THE GREAT MIGRATION

difficult as it may sound to the ear. Our travelers were just in the place, from which it was possible to, proceed direct to  
this asiatic peninsula. Vessels belonging to the Russian fur company every year collect the furs along the north west coast   
of america, and among the fox and aleutian islands sitka being their port of rendezvous. Thence proceeding to the  
harbour of saint peter and saint paul (petropaulouski), on the coast of kamschatka, they complete their cargoes with the  
skin crop that during the winter has been collected throughout the peninsula. Thence to china a portion of these furs  
are taken especially skins of the sable, which the chinese mandarins use extensively for trimming their costly robes; and  
for which teas, silk, lacquer ware, and other articles of chinese manufacture are given in exchange. The Japanese also, and  
other wealthy oriental nations, buy up quantities of costly furs; but by far the greater portion of this produce is  
consumed by the russians themselves in whose cold climate some sort of a fur coat is almost a necessity. Even most of  
the furs collected by the hudson’s bay company find their way into Russia; for the consumption of these goods in great  
Britain is extremely limited, compared with that of many other articles de luxe. In the fur ship our travellers proceeded  
from sitka to the port of petropaulouski, which is situated on avatcha bay, near the southern end of the peninsula. As   
avatcha bay is nearly land locked, it forms one of the most sheltered harbours on that side of the pacific; but  
unfortunately during winter the bay freezes over; and then ships can neither get into nor out of it. The vessel which  
carried our adventurers arrived at petropaulouski late in the spring; but, as the winter had been unusually prolonged, the  
bay was still blocked up with ice, and the ship could not get up to the little town. This did not hinder them from landing.   
Dog sledges were brought out upon the ice by the inhabitants; and upon these our travellers were carried to the town,  
or ostrog as it is called such being the name given to the villages of kamschatka. In petropaulouski, many curious objects  
and customs came under the observation of our travellers. They saw no less than kinds of houses first, the isbas, built of   
logs, and not unlike the log cabins of america. These are the best sort of dwellings; and belong to the russian merchants  
and officials, who reside there as well as to the cossack soldiers, who are kept by the russian government in kamschatka,  
The native kamschatdales have kinds of houses of indigenous architecture one for summer, the balagan, and another to  
which they retire during the winter, called the jourt. The balagan is constructed of poles and thatch upon a raised  
platform to which the kamschatdale climbs up by means of a notched trunk of a tree. There is only one story of the  
house itself which is merely the sloping thatched roof with a hole in the top to give passage to the smoke and resembles  
a rough tent or hayrick set upon an elevated stand. The space under the platform is left open; and serves as a store house  
for the dried fish, that forms the staple food of all sorts of people in kamschatka. Here, too, the sledges and sledge  
harness are kept; and the dogs, of which every family owns a large pack, use this lower story as a sleeping place. The  
winter house or jourt, is constructed very differently. It is a great hole sunk in the ground to the depth of or feet, lined  
round the sides with pieces of timber, and roofed over above the surface of the ground so as to look like the rounded  
 dome of a large bake oven. A hole at the apex is intended for the chimney, but it is also the door; since there is no other  
mode of entrance into the jourt, and the interior is reached by descending a notched tree trunk similar to that used in  
climbing up to the balagan. The curious fur dresses of the kamschatdales; their thin yellowish white dogs, resembling the  
pomeranian breed; their dog sledges, which they use for travelling in winter; the customs and habits of these singular  
people; all formed an interesting study to our travellers, and enriched their journal with notes and observations. We find  
it recorded there, how these people spend their time and obtain their subsistence. Very little agriculture is practiced by them  
the climate being unfavourable to the growth of the cereals. In some parts barley and rye are cultivated; but only  
to a very limited extent. Cattle are scarce a few only being kept by the russian and cossack settlers; and horses are equally  
rare, such as there are belonging to the officials of the government, and used for government purposes. The common or  
native people subsist almost entirely on a fish diet their lakes and rivers furnishing them with abundance of fish; and the  
whole of the summer is spent in catching and drying these for their winter provision. Several wild vegetable productions  
are added roots and berries, and even the bark of trees all of which are eaten along with the dried fish. Wild animals also  
furnish part of their subsistence; and it is by the skins of these especially the sable that the people pay their annual tax, or  
tribute, to the russian government. From animals, too, their clothing is chiefly manufactured; and many other articles  
used in their domestic economy. The peninsula is rich in the fur bearing quadrupeds, and some of these furnish the very  
best quality of furs that are known to commerce. The sable of kamschatka is of a superior kind as also the many varieties

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