

off our hands at an advantageous price ; but here we were woefully disappointed, and we found, to our cost, the sad mistake of our Owners, in appointing the Supercargoes to have the sole disposal of their property, for the moment these Hong-Merchants had looked the skins over, and fixed a value on them, no other Merchant durst interfere in the purchase : indeed as the quantity above-mentioned was not suffered to be divided, there were not many people except these Hong-Merchants who had it in their power to buy so large a parcel, and advance the money immediately : add to this, the duty on merchandize in the Port of Canton seems not to be regulated by any fixed rule, but rests in a great measure in the breasts of those appointed by the Hoppo to lay it on, and who fix it higher or lower at pleasure. With these people the Hong-Merchants have great influence ; so that had any indifferent person been at liberty to purchase our skins, and disposed to give us an advantageous price for them, the fear of having an enormous duty to pay, would at once deter him from any attempt of the kind ; this we found strictly verified more than once.

1787.  
December.

In this poor situation were we with respect to the sale of our cargo, during the month of December, and the greatest part of January : either we must close with the paltry offers which the Hong-Merchants had made to the Supercargoes, or be under the necessity of leaving our furs in their hands undisposed of ; this both parties knew we wished to avoid, if possible. Mean while, some of the refuse which they had left for us to dispose of, sold to considerable advantage ; the 1,080 tails sold for two dollars each ; the fur seals for five dollars each, and a small parcel of rubbish for fifty-five dollars.

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