

In the year 1788 Meares erected at Nootka a small building, which he fortified against the Indians. He then proceeded to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, leaving a portion of his crew to construct a small vessel to be used for trading purposes. This little steop, christened the "Northwest-America," was the first vessel ever constructed in the country north of California. It may be interesting to add that it was built by the aid of Chinese carpenters, being, in all probability, the first instance of Mongolian employment in our Province. From this time on, Nootka derived some importance from becoming the rendezvous of

Spaniards determined to put a stop to all encroachments. Martinez was ordered to proceed to Nootka and in the name of Spain take possession of the Sound. Trouble arose between Martinez and Colnett and Hudson, who had been sent thither by Meares under the British flag. Finally, their ships, the Princess Royal, the Argonaut, and the Northwest-America, were seized and their cargoes placed on board the Spanish ships of war. Colnett was arrested and suffered many indignities at the hands of his captors, and, later, was sent to Mexico, where he was at last liberated by order of the Viceroy. The piratical



Old Post Office and Custom House, Victoria, thirty years ago.

the traders, who had already begun to frequent these waters for the purpose of procuring the valuable fur of the sea otter and other animals, in which a large and lucrative trade was soon established.

The Spanish authorities, who claimed the sole right to navigate the Pacific on the northwest coast of America, becoming aware of the visits of the various traders, sent an expedition in 1788 in command of Estinez Martinez and Gonzales Haro to obtain information regarding the reputed depredations of these adventurers. In the following year the

action of the Spanish commander, as soon as it became generally known, evoked the greatest indignation amongst the British people. In an inconceivably short space of time a large fleet was assembled and for some months the whole civilized world was in suspense and anxiety as to the issue. Eventually, however, Captain Vancouver was despatched in charge of the ship Discovery and the brig Chatham to determine with the Spanish Commissioner what indemnity should be made to the British subjects who had suffered on account of the un-