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A N S W E R

T O

Mr. G E O R G E D I X O N,

L A T E C O M M A N D E R O F T H E Q U E E N C H A R L O T T E.

[P R I C E T W O S H I L L I N G S .]

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A N S W E R

TO

MR. GEORGE DIXON,

LATE COMMANDER OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE,

IN THE SERVICE OF

MESSRS. ETCHES AND COMPANY;

BY

JOHN MEARES, Esq.

IN WHICH THE REMARKS OF MR. DIXON ON THE VOYAGES TO THE NORTH WEST
COAST OF AMERICA, &c. LATELY PUBLISHED, ARE FULLY CONSIDERED AND REFUTED.

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PRINTED AT THE Logographic Press ;

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M.DCC.XCI.

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TO

MR. GEORGE DIXON

LATE COMMANDER OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE

IN THE SERVICE OF

MESSRS. FISHES AND COMPANY

BY

JOHN MEARES, Esq.

IN WHICH THE FEELINGS OF MR. DIXON ON THE VOYAGE TO THE NORTH WEST
COAST OF AMERICA, & LATELY PUBLISHED, ARE FULLY CONSIDERED AND REFUTED

LONDON:

PRINTED AT THE BATHS IN ST. MARTIN'S LANE

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M DCCC X

A N
A N S W E R

T O

Mr. GEORGE DIXON,

LATE COMMANDER OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE, &c.

S I R,

YOU have thought proper to publish a Letter to me, containing remarks on the Voyages which I have lately offered to my country. It becomes me, therefore, to return an answer to them, that my silence may not be interpreted as an acquiescence in the folly of your observations, and the falsehood of your assertions.—It is a duty I owe to the public,—and I fulfil it.

In a work, entitled, A Voyage round the World, by Captain George Dixon,—and which is dedicated to such a respectable character as Sir Joseph Banks, by the same George Dixon; who, in the dedication of the Volume, represents himself as the Author,—in this publication, it is asserted, that the disorders with which my crew were afflicted in Prince William's Sound, arose, in a great measure, from an uncontrouled use of spirituous liquors; I had, therefore, an undoubted right to

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perfume the falsehood was of your fabrication. The calumny which was propagated in print, when I was engaged in a distant and hazardous navigation, from whence I might never have returned to contradict it, struck at my character as a sailor and as a man. It implied that I was ignorant of my profession,—inattentive to the objects of the voyage,—careless of the lives of my crew,—and even regardless of my own. You, however, seem to be very glad to shift the charge from yourself, and leave Mr. Beresford, who was supercargo of the *Queen Charlotte*, and who now appears as the author of the book, to answer for the falsehoods of it. The passage is as follows:

Page 157 of Dixon's Voyage.

“ It was Captain Meares’s intention to have completed his voyage in twelve
 “ months; but the frost setting in sooner than they expected, had unavoidably
 “ detained them in the Sound during the winter. The great loss they sustained
 “ by sickness has already been related: unfortunately, when the remaining part
 “ of Captain Meares’s crew were weak and enfeebled to the last degree, they
 “ were greatly distressed for fuel; and, for some time, it was with the greatest
 “ difficulty that they got wood on board for their daily use.

“ On our enquiry whether the scurvy, unattended with any other complaint,
 “ had made such fatal havoc amongst the people belonging to the *Nootka*, we
 “ were informed, that a free, unrestrained use of spirits had been indiscriminately
 “ allowed them during the extreme cold weather, which they had drunk to such
 “ excess about Christmas, that numbers of them kept their hammocks for a fort-
 “ night together: add to this, their liquor was of a very pernicious kind; so
 “ that there is reason to suppose its effects, when drunk to such an extreme,
 “ were not less fatal than the scurvy itself. Admitting this to be the case, it
 “ was surely ill-judged in Captain Meares to suffer such hurtful excesses amongst
 “ his people; and I am afraid that a scanty supply of the various antiscorbutics
 “ absolutely necessary for these voyages, put it out of their power to check this
 “ cruel disorder, so often fatal to sea-faring people.”

Without making any observation upon the artful, insidious and indecisive manner in which my name is here introduced, in order to fix a criminal conduct upon me, I shall proceed to declare, that the sickness of my crew arose, as I have described in the account of my voyage, from that extreme cold, which all the fires we could make, and all the means of protection we could employ, were not able to moderate, so as to prevent the cruel effects it had, more or less, upon us all. In Poland, Russia, and other northern countries, the scurvy is known to prevail with great severity, where every aid of medicine and regimen is to be easily obtained. That we, therefore, should suffer the most distressing afflictions of this disease, who were destitute of fresh provisions, vegetable productions, and every other means of alleviating application, is so natural a consequence of our situation, that the most eager malevolence alone, could listen to and adopt any other. So far from allowing a promiscuous and indiscriminate use of spirits, I do affirm, that no more than half a pint a day per man was allowed, which was distributed by the purser, half in its raw state, and the other half in water; and, as the people fell sick, this allowance was instantly discontinued. I am ready to acknowledge, that the spirits on board the Nootka were of Bengal manufacture, and very inferior to those of the West Indies; but this circumstance relates to the imperfect nature of our equipment from an Oriental port, and has nothing to do with the false and malignant charge that you made, or, which is the same thing, permitted to be made against me.

R E M A R K T H E S E C O N D .

AN accidental inaccuracy of expression, which arose from the haste with which my Voyages were prepared to meet the circumstances of the moment, has enabled you to make out a quibble that, to superficial readers, may wear the appearance of an argument. The note, page 201, of my book, which

things you so deeply, most certainly implies that you had already been to China; but the error is of no consequence to the charge I made, and still make, against you: for the question is not, whether you were going to China for the first or the second time;—but whether you did not possess such an abundance of stores, as to afford a much more effectual assistance than you gave to the distressed crew of a ship in the service of the same owners with yourself!—I have asserted you did not; and I continue to assert it.—I shall state the offensive note in the form I am very willing to allow it ought to have appeared, and in which it shall appear hereafter.

