

BOOK REVIEWS

The Dixon-Meares Controversy.—Containing, *Remarks on the Voyages of John Meares, by George Dixon, An Answer to Mr. George Dixon, by John Meares, and Further Remarks on the Voyages of John Meares, by George Dixon.* Edited by F. W. HOWAY. (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1929. Pp. 12+156. \$5.00).

This volume inaugurates the Canadian Historical Studies issued by the Ryerson Press and Louis Carrier and Company under the general editorship of Dr. Lorne Pierce. The new series aims at the publication of "original documents, not easily accessible, and authoritative studies by scholars of recognized ability." It is fitting that the first volume should be edited by Judge F. W. Howay.

The three pamphlets here republished bring to light a long-forgotten dispute between two maritime fur traders, Captain George Dixon of the *Queen Charlotte*, and that charming but quite untrustworthy blusterer, Captain John Meares. The quarrel, which dated from 1787 when Portlock and Dixon met Meares at Prince Williams Sound on the Alaskan coast, was enhanced by the publication of Meares's *Voyages* in 1790. In that volume Meares took pleasure in belittling the work of Portlock and Dixon.

Meares attained a brief international fame at the time of the Nootka Sound controversy and his *Memorial* presented to the House of Commons May 13, 1790, was accepted for a time at its face value. But Meares was an incorrigible distorter of facts. In his introduction Judge Howay carefully weighs the evidence against Meares and finds him entirely wanting in truth. Dixon, on the other hand, was a truthful man who bore a fine reputation as a navigator. Meares is the only person to attack Dixon's veracity or his seamanship.

Angered by references in Meares's *Voyages* Dixon wrote his first pamphlet *Remarks on the Voyages of John Meares Esq.* He refuted many of Meares's statements and attacked the amount of damages claimed by Meares from the Spaniards, showing that the wily captain was claiming \$100 a piece for 5,000 sea-otters which he would have captured if his ships had not been seized at Nootka. He also poked fun at Meares's chart, part of which he likened to the "mould of a good old housewife's butter pat." Meares replied in his *Answer to Mr. George Dixon*, a piece of special pleading which upheld the price asked for the hypothetical sea-otter skins and

quoted alleged statements of Captain Duncan of the *Princess Royal* with reference to Dixon's niggardliness. Dixon returned to the attack in his *Further Remarks*. In it he played his trump card, a letter from Captain Duncan clearing him of Meares's charges and commenting most unfavourably on Meares's character and veracity. Meares attempted no reply.

The controversy sheds light on the early days of the Maritime fur trade. Meares was an important figure in the trade and his *Voyages* were widely read and are still to be found in libraries. Dixon has shown that Meares was incapable of telling a consistent story. The three pamphlets are, therefore, a necessary commentary on the *Voyages*.

Judge Howay's volume is well printed on good paper and has been carefully proofed. In the third pamphlet the archaic long "s's" have been employed. Possibly this might have been made uniform throughout the three pamphlets. The careful introduction and notes set forth the circumstances of the quarrel and give much needed information regarding the movements of the men and ships. The illustrations are drawn from contemporary sources and there is a short index.

Other volumes of the Canadian Historical Studies will be awaited with interest.

WALTER N. SAGE

The Wintering Partners on Peace River. By J. N. WALLACE. (Ottawa: Thorburn & Abbott. 1929. Pp. 139. \$2.00).

Of the eastward-flowing prairie rivers the Peace was that which first became important in the westward advance, for the reason that it was the only one which afforded a road through the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Wallace traces its story from the days of the earliest traders on its banks down to the union of the two companies in 1821. He begins with that rare rascal, Peter Pond, whose movements he examines critically, and reaches the conclusion that the first access to the Peace River was made by Pond overland from the Athabaska. He then sketches the gradual advance up the river under Boyer, Vaudrieul, and McLeod to the day when by Sir Alexander Mackenzie's great voyage the Peace became the first transcontinental highway. He outlines the work of the Finlays, Fraser, Stuart, and McDougall—all pushing the trading posts farther westward and solidifying the position against the energetic, though short-lived, opposition of the XY Company as well as against the spasmodic ef-