, pp. 75-80.

⁴⁴ Here Markov is probably referring to the practice in the late 1830s and early 1840s of several American — not English — coasters hiring Tlingit and Haida hunters and taking them to the coast of Alta California to hunt sea otters.

with the Russian-American Company is about to end (to, most likely, the general satisfaction of the Stikine Koloshes), the Russians will again become sovereign masters of Stikine.

The Aleuts⁴⁵

Let us now pass to another people, the Aleuts, and in brief sketches describe their customs and way of life as I came to see them in person. The Aleuts occupy a much greater extent of territory than the Koloshes, inhabiting the islands stretching from the Northwest Coast of America [eastward] to Kamchatka. All of them are under the protection of the Russian-American Company, which has established an office⁴⁶ in many of their settlements. Formerly, before the establishment of the port of New Archangel, when the private [fur-]trading companies of Rezanov⁴⁷ and Shelikhov still existed, the Aleuts did not recognize any authority over them and attacked arriving vessels, pillaging them, killing everyone, and burning everything so as not to leave any sign of their barbarity in case other ships came.

With the arrival of Baranov on Kodiak Island the robbing and plundering of the Aleuts came to an end. These bestial people were known to Baranov, and he subjugated them by force of arms. Woe to those who resisted! He killed them without mercy or moved them to empty islands and prevented all means of mutual contact, so that they were unable to conspire against the Russians. He terrified the savages; they reckoned him a menace from the heavens, and, unable to oppose him, were forced to become his slaves and forget their onetime freedom, which they had recently enjoyed unlimitedly. After pacifying the savages, Baranov became their good leader.

Most of the Aleuts are of medium height, and they do not disfigure themselves like the Koloshes, except that they pierce their nostrils, and sometimes when they are playing a game they insert *tsukli* (long, round, hollow shells like little curved tubes) in these nose holes. The Aleuts, both men and women, always wear a “parka” — a garment sewn in the manner of a woman’s overcoat, mostly of mountain sheep and marmot hide. They do not all speak the same language; for example, the Kodiak Aleuts [*sic*: Konyagas] and the Atka Aleuts cannot understand each other. More than half of the Aleuts have been christened and go to churches or chapels built at the Russian settlements; a priest goes every year to those who live in isolation (as well as any Russians found there) to give communion. Their shamans have not accepted the Christian faith.

The Russian-American Company has constructed “kazhims” (barracks) for the Aleuts; these are simply long, wooden buildings, rather like sheds, strewn with earth and sometimes covered with sod, with small windows. They are inhabited by the Aleuts severally or individually. Anyone with a keen sense of smell should not enter Aleut dwellings, which are very slovenly and unbearably stinky from various marine animals that the Aleuts use for food — but mostly from their dressing of skins and rawhides for “baidarkas” [kayaks] and

⁴⁵ In this section Markov conflates the Aleuts (Unangans) of the Aleutian Islands (whose numbers dwindled in the 1700s under Russian enslavement) with the Kodiakers (or Konyagas) of Kodiak Island (who came to supplant what they termed the [depleted] Alutiiq in the Russian-American Company’s workforce in the 1800s).

⁴⁶ The Russian term is *kontora*, meaning ‘counter,’ i.e., a commercial office, in this case one of the company’s several ‘colonies’.

⁴⁷ Nikolay Rezanov (1764-1807) did not own a private fur-trading company; rather, he married the daughter of the merchant Grigory Shelikhov, who co-founded with Ivan Golikov the dominant of several private companies that plied the Russian maritime fur trade in the North Pacific in the last half of the 1700s until Rezanov undertook their transformation into the monopolistic RAC in 1799. See Grinyov, *Kto yest kto*, pp. 449-450 and Pierce, *Russian America*, pp. 418-421.

the working of gut for sewing “kamleikas” [waterproof capes] (a garment in the shape of a shirt with a hood worn at sea against the dampness and humidity). All of this drying out and getting wet produces an intolerable smell, so that any Russian who enters an Aleut dwelling is unable to stay very long, owing to the toxic air, which almost corrodes the eyes. The Aleuts could escape this odour, if they wished, but they are accustomed to it and sleep peacefully in the fetid air.

The company hires the Aleuts for various jobs, sending them on many long voyages as deckhands and forming parties of them for marine hunting, supplying all their needs for the hunt, besides paying them a fixed price for all that they catch. For a large sea-otter skin it pays them 50 rubles, for a medium-sized skin 30 rubles, and for a pup-sized skin 15 rubles. The company usually designates where the hunt must occur, and with the party of Aleuts it sends one of their chiefs, whom they obey, as well as a Russian overseer. Once I happened to be with a party, consisting of Aleuts and Chugaches⁴⁸ from Nuchek.⁴⁹ We were sent by ship to Yakutat to catch sea otters; Koloshes live there, and they were irreconcilable enemies of the Chugaches, to whom they had long been hostile. Upon our arrival, the Koloshes began to quarrel with us about coming to catch their sea otters, and they threatened to attack the Aleuts if they went to sea to hunt. However, we soon stopped the dispute by treating the Koloshes and giving their chief a blanket. We told them that our sea otters had been found by some Kodiakers in the straits, and that as punishment for this we want to seize their otters, and the Koloshes ought not to touch them. The savages believed us and let the Aleuts come ashore unimpeded. There the Aleuts raised their tents and posted sentries to protect them from attack by the Koloshes. The next day the Aleuts did not leave to hunt on account of windy weather, during which they do not hunt sea otters because then it is not possible to detect the creatures in the waves. The third day was clear and calm, and the breath of a light breeze was barely furrowing the smooth surface of the water. The Aleuts set out in 30 baidarkas.

A baidarka is a pointed skin boat made of tightly woven layers of sea-lion rawhide smeared with grease. Its shape resembles an oblong and swollen pea pod. One, two, or three round hatches are made in the top of the craft. The largest baidarka of three hatches measures 11 $\frac{2}{3}$ feet in length and 21 inches in width, and it is light and fast in the water but very hard to control. The Aleuts are accustomed to these craft; they know how to sit in them, how to don a kamleika, and how to tighten the hatches so that no water can enter, and they paddle far out to sea in them. They do not fear storms when at sea in baidarkas; for them huge ocean waves are nothing, bearing them like sea birds. The baidarka rises to the top of the waves and then abruptly drops to the trough; sometimes it is completely covered by an enormous, falling wave, and one assumes that it has been sunk, but then the baidarka appears again on the surface with its brave and deft paddler, who continues his carefree way.

All the gear necessary for the hunt is attached to the upper side of the baidarka. The Aleuts do not shoot sea otters or any other animals with rifles, as they do not want to frighten them with the noise. Their chief weapon is a dart, or small harpoon, which they throw very accurately, almost never missing. After spotting a sea otter on the water, they hurry towards it, surround it with their baidarkas, and began to throw darts at it; under no circumstances do they let it swim out of the circle formed by their baidarkas. The wounded sea otter dives but, not being able to stay under water very long without air, continually pokes its head above water and utters a cry like an infant. The Aleuts chase it until it is helpless from the loss of blood, whereupon it turns over onto its back and is almost completely exposed on the surface;

⁴⁸ A group of Alaskan natives of Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula.

⁴⁹ On Hinchinbrook Island in Chuvash Inlet, where the Russians built the redoubt of St. Constantine in 1793.

then the Aleuts go right up to it, haul it into a baidarka, and check it closely in order to determine which of the hunters bagged it.

The darts used by the Aleuts for hunting sea otters are made of bone [walrus or narwhal ivory, i.e., tusks?] and have barbs on one side so that they won't be dislodged from the animal when it dives. The usual length of a dart is 42 inches; the smooth side of the shaft is inscribed, and the barbed tip stays in the sea otter after it has been struck while swimming on the surface. Each of the Aleut hunters always brings his own shaft, distinguished by its particular markings, which they make as they fancy, both on the shaft and the head. Sometimes a sea otter has a dozen or more wounds, whereupon the Aleuts come to a firm common agreement about whose dart struck where and how deep. If, upon examination, one of them tries to cheat and say that someone else's dart is his, then the markings on both the shaft and the head are checked to uncover the truth. When the darts, sometimes two or three, are found in the right places, then, regardless of whose darts are deeper or shallower, the owners of those in the right place gain the otter.

The Aleuts rarely use sea otter meat as food, and only when there is nothing else to eat. Their usual food consists of whale, sea lion, and seal meat and dried fish. Those who serve the company receive 36 pounds of flour per month. But their best and favourite dish is whale meat. Among the Aleuts the day when they find a whale somewhere, beached by the ocean waves, is a holiday. The first to find the treasure does not tell anyone else before storing some for a future time and eating his fill before announcing the find to his countrymen, who, like killer whales, descend on the dead giant and leave only its bones. The Aleuts often shoot whales with argillite darts, which penetrate their flesh deeply and wound them; the salt water gradually corrodes the wound, and the whale gradually loses its strength and dies after three days. The waves then wash it ashore, where the Aleuts make a sumptuous feast of it.

During my travels I happened to meet many savage and semi-savage tribes, but I never saw a lazier people than the Aleuts living at a distance from the Kodiak settlement. When a party of them was sent off by the company to hunt for their own benefit, with what reluctance did they go! An Aleut will without fail die from starvation if somebody does not tell him to go hunting. He will go three days without food if only he has water, which he drinks constantly, and for amusement he will beat a drum and sing shaman songs. Many of the Aleuts still adhere to shamanism and sundry prejudices; thus, for example, the marine hunters secretly dig up the dead, take their skulls, and put them in the prow of their baidarka in the certainty that with this talisman their sea otter hunt will succeed and they will not perish at sea. However, it can be hoped that the Aleuts will soon abandon shamanism, superstitions, and prejudices. Already more than half of them have adopted Christianity, abandoning their former delusions and placing their children in schools to study on Kodiak, at Sitka, and on Unalaska. The pupils leave school with a good level of knowledge, and they perform various duties and mock the ignorance and superstitions of their countrymen.

Archbishop Innocent sent one of the students from the church seminary to Kodiak to study the Aleut language and compile an Aleut alphabet. The student succeeded, taking five years to do so. In 1846 it was decided to publish a book in Aleut and distribute it throughout the colonies. The Gospels were translated into Aleut by Archbishop Innocent while he was still a priest, and now he sometimes reads them in the colony's churches. The Aleuts always listen attentively to the Gospels and earnestly obey God's Law, particularly the Unalaska Aleuts. How they revere the Christian faith, how generously do they donate their best furs to the Unalaska church, and how God-fearing and humble are they during the divine service! They are the most devout and the most industrious of all of their compatriots.

The Unalaska Aleuts craft various articles very skillfully from walrus ivory, weave patterned fabric from certain grasses, sew kamleikas, make superb wooden cases whose decoration is not inferior to American [Northwest Coast native] ones, and in general are very kind and deferential to Russians. With extraordinary skill they weave footstools from fine tree roots and sundry grasses for use in the performance of the divine service by the higher clergy, and one was presented as a gift to Archbishop Innocent, who forwarded this rarity to Metropolitan of Moscow Filaret. It should be noted that these footstools, or hassocks, were woven, or, rather, plaited by hand, so one can see how much promise the future holds for these Aleuts.

Chapter 3: Alta and Baja California

Leaving New Archangel

How unexpected was my happiness when we were told that our ship was going to California, to a land which, I had been told, was very beautiful and which I, on the gloomy island of Sitka with its coarse and ignorant settlers, imagined to be an earthly paradise! The day came when we had to set out to sea, and our happiness was written on everyone's face. How harmoniously and successfully did our work go on the ship! Each seaman took comfort in the thought that his labour would be rewarded in the first tavern in California. The ship's complement comprised 25 navy seamen and 5 Russian-American Company employees for a total of 30 men. We unfurled the sails, gave the fort of New Archangel a seven-gun salute, and, with the pennant in a full wind, our ship sailed southward. In the evening from the stern of the ship we bade a sad farewell with a glance at our former abode, which appeared in the distance as a black streak. It was dark there, and menacing clouds drifted over the island that we had just left.

"These damned sea otters are found so far away from everything," said one of the sailors, looking at the land in the distance. "God, what a hellhole, and there aren't any taverns." "Yeah," answered another, "you remember old Baranov. He would have the mugs set out and shout, 'Drink up, boys,' and then he would strike up a song. Some would drink so much that they couldn't stand up straight. But nowadays, look what things are like, you take whatever comes your way, let yourself go, and end up behind bars."

"Hey, they say that in these parts everyone has joined some sort of temperance society."

"And what about this temperance society?"

"I don't really know; they say it's like a sect."

"A sect? That's a bit odd . . ."

"I would have left here long ago, but what would I have got?"

"Had I been the boss," piped up a sailor among a group standing nearby, "I would have ordered that a sea otter be given to anyone leaving."

"A sea otter would be good, but you can't make money on it. If you get such a skin, you'll lose your own!"⁵⁰ When a German naturalist⁵¹ was here (he was no match for us) he

⁵⁰ Here the sailor is referring to the fact that Russian-American Company employees were forbidden to trade sea otter skins on their own account.

⁵¹ This naturalist may have been Georg Von Langsdorff (1774-1852), who served as physician and naturalist on the first Russian voyage around the world to Russian America in 1803-06.

wanted to smuggle out a skin for use as a scarf, but upon approaching Okhotsk he was afraid of being searched and threw it into the sea.

“But that rat Misha, he pulled it off when he was going ashore. He managed to smuggle 4½ pounds of castoreum.⁵² Really, he did; he hollowed out a sugarloaf and put the castoreum inside with some lead, then sealed it with sugar and wrapped it in paper as if nothing had been tampered with.”

“Yeah, he was shrewd, and so was the late Fedka. What they did when I went with them to Okhotsk! You know yourself how difficult it is to take vodka ashore while the ship is anchored in the Okhota River, but they always did so. Just wait, I thought, and decided to find out how by keeping an eye on them. One night I noticed Misha stirring in his cot, then rising and going on deck, so I crept after him. He went to the heads and I watched him through a crack, pulling a bottle out of the water by a long rope attached to its neck; quickly, he unplugged it, poured its contents into a flask he had brought with him, and then lowered the bottle back into the water. Just you wait, old chap, now I know! As soon as he sneaked back, I collared him, but he gave me a shove and said ‘hush, a watchman is coming, I will tell you everything tomorrow.’ In the morning we left the ship to work, and Misha and I walked along the beach behind the others, who were distracted by Fedka turning somersaults while Misha stopped to show me a rope tied around a rock. ‘See,’ he said, ‘the bottle is attached to this rope, one end of which is attached to the ship’s waterway [ship’s outboard deck planks] and the other end to this rock. If you want to get some vodka, you pour some into the bottle, tie it to the middle of the rope, and pull the rope from the heads [ship’s toilet].’ From then on, I tell you, Misha and I really binged at anchor! Thankfully, the captain was a good man; at sea he ordered the supercargo to give us our wages in vodka, but I’ll bet another captain wouldn’t have done so.”

“That’s just it! Our kind deserves to be beaten. We drink everything away, like a Greek, and then complain that we don’t get anywhere.”

“Let’s drink some vodka!” shouted the bosun.⁵³

These magical words were even heard through the noisy wind by the sailor at the top of the mast, waking him from a deep sleep. They did not need to be repeated; in a minute a crowd had gathered around the flagon, each man impatiently waiting his turn.

Evening approached. The weather was fine, the wind was steady and fair, from the cloudless sky the moon reflected its languid face in the shimmering waves, and the loud songs of the sailors, mixed with the muffled noise of the sea, reminded each of them of their homeland. Carried far away by my own thoughts, I slowly fell asleep on deck.