“ On enquiring of Captain Duncan concerning his distressed condition, he told me that he had met Captain Dixon in the *Queen Charlotte*; and though that ship *was proceeding to China*, and abundantly stocked with every thing;—and even though she belonged to the same owners with the *Princess Royal*, the provident commander thought it much better to *carry all his stores to China*, than to spare any of them to the latter vessel, though they would have been so great an alleviation to the hardships of her voyage*.”

That you supplied the Captains Duncan and Colnett, in their distress, with one puncheon of molasses, some Sandwich Island pork, articles of trade, a copy of your charts, and part of your log-book, may be very true.—But will you take upon you to say, that this supply was equal to their distressed condition, or to your power of alleviating it?—If the latter,—from what idle vanity did you make a boast, on your arrival at Canton, that, although you had been out twenty-three months, you had no occasion to purchase any article of stores or provisions for your homeward-bound voyage to England. At the time, therefore, you met Captain Duncan, you must, according to your own account, have had near a twelvemonth's stores, &c. on board; and were, besides, on your voyage to China, where every kind of supply was to be obtained;—nevertheless,

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* It may be proper to observe, that the distress of Captain Duncan arose from accidental circumstances, as both his ship and the *Prince of Wales* were originally equipped with the same commercial spirit as distinguished the outfits of the *King George* and *Queen Charlotte*.

one puncheon of molasses, and an hoghead and harness cask of Sandwich Island pork, was all your cautious sympathy and provident humanity could spare to relieve the distresses of your fellow-creatures and countrymen, employed in the service of your common owners.—The Captains Duncan and Colnett both declared to me, that, in every part of their subsequent voyage, they sensibly felt and lamented, to use no harsher expression, the unfeeling parsimony of your conduct:

You appear, Mr. Dixon, to infer, from the account you give of the supplies which the Captains Duncan and Colnett received from Captain Barclay, that they superseded the necessity of your further assistance; but those gentlemen, while they acknowledged their obligations to Captain Barclay, always represented his supplies as by no means sufficient to be of any lasting service. Nor do I fear to hazard an opinion, that the return of the Princess Royal to China was owing to your avarice. Had she received from you, Sir, what you could so well have spared, and, setting aside the common dictates of humanity, you ought to have bestowed, for the interest of your owners, that vessel might have remained another season on the Coast of America. Captain Duncan is now in London,—and I am most willing to rest my credit with the public, on his testimony respecting all I have said concerning the transactions between that worthy man and yourself.

If you do not recollect the precise quantity of those spirits, stores, &c. which, after a three years voyage, you brought back to the Thames, the Mess. Etches, perhaps, will trouble themselves to re-inform you. As for the porter to which I alluded in pages 28, 29 and 30, of my Introductory Voyage, that charge rests wholly with your commander. He, indeed, promised to sell me a certain portion of it, at a time when it would have proved a nutritious, cordial and healing medicine to the afflicted crew of the Nootka; but, as may be seen in the pages to which I have just referred, he thought proper to break his word on the subject, and brought a quantity of it back with him, in order to regale his friends in London with such a curious and long travelled article of convivial luxury.

R E M A R K

REMARK THE THIRD.

WITH respect to the equipment of the King George and Queen Charlotte, I represented it, as it was, of a very superior kind,—such as the port of London could alone afford, and suitable to the commercial spirit and ability of their owners. It may, indeed, be presumption in me to appear to know more of the objects of your own voyage than yourself: but, *notwithstanding your assertion to the contrary*, I am still of opinion that one of them was to form settlements and factories on the Coast of America; and that, for this very purpose, Mr. Wilby was put on board the King George, to undertake the direction of an infant colony, with proportionable men and artificers. Besides, I have now before me a copy of the orders given to Mr. Portlock, who had the honour of commanding you, which were drawn up by the Mess. Etches, &c. in the true spirit of commercial understanding and honour. These instructions particularly recommend their commanders to fix an establishment in Nootka Sound; and as it was not the incapacity, at least, of your equipments, or a deficiency in your instructions, which prevented you from performing that part of your duty, you would have done well not to have mentioned the subject at all, if you had no better means of justification than evasion and falsehood.

EXTRACT from the INSTRUCTIONS of RICHARD CADMAN ETCHES, to CAPTAIN NATHANIEL PORTLOCK, Commander of the Ship KING GEORGE, of which CAPTAIN DIXON'S Instructions are an exact Copy. Dated London, September 3, 1785.

“ * * * * * and for the future securing the trade of the continent
 “ and islands adjacent, you are to establish *such factories* as you shall see necessary and consistent with the safety of such settlers and your ship's company.

“ King

“ King George’s Sound, we should presume, not only from being central, but
 “ in every respect consistent with the intent of forming such establishment;—
 “ but in this respect we must leave you entirely discretionary.

“ Mr. William Wilby we have deemed perfectly qualified for such an
 “ undertaking, and he accompanies you entirely with that intent:—Therefore,
 “ wherever it is necessary to establish a *factory*, you are to purchase of the
 “ natives such a track of land as you shall think best suited for the purpose of
 “ trading, and for security, paying them in the most friendly and liberal
 “ manner for the same.—You are then to appoint as many men as you shall
 “ deem necessary, and who shall turn out as volunteers, to be companions to
 “ Mr. Wilby: you are to give them every possible assistance to erect a log-
 “ house, or such other building as shall appear to be necessary for their resi-
 “ dence, and for the carrying on traffic with the natives, &c. You are to give
 “ them every assistance to make such place tenable against the natives, and pro-
 “ vide them with such arms, ammunition, &c. as you shall deem necessary for
 “ their defence and protection. You are to leave them such quantities of provi-
 “ sions and other articles for convenience, and the purpose of trade,” &c. &c.

