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An Irish-born adventurer in Russian service, Peter Dobell (1772–1852) embarked in 1812 on a long journey from Kamchatka across Siberia to Tomsk. This two-volume work, first published in 1830, contains a detailed and idiosyncratic account of his journey, painting an affectionate picture of the region and its people. The narrative includes ethnographic observations, descriptions of nights spent with local families, notes on the wildlife encountered, and discussion of the problems caused by the weather. Dobell also lived in China for many years, and his remarks on the experience are incorporated into the work. He gives opinionated observations on topics such as Chinese society, traditions, trade and medicine. Again, this narrative reflects Dobell's instinctive curiosity and enthusiasm. Volume 1 covers the first half of the journey, starting in Kamchatka and ending in Yakutsk.

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Peter Dobell
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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VOLUME 1

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Frontmatter
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Peter Dobell
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

TRAVELS
IN
KAMTCHATKA AND SIBERIA;
WITH A NARRATIVE OF
A RESIDENCE IN CHINA.

BY
PETER DOBELL,
COUNSELLOR OF THE COURT OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY
THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,
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1830.

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a Residence in China: Volume 1

Peter Dobell

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

J. B. NICHOLS AND SON,
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Peter Dobell
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PREFACE.

IN offering these Volumes to the public, the Author begs to disavow all pretensions to literary fame. With regard to the first portion of the work, he trusts the public will receive with some share of indulgence his humble attempt to furnish them with genuine information as to the Oriental part of the Empire of Russia, as yet but imperfectly known.

The reader will be surprised to find so many wonderful works of nature there existing, and to learn how rich and interesting a region is Siberia, heretofore only represented to his imagination in the most gloomy and unattractive colours.

VOL. 1.

a 2

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
a Residence in China: Volume 1
Peter Dobell
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

In calling to mind the perils and accidents attendant on his route through Siberia, the Author cannot forbear to express those feelings of gratitude with which he reflects on the merciful designs of Providence, through whose interposed protection, himself and four others, who were left by the Tongusees to perish in the wilds of that country, were conducted as safely as unexpectedly to a human habitation.

As to that part of his work which relates to CHINA, the Author, having passed seven or eight years in that country, and having travelled as far as Peking, may naturally be supposed to have had an opportunity of acquiring a tolerable knowledge of its manners, customs, religion, population, and resources. Lest expectation, however, should exceed performance, it should be recollected, that the timid and jealous character of the Chinese Government presents very great obstacles to inquiry. Europeans, at Macao, as well as at Canton, are strictly watched; and the slightest attempt to extend their acquaintance with the natives, meets with

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
a Residence in China: Volume 1
Peter Dobell
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PREFACE.

v

immediate opposition from the Mandarins. It should likewise be remarked, that the associates of strangers there are generally either shopkeepers or the merchants of the Hong or Chinese Company; none of which classes possess what can be termed a liberal education; for, indeed, if the truth were known, there are probably not many even of the Mandarins who can boast of much general information. To their ignorance we must add (in estimating the difficulties opposed to intelligence) their strong national prejudices, their intolerable venality, and the preposterous belief that China is vastly superior to every other country of the globe—the effect of all which is, that the Chinese cannot express themselves (on the subject of the Celestial Empire) otherwise than in language of the most exaggerated praise.

The Chinese will rarely tell the truth to Europeans, unless when it suits their interests, and it is well known that, throughout Asia, a falsehood well managed is too often considered as a meritorious proof of dexterity.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
a Residence in China: Volume 1
Peter Dobell
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

vi

PREFACE.

After these admonitory remarks, however, the Author may be allowed to add, that he has endeavoured, by applying his own observation and experience, to clear his account, as much as possible, from the colouring of fiction, and that he ventures to believe his endeavour has not been unsuccessful.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
 a Residence in China: Volume 1
 Peter Dobell
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS

OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.—p. 3.

Author's arrival at Kamtchatka—Bay of Avatcha—Port of St. Peter and St. Paul—Frequency of dikes and mounds in Kamtchatka—Author's departure from St. Peter and St. Paul, in company with the Commandant, to visit the Governor, General Petrowsky, at Nijna Kamtchatsk—Route described—Village of Avatcha—Brantzoff, the hospitable old soldier—Voyage in canoes—Starrie-Ostrog—Annoyance from the Mosquitoes—Hospitable treatment at Korakee-Ostrog—River Bistra—Malka—Bears—Fish—Ostrog of Poochinna—Islands on the river Kamtchatka—Hospitality at the village of Kamtchatka—The modern Merlin—Werkney Kamtchatsk—Singular contrivance of Canoes—Kirganik—Mashura—Construction of ballagans and jourtas—Native fruits—Striking scenery—Klutchee—Majestic volcano of Klootchefsky—Kammina—Arrival at Nijna Kamtchatsk.

