

them was now to be seen;—nor is it easy to conjecture in what manner they had contrived, in so short a time, to dissipate their treasures.

1788.

JUNE.

The fickleness that they at times discovered in their traffic, was occasionally very troublesome. At one time copper was their favourite object; at another, iron was the only commodity in estimation among them; beads would also have their turn of preference. But this hesitation in their choice was generally determined by a medley of them all.

Comekela was, at first, very active in forwarding our commercial arrangement; but he had become very deficient in his native tongue, and he now spoke such a jargon of the Chinese, English, and Nootkan languages, as to be by no means a ready interpreter between us and the natives;—besides, in returning to the manners of his country, he began to prefer the interests of his countrymen, and, amidst the renewed luxuries of whale flesh, blubber and oil, to forget the very great kindnesses we had bestowed upon him.—But as he had, through our influence, been raised into a situation of trust and honour, it was not our interest to unfold our suspicions of his duplicity and ingratitude towards us. Maquilla had committed to him the care of his most valuable treasures, among which was a brass mortar, left by Captain Cook, which was held in the highest degree of estimation by the Nootka Chief. This piece of culinary furniture was elevated from a state of servile use, to become a symbol of royal magnificence. It was kept extremely bright, and, in visits, or meetings of ceremony, it was borne before Maquilla, to aid the splendor of the regal character.—It was therefore an object rather to recall his former dispositions towards us, by the continuance of our friendship, than to justify his deviation from that regard which it was his duty to manifest in our favour. We therefore exerted our influence with his brother Maquilla, to elevate him at once to the character of chief,

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