More clear and explicit instructions were perhaps never given, than those delivered by your owner to Captain Portlock and yourself; and never were orders more strangely perverted, or more shamefully disobeyed.

Your destination was King George’s Sound, where you were to establish a factory; and which, strange to tell, you never ventured to enter.—The King George and Queen Charlotte arrived *off the Sound* from Owhyhee, one of the Sandwich Isles, with their crews in full health and high spirits;—there you remained upwards of a fortnight, without pushing into the Sound: by day, indeed, you neared the land, and sometimes even made the opening of the Sound; but no sooner did the favouring night approach than you retreated, and took care to run further out to sea than you could make the following day.—

Though,

Though, if I am not very much misinformed, your ship was often tacked, and her head pointed to the land, without your knowledge, and without the desired success.

You really write, Sir, in so desultory a manner, that, on the subject of your great geographical discoveries, which are so proud a boast to you, or my plagiarisms from them, which you wish to infer I have silently committed, I must either skip from page to page of your remarks, or compress the whole of them into one article of refutation. It will, I believe, be for the ease of my readers, as well as my own, to perform the latter. Indeed, I am much obliged to Mr. Dixon for giving me an opportunity to state a few circumstances to the public, in addition to those already communicated by me, on the subject of the North West Coast, &c.

I most frankly confess that, when I failed on my second voyage, I furnished myself with your chart, and every chart that promised to be of the least service to me. And I protest, Sir, that it would not have been an intentional neglect, if, in discriminating what each navigator had done to complete the survey of the American Coast, which is comprized in the chart prefixed to my publication, I had omitted what I am indebted to you. The additions you made to the geography of that part of the coast are recorded in my chart. I have attributed to you the discovery of the Hippah Island, and almost all the Charlotte Isles, with many an interesting nook and corner, which your penetrating genius and nautical sagacity have added to the map of the world. In short, Sir, you are crammed with discoveries which you cannot digest,—and are, nevertheless, voraciously gaping for more.

If Captain Cook had lived to finish his work, you, Sir, would probably have been spared the trouble of your discoveries,—and the public would not have suffered any attempt to intrude on its patience from such inconsiderable people as ourselves. Yet, to several of the officers of that great man, the nation continues

tinues to be indebted. To Captain Roberts, in particular, the navigation of this country has very considerable obligations: it is his general chart of the world which ought to form the ground-work of us all; as our best discoveries consist of little more than the filling up its chasms on the American Coast.—I made it the foundation of my chart, as must be evident to every one acquainted with the late discoveries, without any information from me.—To the abilities of Mr. Arrowsmith I owe much, and I never differed from him but when I was convinced that I had better authority before me. Nor do I even blush to acknowledge, that I adopted some parts of Captain Portlock's and Captain Dixon's charts, while I rejected others. I also called in the aid of the Captains Duncan, Barclay and Colnett: all which various assistance, added to the observations and surveys made by Captain Douglas and myself, has enabled me to offer to the public those charts which accompany the Voyages I have published. They are, I trust, as accurate as the nature of mercantile surveys will admit, and have received the sanction of those opinions, against which, any petty objections from you would weigh but as so many grains of dust in the balance.—I very sincerely lament that Captain Colnett's charts were seized by the Spaniards. In point of accuracy, they are, I believe, superior to any of the preceding ones; and when they are delivered up, will, I doubt not, throw new light on the geography of the American Coast.

The following nautical remarks will not be very interesting to the generality of readers;—but it is necessary for me to prove the futility of Mr. Dixon's reasonings, and to correct, by the statements of truth, the falsehoods of his publication.

You observe, Sir, in something like a tone of triumph, that I was in possession of Mr. Barclay's chart, which, you say, includes the utmost extent of my progress to the southward. The former part of the assertion is true;—but the latter is false:—Nay, fortunately for me, I have Mr. Barclay's chart in my possession,

which proves that he did not go further to the southward than 47° , or thereabouts; and $45^{\circ} 30'$ is the point where my course was completed. Between Maurelle's chart and mine there is no similitude;—and for any information I received from the Captains Hannah, Lowie and Guise,—the two latter Gentlemen, for the former is dead, will not come forward to calumniate or accuse me.

In answer to your remark which alludes to a longitudinal mistake on my part, in page 38 of my Introductory Voyage,—I most readily acknowledge, that when I was on that part of the coast there described to be in lat. $56^{\circ} 38'$, and long. $223^{\circ} 00' 25''$, I had my doubts as to the perfect accuracy of the latter observation. Accordingly, in constructing my general chart, I adopted the concurring, though distinct, observations of Mr. Arrowsmith and Captain Douglas, and stated the longitude at $224^{\circ} 30'$, instead of $223^{\circ} 00' 25''$.

You desire me to inform the public, on what authority I have introduced the track of the Washington in my chart;—and, from that respect which is due to the public, I shall condescend to comply with your request. Mr. Neville, a gentleman of the most respectable character, who came home in the Chesterfield, a ship in the service of the East India Company, made that communication to me; which, on his authority, I have communicated to the public. Mr. Kendrick, who commanded the Washington, arrived at China, with a very valuable cargo of furs, some time previous to the departure of the Chesterfield; and Mr. Neville, who was continually with him during that interval, and received the particulars of the track from him, was so obliging as to state it to me.