By morning our ship was already 160 miles from Sitka, and with each day we got closer and closer to California. The air became warmer and more salubrious. On the fourteenth day of our voyage the navigator reported to the commander that a sailor had died. The corpse was wrapped in sailcloth, two cannon balls were tied to his feet, and then he was dangled overboard. “What, matey, did you get sick of everything,” said one sailor, sitting on the rail in order to receive the dead man. “What a way to go; that’s 144 pounds. Well, farewell from this world. Oi, how briskly you have gone to visit Neptune; it means you smelt the vodka. The time will come, matey, when we will hurry there, too. What’s to be done! . . .

⁵² Castoreum, or simply castor, is a substance derived from beaver glands and formerly used in medicine and perfume.

⁵³ The foregoing chatter among the crewmen, the first of several such departures from Markov’s own account of his adventures, was presumably derived from what he happened to overhear (or perhaps even imagine) during the voyage.

but there's room ... ugh, old fellow, how the fog is rolling in; probably Spain is nearby, there's always a wall of fog along its coast."

Entering San Francisco Bay

In fact, we were 80 miles from San Francisco, the northernmost Spanish settlement in New [or Alta] California, but, not having seen the coast because it was hidden by an impenetrable fog, we could not enter the harbour by dead reckoning alone. In addition, we were endangered by a strong current along this coast that can carry a ship into some bay that would be difficult to leave. Without having a midday observation, we had to tack impatiently for a whole week in the thick fog.

Finally, the Farallon rocks⁵⁴ revealed themselves on the starboard side and then disappeared in the fog again, but we just managed to take a bearing and determine the whereabouts of the harbour. We decided to steal into it and lowered the extra sails, but more than six hours later we found ourselves in a very critical situation. We heard the breakers roaring, striking the rocky crags of the shore, which we could still see. However, our commander's⁵⁵ courage and experience assured success in this situation. He ordered the readying of the anchor just in case and the taking of soundings, and he listened to determine on which side of the ship the waves beat harder. Suddenly, a broad harbour opened in front of us with many ships of various nations. With the innate daring of Russians, and within sight of all the foreigners, under two sails with a fresh wind we sailed straight through the middle of the strait [Golden Gate] and into the long bay of San Francisco, leaving the unstable wall of fog behind us. Then we swung around the other ships and came to anchor.

"Well done, Russians!" shouted someone from an American brig.

In the harbour it was clear but the sun was already setting, and its weak rays illuminated a laurel grove on the starboard shore. The whole bay was imbued with the scent of aromatic grasses and flowers. In the picturesque landscape surrounding the bay at various distances stretched the ranchos of the Californios,⁵⁶ between which extended green meadows and valleys with sheep, cows, horses, and mules grazing on them. Somewhere wild geese cried. On the bay's left side stood some attractive wooden houses; from them, as I observed with a telescope, peered the fine figure of a Californio. A high green hill with small bushes was visible beyond the settlement; on it an antelope [?]⁵⁷ was running, and an adept Californio had lassoed a steer. After a long stay on the barren island of Sitka, which was

⁵⁴ The Farallon (Sp., 'cliffs') Islands are a group of islets and sea stacks 30 miles west of San Francisco Bay. They had been stripped of fur seals by American and Russian fur traders at the end of the 1700s and the beginning of the 1800s.

⁵⁵ The captain was Lieutenant Alexander Rudakov (1817-1875), who was seconded to the Russian-American Company's fleet in 1845. He sailed for Alta and Baja California in the *Naslednik Aleksandr (Alexander's Heir)* to obtain salt and grain on 12 September 1845 and returned to Sitka on 21 February 1846 (United States, National Archives, 'Records of the Russian-American Company 1802-1867: Correspondence of Governors General,' File Microcopies of Records in the National Archives: No. 11, Washington, D.C., 1942, vol. 26, roll 51, doc. 241, 5 May 1846, fols. 161-61v.) This voyage was one of several that he was to command to the Californias. He served in the colonies until late 1857, including a stint as governor in 1853-54. In 1856 he was described thusly by an American settler in California, one James Ward: 'Although he spoke but little Spanish or English, he could make himself understood in those languages, but depended mainly on his French, which all educated Russians speak so fluently. He was a handsome man of the true Russian type, of medium height, with a good figure, surmounted by a round, well-shapen head. He was in every way an agreeable companion, and very popular with us all' (Pierce, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 434). Also see Grinöv, *Kto est' kto*, pp. 461-62.

⁵⁶ The Mexicans of Spanish descent who colonized the two Californias, Alta (Upper) and Baja (Lower).

⁵⁷ Markov's Russian term is *zebra*.

surrounded by savages and where everything was lifeless and unvaried, how pleasant it was to find myself in this splendid land, lavishly endowed with all of the gifts of nature!

For a long time I admired California's shores. Finally, I noticed that a small sloop with three Spaniards was sailing straight towards our ship from the settlement of Yerba Buena, where the port captain and the American consul lived. We stood not far from the left shore near the new mission, or settlement, of Yerba Buena, which lies four miles from San Francisco. The sloop came alongside us, and from it emerged two men in striped serapes and patent-leather black hats with wide brims, smoking cigarettes. With an air of importance they scanned the ship and spoke in Spanish, which none of us knew except a couple of deckhands, but they were already occupied in essential work. There was a silence, which turned into laughter. Finally, one of us said in English, "What do you want?" They answered in English, and we invited them to see the captain in the cabin, where they tried to display their smartness with deft bowing and scraping and courteous gestures.

Our captain was a young, cultured man, and he greeted them very politely and asked them to explain what they needed from us. "We are customs officials," said one of the Californios, "who have been sent by the captain of the port in accordance with local regulations to inspect your ship: its measurements and its cargo, as well as whether or not you have a permit from the governor in Monterey for the right to trade; without it you cannot traffic here, and for this reason one of us must remain here."

"I will allow you to measure the ship, sir," said our captain. "We do not have any goods, except those taken for the crew on the voyage, and I do not have a permit from your governor for the right to trade for the very good reason that I did not call at Monterey, but I pledge that without the governor's permission we will not engage in trade here, for which you have only my word, so I will not allow you to inspect, as that would be an offence to Russian honour." The Californios, after hearing this monologue and without saying a word, respectfully took their leave and went ashore.

The next day our commander and I went to the Californio settlement for talks with the captain of the port. His house had been built on a large knoll and surrounded by a palisade. Approaching it, we saw that a very pretty, lively, smart girl of, say, fifteen was leaving it. She met us as if we were old acquaintances, took the commander by the hand, and spoke to him in Spanish. We did not know Spanish but guessed what was being said from her gestures; behind us one of our sailors, who did know Spanish, interpreted for us that she was inviting us to the house of the port captain, her father. We walked there silently and purposefully. It was pleasant to watch our pretty companion, especially after those dreadful painted faces that constantly surrounded us in Sitka. She noticed our attentions, and with a slight smile began to speak Spanish and, with a finger raised to her lips, warned the sailor walking behind us not to interpret.

Finally, we found ourselves on the threshold of the port captain's house and immediately entered a large room, where our gaze fell first of all on a richly-appointed bed. Among Californios a bed is the principal adornment of a home. In some houses in place of a floor you will see dry, clayey dirt but without fail your attention will still be drawn to a splendid bed with superbly-decorated, long cushions. The captain's house was finely furnished; he himself sat on a divan behind a large, red wooden table, reading some sort of thick book. Upon our entrance he rose smartly, exchanged bows with us, and in English asked us to sit on armchairs near the divan, he himself going into the room opposite that resembled a summer house. After a minute he returned with an English book in his hands and began to read to us the regulations on trade within the bounds of San Francisco.

We knew very well that the ship did not have the right to enter San Francisco Bay without having gone first to Monterey (where the governor of California resided) and obtaining from him a permit for the right to trade. But we did not want to go by ship to Monterey because San Francisco lay closer to our route; in addition, it was surrounded by settlements⁵⁸ where we had to buy wheat, beans, peas, corn, meat, tallow, *monteka* (pure tallow that can be eaten instead of butter with bread), and so on. Besides, although one can go by ship from San Francisco to Monterey in a day, the return trip from Monterey to San Francisco requires three weeks or more on account of the constant adverse current and the continual contrary winds from the NW.

Thus, in order not to go to Monterey, we had to resort to cunning. We deliberately took down the main topmast, as if it had been broken in a storm, and told the port captain that without repairing it we could not go to Monterey but intended to repair it here. He replied that he would allow us to go by land to Monterey and back in order to get permission from the governor to trade and to pay the anchorage charge, which for our ship came to 1,666 paper rubles, 66 kopecks.

Our reasoning proved successful. We paid the anchorage charge to the port captain, and he wrote a report to the governor in which he explained that a Russian naval vessel had arrived in San Francisco Bay to buy provisions for the Russian colonies but could not proceed to Monterey without major, time-consuming repairs, so that, having paid our anchorage fee at the port of Yerba Buena, he requested permission for us to trade within the bounds of San Francisco. A packet boat was dispatched expressly to the governor at Monterey, and we thanked the port captain for his kindness and returned to our ship. Within two days we received from the governor of California, Don [José Antonio] Castro, permission to make purchases in cash, but we were forbidden to either sell or barter any of our goods without paying special duties on them.

Yerba Buena

Let us turn now to the land that was then so little-known to us but that now occupies such an important place in the commercial world. I am speaking of California.

The first settlement, where our ship had anchored, was Yerba Buena, or New Mission. It consists of small houses scattered in various directions along San Francisco Bay, whose waters at high tide come quite close to the buildings. There is no pier here, and rowboats land where the shore is a little steeper than elsewhere. However, it is still inconvenient to land from a whaleboat without having a gangway (not to mention larger vessels, which, on account of the sandbars here, must anchor some distance from the shore).

The first building that caught our attention upon landing was a tavern atop a knoll. Its keeper was a Frenchman who had once served in Napoleon's army. He began, *mal à propos*, to tell us about Napoleon's victorious campaign in Russia. "And what's this?", one of us asked, scrutinizing a Moscow-made coloured woodcut that was displayed on the wall, caricaturing Napoleon's withdrawal from that city. It adorned a small room of this well-known tavern of Napoleon's countryman, as if it were an unmasking of the keeper's penchant for boasting. How unforgettable was that event, and my sad thoughts of it carried me far, far away across the seas and the snowy steppes to white-stoned Moscow. At least thirteen

⁵⁸ I.e., ranchos (ranches or farms) and pueblos (towns).

thousand miles separated me from it . . . but now the Russian flag flies proudly on the shores of California!⁵⁹

Descending the knoll to a small depression, we encountered another tavern, much more extensive than the first. It was hosted by a Swede, who, as he himself said, had forsaken his country because of a vile wife. Now he is content with his fate; his business is prospering, and the clinking of mugs and wine glasses doesn't stop from morning until late at night. In choosing this dell as the site of his dwelling (as if to prevent his former importunate helpmate from disturbing his contentment) the Swede had a goal in mind — which was the possibility of combining the careers of publican and smuggler, for the first duty of sailors aboard ships arriving on the coast was to visit a tavern, namely his, as it was hidden from the eyes of shipowners and afforded them the chance to sell the goods brought by their ships.

Directly across the dell from the Swedish tavern stands an attractive little house with a gallery enclosing small plant beds. Two friends, both Germans, live here. They once served as seamen on an American whaler, but they grew tired of the roaming seafaring life, which was too disruptive for their sedentary inclinations, and they decided to settle for good in California, marrying Californios, having children, and rearing ducks, chickens, and geese. They live in absolute contentment. Having chosen the most advantageous trade, namely, tailoring, they introduced themselves to all of the surrounding property owners. Since there were only two of them among a fairly large number of inhabitants, the Germans advertised their trade by word of mouth and profited handsomely. For example, for making Spanish-style trousers they were paid 10 piastres (which included the high cost of the heavy, coarse cloth). On one occasion I saw in the Swede's tavern a yard of dark blue cloth being sold to a sailor for 5 piastres; the cloth was quite coarse, and for us in Russia it would have cost no more than 8 paper rubles for a yard. Such high prices are not in the least surprising, given the fact that California is wanting in manufactures.

Not far from the little house of the tailors an English settler has built a mill. He chose milling as a business because it is very profitable in these quarters, owing to the fact that the Californios have neither wind nor water mills with large millstones. Some, but only a very few, have small hand mills, but for the most part the inhabitants mill flour by means of two flat stones. Can you imagine how much flour one man is able to grind this way in a whole day? No more than the amount needed for one Russian drayman of Kolomna in one shift.⁶⁰ For this reason in California, with its almost legendary growing of wheat, flour is expensive. A small loaf half the size of our French bread, costs 1 real, or, in other words, one piastre buys 8 small loaves — and it is not easy to find a loaf. At this point one American must be mentioned. An ordinary worker, he arrived in California with 5 piastres; but now he has a rich store full of various goods worth at least 20,000 piastres. He buys contraband cargo from visiting vessels, indulges various political opinions, and recently received the title of American consul! Once I had the occasion to do a little business with him, selling him 39 yards of Flemish white linen for 20 piastres, 72 pounds of Virginia leaf tobacco for 40 piastres, and 5 pairs of high, calf-leather boots for 25 piastres. Incidentally, regarding tobacco and leather: smoking tobacco is indulged in California as much as we indulge tea. From the youngest to the oldest, including females, everyone here smokes tobacco, on which the highest duty is imposed. Some Californios have tried to grow tobacco on their holdings; it does grow, but its quality — undoubtedly for some sort of environmental reason — cannot compare to the [Virginia] tobacco grown on the eastern coast of North America.

⁵⁹ On Markov's ship, yes, but no longer at Fort Ross, the colonial exclave that was sold in 1841.

⁶⁰ Presumably at that time in Russia this phrase was a metaphor for a meagre amount.

As regards leather, it abounds and is the common and principal occupation in California — but only in rawhide form. The Californios do not have tanneries and cannot work rawhides into finished leather as we do, so that our curried leather is esteemed there, especially if it is to sewn for such articles as high boots, shoes, saddle cloths, and so on. The reason for this situation is the scarcity of master bootmakers. During my stay in Yerba Bueno, San Francisco, and other surrounding places I did not meet a single master bootmaker in the full sense of the term; I did occasionally see in a few houses someone stitching boots or shoes but for themselves only, and they were rather flimsy, coarse, and blackened with soot. An additional factor is laziness, the eternal enemy of all occupations in the world.

The prettiest of all the houses has been built near the store of the American consul. The English consul lives in it. He is a man punctual to perfection, serious, and proud — unlike any of his peers in this new settlement. Behind his house there is a long, low, wooden, vacant barracks, and at its doors stand two small, greenish, copper cannons on gun carriages. Such is the guardian of the village of Yerba Buena, where you never encounter a single soldier.

On the left side of this barracks an English company has built a large stone trading house. It is impossible not to be amazed by the tireless and energetic enterprise of this nation. The English are prepared to settle everywhere, so long as there is the prospect of profitable commerce. Just take a look in any of the world's best ports and you will without fail meet Englishmen there. Here is an example: the English are now settling in California. What is it that attracts them here from distant seas and lands? Does one not feel that sooner or later California will become the most flourishing and wealthiest of countries? In fact, it was not very long ago that Yerba Bueno was an unpopulated wasteland, where only wild cattle roamed and geese flew freely; but now there are more than 60 attractively constructed houses and an increasing population, which will inevitably grow each year, judging by the present flow of people who, in hopes of a quick fortune, make haste from all parts of Europe to California's shores. During my stay at Yerba Bueno the number of residents grew to 300 persons of both sexes, consisting mostly of immigrants who had abandoned their homeland and selected whatever livelihood here seemed more lucrative and more suitable to each of them. There are no orchards and not very many large gardens here that could serve as permanent enterprises for the residents of Yerba Buena. Only a very few are engaged in orcharding or market gardening, so that most fruit and garden vegetables are brought from the nearest growers by boat to small ports nearby.

