

**THE ADVENTURES OF JOHN JEWITT:  
ONLY SURVIVOR OF THE CREW OF THE  
SHIP BOSTON, DURING A CAPTIVITY OF  
NEARLY THREE YEARS AMONG THE  
INDIANS OF NOOTKA SOUND IN  
VANCOUVER ISLAND; PP. 13-256**

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The Adventures of John Jewitt: Only Survivor of the Crew of the Ship Boston, During a Captivity of Nearly Three Years Among the Indians of Nootka Sound in Vancouver Island; pp. 13-256 by John Jewitt & Robert Brown

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**JOHN JEWITT & ROBERT BROWN**

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with kind regards of

W. M. Brown

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THE  
ADVENTURES  
OF  
JOHN <sup>Rodgers</sup> JEWITT

ONLY SURVIVOR OF THE CREW OF THE SHIP

*BOSTON*

DURING A CAPTIVITY OF NEARLY THREE YEARS

AMONG THE

INDIANS OF NOOTKA SOUND

IN VANCOUVER ISLAND

EDITED

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES*

BY

ROBERT BROWN, Ph.D., M.A., F.L.S.

COMMANDER OF THE FIRST VANCOUVER EXPLORING EXPEDITION

WITH THIRTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

CLEMENT WILSON

29 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.

1896

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## ADVENTURES OF JOHN JEWITT.



### INTRODUCTION

MANY years ago—when America was in the midst of war, when railways across the continent were but the dream of sanguine men, and when the Pacific was a far-away sea—the writer of these lines passed part of a pleasant summer in cruising along the western shores of Vancouver Island. Our ship's company was not distinguished, for it consisted of two fur-traders and an Indian "boy," and the sloop in which the crew and passengers sailed was so small, that, when the wind failed, and the brown folk ashore looked less amiable and the shore more rugged than was desirable, we put her and ourselves beyond hail by the aid of what seamen know as a "white ash breeze." Out of one fjord we went, only to enter another so like it that there was often a difficulty in deciding by the mere appearance of the shore which was which. Everywhere the dense forest of Douglas fir and Menzies spruce covered the country from the water's edge to the summit of the rounded hills which here and there caught the eye in the still little known, but at that date almost entirely unexplored interior. Wherever a tree could obtain a foothold, there a tree

grew, until in places their roots were at times laved by the spray. Beneath this thick clothing of heavy timber flourished an almost equally dense undergrowth of



DR. BROWN'S "BOY."

shrubs, which until then were only known to us from the specimens introduced from North-West America into the European gardens. Gay were the thickets of thimbleberry<sup>1</sup> and salmon-berry<sup>2</sup> wherever the soil was rich, and for miles the ground was carpeted with the salal,<sup>3</sup> while the huckleberry,<sup>4</sup> the crab-apple,<sup>5</sup> and the flowering currant<sup>6</sup> varied the monotony of the gloomy woods. In places the ginseng, or, as the woodmen call it, the "devil's walking-stick,"<sup>7</sup> with its long prickly stem and palm-like

<sup>1</sup> *Rubus Nutkanus.*

<sup>2</sup> *Rubus spectabilis.*

<sup>3</sup> *Gaultheria Shallon.*

<sup>4</sup> *Vaccinium ovatum.*

<sup>5</sup> *Pyrus rivularis.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ribes sanguineum*, now a common shrub in our ornamental grounds.

<sup>7</sup> *Echinopanax horridum.*



head of great leaves, imparted an almost tropical aspect to scenery which, seen from the deck of our little craft, looked so like that of Southern Norway, that I have never seen the latter without recalling the outer limits of British Columbia. On the few flat spits where the sun reached, the gigantic cedars<sup>1</sup> and broad-leaved maples<sup>2</sup> lighted up the scene, while the dogwood,<sup>3</sup> with its large white flowers reflected in the water of some river which, after a turbulent course, had reached the sea through a placid mouth, or a Menzies arbutus,<sup>4</sup> whose glossy leaves and brown bark presented a more southern facies to the sombre jungles, afforded here and there a relief to the never-ending fir and pine and spruce.

A more solitary shore, so far as white men are concerned, it would be hard to imagine. From the day we left until the day we returned, we sighted only one sail; and from Port San Juan, where an Indian trader lived a lonely life in an often-beleaguered blockhouse, to Koskeemo Sound, where another of these voluntary exiles passed his years among the savages, there was not a christened man, with the exception of the little settlement of lumbermen at the head of the Alberni Canal. For months at a time no keel ever ploughed this sea, and then too frequently it was a warship sent from Victoria to chastise the tribesmen for some outrage committed on wayfaring men such as we. The floating fur-trader with whom we exchanged the courtesies of the wilderness had indeed been despitefully used. For

<sup>1</sup> *Thuja gigantea*, a tree which to the Indian is what the bamboo is to the Chinese.

<sup>2</sup> *Acer macrophyllum*.    <sup>3</sup> *Cornus Nuttallii*.    <sup>4</sup> *Arbutus Menziesii*.

had he not taken to himself some savage woman, who had levanted to her tribe with those miscellaneous effects which he termed "iktas"? And the Klayoquahts



PORT SAN JUAN INDIANS.

had stolen his boat, and the Kaoquahts his beans and his vermilion and his rice, and threatened to scuttle his schooner and stick his head on its masthead. And, moreover, to complete this tale of public pillage and private wrong, a certain chief, to whom he applied many ornate epithets, had declared that he cared not a salal-berry for all of "King George's warships." So that the conclusion of this merchant of the wilds was that,

until "half the Indians were hanged, and the other half badly licked, there would be no peace on the coast for honest men such as he." Then, under a cloud of playful blasphemy, our friend sailed away.

For if civilisation was scarce in the Western Vancouver

of '63, savagedom was all-abounding. Not many hours passed without our having dealings with the lords of the soil. It was indeed our business—or, at least, the business of the two men and the Indian "boy"—to meet with and make profit out of the barbarous folk. Hence it was seldom that we went to sleep without the din of a board village in our ears, or woke without the ancient and most fish-like smell of one being the first odour which greeted our nostrils. In almost every cove, creek, or inlet there was one of these camps, and every few miles we entered the territory of a new tribe, ruled by a rival chief, rarely on terms with his neighbour, and as often as not at war with him. More than once we had occasion to witness the gruesome evidence of this state of matters. A war party returning from a raid on a distant hamlet would be met with, all painted in hideous colours, and with the bleeding heads of their decapitated enemies fastened to the bows of their cedar canoes, and the cowering captives, doomed to slavery, bound among the fighting men. Or, casting anchor in front of a village, we would be shown with pride a row of festering skulls stuck on poles, as proof of the military prowess of our shifty hosts.

These were, however, unusually unpleasant incidents. More frequently we saw little except the more lightsome traits of what was then a very primitive savage life, and the barbarous folk treated us kindly. A marriage feast might be in progress, or a great "potlatch," or merry-making, at which the giving away of property was the principal feature (p. 82), might be in full blaze at the very moment we steered round the wooded point. Halibut