Your sarcasm, Sir, on the manner in which I speak of Captain Cook in my Observations on the North West Passage, proceeds from the habitual liberality of your mind. I wrote the sentiment which I felt; nor do I fear to repeat it.—
 “ Though the Felice and Iphigenia did explore the latitudes from 56° to 47°
 “ North, there is every reason to lament, that Captain Cook was prevented from
 “ making

“ making such an examination as would have proceeded from him.” Nor have I the least apprehension, that the most enthusiastic admirers of Captain Cook, will consider the foregoing sentence as containing an attempt to degrade him beneath, or elevate myself above, the very distant stations we respectively hold in the scale of professional merit.

I have endeavoured, to the utmost of my information, to particularize the merits of every Gentleman employed on the coast of America. Captain Duncan did explore a considerable part of the coast between 50° and 52°. I personally esteem him, and think his merit too well established to need such a champion as yourself. Nor have I neglected that attention which is due to Captain Barclay; his name is continued by me to the Sound to the Southward of Nootka:— But though his boat was in the Straits of John de Fuca, he never was, as appears from his own chart.

But now comes the cause of all this bitter severity against me, for depriving great navigators of their just honours, and sinking their superior merit in silence. I have certainly dared to rob the Channel of the Charlotte Isles of the *title of Dixon*; for no better reason, than because the enterprizing, intelligent and humane navigator, who thought so proudly to distinguish it with his own name, never saw that Channel,—according to the evidence of the track on his own chart. I have, therefore, ventured to give it the name of the man who boldly pushed through it:—I have stripped the silly Jay of his borrowed plumage.

I shall here take the opportunity of observing, that there is a port which unfortunately bears my name. I did not myself, however, assume this distinction,—but owe it to the partial remembrance of Captain Douglas, when we were many hundred miles distant from each other.

As to the existence of the Straits of John de Fuca,—Captain Duncan saw them as well as myself; and the original fallies of Captain Dixon’s pleasantry,

will not prevent me from repeating my opinion,—that some further account would have already been given of these Straits, if Captain Colnett had not been prevented by the ships of his Catholic Majesty from fulfilling the objects of his voyage.

I now come to that part of your publication which mentions Cook's River, and its probable communications with the southernmost part of Baffin's Bay, or the northernmost part of Hudson's Bay. I find no data in Captain Cook's Voyage to determine the non-existence of a passage. There is no declaration from him that militates against the navigation of a ship beyond the Narrows,—where we know there is sufficient depth for a whale. But this is not absolutely the point. The place in which the *Iphigenia* anchored, was in lat. $59^{\circ} 58'$ and her boat went as far as lat. $60^{\circ} 42'$, which, indeed, was not so high by many miles as the survey of Mr. Bligh: though, if I mistake not, there were several persons on board the *Discovery*, who retained their opinions in favour of a passage, independent of the surveys made by the boats of both ships. You, however, with your usual eagerness and ignorance, take possession of the shoal placed above the Narrows, in order to form a barrier against all further navigation up the river: but to dispossess you at once of your important situation, I must inform you, that ships can navigate on each side this formidable shoal. No one considers the character and abilities of Captain Cook with more veneration than myself; nevertheless, I am free to observe, that there are those *who have taken the liberty* of correcting the surveys of the very parts which were explored by him. The Russians, indeed, who in their galliots have navigated Cook's River much higher than any European vessel, consider it, in reality, to be a bay, filled with fragments of islands, whose channels have been erroneously taken for rivers;—nor does it appear that a single river has been discovered by any of the navigators on the American coast. It is, in my opinion, by no means improbable, that the sea seen behind Nootka, will be hereafter found to extend to the Northward as far as Cook's River. But this is mere conjecture; and, in my Observations on the North West Passage, I argue only on the probability of its existence,—and

leave

leave my reasonings, such as they are, on the subject, to the candid investigation of inquisitive and discerning men.

Whales were most certainly seen by Captain Douglas at the anchoring place of the Iphigenia in Cook's River; and I myself saw them off Cape Douglas taking their course up it:—But the Pacific Ocean and the channels of the Charlotte Isles are so abundant in these animals, that it would be an idle excursion indeed to follow them elsewhere in those latitudes.

In short, Sir, if you will peruse the Voyages of Captain Cook with a little more attention than you appear to have bestowed upon them, you will add another discovery to those you have already made,—that the great Navigator did not give over his survey of the river, called after his name, from impediments, but opinion; and I defy you to produce, or even name any one who navigated Cook's River till he could navigate it no further. But, after all, though Captain Cook found the rise and fall of its tides to be very considerable, I am disposed to believe, that if a passage should hereafter be discovered, it will prove to be in a more southerly direction.

The probability of a North West Passage, for which I contend, appears to be a stumbling block of great offence to you; and, in a dictatorial tone of inquisitive importance, you ask me, why I produced the voyage of the Iphigenia to aid my observations on the subject; when, as you are pleased to say, it was in my power to have brought forward that of Captain Duncan; which, in your unerring opinion, is of superior authority. I answer,—because, without retracting from the acknowledged merit of Captain Duncan, I prefer the journal of the Iphigenia to every other.—I consider Captain Duncan as the best authority for the navigation between the Charlotte Isles and the Main,—or, at least, what we take to be so. This circumstance, with his traverses from shore to shore, justifies the application I have made of his voyage to my chart. He undoubtedly

visited the great Northern Archipelago prior to Captain Douglas;—but, from his distressed situation, he quitted those parts without knowing there was such a channel as that through which Captain Douglas made his way. You had no such excuse;—and when I mention Captain Barclay as infinitely your superior both in navigation and commerce, I assert that which he himself has proved.—He performed the voyage from Europe to America, and from thence to China, in twelve months; and I maintain, that instead of employing two years to reach Canton, you and your consort ought to have manifested the same expedition as that gentleman.