The Californios

In the vicinity of Yerba Buena there are many estates, or “ranchos”, which abound in the gifts of nature. The closest rancho lies no more than half a mile away. In it lives a family of Californios: cheesemakers, herders of a fairly large number of cows and the main suppliers of milk, which is brought to Yerba Buena for sale by boats that anchor in the harbour (the Californio is the longtime original [*sic*]⁶¹ inhabitant of California). His rancho epitomizes the picturesque. The owner's residence lies in the middle of a smooth, green valley; on one side it is enclosed by wattle fencing that serves as a corral for cattle, and on the other it is bound by a garden in which watermelons and pumpkins are planted and where apple and pear trees grow. Beyond stretches ploughland, sown to wheat, barley, corn [maize], and peas. And

⁶¹ Markov is referring here to the original Spanish/Mexican settlers of the Californias, not the natives.

everything smells sweet, blossoming and ripening to the full and even, it can be said, in fabulous abundance. Many assert that in California 1 fanega⁶² (126 pounds) of wheat seed yields from 80 to 100 fanegas of large, plump kernels. But this is not very surprising in a land where a man does not have to work himself to the bone manuring fields and where nature itself with its own generous hand lays bares to him all the treasures of the vegetable kingdom. Rain, so essential to plantings, seldom visits his land, but, when it does rain, growth is evident almost daily, and it rains so hard that the meadows sprout, and, if it lasts a quarter of an hour on an open place, the Californio can be soaked to the skin. At sunrise everything evaporates, and the mornings are quite cool, but in that case the Californio, true to his natural inclination to indolence, does not show himself outside his dwelling until the sun's rays have warmed the cool air. Then he goes out into his cornfield in a serape (a woven, patterned blanket 9½ feet long and about 3 feet wide with a opening in the centre for one's head, worn thusly instead of a cloak) and a wide-brimmed straw hat, followed by his wife and children. Meanwhile, a worker makes a fire in his hut and starts to make breakfast, viz., he grinds some corn and from it somehow bakes the flour into a kind of flatcake [tortilla] (or, rather, something like our Russian blini), boils bits of minced meat in a pot, and adds oil, salt, and so much capsicum that, if you are not used to it, you can't swallow one bite without a burning sensation. You will not find ovens here; indeed, one will encounter them among very few residents, the reason being the shortage of bricks in California, and that is why the inhabitants of this blessed land reckon it is better to prepare their food under the open sky. After breakfast the Californio fetches his favourite musical instrument, the guitar, and retires to a velvety couch in the shade of a tree or mounts a horse and rides to his cropland to see how his hired Indians are working.

These astute Indians are content with payment in strings of black, white, or red beads, each 6 feet in length. Beads are the main adornment of both the men and the women, so they are costly. One sailor sold 5½ pounds⁶³ of beads there for 10 piastres, whereas among us in Russia such an amount would cost no more than 5 paper rubles. In addition to this expense for beads, the Californios pay for the Indians' food, which is steamed wheat without any preparation, not because they do not want to or cannot eat better but because the Californios do not give them anything better, saying that their work does not deserve more. However, the Indians do not ask for tastier food, and if they take it into their heads to treat themselves, then they will try to catch field mice, put them on a skewer, fry them over a fire, and eat them with relish. Sometimes they scorch the large fields in order to make it easier to catch the mice.

There are already many of them who are used to living near houses, and they carry out all the duties of domestic existence. The Californios pay them a salary, dress them, and feed them tolerable food. If an Indian tires of this subordinate life, he has the right to leave for his native mountains, where a knife and a bow and arrows constitute his wealth. They know how to shoot well with a pistol and a rifle, but not many use these weapons, which require expensive lead and gunpowder. Instead, the gunpowder serves the Indians, both husbands and wives, for body adornment [tattoos]; they prick their chest, face, arms, and back with various figures and rub them with gunpowder, which makes the figures blue and distinct. This is their form of dandyism.

But let us return to our esteemed Californio; let's look inside his house, observe his family life, and acquaint ourselves a little with his daily existence. Upon entering the first

⁶² The fanega (roughly 2½ bushels) was an old Spanish/Mexican measure of grain.

⁶³ Here Markov uses the term *livre*, a French unit of weight equal to 1.1023 pounds or 500 grams.

room of his dwelling, you do not encounter anything of interest, just a floor of dry clay, a plain wooden table surrounded by small wooden benches, and bare walls, on one of which hang saddle cloths, spurs, and horse harnesses. This is the reception room for visitors. On the right is another room of the same size but of much more interest than the first. Most striking of all is the large double bed, decorated with such care and richness that any of our European beauties would envy it (whereas the floor is the same dirt as in the reception room). In one corner stands a keg with rum for sale. Trunks, arranged along the wall, serve as small benches for visitors, a great many of whom sometimes gather here, especially on holidays with the stoppage of work on the ships. Here you meet an Englishman with serious looks and a bottle, a Frenchman with his boastful phrases and likewise a bottle, and a Russian with his open, contemplative expression and two bottles. There is, perhaps, yet a third room of more interest than the others, but entry to it is curtained off, and it is not accessible to the curious. In it lives the daughter of the esteemed Californio: hospitable, lively, gentle, charming, and — although quite rarely also encountered — very intelligent. Thus does this rancho, furnished with all of the above conveniences, attract numerous visitors seeking diversion in the valleys of California. Say you need a riding horse, then just pay one piastre and ride the whole day, wherever you like. Or you want some rum, and right away a whole bottle appears before you, also for one piastre. Enjoy yourself wherever you want to be: at the large table or in the open air under a shade tree. If it is your pleasure to quench your thirst with sweet milk, then for one real you can drink until sated. Perhaps you love to daydream — presto, before your eyes is the flow of the bay's waves and fog beyond, everything before you that can arouse a dreamer's imagination. But you are a seafarer, you see only the sky and the sea and the customary faces of your comrades, and you would like to take from this land to the briny deep a reminiscence of something beautiful, so you talk to the Californio's sweet daughter. Then your breast heaves an involuntary sigh when duty again calls you to the ship, which is ready to leave these blessed shores.

In short, here are found food and rapture for the eyes, the heart, and the palate in equal measure. This rancho is still memorable to me because of a story of an event that I witnessed. A sailor from our ship approached the Californio's daughter and asked her to serve him some milk, and he explained his request with various signs, but she did not understand him or, perhaps, pretended not to as a joke. What was the poor fellow to do? There was no interpreter, and, if he returned to the ship without any milk, it would mean angering the commander. Suddenly a happy thought popped into his head. The sailor dropped down on all fours, put his hands to his head in the shape of horns, and bellowed like a cow. The daughter burst out laughing and brought the sailor 2 bottles of milk, and she did not charge him.

I suppose she liked the cleverness of the Russian. However, it must be noted that by comparison with other foreigners in these parts Russians enjoy special respect on account of their gentle treatment of the natives. The Russian name in the remote limits of the Pacific Ocean is emblematic of geniality, cordiality, cleverness, and resourcefulness.

En route to San Francisco

On the left side of the aforesaid rancho the road to San Francisco ascends a small, sandy hill. One fine morning I rented a horse from the owner of the rancho and set off to see the town, California's northernmost. The road is quite hilly and mostly sandy; now and then I found myself on level stretches covered with small shrubs, among which herds of wild horses or steers were roaming. The latter are incredibly numerous here, and they constitute the principal enterprise of the Californios. Here a large bull or cow of the size of one of our

bullocks costs 8 piastres and one of medium size (with the hide) 6 piastres; without the hide it drops to 2 piastres. This is a fixed price, never rising or falling.

Every herd has its owner, and wherever it roams he never fails to find it if he needs some cattle. Each year vaqueros⁶⁴ set off to the roving herds and brand the newborn calves by slitting their ears or filing their horns — which is why they know immediately which cattle belong to whom. More than once I had occasion to see the catching of wild steers by these experienced and daring vaqueros. Two daredevils on their favourite horses, swinging lariats of sinew or hair in the air, dash headlong into the herd. The animals, as if they were sensing death approaching them, look around, bellow wildly with fright, and, in hopes of saving themselves from the inexorable pursuit, scatter in all directions. But it is in vain. Even from some distance the vaquero will select his victim; then instantly he throws a well-aimed lariat over the hind leg of one animal, and with another he snares its front leg, and, with no chance of escaping, the beast falls heavily to the ground (the horses are stretched out straight by the lariats but do not move an inch from the spot). The vaquero coils his lariat around the pommel of his saddle, jumps to the ground, and coolly cuts off the head of the furious but powerless animal. Throughout this activity his horse stands rooted to the ground until the lariat is loosened.

There is another method of catching steers, and it seems more curious to me than the first. In this method one vaquero, with the help of a trained steer (and for this purpose the largest and strongest steer is always chosen), sets off boldly to catch a feral steer. Again with one lariat he rides on a fast horse to the wild herd, throws the lariat around the front leg of a steer, which tries to flee but is abruptly halted and invariably stumbles and falls. The vaquero then dismounts quickly from his horse (which in the meantime does not slacken the lariat but pulls it tighter and thereby prevents the steer from standing up), approaches the beast (also coolly as in the first method), immobilizes it by tying its legs, then approaches the trained wild steer and ties the two animals together by their horns. Finally, he unties the downed steer, which stands up and, lacking the strength to break away from its fellow animal, helplessly follows the trained steer, which, upon the vaquero's order, drags the doomed victim heavily to the killing ground. The trained steer also serves as a hauler for the meat. It sometimes happens that the vaquero looks for steers far from the settlement, and for one horse it is difficult to carry a whole carcass weighing up to 720 pounds, but to pull a live steer by a lariat is very unsatisfactory because the animal will be constantly trying to lose itself among the thickets.

The trained steer sometimes roams together with the wild steers, and they do not fight among themselves. Upon seeing a horseman coming in the distance the wild steers scatter, but the trained steer stays, not moving from the spot. It knows that if it does not stay, it will be caught for slaughtering. If steers come across people on foot, they will without fail charge them. It is extremely difficult to escape them after being caught somewhere in the open, so in California both men and women never go walking in the countryside.

Steers are also used for transportation in California as oxen. Some of the missionaries have carts for hauling various supplies. These carts resemble large chicken coops; they have a flat, wooden roof, and passengers board through an opening at the back. Instead of wheels they have thick, unequal, circular slabs [of wood] that squeal frightfully when rotating. To this contraption they harness a pair of oxen, which quietly and slowly plod from one mission to another.

⁶⁴ Author's note: 'In California the best horsemen are called vaqueros [cowboys]. Cattle are entrusted to them, and they catch them with a lariat [lasso] and bring them to the owner dead or alive, depending on the need.'

During my trip from Yerba Buena on the road to San Francisco, I happened to meet one of these ludicrous vehicles. In it, however, there were no supplies at all, just one very pretty Californio and her mother. The latter was knitting stockings and the former, it seemed, was daydreaming. In the front sat a Californio driver, who constantly prodded the bullocks, which slowly moved their hooves. I was already halfway to San Francisco. Surrounded by splendid, thriving vegetation, I slowly ascended the verdant slope of a hill, covered with small woods. Around me all was quiet; only now and then did a light breeze rustle the leaves of the trees, and somewhere a grasshopper sang its monotonous song — and then everything fell silent. Suddenly, from the right side of the road I heard the snapping of dry twigs and the rustle of falling leaves. My curiosity excited, I turned off the road and peered into the woods . . . and what was this? In front of me stood a young Indian woman. She was quite naked and did not move from the spot, and shyly but without embarrassment looked me straight in the eye. “Here is a child of nature!” I thought to myself, and I rode closer to her. She was silent and stood on the spot as before. Pitying her, I gave her a shawl; she took it and neither spoke nor bowed in response. And after I had ridden away some distance, I glanced back, but the savage was gone.

After descending the hill and passing some thickets, I found myself in a large, empty, open space. Here I took it into my head to test the speed of my horse. I loosed the reins and spurred my mount, and its swift dash carried me over the level ground with the speed of an arrow shot by a strong arm from a taut bow. Five minutes had not passed before the open space was already behind me, and I found myself at the foot of a high, sandy hill. My flushed horse galloped to the top, where I stopped. It was the last hill on the road to San Francisco., and from its summit I had a view of the whole settlement, consisting of a mission and up to twenty humble houses plastered in white clay [adobe] and scattered in all directions.

I descended the hill. At its foot a small stream flowed, and on the other side of it a ditch had been dug as a canal for the accumulation of water. Here I met three women; they were washing linen, and not far from them a boy was trying to catch a rooster with a lariat. Beyond stood a long house, and a Californio was sitting at its door, holding a guitar. Seeing me, he rose, greeted me with a handshake, and asked me to sit in his place, repeating in Spanish, “Russians are good people, good people!” I took a strong liking to this cordial stranger. I followed him into a room; it was dark and stretched the length of the house like a corridor and was illuminated by two doors. In one corner, as usual, stood a bed with silk curtains, and on the opposite wall hung a brown bearskin. Nothing else was visible. “Where is your family,” I asked the Californio. “I don’t have a family.” “What is your occupation?” “None.” “So you might starve to death, señor.” He smiled and said: “I have a horse and a strong lariat.” “What a strange man, I thought.” I should have out more about his life, but there was not enough time to do so because soon I had to return; besides, curiosity drew me farther, and I wanted to give more attention to San Francisco itself. So, leaving my new acquaintance, I resumed my journey. Soon, right in front of me stood another house, in which, apparently, there was incomparably more ado and life than in the first. Nearby two Californios (presumably the owners of the house) were lying on serapes. One of them was smoking a cigarette, and the other was playing a guitar. They, too, greeted me and suggested that I spread out a serape and lie down on it. I thanked them and asked for a drink of water. They indicated the door to the house, and I entered. It comprised one room with a partition; the floor was clay, swept clean; the corner, as usual, was beautified by a bed, adorned with the best to be found; and next to the wall stood a large trunk, on which a fat Californio woman sat smoking a cigarette. I explained to her what I wanted, and she graciously fetched me some. For this service I offered her a small cigar; she took it, thanked me, and said, like

my previous acquaintance, "Russians are good people!" While leaving the house, I noticed from a side door a yard fenced with wattle. A rack had been erected in the middle of the yard. "Probably some kind of enterprise," I thought, and I was right. Two Indians were cutting beef into thin slices, salting them lightly, and hanging them from poles in the rack; this dried meat [beef jerky] is an article of trade of some importance in California. It is made primarily at the missions, where there is more space. At Yerba Bueno and San Francisco the few who engage in this activity do so only for their own use.

Mission San Francisco de Solano

Opposite the aforesaid house and across a small square stood a long, low stone building framed with large beams. Near the end of it a mission had been added with a high bell tower and named San Francisco. I wanted very much to see the interior of the mission, but it was closed, unfortunately, and I found it necessary to go back to the fat senora and find out from her when the mission was open and who managed it.

When I walked across the square, I happened to meet the very same boy who had been trying to lasso a rooster. I turned to him in the hope that I could explain to him what I wanted to ask the fat senora, the lover of cigarettes. In fact, the scamp accompanied me to the house with the large windows and said that his father lived there and held the position of mission watchman but that now he was not home because he had ridden to see the padre [priest] at the mission. There was nothing for it, but I was already there, so I decided that I might as well see how the watchman lived. I opened the door and stepped onto a brick floor of a huge room resembling a *manège* [riding school]. Long benches lined all of the walls, and in the centre a table stretched the length of the room. Everything was covered with a thick layer of dust. Hanging on the right side of the room was a small curtain, through which a human figure could be seen, and lying on a window ledge was a bunch of keys, distinguished by their huge size. I picked them up and began to twirl them. Then from behind the curtain a woman approached me and said that they were the keys to the mission.