CHAPTER II.—p. 47.

Author's reception at Nijna Kamtchatsk—General Petrowsky—Commencement of the return—Some remarks respecting Nijna Kamtchatsk—Tschokce—Kammakee

VOL. I.

b

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
a Residence in China: Volume 1

Peter Dobell

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

iv

CONTENTS.

—Shooting of ducks and geese—Klutchee—State of the people there—Fall of snow—Sherrom and its hospitable Toyune—Industry of his family—Edible roots—Arrival at Malka—Story of a perilous adventure on the ice—Nacheeka—Difficulties of the journey—Horses, dogs, and sledges—Karaikee—Embarkation in canoes on the river Avatcha—Re-arrival at St. Peter and St. Paul's—Observations on the temperature in Kamtchatka—Remarks on the character of the natives.

CHAPTER III.—p. 65.

The Author's second departure from St. Peter and St. Paul—Sledge-travelling—Renewed acquaintance with old Merlin—Climate of Kamtchatka—Tchappinna—Wild fowl and game—Argallis, or mountain sheep—Wild dogs, reindeer, &c.—Causes of depopulation in Kamtchatka—Tolbachik—Oushkee—Trait of simple gratitude—Klutchee—Second meeting with General Petrowsky—Village of Kharchinna—A Kamtchatdale dance—Yalofka—Bear-skins—Case of misfortune—Ozernoy—Singular marriage custom—Remarks on the habits and character of the Kamtchatdales.

CHAPTER IV.—p. 85.

An excursion on snow-shoes—Ouka—Further remarks on the resources of Kamtchatka—Khallule—Mode of constructing Jourtas—Rivers Khallule and Nacheeka—Frozen state of the sea-shore—Ostrog and river of Evashka—The Kamtchatdale climate—Dranka—Karagee Ostrog and River—An invalid—Violent snow-storm—Another kind host—Timlatee.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
 a Residence in China: Volume 1
 Peter Dobell
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

v

CHAPTER V.—p. 99.

Journey continued from Timlatee—Another violent snow-storm—Sagacity of the Sledge-dogs—Hospitable shelter—A Toyune's possessions—Killing the fatted buck—National tribute—Keecheekinskoy Ostrog—The Karaikee Prince Zachar's Ostrog of Govinskoy—Visit from an old Chief—Qualities of the Reindeer, for purposes of draught—Mode of taking them—A friend to whiskey—A trait of female character—The Sedatchee Karaikees—Respect shown to the Chiefs—Anecdote displaying the presence of mind of Prince Zachar—Further particulars respecting the Reindeer—Arrival at Vilpareskoy.

CHAPTER VI.—p. 117.

Prince Zachar's advice as to the route—Departure from Vilpareskoy—Veyvinskoy—A snow-storm predicted and experienced—Uncleanly habits of the Karaikees—Singular mode of catching wild ducks—Herds of reindeer—A Tschookchee chief—Veytera—Numerous presents of venison—Remarks on the Karaikees—Crowd of Visitors—Karaikee bread—Karaikee jourtas—Vaytivay—Visit from a Toyune—Difference of character between the Karaikees and the Kamtchatdales—A ride in a reindeer sledge—White partridges—Discomforts arising from wind and snow—Virtues of tea peculiarly felt by the traveller—Course along the Kammina river—Crossing a moor—A Karaikee sorcerer—Dangers of the river Talofka in its frozen state—Arrival at Kammina.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
 a Residence in China: Volume 1

Peter Dobell
 Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER VII.—p. 140.

Toyune of Kammina—Precautions necessary against the
 Inhabitants—The starosta, or head man, of Klutchee,
 a useful companion on the road—Comparison between
 the Tchookchees and the Sedatchee Karaikees—A
 meeting with two Cossacks—Fatigue of the travelling-
 dogs—Arrival at the ostrog of Parrennia—Imposition
 practised by the natives—Party of Cossacks—Conti-
 nued weariness of the dogs—Scantiness of provisions—
 Canine sagacity—Arrival at Igiga—Its poverty of situ-
 ation and resources—Poisonous species of whale—
 Author's excursions around Igiga—Difficulties pre-
 ceding departure—A wholesale slaughter of reindeer
 —A Tchookchee conjuror—Remarks on Igiga.

CHAPTER VIII.—p. 160.