Your charge against me that, in the only place where I acknowledge Mr. Arrowsmith's assistance, I have made such an extraordinary deviation from him as $19^{\circ} 45'$, would be of a very serious nature indeed, if it were true;—but the accusation, from its flagrant falsehood, proves nothing more than the mad malice of the man who makes it.

You here allude, I presume, to the sea seen by Mr. Hearne.—Now, Sir, to prove the captious ignorance of your objection, I must inform you, that in Captain Cook's chart we find this sea in latitude 72° North, and longitude 240° East of Greenwich.—In that of Mr. Arrowsmith, it appears in latitude $68^{\circ} 15'$ North, and longitude $248^{\circ} 30'$ East, agreeable to Mr. Turner, as I have since been informed, making the difference of $3^{\circ} 45'$ in latitude, and $8^{\circ} 30'$ in longitude; nevertheless I have adhered to the position of Captain Cook. On the chart of the latter, we find no sea laid down in latitude of $68^{\circ} 15'$, and longitude 228° East; but in that of Arrowsmith a sea is placed precisely in those degrees, agreeable to the account of the Canadian traders, given to him.—And so much for your idle and ill-founded questions concerning your supposed difference of $19^{\circ} 45'$ of longitude between Mr. Arrowsmith and me.—But to proceed in settling the rest of them, such as they are:—I must inform you, that the reason why I differ from the last named
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gentleman, or rather from Captain Duncan, who was his authority, in the position of the land to Eastward, at Nepean's Sound, Princess Royal Island, &c. proceeds from a preference I have given to the corrections of Captain Douglas, who has fixed these parts of the coast by numerous lunar observations. He has placed them $1^{\circ} 30'$ to the East of Captain Duncan; and I believe myself to be justified in following his example.—I am not conscious of any improper bias in selecting the authorities which have governed me.

You are at a loss, it seems, to account for my motives in mentioning the Capes *Mendocino* and *de Mendozino*, in my delineation of the American Coast;—because, in your opinion, there is only one Cape *Mendocino*; the other, you say, is *Cape Blanco*, which you accuse me, in your usual way, of removing $1^{\circ} 30'$ to the Northward of its real situation.—I answer,—Captain Cook does not mention any Cape *Mendocino* in latitude 40° , which Mr. Arrowsmith does:—I have therefore, as I conceive, very justifiably mentioned both the Cape *Mendocino* of Mr. Arrowsmith, in latitude 40° , and the Cape *de Mendozino* of Captain Cook, in latitude $42^{\circ} 30'$, or thereabouts, which he places in his chart $42^{\circ} 30'$.—As for *Cape Blanco*, I have placed it in latitude $43^{\circ} 30'$, agreeable to Captain Cook, by whose chart I have arranged all that part of the coast.

You state my position of Port Sir Francis Drake, as an example of the happy method I possess of removing land at pleasure. Captain Cook places it in latitude $38^{\circ} 45'$, or thereabouts.—Mr. Arrowsmith in latitude $37^{\circ} 30'$, and I have adopted the position of the former, latitude $38^{\circ} 45'$; while you insist upon its being in $47^{\circ} 30'$; forming a difference of ten degrees from Mr. Arrowsmith, and of eight degrees fifteen minutes from Captain Cook. This, Mr. Dixon, is removing land with a vengeance.—The interior parts of America, as laid down in my chart, come in also for their share of disapprobation. I shall only add, with respect to them, that they were arranged from the best authorities.

Having

Having, I trust, very completely fixed the latitude and longitude of your character as a navigator, I shall proceed to lay down, as I hope with tolerable accuracy, the exact position of your commercial excellence. In making my observations on this subject, I must previously remark, that your malignity is so predominant, as to annihilate in you the leading, and, as I should think, the inherent principles of a man of trade. You seem to rejoice that your voyage round the world, as you call it, for the purposes of commerce, was not attended with the advantage expected to be derived from it.—You appear to be proud of the inadequate and disproportioned sale of your cargo at China; and are, I doubt not, grateful to the Houang merchants of Canton, *for having purchased all your skins at less than half their value*, in order that you might be furnished with a plausible, but fallacious argument, against a new branch of commerce; in which, having failed yourself, you would be glad, as far as your wretched testimony would go, to prevent former adventurers from obtaining the remuneration of their risks and labours; or to discourage the enterprizes of others, whose knowledge, activity and perseverance, by ensuring success, would bring added disgrace on those who have failed from the want of such essential qualifications.

You state, with an infatuated kind of triumph, that your 2552 sea-otter skins, &c. fetched no more than 54,857 Spanish dollars at the Chinese market; and your statement is made in such a manner, as to infer that it was *the common market price* of that valuable commodity; and that, of course, what has been said by myself and others on the advantages of that commerce, is a deception on the public. At the moment you were writing that curious piece of information, or instructing others to write it, you knew that it was founded in falsehood. Nor dare you deny that the low prices given for the articles in question, arose from the contract of your owners with the East India Company, to leave the disposition of your American cargo to the disposal of their servants at Canton, which necessarily gave an additional power to the Houang merchants,

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those privileged oppressors of European commerce*. I repeat, those skins did not find any thing like half the price for which other skins have been sold in China, both at the time, and since the period of their sale.

You are pleased to add, if I wish to be informed why these skins sold for so small a sum, I may enquire of Mr. Richard Cadman Etches, who, you doubt not, can give me every satisfaction on that subject. I perfectly agree with you, that the gentleman to whom you refer me, is fully qualified to answer me upon the matter immediately before us;—and I desire no better judge than him, between you and me.—Nor have I the least doubt but he will be ready to confirm the explanations I am about to give, to use your own phrase, of *the ill success of your commerce*; which arose, among other causes, from the misconstruction your commander and yourself thought proper to put on the licence granted to your owners by the Honourable the East India Company, for the disposal of your American cargoes, and the consequent controul assumed by the supercargoes over the sale of them.

