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INTRODUCTION

AN important part of the present volume concerns the natives of the Nootka region. Now but a sleepy Indian village with a handful of mongrel inhabitants, where the silence is scarcely broken except by the croak of a raven, Nootka was once the best-known port on the western shores of America. Its ownership was a mooted question with several important governments, and there was grave danger of the Nootka controversy dragging all the civilized nations into a conflict that would have changed the map, as well as the history, of the world. Had that war occurred, the United States would probably never have gained territory beyond the original colonies, and England, if successful, would have secured the greater part of both Americas.

On August 7, 1774, Juan Perez, a Spanish explorer, discovered a small harbor on this wooded shore and named it San Lorenzo bay. Later it became San Lorenzo de Nootka. Perez however did not land. The English Captain Cook visited the west coast of Vancouver island in 1778 and landed at Nootka on March 27 of that year. He was unaware that he was on an island; in fact, Vancouver island was not known to be insular until so reported in 1787 by McKay, who bad been left there to trade with the natives. Lieutenant John Meares, flying the British flag — when it best served his purpose — sailed from Bengal in 1786 with two ships, the *Nootka* and the *Sea Otter*, his mission being to buy furs. He visited the coast of Alaska, and in the following year sailed from China in the *Felice Adventurer* and the *Iphigenia Nubiana* with half a hundred Chinese ship carpenters. Arriving at Nootka in May, 1788, he at once secured from the Indian chief a plot of ground and began to build a small trading ship, at the same time constructing a house to serve as a home for the Chinese carpenters and as a workshop. By these activities Meares established himself in history. His craft was the first ship built on the Pacific coast north of California, and his workshop and handful of land purchased at the cost of two pistols proved England's strongest claim against Spain. History gives no account of the Chinese carpenters ever having left that region, and there is little doubt that they married Indian women and by this admixture of Oriental blood did much to encourage the novice of today in his belief that these Indians were late comers from Asia.

On September 17, 1788, the United States flag first appeared at

Nootka, Captain Robert Gray arriving in the *Lady Washington* of Boston; for by this time the fame of the northwest coast as a fur-producing country had spread to the far corners of the earth, and in 1789 ships of many nations began to arrive. Russia occupied and began to fortify, and on May 6 Estevan José Martinez took possession for Spain. The English ship *Iphigenia* was already there, and the Spanish and English commanders fell into a heated discussion as to the ownership of the territory. With his superior forces Martinez seized the *Iphigenia* for trespassing on Spanish territory, but soon released her. In July, however, he seized the *Argonaut* and the *Princess Royal* and sent them to Mexico as prizes. Out of this seizure grew the controversy between England and Spain. England, ablaze with the war spirit, assembled an unprecedented fleet for what promised to be a war for world supremacy. Spain relied on France, but expected help from Russia, Austria, and Denmark. England meant to incite insurrection in all Spanish colonies of South America, to draw upon the forces of the Netherlands and Prussia, and, at the end of the war, to form a second empire, including the greater part of South America, the West Indies, and all North America exclusive of our original colonies and the small Russian territory in the extreme north. Both contestants sought the support of the United States. Through months of diplomatic negotiations it became more and more apparent that Spain, lacking war funds, would eventually concede the demands of England, and in 1795 was signed the Nootka treaty, establishing England's title to the country, and on March 23 the Spanish flag came down. Nootka traditions today tell how the men in "steel shirts" wept as their flag fluttered to earth. Truly there was more cause for tears than they realized, for with the hauling down of the Spanish flag at that isolated point passed the ascendancy of Spanish colonization.

One who is sufficiently industrious can today unearth in the jungle of brush and weeds fragments of bricks from Spanish kilns; and the parade ground cleared of the heavy forest by Spanish soldiers is now used by Indian boys in the American game of baseball.

In the following pages Nootka words not specifically excepted are in the Clayoquot dialect, except those occurring in the description of the winter ceremony, which are in Mooachaht.

The notes on Makah customs were recorded by Mr. Edmund Schwinke.

In the preparation of this volume I have had the increasingly valuable assistance and collaboration of Mr. W.E. Myers.

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