"You are probably the wife of the watchman?" I asked her. "Just so," she replied. "Where is your husband?," I asked. "He rode to the padre's place." "What do you want him for?," she asked. "I would like to look at the interior of the mission," I said. "If you wish," she offered, "I will show you. My husband may not come back for some time, so let's go. I will open the mission doors for you." She took the keys, and we set off to the mission. "You are probably a Russian," she asked. I answered in the affirmative. "Good people!" remarked the honourable watchman's wife. Approaching the doors, I observed a small copper cannon; it was standing on a gun carriage, dilapidated from utter neglect. "Why is this ordnance standing here?" I asked. "Because when the governor comes here from Monterey," responded my guide, "they greet him with a salute from this cannon."

At last, the iron door creaked on its hinges and we entered under a high monastic arch. On the left side one's eyes are drawn first to a small room; in it was an infant's tomb.⁶⁵ On the left side, too, a niche had been made in the wall behind an iron grille; this was the confessional, where the padre hears recantations. The rich altar is the chief adornment of the mission church. Its paintings [frescos or murals] are quite old. The Evangelists [the four Gospels], standing on their high pedestals, are distinguished by precise carving; the entire screen is covered with gold and silver; the pulpit for sermons is enclosed by gilded handrails;

⁶⁵ Presumably a representation of the baby Jesus.

and the choir for music and singing is built under the arch itself. For want of an organ, violins are played here. The Venetian windows, which begin fourteen feet above the floor, lend a sombreness to the entire building, filling the soul with a heavy, morbid feeling. "And is a service often held here?" I asked my escort. "No," she replied, "only on holidays." Apart from this single mission, which can still draw the attention of travellers, I found nothing else of particular interest in San Francisco, except, perhaps, the numerous dogs, one or even two of which are owned by every resident.

Not far from the mission on the road to Monterey I could not help noticing one little house. It was more attractive than the others and was the dwelling of a widow, who was engaged in the selling of rum and gin. Olive trees grew around it, and under one of them sat an Indian woman, probably the proprietress's employee, and she was plucking feathers from a quail. It is a small bird, dark grey in colour, with a high topknot of no more than three feathers. Often encountered in California, the quail is used by its inhabitants as food; its meat is white, tasty, and a little sweet.⁶⁶

Beyond the settlement ploughland sown to wheat and barley was visible, and on the right-hand side lay the smooth surface of a small lake, and beyond it stretched a small wood. It was almost midday, and smoke was rising from nearly every little house — a sign that dinner was being prepared.

The Visit of the Governor

On the Monterey road two riders were galloping at full speed towards San Francisco. After they had ridden closer, I could see them better. They were Spanish [Mexican] soldiers and were bringing news of the coming of the governor to San Francisco. Their attire consisted of navy blue, heavy cloth jackets with red cuffs and striped trousers of the same colour, slit at the bottoms — plus huge spurs that every Mexican owns. The black patent-leather hat with a wide brim completed their outfit. A long lance with a red pennant was fastened to one leg, and a pair of pistols was visible under the saddle blanket.

The residents of the settlement, having heard of the governor's coming, were beginning to bustle about. Some citizens applied themselves to the mission's cannon and began to charge it with such carelessness and so much commotion that, watching them, I could not refrain from laughing. Gradually more people assembled, the cannon was readied, and the curious throng awaited their governor. Soon at the end of a clearing appeared a troop of riders, gradually approaching San Francisco. The boom of the cannon salute proclaimed the governor's approach. Now it was possible to clearly discern the whole cavalcade, trotting lightly. It numbered thirty people; some of the officers in shakos resembled uhlans, except that they were much clumsier, and the helmets of the others were round with spikes on top. Their navy blue and forest green uniforms with tails were distinguished by red or yellow lapels and trousers with wide stripes. A gleaming sabre was the officers' sole weapon.

The governor himself was in the midst of his military retinue and rode in a long, pale blue, velvet cloak with a small collar of the same colour, similar to a woman's cape, and trimmed with a fringe of silk; under his cloak was a *kazakin*⁶⁷ or, rather, an *akhaluk*, a short caftan with a green fringe and a sash of silk, under which a dagger was visible. A black patent-leather hat and long, black whiskers imparted a stern military expression to his face.

⁶⁶ The California, or Valley, quail (*Callipepla californica*) is a small, chubby ground-dweller noted for its comma-shaped topknot dangling from its forehead.

⁶⁷ A man's knee-length coat with a pleated skirt.

This was Don Castro, governor of [Alta] California. Seeing me standing above the gaping crowd, he asked who I was. “A Russian from the ship *Naslednik*,”⁶⁸ I answered. The governor shook my hand, and together we set off to the room of the mission watchman. There the table was already covered with a white tablecloth; on it stood some glasses, 2 bottles of rum, and several carafes of water. I wanted to toast the governor, but he begged me to sit and drink a glass of rum. I did so, toasting the health of everyone present. Then the governor slapped me on the shoulder, and we parted.

It was still quite early, so I rode to a rancho about a quarter of a mile from San Francisco near the bay itself. It belongs to a recent settler, the son of a German merchant of Riga and a former employee of the Russian-American Company. Having served the term of his contract, he married a Creole in Sitka and settled here to make money, and he passes for a Russian and thereby enjoys the general esteem of the Californios. His rancho, which is very beautifully situated, is used for cultivation. He is energetic and enterprising and thus combines the two most important qualities for the right road to a quick fortune in booming California.

His house is built on a small scale, with a chimney and a Russian stove (and is surrounded by a garden in which cabbages, turnips, onions, and potatoes are grown). Its rooms are bright and clean; well-done engravings hang on the walls, and the furniture is of fine wood. But a traveller’s attention falls most of all on one object, namely, a fortepiano. Mr. Geppener⁶⁹ (the family name of the rancho’s owner) plays superbly on this instrument and attracts many listeners, especially some of the natives, who have never before had an opportunity to see or hear a fortepiano. Sometimes at galas it is carried to the mission, so that Mr. Geppener has become more and more known in these parts. The governor himself during his visit to San Francisco made it his first duty to visit him, firstly in order to show him his favour as a Russian settler and secondly in order to hear him play. He still does not have any livestock or pasture because he settled only recently, but in time they will underpin his principal enterprise. Also, Mr. Geppener renders much service to the Russian-American Company (as well as, perhaps, its far-flung colonies) by supplying the company with wheat and thereby greatly relieving its need of grain.

During my stay at Mr. Geppener’s rancho, or estate, we often discussed productive and prosperous California and its great capacity for growing the products of nature required by mankind and — tacitly — their transport to places familiar to us in Eastern Siberia. What striking opposites! Huge expanses covered in snow versus ever lush, green valleys; people numb with the cold, sullen, unsociable, and inactive because nature itself limits their activities, versus people always warmed by the sun’s rays, serene, cheerful, and idle, lazing in the bosom of nature, which offers its best gifts without any retribution. And in the midst these two very different spheres of life there is the hungry, feverish activity of enterprise. All of this greatly stimulates and excites the curiosity of thoughtful people. Enormous distances

⁶⁸ The RAC’s supply ship *Alexander’s Heir* of 300 tons was built in Åbo and reached New Archangel in the summer of 1840 under the command of Captain-Lieutenant Zarembo. In the early fall of 1842 it was nearly sunk by a storm on its return voyage from Alta California to New Archangel and lost several men and most of its cargo. It remained in the colonial fleet until at least late 1846.

⁶⁹ Andrei Andreievich Gepner (Andreas Höppner), or Heppner, was the son of a Baltic German merchant in St. Petersburg and was born in either Latvia or Estonia. He joined the RAC in 1835 and arrived the next year in New Archangel, where he served as a manager in the company’s local office, as well as a conductor at concerts, an actor in theatricals, and an organist in the Lutheran church. In 1842 he married Anna Klimovskaya, a Creole, and at the end of his contract term in 1845 they moved to Alta California, settling first near San Francisco and later near Sonoma. Around 1849 he left his wife and moved to Chile, where he died about 1855. See Grinöv, *Kto est’ kto*, p. 123 and Pierce, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 192.

separate the peoples of the two territories, and they remain strangers to each other, whereas the fruits of their labour and their capabilities could be shared and the products of their native lands exchanged beneficially.⁷⁰

After having stayed at Mr. Geppener's rancho for some time, I wanted to return to my ship at Yerba Buena, but he suggested that I take a sloop to San Pablo,⁷¹ a small settlement situated 2 miles inland on the other side of San Francisco Bay. At his invitation I left my horse at his place, and we set out in the sloop. No more than seven families live at San Pablo, each in its own small house with a fence and a garden, with capsicum [red peppers] hanging from the walls; they dry them for sale, as well as for their own use as food (Californios are passionately fond of peppers). In one house they made soap, quite hard and of good quality. In other houses they jerked meat and rendered tallow, which was poured into bags sewn from oxhide. The better tallow from marrow was poured into bladder bags; it is called "monteca" and is very pleasant to the taste. All of these products constitute not unimportant items of trade for the Californios. Not far from the settlement an enclosure has been built; there they ground wheat. Two Indians drive unshod horses over the sheaves spread on the bare but hard ground. This crude method of threshing wastes a lot of kernels, with some remaining in the ears but others being pounded deeply into the ground (it can be assumed that from ten fanegas of clean wheat at least $\frac{1}{3}$ is lost). Beyond stretched broad green valleys, unplanted. The beautiful locale that opened before my eyes held me to the spot for a long time. I did not want to part with these charming vistas, but evening was approaching and I had to return to Mr. Geppener's place, where I retrieved my own horse and rode to Yerba Buena.

A Fandango

Upon arriving at my ship, I learned that within two days a fandango would be held. In fact, the next morning invitations were sent to some people, especially families, living in the vicinity of Yerba Bueno. Then the day of the party came. It was not possible to use the ship's quarterdeck; it was out of the question to think that the delicate little feet of a Californio could glide along the deck that had been washed by the ocean's waves. An awning was stretched over half of the ship, viz., from the taffrail to the mainmast, and one side of it was stretched as far as the railings, which, from the deck to the tent itself and around all of the quarterdeck's bulwark, were sheathed in striped ticking. The cannons were positioned along the ship and boards were placed over them and covered with heavy cloth and arranged in such a way as to serve as divans for the guests. The stern hatch was curtained off by a flag with a representation of the double-headed eagle, netting was stretched over peaked caps that were arranged from bulwark to bulwark, the stays and masts were entwined with bunting, and everything was illuminated by thirty torchlights in the corridor. The sailors in red shirts sat in the cutters, sloops, and yawls, ready to ferry the guests. Everyone became merry, and everything assumed a festive air.

Now the invited guests appeared on shore, and rowing vessels were sent to embark passengers. In the first cutter to arrive at the ship's ladder were the captain of the port and his two daughters and the cheesemaker and his daughter and several other family members. From

⁷⁰ This notion is elaborated in the author's will-o'-the-wisp scheme entitled 'A Project for a Trading Expedition Around the World' that is appended to the original as an appendix, but it has been omitted from this translation as tangential.

⁷¹ Presumably Markov is referring to Rancho San Pedro, a 9,000-acre Mexican land grant awarded in 1839 to Francisco Sanchez alongside the site of the former mission of San Pedro y San Pablo Asistencia in the San Pedro Valley at Pacifica.

time to time other guests assembled on various sides, both on land by horse and on the bay by boat. Many of the Californios had guitars, and two violinists completed the orchestra. Under the sound of their pleasant harmony began the dance called the fandango. How gracefully did this motley group move back and forth, and how fine were the Californios in their national dress! At this time some sort of feeling, both sad and happy, overcame me; it seemed as if the local family was making merry, but it was strange to my eyes and ears and heart, which were used to seeing, hearing, and liking something else that was more familiar yet immeasurably distant.

In the cabin the tables were laden with berries and bottles. The Californio women drank light wine modestly and the men strong wine. Around midnight on the quarterdeck the Russian sailors were heard singing dancing songs; some of the guests threw off their serapes and jackets and made themselves at home. It is not a sin to dance, and for a while we let ourselves go, without, however, becoming indecent. On the side of a lovely field we encountered friendly, happy laughter instead of willfulness. Finally, sleep gradually overcame us, and it was nearly sunrise when our guests dispersed with feelings of genuine gratitude for the welcome and entertainment of the Russians.

Russian-American Company ships visit California annually to buy foodstuffs, and, while anchored, the commander of every Russian ship considers it virtually his duty to throw a party or a fandango. I had to go to California several times, and I never saw any of the foreign ships anchored there undertake to give a party for the Californios; on the other hand, the Californios on their part did not favour any of the foreigners with this honour except the Russians, who knew how to incur their trust and respect. I will never forget the evening when the Californios, in gratitude for our entertainments, held a fandango especially for the Russians at Yerba Buena in the very barracks that I have already mentioned. They were beautifully illuminated and furnished. There was an abundance of Californian fruit and wine; the cannons, until now forgotten, did not stop firing. The Californios, in an outpouring of feeling, shook our hands and shouted in Russian, "hurrah!" I do not know how any Russian heart could not beat from happiness at this native greeting from the mouth of strangers! Arriving at our ship after the party given in our honour by the Californios, for some time I could not stop thinking about the companionship of these cordial people. The noise of the past feast still resounded in my ears; finally, little by little sleep overcame me, and I did not wake until late in the morning.

Alta California's Commercial Prospects

We needed garden vegetables, as well as fruit, for both our own use and for the Russian-American Company's governor at Sitka. That is why I had been charged to purchase them at the town of Santa Clara⁷² near San Francisco Bay, 26 miles from Yerba Buena. Time and duty allowed no delay, and it was with sleepy eyes that I set off to do so with 8 sailors in a launch. The wind was favourable, and it was under bent sails that we got underway along the bay, passed Geppener's rancho, and reached the settlement of Santa Clara in five hours. It consists of several houses lying not far from the bay. The little houses are quite distant from one another, and in the intervening spaces there are vegetable gardens with cabbages, turnips, onions, cucumbers, and mustard; there are also tracts planted with nothing. Orchards with apples, pears, olives, plums, cherries, and grapes stretch beyond the settlement; there are also

⁷² The pueblo of Santa Clara was founded alongside Mission Santa Clara de Asís, which was established in 1777 and secularized in 1835. It is located in the middle of the Silicon Valley about 45 miles from San Francisco.

walnuts and acorns, as well as fields of melons and gourds (pumpkins, muskmelons, and watermelons). The settlement of Santa Clara is more attractive than all the others by virtue of its situation. First the eyes rest on the small, green hills, some overgrown with thickets and some with groves of oaks and redwoods, and then on level valleys that merge faraway on the horizon or come up against blue mountains, barely visible in the distance. The bright bay completes the picture. There is a deep silence everywhere, and a carefreeness that generally distinguishes all of the inhabitants of this blessed land.

A tanned Californio with a cigarette in his mouth and a guitar was lying near the front garden of his house and watching a hired Indian gathering cucumbers in his garden and packing them in a creaky, enclosed cart hitched to two oxen. This vehicle was due to set off via San Francisco for Yerba Buena. The Californio's wife, wanting to quench her thirst, was sitting alongside a submissive cow and milking her into a glass. There are no cellars here and nowhere to keep milk for a long time; the morning's milk, if not sold, is used for cheese. If anyone takes it into their head to drink some milk, then they go straight to a cow and milk a glassful or go elsewhere for fresh milk, which they drink like water. I approached the Californio, greeted him, and explained my needs. "I have everything that you require," he answered. "Order your men to take as much as they need from the basket, and then we will see how much it costs." "No doubt," he continued, "you will overnight here because it is late, as well as the fact that the wind is unfavourable for the departure of your ship, so you can continue your business tomorrow morning, but now let's drink tea." And he told the Indian to heat the tea kettle (in this land copper tea kettles have taken the place of samovars).