I have also good reason to think, Mr. Dixon, that a considerable part of your furs were of a very, if not the most, inferior nature, consisting of worn out garments of the Indians, pieces bedaubed with paint, and sewed together, so as greatly to lessen the supposed aggregate value of your cargo.

But let me ask you, Sir, whether you did not encourage, as far as you had any power to do it, the first opportunity of selling the furs, however disadvantageous to your owners, in order to secure, from all future risk, a certain little advantage you were to receive upon the sale?

* The history of the Houang merchants, and the manner in which they are allowed by the Chinese government to oppress the commerce of the Europeans, is stated at large in the Account of the Trade between the North West Coast of America and China, prefixed to my Voyages.

In page 13, your pamphlet states an account of furs brought by the several ships you mention, amounting to 5,033 skins:—they sold, it seems, for 146,842 Spanish dollars in China; which, at a medium, makes no more than about 29½ dollars per skin:—but of these furs which were brought to Canton in the years 1786, 1787, and 1788, I am authorised to say, that scarce three thousand of them were saleable articles. And I do assert, that in those very years, the prime skins sold in China from *ninety*, to *one hundred and twenty dollars* per skin.

In the first voyages to the North West Coast of America, the adventurers purchased whatever skins the natives brought them; and the latter sold only such as they had procured for themselves,—many of which must have necessarily been old, worn out and rotten,—having been employed as cloathing, and for other purposes of personal or domestic convenience. But as the inhabitants of the coast are become more informed as to the nature and advantages of commerce, their attention is proportionably encreased to the due preparation of the objects of it.—They no longer dye or paint, or even wear the otter skins which they take, but consider them merely as articles of trade, for which they can get commodities more suited to their necessities and comforts. The Nootkan people have already given a very decided preference to the woollens of England.

The following statement will, I believe, settle at once the present difference, Mr. Dixon, between you and me.

Your 2,552 skins, sold for 54,877 dollars, which is somewhat more than *twenty-one dollars* per skin.

My cargo, (carried to Canton when you were there, consisting of 370 skins, 120 of which were of the river otter, worth only from eight to nine dollars each)—

each)—was sold for 14,000 dollars; and the merchant who bought them, not being able to make good his purchase, forfeited his deposit of 1000 dollars.—Many of these skins were of an indifferent quality, but the prime parchment skins sold from 100 to 120 dollars per skin.

In the year 1788, which is the period when your extraordinary sale took place, I beg leave to bring to your remembrance, and Mr. Etches will confirm the assertion, that the prime sea-otter skins sold at Canton, at an average price, from *ninety to one hundred Mexican dollars* per skin.

In page 13 of your letter, you address me in the following manner: “ I should have been happy to have included in the above statement, the furs brought to the China market by yourself, your second voyage; and also those belonging to the Prince of Wales and Princess Royal:—These accounts you had it in your power to have laid before the Public; but, for reasons best known to yourself, you have thought proper to keep them secret.”

To the Public I most readily give the account both of the one and the other; and my character shall stand pledged for the accuracy of them.—You are continually giving me opportunities, Mr. Dixon, of clearing away any and every impression that may be made by your insidious, malignant, and false depreciation of the North West American commerce.

I arrived at Canton, in the Felice, in the month of December, 1788; my cargo consisted of about 750 skins.—I had not to encounter the controul of the Honourable East India Company's supercargoes, but possessed a free, independent power over my cargo, which I sold for 38,000 dollars, being something better than 50 dollars per skin.

It may not also be improper to observe, that the Chinese furriers sorted these skins into the following classes :

Of the first quality	-	-	-	100
the second	-	-	-	200
the third	-	-	-	200
the fourth	-	-	-	90
the fifth	-	-	-	120
the sixth	-	-	-	40
				<hr/>
				Total 750
				<hr/>

The tails of the sea-otter, which were promiscuously attached to these skins, averaged about six dollars per tail*.

I shall also add another circumstance relative to this cargo, as it is in point to the general question.

The Chinese furrier, who had bought the whole of it for 38,000 dollars, being apprehensive that the Hoppo, or Comptroller of the Customs, would exercise his arbitrary power, in taking such of the skins as he might chuse, at his own price, if he knew of the sale, requested that it might not be immediately divulged; in consequence of which the Hoppo came on board the Felice, and selected eight of the best skins, and twenty of the finest tails: for the former he paid me 250 dollars each, and for the latter 15 dollars each; which I, of course, allowed the Chinese merchant, on completing the contract between us.

The Prince of Wales and Princess Royal arrived off Macao the same month, with a cargo, which was acknowledged by the Chinese merchants to be in the best condition of any brought to the Canton market; and many applications

* The reason of the small comparative number of tails arises from their being considered as the exclusive right of the American women, who employ them in their dress.