Route continued from Igiga—Numerical force of the
 party—Exchange no robbery—Inflammation of the
 eyes occasioned to the Author by the reflection of the
 sun from the snow—Karamandash—Drunken Karai-
 kees—Nyakonna—An adventure there—River Audonee
 —Warm springs—Voracity of the Cossack guides—
 Shooting excursion to the sea-coast—Marrow of the
 reindeer a luxury—Shortness of provisions on the
 road—Postman conveying the mail—Softness of the
 snow an impediment to travelling—Crossing a moun-
 tain—Travelling virtues of the dogs—Toomannee—
 Author parts with his Cossack guides—Situation of
 Toomannee—Its drunken Toyune—A skilful sledge-
 driver—River Tackyam—Speculation on the migration
 of wild-fowl—Encounter with a bear—Arrival at
 Yamsk—Character of the neighbouring inhabitants.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
 a Residence in China: Volume 1
 Peter Dobell
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAPTER IX.—p. 189.

Situation of Yamsk — Journey continued — Excursion over a mountain—Expeditious descent—Accident occurring to the Author and the driver of his sledge—Peculiar benefit of sleep to the traveller—River Seglan — Passage on the ice to the sea—Prevalence of snow—Village, river, and bay of Aula—Civil host—Prosecution of the journey along the sea-coast—Mode of catching seals practised by the Tongusees—Ostrog of Arman—Lamoots, or Tongusee Reindeer men—Arrival at Towisk—Detention by a snow-storm—Difficulties of the route—Active habits of the Tongusees—A tremendous cliff—Advantage of snow-shoes—Absconding of several of the Author's attendants—Pusillanimity of the Cossack guide—Scantiness of provisions—Author's suspicions as to the Cossack.

CHAPTER X.—p. 224.

Continuation of the journey—Chain of mountains—Debate as to the right direction of the route—New travelling arrangements—Author's exhortations to those with him—Part of the baggage is left behind on a mountain—Perilous descent of the mountain—Fears expressed by the Author's Karaikee attendant—Mutual promises entered into by the party—Stormy weather and scanty food—Night-quarters in a forest—Contrivance for passing a stream—Incipient signs of vegetation—Excessive fatigue endured—A loss on the road—Tea without sugar—Effect of the sun on the snow, increasing the difficulty of progress—Hopes delayed of discovering the sea—Screech-owl soup!—Necessity for personal conveyance of the baggage—Increased fatigue of the travellers—A shooting adventure.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
a Residence in China: Volume 1

Peter Dobell

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER XI.—p. 250.

Prosecution of the journey—Renewed endeavours to discover the Sea—Extensive burning of the Woods and Grass—Persecution by Mosquitoes—Fatigue and hunger—A sporting accident—The party reach a river and construct a raft for its navigation—Fog, wind, and rain—Perilous adventure on the raft—Seasonable acquisition of a Tongusee Canoe—A deserted jourta—Rapidity of the current—Joyful meeting with three natives—Arrival at Grebay—Kindness of an old Yakut woman—Towinsk—Hospitable treatment there—Amokthon—Author parts with his Karaikée guide—Encampment of the party by the river Mettaclay—Recovery of the baggage—Messengers from the Governor of Ochotsk—Remarks on the providential escape of the party during their past route—Inskay mountain—Kindness of the Russian peasants—Inia—Effects of cold on the human faculties—Communication from Captain Minitsky—Arrival at Ochotsk.

CHAPTER XII.—p. 295.

Kind attentions experienced by the Author at Ochotsk—Description of that place—Magazines of warlike stores—Admiralty—Flour magazines—Remarks on the situation of Ochotsk—Preparations for prosecuting the journey to Yakutsk—The Author quits Ochotsk—Medvazia Golova—Appearance of the Country—Maitah—An accomplished resident there—Travelling method of making butter—Koneskoy mountains—River Ourak—The Yakut taste in horse flesh—Costume of the Yakuts and Tongusees—Ourasky mountains—Striking

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-07085-0 - Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia: With a Narrative of
 a Residence in China: Volume 1
 Peter Dobell
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

ix

character of the scenery—Difficulties of the road—Yakut superstition—A begging party—Udomskoy Krest—Reflections on the means of water communication in Siberia—Remarks on the resources of the country.

CHAPTER XIII.—p. 318.

Course of the party along the river Okkatchan—Okkatchanskoy mountains—The Kaiyan lakes—Gnats and Mosquitoes—Horse-flesh a Yakut delicacy—A remarkable mountain—Ice in summer—A sublime scene—Mootins Krest—Somniferous cataracts—Post-station of Allachkunc—Lofty mountains—Their effect on the beholder—Bad travelling—The white River—A visit from the wolves—Danger from shaking bogs—River Aldan—Colony of exiles—Reflections on the custom and policy of banishment to Siberia—General character of Siberian scenery—Conjuror's lake—Mindiginskoy mountain—River Amga—Mildagaia—Visit by invitation to a Yakut jourta—Lake Cherropchee—Native method of mowing grass—Yakut fisheries—A canoe of peculiar lightness—Lake and station of Borodoy and of Tchatcheekni—Encampment of soldiers—Passing of various lakes and stations—Good qualities of the horses—Village of Yarmanka—Arrival at Yakutsk.