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"Alone in lofty splendour all the day, but visited at night by troops of stars"

## The Romance of the Fur Traders

Continued from Page 9

by some British merchants in China. His first trip netted him \$26,000, but his voyage in the following year was less profitable, owing to the competition of three other expeditions—two English, from Bombay and London, the other French.

In 1788 an English expedition arrived from India under Captain Meares, who made a settlement at Nootka Sound and continued the friendly policy of Cook in dealing with the Indians. He found the latter eager to respond. "A present, consisting of copper, iron and other gratifying articles was made to Maquinna and Callicum, who on receiving it took off their sea-otter garments, threw them in the most graceful manner at our feet, and remained in the unattired garb of nature on the deck. They were each of them presented with a blanket, when with every mark of the highest satisfaction they descended into their canoes."

Unfortunately this kindly treatment by Meares was soon to be a cause of offence to the Spaniards, who attacked the settlement at Nootka and wantonly killed Chief Callicum as he came out to present a gift of fish to the commodore. This attack almost led to war between England and Spain, but the matter was settled by arbitration and Great Britain maintained possession of the coast from the Russian "Panhandle" to California. It remained for her to settle the north-western boundary of her lately revolted colonists, and it was becoming clear that the solution would be determined by effective possession. Great Britain might claim sovereignty over an unknown wilderness, but if her late colonists should exploit and settle this wilderness it would be difficult to dispute its inclusion in the United States. Hence it was that the Nor'-Westers, by pushing over the Rockies to the coast and by opening up the valley of the Columbia to trade, rendered a distinct service in preserving the Pacific slope for Canada and the Empire.

It was on March 28, 1795, that the

Nootka Sound controversy was definitely settled and the British flag hoisted in token of possession; but in the meantime Alexander Mackenzie of the Nor'-Westers had reached the Pacific from Canada and had discovered the north-west passage by land.

## Nor'-Westers at the Height of Their Power

Though the Nor'-Westers were interested primarily in furs and profits and gave little encouragement to Mackenzie in his exploration, they were proud of his achievements in opening up such vast regions to the fur-trader and the geographer. The shrewd partners in conference at Grand Portage, however, jealous of his growing popularity, were swift to see the possibilities for trade, and they began to construct new forts all over the territory which was now called New Caledonia. They sent Fraser and Thompson to trace the Fraser and Columbia Rivers to the sea, and anticipate Lewis and Clark who were working from the American side. Thompson arrived at the mouth of the Columbia too late to anticipate the Americans, for John Jacob Astor and his Pacific Fur Company had already arrived there and established Astoria, which was to be but the western end of a chain of forts from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But the war of 1812 ruined the Pacific Fur Company, and the Nor'-Westers following hot on the heels of their explorers purchased their rights and converted Astoria into Ft. George. By 1813 they had extended their trade from Montreal to the mouth of the Columbia, controlling the entire trade west of the Rockies as well as that of the tributaries of the Columbia eastward to the headwaters of the Missouri; but they were not alone on the Saskatchewan and Winnipeg Rivers, nor even on Rainy Lake so near their own headquarters, for the company at the Bay no longer slumbered and slept.

When Frobisher had planted his post



A Fur Trader of the Far North.