were made to Mr. J. Etches, the supercargo of those ships, for the disposal of his cargo, before he went up to Canton. He exposed, however, only those skins which were of the second quality to sale, for which he was offered *seventy-five dollars* per skin; and he and Captain Colnett wrote an account of the offer to their owners, and acquainted them that if they could not procure an higher price, they should close with the offer, and pay the proceeds into the Company's treasury at Canton. He was offered so high a price as *one hundred and fifty dollars* for some of the best skins.—A few days after this offer, they received a peremptory order from the East India Company's Council, for the Prince of Wales to proceed to Canton with the joint cargoes, which was accompanied with a prohibition to dispose of any part of their furs. On their arrival they found the fatal precedent, established by Captain Dixon's commander, of leaving the sale of his cargo to the controul of the Company's Supercargoes, in full force against them. So that, exclusive of a large quantity of pieces of sea-otter skins and other furs, which were left at their own disposal, they delivered to the Supercargoes 1959 *whole sea-otter skins, and sixty-five cloaks made up of the furs of the same animal*, for which they granted Mr. Etches bills on the East India Company for *fifty-six thousand dollars*, amounting to no more than about *twenty-seven dollars and an half per skin*.—The difference between the price offered by the Chinese merchant, and that which was paid by the Company's supercargoes, renders all further observation superfluous.—And now, Mr. Dixon, I have laid these accounts before the Public, which, with your usual liberality, you suggest that I withheld from some sinister and dishonourable motive.—Your ignorance, to say no worse, has called forth these incontrovertible proofs of the falshood which pervades your statement of the North West American fur trade.

I have one more item for your satisfaction on this subject. The Spanish commanders, in their tender kindness, thought proper to return 96 skins belonging to the cargo of the North West America, which they had seized, as stated in the memorial presented to the House of Commons. These, with the
 master

master and crew of that little vessel, were taken to Canton on board the American ship Columbia, who took 24 of the 96 skins for freight. The account of their sale, from Canton, is thus stated in a letter to me, by the *Chesterfield* East Indiaman, dated Canton, February 12, 1790.

“ I have received from the Americans 72 skins, (*of the middling, second, and third quality*); they deduct 25 per cent. for the freight; and these 72 I have “ sold for 4000 dollars.”

Thus, at so late a period as in the commencement of the last year, *sea-otter skins*, which are stated to be of the *middling, second, and third qualities*, averaged at the Canton market at *fifty-five dollars and an half* per skin.

Having employed such reasons as my own experience and information suggested, to detect the fallacy of the statement in your pamphlet, which is calculated to give the most erroneous ideas concerning the fur trade between the North West Coast of America and China,—I shall proceed to state a few corroborating arguments in favour of my opinions concerning that trade:—And the first will be taken, Captain Dixon, from your own voyage, p. 300, 301.—The account there given, differs so much from your opinions in your letter to me, that as you acknowledge you did not write it, I am disposed to think also that you have never read it. The passage I allude to proves, *as I have already asserted*, that the low sale of your furs arose from accidental circumstances, and by no means from the state of the market for that article when you arrived at Canton. The passage is as follows:

“ In regard to the sale of our furs I should observe, that there is at Canton a “ company of wealthy merchants, called the *Houng Merchants*, with whom our “ East India Company transact all their business, and purchase from them the “ whole of the tea and China-ware sent to Great Britain. To these people our “ furs

“ furs were offered, with an expectation of their immediately taking them 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 Houg Merchants had looked the skins over, and fixed a value on
 “ them, no other merchant dares interfere in the purchase. Indeed, as the
 “ quantity above-mentioned was not suffered to be divided, there were not
 “ many people, except these Houg merchants, who had it in their power to
 “ buy so large a parcel and advance the money immediately. Add to this, the
 “ 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 Houg merchants have a 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: 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 Houg 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; meanwhile *some of the refuse, which they*
 “ *had left for us to dispose of, sold for considerable advantage.*”*

Another argument in favour of the *fur trade*, and which corroborates Captain
 Dixon's foregoing refutation of his own fallacious statement and insinuations to
 the prejudice of that trade, as given in his letter,—is taken from the voyage of
 Captain Portlock, his associate and commander. The latter gentleman con-
 cludes the account of his voyages in the following manner:

* Whether they were considered as among the refuse, I know not, but a small lot of those skins
 were sold by your commander to a China merchant at 100 dollars per skin.

“ The grand object of the voyage, of which an account is given in the preceding sheets, being to trade for furs, with an expectation, no doubt, of gaining more than common profits, by an undertaking which, at once, was new, hazardous and uncertain, the world will naturally enquire whether such expectation has been answered; and, more particularly, *as reports have been industriously propagated to the contrary.*”

“ That the King George’s Sound Company (the proprietors of the ships commanded by Messrs. Portlock and Dixon) have not accumulated immense fortunes, may, perhaps, be true; but it is no less certain, that they are *gainers* to an amount of several thousand pounds; and that the voyage did not answer to the utmost extent of their wishes, *undoubtedly was owing to their own inexperience*;—for when the King George and Queen Charlotte arrived at Canton, and even a month after that period, prime sea-otter skins *sold from eighty to ninety dollars each*. Of this quality the ships had at least two thousand on board, besides a large quantity of furs of inferior value; but though we could have sold our cargo with ease, we were not at liberty to dispose of one material article,—the sole management of it being vested in the hands of the East India Company’s supercargoes; and, at length, the skins just mentioned sold for less than twenty dollars each.”

“ From this plain statement of facts, the public may at once perceive, that *this branch of Commerce, so far from being a losing one, is, perhaps, the most profitable and lucrative that the enterprising merchant can possibly engage in.*”

I have only one additional observation to make upon the subject. In page 11 of your pamphlet, you are pleased very facetiously to remark, that though, according to *my probable arithmetic*, your cargo ought to have sold for 200,000 dollars, it fetched no more than 54,857. To this I have only to answer, that the *probable arithmetic* of your commander, Captain Portlock, goes to the same calculation.

Having

Having, Sir, as I trust, fully, incontrovertibly, *and from the best authorities*, established the fallacy of the statement in your letter,—and thereby, as I hope, baffled the malice which excited you to make it, I shall, for the present, quit the cause of the North West American commerce, and take up my own.