The sailors dispersed wherever they wished, and the Californio and I walked to his house. It was not as attractive as the others, but it was full of everything. The fact that Don José (the owner) drank tea was significant, as tea is not used much in California because of its dearness; here one pound of tea costs 3½ piastres (17½ rubles), so the beverage is a special luxury in California.

Don José has five children; the oldest is a daughter of seventeen years. Unfortunately, she was sick and not benefitting from any medical help, as there are few doctors in California, and in the event of sickness most Californios leave themselves to the whims of fate.

The mistress began to prepare supper, kneading tortillas and boiling chopped meat, flavoured with red peppers, which are essential to nearly all Californio dishes. Two of the young sons brought apples, pears, and watermelons. Then some other Californios arrived; they were a circle of friends, and they struck up an interesting conversation. A quite elderly member of the circle astonished me with his knowledge.⁷³ In appearance he resembled a Californio, but I subsequently learned that he was an English captain who had abandoned his country of birth for good and settled in the vicinity of Don José's house. He talked about the war that had begun between the Americans and the Mexicans and said that the former needed California; he also said that after having taken possession of it they, as an enterprising people, would settle the western shores of America, bring their fleet to the Pacific Ocean, converge on the Sandwich Islands and China, expand their trade, and even, one can suppose, turn their attention to Japan, whereupon both oceans, the Pacific and the Atlantic, would fill North America with the riches of the shores of Eastern Asia and Western Europe. "Then," he continued, "see how trade will accelerate between the shores of the Pacific and the shores of the Atlantic. The Americans will certainly establish depots at Acapulco or Mazatlan. Then

⁷³ Markov was impressed with what this person had to say, of course, because it smacked of his own scheme.

their ships in the Pacific will sail to the Atlantic and store goods at certain ports; from them by land through Mexico the goods will move to the port of Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico, in which case it will become a depot, and from Veracruz goods will move to Europe on ships via the Atlantic. In this way and back, goods from Europe or the eastern shores of America will also be conveyed through Mexico to the western shores of America at Mazatlan or Acapulco or across the Pacific to the eastern shores of Asia.” All of these suppositions of the Englishman were highly plausible and corresponded with my own views. The other members of the circle listened closely to the conversation of their fellow settler, and, although there was much that they did not understand, they felt that California would remain in a calm state, having sooner or later to abandon its Mexican laws and become a slave of the stronger.

“The Americans,” continued the Englishman, “with California in their possession can also serve Russia by providing grain for Kamchatka or Okhotsk, if only the Russians want to do themselves a service and avail themselves of this largesse by sending their own ships from the port of Okhotsk to California for wheat, peas, and barley. Then the Americans would substantially reduce the prices of foodstuffs, which, within the limits of the Okhotsk Sea, I have heard, are very high.”

“Yes,” I remarked, “rye flour brought from Yakutsk to Okhotsk regularly costs from 22 to 28 kopecks per pound, and groats from 28 to 33 kopecks per pound.” “Why so costly?” asked the Englishman with surprise. “Because the flour and groats brought from the Irkutsk region to Yakutsk are sold there for 4 to 7 kopecks per pound; and from Yakutsk they are transported on pack horses in caravans to Okhotsk, with a payment of 30 to 40 rubles for haulage by each packhorse, and, since no more than 180 [*sic*: 90] pounds of flour or groats is packed by each pack horse, then by adding the costs of both purchase and transport, we can see clearly that it is impossible to sell the grain below the aforesaid Okhotsk price. Besides, for the delivery of provisions from Yakutsk to Okhotsk they are packed in rawhide bags, and it sometimes takes a whole month to convey them the distance of more than 650 miles; and from the frequent river fords on this long route the grain packed in the bags often gets wet. In addition, from the packhorse transport the grain smells of horse sweat and loses its freshness.”

“Do you see the difficulties,” I said to the Englishman, who then asked “Why don’t the Okhotsk merchants acquire their own ships in order to sail to California for grain that would bring them considerable profit?” “Because,” I replied, “the Okhotsk merchants, although they have enough capital to acquire their own ships, are still too unfamiliar with California to be able to confidently launch trade with it.”

“Judging from all of these circumstances,” continued the Englishman, “the inhabitants of Russia’s eastern frontier should be glad if the Americans were to begin to supply them with fresh, healthful provisions and at half the current price within the limits of the Okhotsk Sea. And the inhabitants of California, counting on a large demand for its products, would undoubtedly exert more effort to produce the wheat and other supplies from their ranchos.” “However,” I said, “the Americans might take furs, if they were permitted to enter the limits of the Okhotsk Sea.”⁷⁴

“To counter this it would be necessary to take some measures, the best of which, I think, would be strict customs inspection.” “Now,” said Don José, “the Californios sell their output to the Russian-American Company only.”

⁷⁴ Markov had in mind the maritime fur trade (in sea otters and fur seals of the North Pacific rim), which was now ebbing.

“But why,” I asked, “do we procure the supplies that we need with difficulty, and it sometimes even happens that the amount is not enough”?

“The reason for this,” continued the Englishman, “is the fact that the Russian-American Company has leased Stikine to the English [Hudson’s Bay Company] on the condition that the latter supplies the Russian colonies with various goods, including wheat, peas, and other articles on its own ships round-the-world. Meanwhile, the amount of provisions supplied by the English from the Columbia [District]⁷⁵ has proven insufficient for the Russian-American Company, particularly as it has begun trade with Kamchatka in various goods, including flour. For this reason the company has had to send its own ships to California and buy wheat from the Californios, who, not being accustomed to much planting, have not until now paid attention to sowing their fields, sometimes selling only limited amounts to visiting trading vessels. This is why you are now facing difficulties in the procurement of wheat, peas, barley, and other articles; but it can be assumed that in time wheat growing will become the principal enterprise of the inhabitants of California.”

Now the teapot was brought. During the conversation the Californios sat with their hats on, and they did not take them off at the table either. Don José’s family were accommodated at one table, which was covered with various dishes; but there was no bread, which was replaced by tortillas. The first dish, prepared from ground meat, was eaten by the host. Upon his example we reached with our forks to a dish in the centre of the table that contained so many peppers that after two bites my mouth felt flayed, whereas the Californios ate it contentedly. When that dish was finished, the hostess brought another, consisting of fried mutton [or lamb], cut into long, narrow strips; after it came frijoles cooked with mutton fat and strongly flavoured with peppers, then lightly grilled young cheese, cut into strips like strands of curds, and, finally, apple pastries with tea. After leaving the table the Californios smoked cigars and left to lie down for a while in the fresh air, inviting me to join them, while Don José’s wife and older children also smoked cigars but stayed in the house.

I declined the Californios’ offer to lie down for a while with them in the fresh air, opting to take a walk alone and look at the pueblo of Santa Clara. Smoke rose from some of the small houses, indicating that it was supper time; a deep silence prevailed everywhere, as if everything was basking. Now and then hens wandered between the houses, sheep browsed the grass, and somewhere cows mooed or horses snorted; not far from the shore some boys chased each other barefoot; at one house an Indian was making himself some bedding in the form of a rug, tying it up with straw and cutting the ends evenly; and gardens, enclosed by stakes, stretched into the distance on the right, where our sailors were enjoying themselves by gorging on fruit.

Bear Hunting

Not encountering anything else of interest, I walked back to Don José’s house, where they had already prepared a bed for me. Suddenly, in several places the dogs, which had been lying quietly, began to bark and then ran out of the settlement with the boys in pursuit. This commotion piqued my curiosity, and I strode in the direction the dogs had taken. After passing four houses, I saw a valley before me; along it rode two vaqueros, leading a straining bear. They had caught it in a grove of oaks and were bringing it alive to the pueblo for amusement. It was brown and no less than two and a third feet in height. The furious beast

⁷⁵ Mainly from HBC farms at Fort Vancouver on the lower Columbia River, Fort Nisqually just inland from Puget Sound, and Fort Langley just above the mouth of the Fraser River.

looked angrily at the barking dogs around him and at the boys, who boldly poked sticks at him, knowing that the bear, his front and back legs tied together, was unable to harm them in the slightest. The vaqueros were confident that they could release it in the valley and lasso it again. It would have been interesting to watch this daring chase but it was not allowed, as the bear might attack the assembled crowd. The Californios urged the vaqueros to kill the beast there and then, so one of them pulled a wide knife from his boot top and plunged it hard into the back of the beast's head. The bear swayed on its legs and with a horrible roar fell to the ground. The vaqueros undid the lariats and had the Indians skin the carcass. I set off to José's house to sleep. Fatigue from the evening soon put me to sleep, and I slept hard until sunrise, whereupon I was unable to close my eyes, as coyotes (a kind of jackal) were running around the pueblo and constantly disturbing me with their howling. They are terribly numerous throughout California. In the quiet of the night they come to the pueblo to hunt, and they take any uncorralled sheep, but they run to the woods upon the appearance of humans. Dressing quickly, I ordered the sailors to pick as much fruit and garden vegetables as were needed for the baskets and bags, and I went with them to the garden. Passing the spot where the bear had been killed the previous evening, I saw no sign of the innards, which had been left for the Indians and scavenged at night by coyotes. I never saw any Californios eating bear meat; they use only the animal's hide and fat [for tallow], which they sell to trading ships. But the Indians are content to eat the bear meat. In a short time the sailors had filled their baskets and bags with fruit and vegetables and taken them to the ship. It only remained to settle accounts with the owner and ride back to my ship.

We were ready [to leave], but the residents of Santa Clara were still sleeping, and the doors of their houses were locked, for a morning fog had not yet completely cleared, and the air was cold. Not wanting to disturb José, I waited until he woke up. Finally, the sun rose fairly high in the blue sky, the fog disappeared, and the air became warmer. Doors opened in some houses and people appeared, cattle were driven from the corrals, Indian men and women went to milk the cows, smoke appeared from the houses, and the preparation of breakfast began in the same way as supper.

Finally, Don Jose left his house to direct the work on his rancho. Seeing us preparing to leave, he greeted me and asked me to stay for breakfast with him. Fearful of encountering a contrary wind and wanting to take advantage of the calm weather, I excused ourselves, saying that the men were needed for work on the ship, paid him for the fruit and vegetables in goods that in California are more essential than money, namely, beads, tea, and calico, and bade him and his family farewell. On the road I called on the Englishman, who also tried to detain me, but I thanked him and proceeded to our ship. By 2 o'clock in the afternoon we were already aboard and the men were stretching the rigging, which had been weakened by the sun's rays (and with weak rigging it is quite possible to lose a ship, particularly when it rolls and pitches strongly).

A Trip to Monterey

After returning from Santa Clara, I had some free time until our departure from San Francisco Bay. I decided to make use of this interlude by visiting Monterey, the capital of California, 250 miles from Yerba Buena. Early in the morning I set out on the San Francisco road, taking with me as a guide a vaquero with a rifle and his inseparable lariat. After passing San Francisco, we found ourselves in a wide, green valley crossed by trails that were barely noticeable from infrequent use by riders. Upon crossing the valley for about 10 miles, we came upon three little houses, surrounded by fences of poles. Two Californios with their

families lived in them. There were cows and horses behind the dwellings, and wheat grew here and there. Nobody was around; only the bark of a dog was heard. When we approached one of the houses, a Californio came out to meet us and invited us to join him, but we did not have time to stay.

After changing horses, the vaquero and I rode off through the valley towards Monterey. Many changes of frisky horses took us as to a series of little settlements along the road, and at each of them we could change our mounts for a modest payment. En route we came across many picturesque places. Often we had to ride through small woods, in which oaks, lime trees, beeches, redwoods of enormous thickness, alders, the odd poplar, and wild grapes were growing. We also encountered forests of laurel [bay trees], but we strove to ride faster through them, fearing the headaches that can be caused by their strong scent. In the distance mountains of various heights and foothills, some with and some without woods and bushes, were visible; there were lakes, too, where wild ducks and geese were swimming, as well as streams and small rivers flowing from the mountains or lakes and running through the sandy (and gold-bearing) ground. Often smoke curled near the road, indicating the proximity of an Indian village.

At one place by the foothills of a small mountain and a fair distance from the road I noticed more smoke, which, I assumed, likely came from a large Indian village, and, never having seen the domestic life of the Indians, I decided to take a look at it, so I turned off the road and rode straight there with my guide. Upon my approach I saw that it consisted of 12 dwellings, arranged in various directions; some of them were covered with the hides of horses, antelope, and elk and others with rawhides or reeds. In the first dwelling an Indian was sitting and making an arrow with a knife. Seeing us, he stopped his work and, without standing up, looked at us with the knife in his hands. His face, with its small, sharp eyes (common to all of the Indians), was ugly and brutish. I gave him a cigar and asked to look at his work. He leapt to his feet, as if he wanted to attack me, but ran instead into his dwelling and fetched a finished arrow with a bow for me. The arrow, made of redwood, was 2½ feet in length; a 9-inch arrowhead of strong bone was implanted in one end and a vane of three feathers in the other so that the arrow would fly true. A five-foot bow string of very strong sinew was drawn very tautly to the bow. I was curious about how high the arrow would go, and, through the guide, who spoke the language of the Indians, I asked the Indian to shoot one. He did so; the arrow soared and in the blink of an eye disappeared from sight before falling not far from me and embedding itself almost nine inches into the ground. Soon we were surrounded by many Indians. All of them were distinguished by identical brutish, sunburnt faces on which various figures were tattooed, a practice that they consider fashionable; their dark, coarse, long hair was tied in a bun behind their heads; and their clothing consisted mostly of pieces of thin hide, and in some cases of cotton or woollen fabric that they had probably received from the Californios for their labour or, perhaps, had stolen, for the Indians, like all savage peoples in general, are very prone to thievery.

In the assembled crowd there was not a single Indian woman. Among the Indians the women perform almost all the work, whereas the men loaf. I met many women in this village, and all of them were occupied with something, but the men were lying or sitting, doing nothing. Very few of them were working at anything, such as sharpening knives or fashioning arrows. Here in one dwelling a woman was trimming a pole for the shelter, and a man, probably her husband, was cooking meat on a stick. In other shelters women were squeezing juice from wild grapes (used for making wine), plaiting tree roots for containers (tight, strong, and very beautiful baskets that serve them in place of crockery), or making headdresses from bird feathers of various colours that both the men and the women use for

adornment. In the middle of the same village three women were skinning a steer, which had probably been rustled. The vaquero wanted to see whether it had any brand, but I restrained him, lest he arouse suspicion, for which they might exact retribution. A high degree of repulsive slovenliness prevailed in the village; most of all, the brutish appearance of the Indians inspired a kind of fear. Night was already falling, so we rode hurriedly from the Indian village back to the Monterey road.

More than half of the way to Monterey remained, and we had to overnight at a rancho somewhere. Now the roofs of a Californio settlement appeared in the distance, and I decided to stay there. It consisted of four houses with various extensions. Many olive trees were growing in the pueblo, and in places apple and pear trees were visible. I came across nothing of interest here because all Californio villages are much the same. I stayed with the family of one of the Californios, who received me very cordially. Fatigue from riding overcame me, and I slept soundly, lying on an antelope hide. In the morning, after having changed horses that had already been readied for us the previous evening, we hastened to resume our journey, despite a cold fog. On the road we met not a single object of interest, apart from a couple of picturesque localities. Sometimes we came upon wildcats in the woods, but they fled from us, so we were unable to shoot any of them.

We changed horses without hindrance, and we soon reached Monterey. We ascended a hill, from the top of which rose the cross of Monterey's monastery.⁷⁶ Finally, after passing a small thicket we rode into the town, situated on the slope of the shore of Monterey Bay. The houses were arranged with some regularity; many of them contained shops and storehouses, whose goods were very dear, for, without any particularly substantial income from the towns of California, high tariffs are imposed on imported commodities.

