

rica, constructed. Meares took upon his vessel the furs that had been collected, and sailed for China, and from that time to the present, John Meares has never seen Nootka Sound. The other two vessels, the *Iphigenia* and *Northwest America*, spent the following winter at the Sandwich Islands. Meares had promised to meet this vessel at Nootka in the spring of 1789, to pursue their trade.

At this time, the Spanish Government had become dissatisfied with and jealous of the frequent appearance of foreign vessels on the Pacific coast, over which she claimed to be the exclusive mistress. She therefore commenced more vigorously to prosecute her discoveries, and assert her rights. Early in the spring of 1789, in pursuance of this determination, Don Manuel de Flores, then viceroy of Mexico, fitted out and despatched two armed vessels, with the necessary implements for settling and defending Nootka. These vessels were commanded by Martinez and Hero, two Spanish navigators, who were instructed to proceed to Nootka to take possession thereof in the name of Spain, to treat with civility any British or Russian vessels that might come to Nootka; but, at all hazards, to assert and maintain the sovereignty of Spain at that place. On the 6th of May, 1789, Martinez arrived at Nootka, took possession of the place, landed his cannon, and other materials for settlement and defence. On his arrival there, he found the vessels *Iphigenia* and *Northwest America*. They had arrived on the 20th April, 1789, still sailing as Portuguese traders. He also found anchored there the two American ships, *Washington* and *Columbia*. After taking possession, he informed the commandants of the vessels lying there of his intentions and instructions. They made no objections, but appeared satisfied with what had been done. Things remained thus for about one week, when Hero arrived. Martinez then demanded an inspection of the papers of the Portuguese vessels, which was granted; and by the translation of these papers from the Portuguese language, Martinez was informed that they were instructed to take all English, Spanish, and Russian vessels that were inferior in force, and send them to Macao, to be tried as pirates. Martinez thereupon seized the *Iphigenia*, her officers and crew, and was about to send them to San Blas, a Spanish port, for trial, when the officers agreed for and on behalf of the reputed owner, Juan Cavello, that if they were released, and afterwards upon trial condemned, the condemnation-money should be paid; and accordingly they were released, and soon after left. In June, the *Northwest America* returned to Nootka, and was also immediately seized; but afterwards returned to her owners. It afterwards turned out that these vessels, although sailing under Portuguese colors, were the property of John Meares and his associates, British merchants trading at Macao; and the piratical disguise had been assumed for the purpose of defrauding the Chinese revenues. John Meares then left the coast, and arrived at Macao the same year. These merchants, with Meares at their head, fitted out another expedition, the ships *Argonaut* and *Princess Royal*, commanded by Colnett and Hudson, two English officers, and sailed under English colors. On the 2d of July,

the *Argonaut* arrived at Nootka, and found the *Princess Royal* there. Martinez demanded an inspection of their papers, which was complied with; and, upon inquiry of the intention of their expedition, was informed that they intended to erect a British fort there, hoist the British flag, and take possession. Martinez told them this could not be done, as the place was already occupied by Spain. A quarrel ensued; the Spaniard arrested the commandant, seized the ship, and sent her to San Blas for trial. She was afterwards restored by Quidra, on the ground that the British commander was ignorant of the Spanish rights. Under these circumstances, the Nootka convention originated. Information of these difficulties being communicated to the home Governments, England and Spain, a discussion of their respective rights was commenced at London and Madrid. In February, 1790, the Spanish Minister at London informed the English Government of the capture, and requested that Government to restrain her subjects from further intrusion upon the Spanish settlements; to which the British Minister replied, he would not negotiate on the subject, unless immediate restitution was made for the vessel which had been seized. This reply, with the circumstances attending it, convinced Spain that England had other designs. The Spanish Court became alarmed; and another note was addressed to the British Minister, saying that Spain would be satisfied if Britain would command her subjects to respect the rights of Spain in future.

About this time (May, 1790) John Meares, now representing himself to be a lieutenant in the British service, arrived from Macao at London, with a memorial to his Government, on behalf of himself and his associates at Macao, who were also represented as British subjects. In his memorial he set forth that four British ships, with their cargoes and crews, had been seized at Nootka by an officer commanding two Spanish ships of war, and sent to a Spanish port for trial; also, that he had been dispossessed of certain houses and tracts of land at Nootka. This information the King of England immediately communicated to Parliament, denying, at the same time, the exclusive rights of Spain to the territory in dispute, and asking for supplies to prepare for war. Negotiations were closed at London and opened at Madrid between the two Governments. Meanwhile Britain was making extensive preparations for war. She equipped two large fleets, at a cost of £4,000,000. Spain also armed. The ulterior designs of Britain to wrest from Spain some of her American possessions became manifest. The Spanish Government, to avoid difficulty, proposed to submit the whole matter to the arbitration of any of the Kings of Europe Britain might name, and to satisfy any award that might, upon substantial proof, be made against it, provided no inferences should be drawn from this offer affecting the territorial rights of Spain in America. This proposition was accepted by Britain as to the indemnity; but coupled with the acceptance was a demand that Spain should admit that British subjects might fish on any part of the Pacific coast, and trade and settle on any unoccupied part of the American coast. The Spanish Minister proposed to admit the right to fish

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