You suggest that I divided part of the skins I carried to China, on board the Nootka, among my own people, and sold them on my own account;—and with the most entire satisfaction I inform you, that I did both the one and the other. I sincerely thank you, Sir, for forcing me to relate circumstances which I feel to be so honourable to myself, and to state my conduct in them, of which no liberal or humane mind will think I have any reason to be ashamed.

The commercial expedition to the North West Coast of America, from Bengal, in 1786, and which was fitted out by many of the most respectable characters in that settlement, proceeded not from a view of private gain, but the spirit of public advantage: *it was a patriotic experiment in favour of British commerce*; and the proprietors consigned it to my unlimited and independent command;—their partial and animating friendship shackled it with no conditions,—but made me as much master of the whole equipment, as if I had prepared it at my own cost and expence. The misfortunes of the voyage I have related to the world; but they have not been heightened by a single reproach from those who enabled me to make it: on the contrary, my disappointments have almost been done away by the continuance of their friendship and protection.

The sufferings of myself and people in this voyage, afford a very painful example of those hardships to which maritime life is subject. When, therefore, I returned to China, I felt it to be my first duty to remunerate, in the best manner I was able, those of my crew which the winter of Prince William's Sound had spared me. I did, accordingly, divide a certain quantity of skins among them; I was invested with the power of doing it:—And this act of justice, which was

my chief consolation at the time when I performed it, is a source of honest pride to me at this moment, when I am compelled to record it.

I have now, as I flatter myself, settled the opinion which every impartial reader will entertain of your pamphlet, in the principal objects of it. As I feel a wish, however, that the confutation should be complete, I shall condescend to remark upon the petty observations and subordinate charges which form the remaining part of that publication.

I mentioned, but without any aggravating expressions, the circumstance of your having supplied Taheo, the King of Atooi, one of the Sandwich Islands, with arms, ammunition, &c. on very improper conditions, from the authority of Captain Douglas.—It is the language of his journal, and I am disposed to believe it.—Nor can you, with any justice, exercise your severity on me, for having given credit to such an authority; when you reflect, with what readiness you admitted an invidious as well as false account into your book, of the causes that augmented the sickness of my crew in Prince William's Sound, on an evidence of very inferior credibility.

But it was not the matter of trading away musquets, pistols, or other weapons,—which, indeed, was consistent enough with your former occupation—but the manner or motive of your conduct in so doing.—I am willing to acknowledge that I also furnished certain of the chiefs of the Sandwich Islands with arms and ammunition, in order to defend themselves against their enemies, and thereby to secure their friendship to the future interests of British commerce.

The recollection of my conduct at the different visits I made to the Sandwich Isles, does not present to my mind a single cause of reproach. On my return to China from Prince William's Sound, we remained there a month; and, in consequence of frequent attempts, during the night, upon the anchor of the
Nootka,

Nootka, by some of the natives, I did discharge a four-pound shot on shore, though not among the people, as you falsely assert, but over an hill, where it could have no other but its intended effect, to terrify the inhabitants from their designs on the most material implement of the ship: this desirable effect was produced without the least interruption to that harmony which subsisted between us and the natives, from the time of our arrival, till we quitted them to proceed on our voyage to China.

I agree with you that a time-piece is not of the least utility at sea, unless a sight can be obtained both of the horizon and the sun.—Nor do I retract the declaration, which seems to alarm your nautical experience, “that during a season of continual fog, my time-piece had proved of real service to me.” For, I believe it is known to every seaman, that, in weather which may be properly called a continual fog, those momentary gleams of the sun appear, and transient views of the horizon are obtained, to which the instrument in question may be applied with the greatest utility.

As to your having anchored in Karakakoa Bay, in the Island of Owhyhee, previous to the Iphigenia, if I had recollected that circumstance to have been related in your voyage, I should have acknowledged it in mine. I really do not wish to deprive you of any merit, however trifling, that you or your voyages may possess.

Whether skin or wooden canoes are in use from the straits of the two continents along the coast, as far as Cape Edgecumbe, is a matter of too little consequence to merit an investigation. When I am convinced, from some better authority than your's, that I am mistaken in my account, in favour of the former, I will correct the error.

Whether you or I, or, according to your opinion, the Spaniards, first saw the extraordinary people with the disfiguring cut in their under-lips, in the
 latitude

latitude of $56^{\circ} 38'$ North, and longitude of $223^{\circ} 0' 25''$, shall not be made a subject of contention by me. I shall only repeat the opinion of my Introductory Voyage, p. 38, where some account of these people may be found,—that, from the circumstances of their conduct and behaviour, there was every reason to believe that we were the only navigators they had ever beheld.—One word more, Mr. Dixon, and I have done.—

You are pleased, Sir, to declare, that it was from a sense of the duty you owe to the public and yourself, that you have undertaken, with what success that public will determine, to point out some of the numerous absurdities, &c. which, in your opinion, fill my volume: but, leaving yourself out of the question, it really became your boasted zeal for the right information of the public, to have added a few more of my inconsistencies, and your own observations on them, in order to have narrowed the enormous margins of your pamphlet, as well as to have occupied the four last pages of it, which you have now left to instruct the reader with an interesting catalogue of your bookseller's publications.

JAN. 1, 1791.

JOHN MEARES.

P. S. It is with particular satisfaction that I possess this opportunity of contradicting the misinformation of Mr. Duffin, relative to Captain Colnett's illness, in his letter to me, from Nootka Sound, published in my Memorial to the House of Commons, N^o 9;—and, in the Appendix to my Voyages, N^o 13. Mr. Duffin there mentions, but I am sure very innocently, that Mr. Colnett's insanity is supposed to be a family disorder.—It, therefore, becomes my duty to declare, from the best authority, that such a report is destitute of any foundation whatever.