The house of the governor was found in the centre of the town. Its exterior was more attractive than those of the others, and nearby were the barracks — long, one-story buildings with small windows, and dilapidated in many places. The cannons standing in front of the barracks were in somewhat better condition than those that I saw in Yerba Buena. A town hall had been built near the barracks and a prison behind them. I approached the latter and saw an Indian sitting on an iron grating; he had been condemned to death by shooting. The felon's face, already disfigured by tattooing, was made even more terrible by the savage, brutish glances that he cast around. His crime was the theft of a steer from a Californio ranchero. When the thief had taken the animal with him to the village, he had encountered a vaquero who recognized the owner of the animal from its brand and with his lariat captured the Indian (who would otherwise have tried to flee) and took the thief and the steer to the rancho of the owner, who flogged the Indian severely and then released him. With malice and vengeance in his heart, the Indian left the house but not before he had noted the details of its layout, and the next night he carefully stole up to the house and, seeing an open window, sneaked into the bedroom and knifed the Californio and his wife. Their son, who was sleeping in a nearby room, was awakened by the noise and cried out; the Indian attacked him, but upon the outcry other residents came running. Trying to save himself, the Indian jumped out the window with the cunning of a wild beast but was overtaken and captured.

A tannery has been built in Monterey alongside a small river. I visited it and saw the hides; their quality was much lower than that of our Russian hides. Closer to the bay lay an enormous pile of shells, which, I learned, are calcined and serve in place of lime for whitewash for the houses. The broad bay was full of trading vessels, which come to sell

⁷⁶ Presumably the Cathedral of San Carlos Borromeo, or Royal Presidio Chapel, founded in 1770 and subsequently moved to the mouth of the Monterey River and rebuilt several times.

goods or to buy local products. Among them were many whalers, which have put into the bay to overnight or to water. A French ship had been hauled up right to the pier; it had come for live cattle for the Sandwich [Hawai'ian] Islands. After finding nothing more remarkable in the town, I hurried back to my ship.

Sailing Orders

Three weeks after we had anchored at Yerba Buena, two more of our ships arrived at San Francisco from Sitka (the *Konstantin*⁷⁷ and the *Baikal*⁷⁸) to embark wheat and meat. We received a packet from the governor with orders to get salt at the island of Carmen in the Gulf of California (or Crimson Sea⁷⁹). However, in order to buy salt and to pay for anchorage it was necessary to have piastres in cash, which we did not have in a sufficient amount (only the RAC's promissory notes to the sum of 5 thousand piastres, or 25 thousand paper rubles), so we would have to put into some port along our route where it would be possible to exchange the promissory notes without difficulty. And at those places where we could get salt — and generally everywhere around the Gulf of California — we would not be able to exchange promissory notes for such a sum, for the local inhabitants did not have much money. Besides, there was not much trade at the rich ports, where promissory notes could be converted. European ships come here very rarely, and even then for some special reason, for example, to get water or to make repairs. Very rarely do they come for salt, and even the Russian-American Company itself sends ships for this product at Carmen every three years only, and the ship is always outfitted so as to have space for other products. Since our ship, the *Naslednik*, was the largest of all of the company's vessels suitable for the voyage, we had been ordered not to embark wheat in California but to go for salt; instead the *Konstantin* and *Baikal* were to fetch wheat for the colonies. What could be more pleasant than this news? Gloomy Sitka, with its constant rain and fog, had bored all of us, and we wanted to enjoy ourselves longer in foreign ports and bask in the balmy climate.

Now we had to find a port where we could definitely and profitably exchange promissory notes. An atlas directed us to Mazatlan on the Pacific coast of North America. The commander's experience and the customary deftness of the sailors, as well as a fair wind, accelerated our departure. Having the necessary supply of provisions and water, and — despite the difficulty of raising the anchor from the silty bottom of San Francisco Bay — at 3 o'clock we went out to sea singing, and by 8 o'clock in the evening the wind had taken us 70 miles from the coast.

The farther south we went, the hotter it became. It was as if the ocean gradually became calmer and the wind blew more evenly, and right up to the site of our anchorage the topsail kept stretching. Sometimes, but very rarely, a small cloud ran across the blue sky or a warm, heavy rain fell, but within ten minutes all of this pleasant moisture had been dissipated

⁷⁷ The RAC's twenty-two-man brig *Konstantin*, upon its return to New Archangel, left there in the spring for the port of Ayan to covertly (so as not to alarm China) explore the coast of the Okhotsk Sea and the shores between the mouth of the Amur River and the island of Sakhalin in the summer. It would be joined at Ayan by Markov and his ship. The overall purpose was to find a better outlet to the Pacific from Eastern Siberia than the notorious Yakutsk-Okhotsk Trail.

⁷⁸ The RAC's 215-ton *Baikal* was the former brig *Arab*, one of several superior American ships purchased by the RAC.

⁷⁹ The origin of this alternative name for the gulf is unknown; the usual alternative is the 'Gulf of Cortés.' One possibility is the conflation of *carmesi* (Spanish for 'crimson') and Carmen, the two salt islands inside the gulf.

by the rays of the sun without leaving a trace. Our ship was nearing the tropic [of Cancer at 23° 26' N. latitude]; the tar on the shrouds was sticking to the sailors' hands, and we had to continually water the deck to prevent cracks in the planking. A shirt, white trousers, shoes, and a tarred hat were the only clothing of each of the sailors. We slowly grew accustomed to the heat farther south, and, as native inhabitants of the far north, recalled our deep snows and crackling frosts.

Some beautiful fish, their scales shining golden and silver in the sun, swam around our ship. We often had occasion to catch these bonitos [*Sarda lineolata*] with a line. This fish is two and a third feet in length; its beautiful skin was reflected in rose, green, and blue stripes in the water, and its meat was white, tasty, and quite fatty. On one occasion hammer-head sharks would not leave us alone for three days. When we tried to catch them with harpoons or nooses, all of our efforts were in vain; it was as if they were playing with us before vanishing in the ocean depths. Mostly we came upon flying fish; sometimes they found themselves on the deck, but their meat was unfit for use. A line with a hook baited with salted meat was always dangling over the side of the ship, salted meat being the lure of choice for the catching of these dwellers of the tropical seas. Many of them in grabbing it were caught on it, and this event afforded us some amusement during the boredom of our monotonous voyage. Once a three-foot shark took the bait. We had scarcely raised it to the deck and extracted the hook from its mouth when it began to flop about high in the air, and it struck one sailor in the head so hard that he suffered for two weeks and lost his desire to amuse himself with such fishing, although initially he had liked it very much! And something else occurred when a sailor was lowered overboard in a net to paint a white stripe. He was at least four and two-thirds feet above the surface of the sea and was quietly doing his work, swinging his legs, when suddenly a shark surfaced and grabbed the sailor by his shoes. It had probably wanted his whole leg but had risen too high above the water. This incident made us a little more cautious with sharks, which abound in tropical waters, where it is very dangerous to swim alongside a ship.

Mazatlan

Soon land was sighted on the port side. It was Cabo San Lucas, the tip of the peninsula of California. Many small birds of various species flew to our ship; brought from the coast by the winds, they became our permanent passengers and sailed with us to the land. Since the object of our coming was solely the exchange of promissory notes, which required very little time, the captain saw fit to go ashore in the cutter to exchange the promissory notes, leaving the ship to tack near the shore — firstly because the governor of the colonies had ordered us not to stop at the anchorage (even though our ship was a naval vessel with a pennant and, according to maritime regulations, naval vessels do not have to pay for anchoring in foreign ports) and secondly (and more importantly) so as to save labour and time lowering and raising the anchor. This order, known until now to the captain only, grieved almost all of the crew because each of them had thought to enjoy himself in a prosperous foreign port — and now all of their plans for some prospective amusement had collapsed. But there was nothing to be done: service aboard ships demands obedience.

After reaching the roadstead, the captain ordered that our ship lie to, whereupon he launched the fourteen-oared cutter. The oarsmen were ordered to wear uniforms and carry arms just in case. The commander and I as second navigator sat in the cutter and proceeded ashore; meanwhile, our ship, under the first navigator, turned around so that it could tack more safely while awaiting the cutter's return. The flag of the Russian-American Company

with the double-headed eagle flew on the stern of our cutter; the bosun's assistant steered and whistled commands to the sailors. The most strapping and most vigorous sailors had been expressly selected as oarsmen. Some naval frigates stood in the extensive roadstead: 3 American of 60 guns; 2 English, also of 60 guns; and 1 Mexican transport. The sides of these vessels were lined with spectators, watching our cutter and the tacking ship; each of them were keen to know why a Russian naval vessel had come to the port, which had never before been visited by a Russian ship. After crossing the roadstead, we entered the harbour, where many 3-masted and 2-masted trading vessels from various nations stood. On the pier a throng of curious spectators had gathered to see Russians, who had never before been guests at Mazatlan. Actually, many of the local inhabitants, knowing of Russians by hearsay only, esteemed us as some sort of special people, and that was why they were watching the cutter with such curiosity.

After we had disembarked at the pier, we were met by the commandant of the port. He welcomed us in a friendly manner and asked us why we had come and why we were not standing at anchor. Our captain explained our needs and also questioned whether anchoring required payment.

"We are very pleased to see Russians," answered the commandant, "and you would do well to stay at anchor and stay a while in our town. Don't worry about payment; yours is a naval ship, and you have the right to stop where you want without paying a penny⁸⁰; meanwhile, you will be exchanging promissory notes, for which you will need more time than you suppose."

We thanked the commandant for his amicable suggestion, while rejoicing internally at the chance to stay a little longer at this port, which we liked from the outset. Our captain, wanting to answer courtesy with courtesy, asked the commandant for permission to salute the fort. He did not object to this honour, and our navigator went in the cutter to the *Naslednik* with an order to drop anchor and salute the fort with seven guns. The commandant also invited us to dine with him.

Walking along the long, narrow stone pier, at the end of which a customs house had been built, we met a man in a blue uniform with a red collar and a staff in his hand (the knob of the staff was adorned with a one-headed eagle). This was the customs officer. He bowed to us and, without looking at his superior, walked with us, calmly smoking a cigarette. We entered a broad quay, paved in stone right to the street. In front of us on the left stretched some white, three-story houses of quite beautiful architecture. Cellars were visible on the first floor of almost every house with closely packed rows of bottles and carboys. The clicking of billiard balls echoed in a few of the houses, and at times the sound of a fortepiano could be heard.

Then we reached the commandant's house on the quay and mounted the stone steps of the entrance. A slave, serving as a doorman, opened a glass door to a gallery with flowers and various trees. Two green parrots sitting in lemon trees squawked something to us. The gallery ended in an arch, which led to a luxurious hall, also lined with fruit trees. Huge, coloured plate-glass windows cast iridescent light on the soft carpets spread upon the smoothly-polished stone floor. A round table with dishes for dinner stood in the middle of armchairs, which stretched all along the hall. There we were met by the commandant's wife with her two young children. It seemed that she was genuinely pleased with the arrival of some Russians, and the children gamboled around us, playing with their toys and showing them to

⁸⁰ The original reads *real*, or 'piece of eight,' the Spanish colonial silver coin, eight of which equalled one silver dollar (piastre).

us. I was handed a small book with pictures illustrating the soldiers of various nations; in it a Russian soldier was represented in a much larger size than the others, with enormous ears and side-whiskers hiding nearly all of his face. This depiction supported my impression that the inhabitants of Mazatlan, never having seen Russians before but only hearing of them, imagined them as a people completely different from others.

A cannon salute to the fort from our ship rang out, whereupon the commandant led us to another room with a view of the entire anchorage of Mazatlan. The *Naslednik* was already standing at anchor, three miles from the shore. With his telescope the commandant was clearly admiring our ship and the ease with which the sailors were furling the sails.

Our salute was answered by the fort, also with seven guns. People were still crowding the pier, awaiting the Russian cutter, which was returning from the ship. The commandant made a sign to invite the second navigator to dine with us, and after he arrived we sat down to a hearty dinner.

During dinner a banker arrived and offered his services with respect to the exchange of promissory notes. Our captain asked him, "how much will it cost?" "My apologies," he replied, "it is such an insignificant sum that it is not worthwhile to exact a percentage of it. If you would like to exchange not 5 thousand but 100 thousand piasters, then we would take nothing from you as a percentage for the exchange because this is the first time that we have seen Russians here, and it would please us if you were to visit us more often."

We thanked the banker for his generous offer and replied that for our part the percentage required as payment for the exchange was not significant to us either, but we did not want to take advantage of anything gratis, especially in a foreign port where we were being accepted so cordially.

"I know Russians, captain," answered the banker, "they all like to do their part, but if you do not want to take advantage of an exchange without a percentage, then allow me to say that you won't be able to exchange promissory notes here; I am certain that not one trading house will take a percentage from you for the exchange. So, you will have to accept my services anyway. When would you like to get the piastres?"

"If possible, today then," replied our captain.

"No, today is impossible," said the banker, "because I am having an evening party, at which you must be the first of my guests, but tomorrow I will be completely at your service for the sum that you require." A cordial handshake sealed agreement on the part of our captain, and the banker left for home.

During dinner the commandant questioned us about Russia and its snowfalls, and he was very surprised when we told him that there were places where the depth of the snow reached more than 9 feet and the cold up to 49°, as at Yakutsk, where people just like us live. The commandant's wife probably would not have believed our narrative if she had known that we meant -49° of hard frost. Barely having had occasion to experience only 2° of cold, she would not have been able to imagine the full severity of Russian frosts.

The Town Itself

At the end of the dinner the commandant offered us horses for riding around the town, but we declined, saying that after having constantly travelled on ships at sea it would be pleasant for us to wander by foot on land.

It was about 4 o'clock, and the heat had begun to diminish gradually. We set off into the town. A plaza opened before us; in the middle of it stood a column with two gargoyles, from which hung ropes with nooses. It was a gallows for criminals. For three days before our

arrival a young man had been hanging from this very gallows for the murder of an American navigator, who had seduced his wife and taken his place.

After crossing the plaza, we entered a small street. Piles of pineapples, lemons, figs, bananas, and other fruits lay for sale on grassy reeds. Here I saw stalks of sugar cane up to 10 inches in diameter and 14 feet in length. All of these fruits grow wild in the valleys around Mazatlan and do not require any tending. Out of curiosity I asked how much a hundred pineapples cost. "1 piastre," replied a sunburnt hawker. "Why so dear," I asked jokingly. "Well, we have to tend them for half a day, and 2 piastres are paid for a day's work here, so the price is not out of line." Our captain ordered the hawker to count out 200 pineapples for the sailors and gave him 4 piastres. He was very grateful for our generosity.

Then we entered an enormous bazaar, enclosed by thick columns. Well-stocked shops stretched in straight lines on both the right-hand and left-hand sides, and smart, well-dressed merchants walked back and forth in expectation of customers. The captain took it into his head to buy a shawl, so we went into a Chinese store that was full of rich shawls of Chinese workmanship. "What does this cost?", asked the captain, pointing to one of the hanging shawls. "1,000 piastres," answered the merchant. "And that one?" "800 piastres." "Show me a shawl that is not very expensive," requested the captain. "We do not have any shawls cheaper than 200 piasters," the merchant replied. And he unfolded some excellent shawls in front of us. The captain chose one of them and ordered that it be put aside for another day. "And what is the price of your most expensive shawl?" The merchant opened a box and took out a huge, white, silk shawl with black flowers and a black fringe. He squeezed it into a ball and then let it go; the shawl had not changed at all. Then he rolled it into a ring and pulled the shawl through it. "How much does this shawl cost?," our captain asked. "5,000 piastres." "And do the local inhabitants buy such shawls from you?" "Very often," answered the merchant. "And our business is always good." Judging from the wealth of goods and the huge size of the buildings, the inhabitants of Mazatlan, I thought, must be either prosperous or very extravagant.

