together to the disadvantage of the Siamese, who were re­peatedly defeated with great slaughter; their capital was sack­ed by the Burmese in 1766, who besides took all their maritime possessions on the bay of Bengal and along the west coast of the Malay peninsula, including the important places of Tavoy, Mergui, and Tenasserim. Though greatly reduced by this unsuccessful war, and frequently brought to the brink of ruin, Siam still exists as an independent kingdom, to which it is indebted partly to the dissensions of the Burmese, and partly to the actual strength of the country.

An embassy was sent to Siam by the British government in 1822, which was placed under the charge of Mr. Craw- furd, who had an audience of the king of Siam, by whom he was received so favourably, that he had every reason to ex­pect a favourable termination to his mission. But these hopes were frustrated by the jealous and unaccommodating policy of the government. They made propositions one day which were revoked the next ; and displayed their faithless character so clearly, that all negotiations were final­ly broken off ; and the embassy were finally interdicted from going about the town or on the river, and were not allowed to trade. An American embassy was more agreeably re­ceived by this jealous government in 1833, and it is said succeeded in concluding a commercial treaty with the go­vernment. *Asiatic Journal,* new series. Hamilton’s *Gazetteer.*

SIBERIA, a vast tract of territory comprehending the northern regions of Asia, which has been partly described under Russia ; so that it will only be necessary in this place to supply some particulars which have not been so fully de­tailed in the former article. Siberia may be considered as a gradually descending plain from the Altai mountains to the Frozen Ocean, which is indeed indicated by the course of all the great rivers, the Obi, the Jenesei, and the Lena, which flow from these mountains in a northerly course until they terminate in that sea. Although under the dominion of Russia, and of regular government, improvements have been gradually diffused amongst its rude tribes ; and although cities, some of them populous and thriving, have risen up, yet it is on the whole a barren and unproductive country, the predominance of cold throughout the greater part of it chilling the progress of vegetation, and preventing either fruits or grain from arriving at maturity. Nor, though it is by no means destitute of rivers, is the direction which they take calculated to favour the course of commerce, or to give facilities for the transmission of its productions from one part of the country to another. Flowing, as already stated, from south to north, they run out of the regions of civilization and commerce into those of perpetual win­ter; they lead into inhospitable deserts, to which there is no resort either of goods or of men ; and therefore they are, and will ever remain, useless for the purposes of trade, and of little use to the country through which they flow. Nor is there by sea any easy access to this cold and inhospita­ble tract. The Frozen Ocean on the north presents an insu­perable barrier to navigation ; and the eastern shore, wash­ed by the Pacific Ocean, is so far removed from the great seats of wealth and commerce in Europe, that no great in­tercourse can ever take place. Siberia has no surplus pro­duce that can tempt a European vessel to perform the cir­cuit of half the globe in order to obtain it.

This region was unknown in the ancient world. The know­ledge of the Greeks and Romans did not extend beyond Scythia, or independent Tartary ; they were altogether ig­norant of the vast regions which lay farther to the east and north, from which issued those vast hordes of barbarians who overthrew the Roman empire. During the devastations and wars which succeeded, and by which the great empires of Asia were shaken and thrown down, a greater knowledge was obtained of these northern regions, especially by the Ma­hommedan conquerors ; but it does not appear that they ever

penetrated into these districts, or that they were ever tho­roughly explored until the progress of Russian conquest brought them under the sway of this rising power, which did not take place till the middle of the sixteenth century. In the reign of John Basilowitz I., indeed, an incursion had been made into Siberia, and some Tartar tribes subdued ; but these conquests were not permanent, and we hear of no further communication between Russia and Siberia till the time of John Basilowitz II. It was opened again at that time by means of Anika Strogonoff, a Russian merchant, who had established some salt-works at a town in the government of Archangel. This man carried on a trade with the Samoie­des who inhabited the banks of the Obi and the Petchora, and who are accustomed to come along the river Vitenegda to its confluence with the Dwina, where they exchanged their furs with the Russians. He acquired in this manner a considerable fortune in a short time ; and he determined on exploring the districts whence these valuable commodi­ties were derived. He sent thither a party of his depend­ents, who, in exchange for Dutch toys and other trifles, ob­tained the most valuable furs. He judged it prudent, after he had carried on the trade for some time, to communicate the whole affair to the brother of the reigning emperor, Theodore Iwanovitch, and ultimately his successor. The Czar perceiving the advantage that might be derived by his subjects from a regular intercourse with Siberia, despatch­ed a body of troops into that country, chiefly needy adven­turers, who crossed the mountains that form the north-east­ern boundary of Europe, though they never seem to have passed the Irtysch, or have penetrated beyond the western branch of the Obi. The people they met with were rude and barbarous ; they were small in stature, destitute of towns and villages, ignorant of bread, and subsisting entirely by fishing and the chase. They were struck with the novelty of what they saw, and with a variety of unknown animals; with men riding on elks, or dervises mounted on sledges drawn by rein-deer or dogs. The natives received with high gratifica­tion the presents that were brought to them, and they eager­ly in return desired to visit the Russian capital, of which their visitors had given them a splendid description. They were dazzled with the magnificence of Moscow and the emperor. Some Tartar tribes were laid under contribution, and a chief named Yediger consented to pay an annual tribute of a thousand sables. But this produced no lasting advan­tage to Russia ; for, soon afterwards, Yediger was defeated and taken prisoner by Kutchum Khan, a descendant of the great Genghiz Khan ; and thus the allegiance of this coun­try to Russia was dissolved.

For some time we hear of no further attempts made by the Russians on Siberia; but in 1577 the foundation of a permanent conquest was laid by Yermac Temofeeff, a Cos­sack of the Don. This man was at first the head of a ban­ditti who infested the Russians in the province of Casan ; but being defeated by the troops of the Czar, he retired with six thousand of his followers into the interior parts of that province. Continuing his course still eastward, he came to Orel, the most easterly of all the Russian settle­ments ; and here he took up his winter quarters. But his restless genius did not suffer him to continue for any length of time in a state of inactivity ; and from the intelligence he procured concerning the situation of the neighbouring Tartars of Siberia, he turned his arms towards that quarter.

Siberia was at that time partly divided amongst a num­ber of separate princes, and partly inhabited by the various tribes of independent Tartars. Of the former Kutchum Khan was the most powerful sovereign. His dominions consisted of that tract of country which now forms the south-western part of the province of Tobolsk, and stretch­ed from the banks of the Irtysch and Obi to those of the Tobal and Tura. His principal residence was at Sibir, a small fortress upon the river Irtysch, not far from the present town