We took leave of the merchant and proceeded through the bazaar, which housed other, even better, shops in terms of both their appointments and the quality of their goods. In one of these shops I noticed some sailcloth from a Russian firm. Curiosity prompted me to ask how an article of Russian manufacture could find its way here. "An English trading vessel from Brazil supplies us with sailcloth," replied the merchant. "But there is no Russian factory there," I said. The merchant, who was evidently an expert businessman, explained to me that the Englishman brought more than twelve million measures of sailcloth to America annually and sold them as being of Russian manufacture. "This means that Russian goods are esteemed at American ports?," I asked. "It's all the same", replied the merchant, "just as you have foreign goods in Russia." "And how much does a piece of Russian sailcloth cost here?" "20 piastres." Yes, I thought, and it would be very profitable if the Russian manufacturers themselves were to bring their products here.

We continued walking through the bazaar. In many shops luxurious vases were featured. Grand white silk laces, patterned rugs, silk, woollen, and cotton fabrics of various colours, articles of crystal, silver, and gold — everything dazzled the eyes and afforded a very good idea of the trade of the port of Mazatlan. The offices of various foreign trading houses had also been established inside the bazaar.

A narrow street cut the bazaar into two halves, and we proceeded to the end of this street in hopes of getting to the pier, where our cutter awaited us. On the way something rather amusing happened to us. A hawker's fruit stall stood on one side of the street; beside it sat a monkey eating a banana, and nobody else. Probably the owner had gone and left the

monkey to guard the stall, and our navigator took it into his head to verify our assumption. He went up to the stall and took a lemon, whereupon the monkey dropped his banana, grabbed the navigator by his coattails, shrieked, and clung to his captive. To oppose the creature would be foolhardy, for it might rip off the navigator's coattails or, even worse, scratch his face. The captain wanted to grab it by the face, but it bared its teeth at him, so we stood meekly in front of the creature until the owner returned. Seeing him, the monkey immediately released the navigator and resumed eating the banana. We explained to the owner what had happened and gave him a piastre. He thanked us, but the monkey continued to watch the navigator maliciously.

On the street at the end of the bazaar stood a large, 3-storey building. It was a hotel, and at its entrance two lions with bronze lamps stood on their hind paws on both sides of a wide, iron staircase. On the 2nd floor we walked straight into a huge hall, in the middle of which stood a thick, polished column of marble that supported the ceiling. Around it wound steps with flowers. There were chairs, armchairs, and divans upholstered with some sort of fine material. The fruit trees lining the hall exuded coolness and freshness; above the chairs between the windows were hung mirrors in large, bronze, oval frames, reflecting the greenery as well as the ships in the waves of the bay. From the hall another staircase led to a garden with shady alleys of laurel trees and coconut palms. In the middle of the garden there was a rather large pond with two landings. Its glassy surface bore a pretty sloop with bent sails, and in it sat several gentlemen and ladies.

In the hotel pretty girls served in place of servants. The owner, an elderly man of respectable appearance, walked the hall, smoking a cigarette and bowing to the guests. We requested ice cream, and one of the girls gave us some in three shells. After eating some, we rang a little bell, and a girl came up to us. "How much do we owe you for the ice cream?" asked our captain. "6 piastres." "Why so expensive?," the captain asked jokingly. "Ice is very costly here," she answered, "it is brought laboriously from the high mountains." "We do not have much money," said the captain as a joke. "Forgive us this sum." "As you wish," the girl replied with a smile. We thanked her for her trust, and then we gave her 6 piastres for the ice cream and 1 for herself.

The hall was full of guests, particularly officers from the English and American frigates standing in the roadstead. Many ladies were also there, either with their husbands or with friends. Some of them were smoking cigarettes, and others were drinking coffee or watching their husbands play bingo or dominos. Here it was not considered improper on the part of ladies to visit such establishments without a gentleman chaperone.

Other, smaller rooms were visible along both the right-hand and the left-hand sides of the hall. Billiard and chess tables stood in them. When we entered one of these rooms a plump Englishman proposed that our captain play a game of chess with him. The captain knew how to play this game very well but was not an enthusiast; however, he took a seat in order to amuse the Englishman. The curious gathered around the table to watch and see who would win. The Englishman went first, moving two pawns: one in front of the king and the other in front of the castle. The captain for his part also moved two pawns: one in front of the king and the other in front of the bishop. The Englishman's turn was next. I don't know why, but he moved his pawn. It was an inexcusable mistake. The captain took advantage of this move, sacrificing his own pawn but checkmating the king with his bishop.⁸¹ Having seen that

⁸¹ However, a colleague, Constantin Ponomareff, who has helped me with the translation of this paragraph (and who is also a chess player), advises that the narrator either knew little or nothing about chess or else

he had lost the game, the Englishman frowned slightly and then guffawed (more from vexation, it seemed) and proffered a dozen bottles of champagne. Courtesy demanded that the captain drink a bottle with the Englishman. The latter paid for the champagne and split a bottle with our captain; it seems that the remaining eleven bottles, which the English eccentric neither wanted nor touched, were left for the use of the hotelier.

We walked into the garden. There some patrons were drinking tea at small tables under a shade tree, others were resting in Chinese summer houses, from which the ocean and the ships with flapping flags were visible. The sun had nearly set. Evening had come. It was a pity that we had to part with such a pleasant place, but it had to be so, as the ship awaited us in the roadstead.

Merrymaking Crewmen

Leaving the hotel and walking straight down the street to the pier, there we met our sailors making merry. The bosun in his unbuttoned uniform and tilted cap was standing in the middle of the pier with a bottle in his hand and entertaining some sort of French pedlar (he had served on a French warship and seen action at a battle off Narva). Having spotted us, the bosun gave his bottle to the Frenchman, nodded to him, and shouted to the sailors: “Hey, lads, save it!” Hearing this warning, the sailors assembled in the cutter as best they could.

“Good Lord, how drunk you are,” said the captain, adopting a stern demeanour (while both the navigator and I were inwardly pleased with this situation, which meant that we would be able to stay ashore). “Guilty, Your Honour”, said the bosun, “we were wetting our whistle a bit.” “You were toasting a relative or what?” continued the captain, sitting down in the cutter. “A compatriot, Your Honour!” “Why, are you really French?” “No, Your Honour, you know that I am a Christian.⁸² I call him a compatriot because he was on a French ship at Navarino [in 1827] and helped us fight the Turks when we were serving you in the Sea of Azov”

“Cast off!,” ordered the bosun, forgetting his whistle. The oarsmen stroked the water and the cutter began slowly to move towards our ship. As we departed, reveille was being played ashore, and as we proceeded in silence our thoughts carried us ashore. A quarter of an hour later we had gone no more than a mile from the pier. “For some reason we are moving too slowly,” remarked the navigator. “Lean on the oars, lads!”, shouted the bosun to the sailors. “The damn current is pushing us back to shore.” “No, it’s more likely that rum is fueling the cutter,” said the captain, “and we won’t even make the ship by morning. Turn back.” Delighted, the bosun gave the order: “Hard to port!”, and the cutter flew towards the pier. “Good lads, let’s move it,” continued the bosun. “Well, I’ll give all of you a flogging tomorrow to teach you how to row,” said the captain with a pretended angry look. “We seem to be moving fast,” remarked the bosun. In less than 10 minutes we reached the pier. Upon leaving the cutter, the captain ordered the sailors not to go anywhere, to guard the cutter, and not to drink. “Aye, aye, Sir!”, they answered in one voice.

The music had not stopped, and the three of us — the captain, the navigator, and I — set off into the town, which was still illuminated by lanterns. In Mazatlan there are no boulevards, but the wide sidewalks lit by lanterns serve as places for public strolling. The

misdescribed the play because, given the moves, a checkmate would not be possible — which in turn means that the champagne was not justified!

⁸² The bosun’s French ‘compatriot’ was presumably Catholic, which the Russian Orthodox bosun apparently did not even deem a Christian denomination.

constant heat during the day does not allow the residents to stroll then, but when the sun sets and the evenings cool the sidewalks are filled with strolling ladies and their partners.

We, too, strolled for quite a while. The luxuriance of nature, the healthful air (which we greedily inhaled while thinking of our imminent return to rainy Sitka), the pleasingly enlightened society (which we had not experienced for a long time), and our flattering privileges (being objects of attention and respect from all of the elegant and smart people) — in short, everything was conducive to our remembering this evening for a long time.

At one bend in the sidewalk we met the commandant, strolling with his wife. It was evident that he was very pleased to meet us and wanted to walk with us. While we were talking we imperceptibly crossed the street leading to the plaza where the criminal was hanging. It was dark in the middle of the plaza but lanterns burned on its sides. A street ran straight from the plaza to the pier. The sound of a Russian song reached our ears. “It’s your men singing,” said the commandant. We walked directly to the pier. There we saw a thick crowd of people, and near the pier stood a pyramid of rifles, around which our sailors were sitting, singing their favourite song: “Our Russia conquers everything” The pier was lit by lanterns; light also fell from the windows of the nearby houses. The sailors were not trying to enter the town: they needed vodka, which they had found, and as an additional gift many of their listeners had brought them rum, gin, and sundry wines. Although Mazatlan’s residents did not understand the Russian songs, they liked the melodies very much. The commandant walked up to the merry circle, took out a doubloon,⁸³ and gave it to the bosun, and then he made to leave but his wife entreated him to wait; she liked the Russian songs, too.

Soon the commandant’s wife turned to him and said: “You promised to be at the banker’s in the evening, so we must go.” And we arrived within half an hour. The extensive courtyard of the banker’s home was full of riding horses (I should mention that there are no carriages in Mazatlan, and the locals of both sexes generally ride on horses). Music rang out from the brightly-lit second floor of the house. We entered the hall, which was full of guests, just before the end of the gentlemen’s [or cavaliers’] dance, which aroused our curiosity. Although we did not catch its beginning, I recognized it by its content. In accordance with prior conditions, a certain number of gentlemen and ladies assemble, the former with fencing swords and the latter with garlands of artificial or natural flowers. Pairs are formed, divided into two equal parts, and arranged in two rows, such that the gentlemen, with swords in their hands, are positioned right in front of one another and the ladies are beside them with their garlands raised upwards. Then in time with the music the gentlemen begin to approach each other and fence with their épées. Each of them tries to get the garland of the lady opposite him with the end of his épée. The lady must throw the garland over the victor’s sword, and he leaves the row, takes the lady, and has the right to kiss her and test her in a fast waltz. The defeated gentleman also takes a lady but has the right to waltz with her only, not to kiss her. The dance, in its liveliness and swiftness, pleased us very much; and it is all to the good in that it instills some military-like training in young people, who can then supplement the garrison.

The gentleman’s dance was followed by the donkey dance, the jota,⁸⁴ the cha-cha-cha, and other dances, a couple of which were familiar to us. Our treatment by the host and hostess and the guests was very cordial; it seemed that they took special pleasure in including in their circle Russians who were visiting this distant country for the first time.

⁸³ A doubloon was a Spanish gold coin equal to 16 piastres.

⁸⁴ The jota is a traditional Spanish courtship dance accompanied by a folk song with guitars and castanets.

I went into one of the side rooms. There around an open table sat five Mexicans, playing cards. The whole table was covered with high stacks of doubloons. Judging from the calm faces, one would think that none of them was afraid to lose, even a lot. But then dawn broke, and the guests started to leave, one after the other, save several laggards.

We also wanted to take our leave of the banker and ride in his boat, but he stopped us, saying: "Gentlemen, it would be better if you overnight with me and receive your money tomorrow." We accepted the offer of the obliging banker with pleasure and were conducted to a sleeping room. Somehow or other sleep escaped me, my mind being full of recollections of the past evening. Then in the east I saw the sun rising from behind the high mountains and over the light morning fog, which was like a transparent haze. It rose higher, but the residents of Mazatlan still slept. The streets were empty, and only a five-man patrol passed through them from time to time. Each of the men had a rifle. They were attired in white sailcloth trousers and jackets of the same material with red collars, plus a black shoulder belt with a pouch and a shoddy wedge-shaped leather shako with a single-headed eagle of copper. Judging from their uneven steps, it was impossible to imagine that Mexican could compare with European, let alone Russian, soldiers.

At the end of the street, I noticed three men. One of them, in a black robe, was walking ahead with a book in his hands, and the other two, in white jackets and hats with wide brims, followed him with long staffs. "Who are those people?" I asked a servant in our room. "They are a pastor with his bodyguards; he is probably going somewhere to perform some rite," he answered.

The clock on the fort's tower struck six; people began to appear on the streets. Because the banker's house was located on a direct line to the embankment, all of the pier was visible from the room that we had been given for overnighting. And as soon as the wine cellars opened, their first customers were the sailors; they had undoubtedly been awaiting this blessed hour with great impatience because it was still long before the start of knocks at doors and windows.

After the sailors had begun their early session at the wine cellars, water carriers appeared on the streets. Their method of hauling water in barrels was interesting. A long axle extends through the barrel (which contains at least $48\frac{3}{4}$ gallons) from one end to the other and protrudes at both ends as a shaft, so that one man can either harness himself to it or easily roll it along the smooth streets.

The streets gradually filled with the various pedlars and merchants of the bazaar. Our captain was still sleeping as the navigator and I left the house to stroll through the town. After passing several stone structures, we came across the theatre — a very beautiful building, its frontal facade adorned with Corinthian columns. Not far from it was a fairly large hospital, farther yet a stables with barracks, and to the left a market, filled with sundry fruits and leafy vegetables. We then exited the town on its other side, which was also washed by the bay — meaning that the town was situated on a large cape. In front of us extended a long row of little shacks, assembled somehow from thin boards and covered with banana leaves; there was dirt everywhere, with piles of litter. These were the dwellings of the pedlars, half-naked and sun-burnt. Their occupation consisted of day jobs: carrying and hauling heavy items, digging, taking messages — in short, doing all of the so-called "black" [unskilled] work. The wives of some of them hawked fruit, which they themselves fetched in the woods, or they were hired to pick sugar cane, or at home they plaited sacks (for root vegetables), baskets, bast mats, and so on from grasses.

After passing these shanties, we ascended the rugged cape. From the summit all of the town and the bay with ships were visible. Seven bell towers rose in various parts of the town;

up to a thousand houses, mostly of stone, were situated compactly on the broad cape, and many of them had gardens with palm, coconut, banana, and bay trees. To the east a lush valley with lemon, pomegranate, and pineapple trees stretched to the mountains [Sierra Madre Occidental] in the distance; through this wide belt ran the road to the city of Mexico. For a long time we admired these different panoramas of Mazatlan's setting.

But it was time for us to return to the banker's house, where we found our captain having coffee with the banker's family, who invited us to share breakfast with them. After eating the banker fetched five bags of piastres. "If you please, count it," he said. "I have no doubt that it already has been," replied the captain. "Yes, here are 5,000 piastres." "So there is nothing to count." "Order our sailors to come and take the bags to the cutter," said the captain, turning to the navigator, who soon returned with five deckhands.

Then we parted cordially from the banker and his family. The navigator proceeded to the cutter, and the captain walked with me to the bazaar to get the shawl that he had chosen the previous evening and to buy some provisions for the *revival* [sobering up] of the crew. We were ready to cast off and bid farewell to Mazatlan by midday, when our cutter set out from the pier.

Loreto

It was sad to part from such lush shores, and we sailed silently. Finally, we reached the ship, which was bobbing slowly on the ocean waves, its pennant fluttering in the light breeze. Many small boats were standing around the ship, having come with fruits and sundry small, fancy items to sell. Despite the nearness of the ship from the coast, the hawkers had not tried to meet the ship enroute on account of the danger from sudden winds. They had sailed in the certainty of selling their goods, and, in fact, upon our arrival at the ship their boats were already empty, and they were preparing to leave.

After the captain had boarded the ship from the cutter, the first navigator reported to him on the fitness of the ship and the crew. Then he added that during our absence ashore a lieutenant had come in a sloop from an English frigate to learn the reason for our coming to Mazatlan. "How did you answer the lieutenant?", asked the captain. "I told him," replied the navigator, "that I did not know the reason and that our captain had gone ashore." After hearing the navigator's report, the captain ordered that preparations be made for departure.

The bosun's whistle roused the men below deck to raise the cutter in the boom and lift the chains. Then, after the ship had settled, they were deployed to unbend the sails. All of these tasks were performed very smartly. The frigates standing in the roadstead were directing their telescopes at us, the foreigners undoubtedly being curious to observe the orderly and nimble actions of Russian sailors. After setting the sails, we made a turn in the sea and saluted the fort, which fired seven guns very loudly, as we had put a double charge in the cannon with a large wad rubbed in salt. The fort answered with an equal number of rounds. Afterwards the whole roadstead was enveloped in smoke from the salutes of the foreign frigates, who also bade us farewell with seven rounds, to which in gratitude for their friendly disposition we answered with nine rounds. Then we set our course NNW for the Gulf of California, or Crimson Sea. We watched quietly as the buildings of Mazatlan slowly disappeared, and our thoughts were carried to that fascinating coast and its hospitable inhabitants who had received us visitors from the faraway North so warmly.

At the fo'c'sle [forecastle] a circle of sailors, some of whom had been ashore and some who had not, were gathered, including the bosun. The former talked about their

adventures; the latter envied them. ‘Well,’ said one of the former, ‘when we first went ashore at the small town, it seemed as if never in all of our lives did we do so much drinking.’

‘What do you mean, matey,’ asked one of the latter, ‘did you really have enough money?’ ‘Zounds, man!’ ‘We barely had enough to last half a year.’

‘Where did you get it?’ ‘We didn’t get any! We just spent what we could spare.’

‘When we reached the pier, a lot of people gathered to see us, as if we were some sort of wonder. At the time of our second visit the captain was with the commandant, and we were left to ourselves. Then some sort of gentleman with two gentlewomen approached us, and, after talking amongst themselves for a while, the gentleman gave some money to one of the town’s tradesmen, who brought us two bottles of rum with a large glass. The gentleman took the glass, filled it to the brim, and gave it to me first to drink. I thought to myself: what’s he up to? Probably, I thought with a smile, he wants to show the two gentlewomen how Russians drink. I doffed my cap, bowed respectfully, and drank it back without even wincing. The gentleman exclaimed ‘ah!’ Then he treated us to another bottle, then a third and so on until he had bought five bottles and given them to us. Watching us, the gentleman simply shrugged his shoulders. Then someone brought us gin, and we drank so quickly’ ‘They couldn’t even walk,’ added the bosun. ‘How so?,’ said three of them in one voice. ‘We were already halfway down the street when the captain ordered us to go back. It was’t as if we had to be dragged to sea.’ ‘It just means that they were very drunk,’ said the bosun.

‘Enough!,’ shouted the navigator and officer of the watch.

‘Yes, sir!,’ was the bosun’s reply, and the sailors dispersed over the deck.

The wind shifted to the S.S.E. and we ran before it. The current hissed under the ship, which tossed slightly as we sailed away at seven knots. The distance that we had to cover from Mazatlan to Loreto⁸⁵ was up to 280 miles. By the evening of the day after our departure, Cape Lucas [Cabo San Lucas] appeared for the second time on the port side. We sailed parallel to the coast of the eastern side of [Baja] California without losing sight of it. Now it seemed high, now low, and then it disappeared from view altogether, undoubtedly because of the large bays that extended far into the interior of the peninsula of California. The weather was very pleasant, and the scent of fragrant trees and wildflowers reached our ship.

On the third day we sighted the entrance to the bay of Escondito [Sp., ‘hidden’]. High cliffs were divided into several parallel straits, making it difficult to recognize the correct passage to Escondito’s bay. The wind was light, and we approached our destination with the current mostly; finally, we entered a narrow strait, enclosed by high banks, where we were completely becalmed. Towards 8 o’clock the current changed, becoming contrary and gradually stronger. A sounding line did not reach the bottom, so a lead line was dropped and showed a depth of 294 feet; consequently, because of the impossibility of anchoring we had to either proceed to the bay or return to the sea.

No sailor, of course, would like the latter choice, which entailed distancing ourselves from the coast. And so all ranks gathered all of their strength to tow the ship to an anchorage. The cutter and the sloop were lowered, and all of the deckhands manned them. The captain remained at the helm, and we gathered the sails, which from the lack of wind were slapping the topmast. The moon illuminated the wild crags ahead of us, and the surrounding silence was broken only by the sound of the oars striking the somnolent waters. Towards midnight

⁸⁵ Possibly named after the commune of the same name in Italy and a holy site. During the first half of the nineteenth century it was one of the two most important sources of salt for the inhabitants of the far North Pacific, Russian and Spanish as well as indigenous; the other was Oahu in the Hawai’ian Islands. And on the coast of the Russian Far East there had been a small saltworks worked by convicts just south of Okhotsk.

we reached a cape where it was possible to anchor. From here we were not far from the bay of Escondido, where there was the prospect of a prolonged anchorage. The captain, while awaiting a favourable current — and giving the crew time to rest — was content to stay at anchor in a depth of 108 feet.

We stood at anchor here for five hours awaiting a favourable current, and finally at sunrise we raised anchor and entered a bay similar to Kamchatka's [Avacha Bay⁸⁶]. It is protected everywhere against winds, and its shores on both sides merge into a plain covered with scrub. There is no remarkable structure, except a dilapidated stone house. Formerly, when an epidemic [smallpox?] raged at Loreto, the Spaniards, fearing infection, brought the sick to this house and left them to their fate. Some of the sufferers recovered from the disease and returned to their families, but most of them died, donating their land to a religious order.

After securing the ship, the captain and I went ashore in the sloop towards the ruins. On the beach lay an enormous piece of oyster shell that had been collected for making lime. A plain, overgrown with scrub, stretched into the distance. On it grew a lot of agave with two thick arms. Berries of a scarlet colour were visible on most of the trees; I was able to pick a few of them and found them to be very tasty.

On a winding path that stretched through the scrub we proceeded in the hope of seeing some sort of settlement, but despite going farther inland, we came upon nothing of the kind. Here and there the hard ground bore cracks, where salt had come to the surface.

Suddenly we heard the stamping of a horse, and soon a rider appeared from the scrub wearing a blue jacket with red cuffs, white canvas trousers, and a straw hat. It was the commandant of Loreto. After greeting us, he politely asked the reason for our coming. "We need salt," answered the captain. "What is the tonnage of your ship?," said the commandant. "I have to report this to the authorities in Guaymas, where they set the price per ton, whereupon you may get the salt from Carmen." Our captain then stated a lower number of tons than our ship actually displaced, for we had never had to have it measured for anyone; besides, judging from the commandant as the person in charge of Loreto, it was unlikely that there would be anyone in the entire town of Guaymas who would know how to measure the capacity of our ship.

The three of us resumed our walk and came upon a very beautiful plant, similar to a twisted hawser.⁸⁷ I wanted to break off a piece of the plant in order to examine its pith, and no sooner had I touched it than my hand was stinging and my fingers were swelling. Fortunately, our commandant companion, as a local resident, knew this plant, and he told me to rub my palm and fingers in my hair. I tried his simple remedy, and the stinging and swelling stopped!

Now the fence of a fairly large garden or orchard appeared. Various vegetables and fruits were growing in it, including peppers, grapes, and many cotton plants. Beyond lay a small plaza, in the middle of which stood a hut with a little shed. This was the entirety of the settlement of Escondito. One Spaniard (Don Juan) lived here. The interior of his house appeared nearly empty; except for a table with a bench in one room and a bed with a few chests in the other, there was no other furniture in the honourable don's home. His family consisted of a wife and four children. On the right side of the house a well had been dug; from it two mules were taking turns withdrawing water into a tank for the livestock to drink. Don Juan's assets comprised horses, cattle, and sheep, and from some of the last he got wool.

⁸⁶ Avacha Bay, like San Francisco Bay, is a caldera, the cone of an extinct volcano, with deep water, sheltering slopes, and a narrow entrance.

⁸⁷ Probably *Euphorbia magdalanae*, whose milky, white sap, or latex, is toxic.

Here we parted with the commandant, who hurried to Loreto to write a report to Guaymas about the arrival of a Russian ship for salt.

It seemed to me that it would be hard to find a quieter and more secluded life than Don Juan's. After viewing his property, we returned to the ship. The next day the captain and I got horses from Don Juan and rode with a guide to Loreto, 20 miles away. The horses, accustomed to the route, bore us quickly through the high, stony hills. Small lakes stretched into the distance; their quiet, smooth surface caught our attention. The road was rugged halfway only; thereafter we entered a lovely plain, covered with lush vegetation. In the woods we came across many parrots; the closer they let us get to them, the farther away they flew, as if they were toying with us. Then in the distance a monastery [mission⁸⁸] appeared, enclosed by a serrated wall with many towers. In places it was in ruins, but, judging from its external appearance, it must have been grand at one time. It stood alone in the middle of a plaza; farther away little stone houses could be seen scattered along a bay. A stream meandered through the centre of the town, and on its banks coconut and banana trees were growing. A better house than the others stood near the stream, and we rode up to its wide door. The dwelling belonged to a widow, the wife of the former commandant, but it seems that she has preserved his authority and influence over all of Loreto because, as I noticed, the residents of the poor town treated her with special respect. She is very well-to-do, and her exceptional plumpness undoubtedly has no equal locally. We spent the night in her house. In the morning we were given tea, which can rarely be found among the other residents of Loreto. Breakfast was also delicious and plentiful.

What is there to say about the fruit? It is dirt cheap here. Figs are an article of trade in Loreto, where they are picked, packed in leather bags, and sold for 3 piastres per *quintal*.⁸⁹ Formerly, it was possible to get pearls here, but now they are scarce. Among some of the inhabitants I happened to see pearls of excellent quality (albeit very few) from the Gulf of California, as well as pure water and an abundance of roasted nuts. From two hawkers I bought a *zolotnik*⁹⁰ of three pearls the size of flax seeds and several the size of peas, and for all of these I paid five twists of Virginia tobacco.

At Loreto there are numerous tortoises, and we even managed to catch some. To do so we put a small log into the water, the tortoise climbed onto it, and we simply pulled the log into the shallows and picked up the creature with our bare hands. The shell of the Californian tortoise is very beautiful, and its meat is a tasty food.

Ships come to Loreto from Mazatlan and exchange or buy and sell goods, including pearls (but very few), tortoises, figs, pineapples, lemons, pomegranates, and coconuts. Three of the households trade wine, but it is quite bad because the occupants do not know how to make it properly.

After breakfast with the onetime commandant's wife, we walked to the mission, whose huge iron doors were open. We entered and crossed the courtyard and then climbed a stone staircase leading into the church. At the top on the right an altar could be seen through a glass door, but services had not been held there long since because the priest, who resided permanently at Guaymas, very rarely came to Loreto. On the ledges lay a thick layer of dust, and here and there spiders were crawling around and spinning large cobwebs. To the left was a large room with some very large books; several were forty-two inches in length and at least

⁸⁸ The Misión de Nuestra Señora de Loreto Conchó, or Mission Loreto, was founded in 1697 at the native Monqui settlement of Conchó. It was closed in 1829.

⁸⁹ A *quintal* was a Spanish measure of weight of 100 libras, a hundredweight of 101.43 pounds.

⁹⁰ A *zolotnik* is an old Russian measure of weight of 65.83 grains, or 4.26 grams.

fourteen inches thick. It would have been interesting to scan the contents of these tomes, but in the absence of the priest we did not want to disturb their serenity, which they had doubtless long been enjoying, as indicated by the layer of dust. The mission was divided into several courtyards, separated by thick walls overgrown with moss.

A flood had ruined Loreto, which now had only some 200 residents of both sexes. Everything here indicates the decline of the population. Here and there stark-naked boys lolled in the sand or ran on all fours. Bored to death, we called on the commandant, whose residence was no better than the others, either inside or outside. When we entered his house he was sitting on a chest and reading the draft of a report about the arrival of our ship. He told us that tomorrow he would send the report by express to Gyuamas and that we would have to wait four days for an reply.

Our captain gave him ten cigars, for which he thanked us profusely (we knew that the residents had long been without tobacco). He also promised to send him four and a half pounds of smoking tobacco. Loreto's leader could not find the words to express his gratitude for our captain's generosity.

After returning to our ship, the captain, without waiting for an answer from Gyuamas to the commandant's report, dispatched 10 crewmen to the island of Carmen, which was located thirty miles from Escondito and abounded in salt. They were sent in a longboat and supplied with provisions for three weeks, as well as tents. Soon afterwards the captain and I also went to Carmen to see the area and to find out whether or not the lake was dry. Upon our arrival we found to our surprise that it was full of water to a depth of more than 5 feet. This setback was extremely disappointing, as it remained for us to either return to Sitka with an empty ship or to wait until the lake had dried up and left salt on the surface. With respect to the latter choice, however, we were unable to know for certain whether the water level might rise even higher from rainfall. In any case, prudence forced us to wait and watch the level. A week passed, and the water had subsided only a foot. Judging from such a decline, it was likely that we would be waiting a long time before salt appeared on the surface, in the meantime wasting time and provisions, which were nowhere else to be had. So the captain decided to return to Sitka.

It should be mentioned that on other occasions company vessels had gone to Carmen for the same purpose and had found the lake dry and the salt covering it like ice to a thickness of more than a foot, such that ten crewmen were able to cut a full load of salt of 350 tons in 8 days. The salt had cost the company 50 kopecks [half a ruble] for every thirty-six pounds, and it had been of excellent quality.

We began to prepare for our return voyage, supplementing the ballast and stocking firewood. The latter task caused us a lot of trouble, as we used the discarded centres of agave plants, which afforded fairly thick logs with holes that were dry and burned very well. They had been fetched in six longboats and stowed in the hold, and within two days scorpions had appeared in the ship and multiplied. One day, not understanding the reason for the appearance of these vermin, we got some of the recently stowed firewood from the hold for the galley. Our ship's medic sat on a piece of this firewood and suddenly, with a terrible cry, jumped so high that he nearly fell over the railing. The cause soon became clear. While he had been sitting on the firewood, a scorpion had crawled up to his neck and stung him with venom. The unbearable pain is accompanied by rapid swelling, and if the sting is not treated quickly, the victim invariably dies. The most successful treatment for the scorpion's bite is snuff with salt: one needs to sprinkle this mixture on the wound, whereupon the swelling slowly wanes. We had experienced a similar instance before, and we were careful to fumigate the ship with smoke.

Having completed our preparations for departure, we left the bay of Escondito and entered the Gulf of California, rounded Cape [San] Lucas, looked for the last time at the side where lush Mazatlan lay, and began to sail slowly northward. Thirty-six days later our ship was standing in the harbour of New Archangel on the island of Sitka. Here I finished the term of my contract with the Russian-American Company, and love of my homeland prompted me to leave the Russian colonies.⁹¹ My route lay through Ayan, and I want to acquaint curious readers with it.⁹²

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⁹¹ However, Markov did not leave, instead signing another five-year contract at the behest of the new governor (1845-50) of Russian America, Mikhail Tebenkov.

⁹² This narrative is not included, however, because it is not a primary source on the new Ayan-Yakutsk route based upon his own experience of it but a secondary source based upon the records or recollections of others, presumably those of the Russian-American Company or its agents.