

# GREAT SAILOR

THE LIFE OF THE DISCOVERER

Captain James Cook

JOHN W. VANDERCOOK

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*Title:* Great Sailor, a Life of the Discoverer Captain James Cook

*Date of first publication:* 1951

*Author:* John Womack Vandercook (1902-1963)

*Date first posted:* May 30, 2023

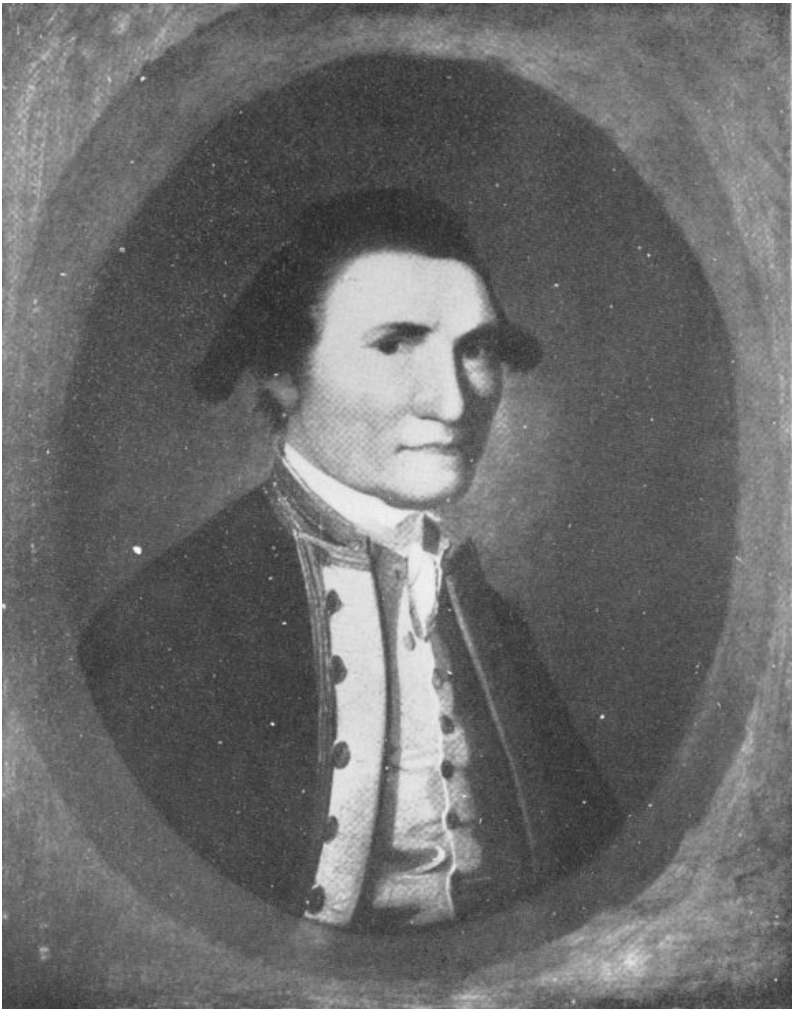
*Date last updated:* May 30, 2023

Faded Page eBook #20230563

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MURDER IN TRINIDAD  
MURDER IN FIJI  
DARK ISLANDS  
CARIBEE CRUISE  
KING CANE  
EMPRESS OF THE DUSK  
ONE DAY MORE  
GREAT SAILOR



CAPTAIN JAMES COOK— By James Webber— (*From a portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*)

# GREAT SAILOR

*A LIFE OF THE DISCOVERER*

Captain James Cook

BY JOHN W. VANDERCOOK

*THE DIAL PRESS • NEW YORK • 1951*

DESIGNED BY MAURICE SERLE KAPLAN  
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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY THE HADDON CRAFTSMEN, INC., SCRANTON, PA.  
SECOND PRINTING

*TO IRIS*

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PART I

Preparation

1728-1768

“Ye son of a day labourer”

1728-1749

It was the end of the age of legend. The search for the precise and for the knowable, which was so to alter the centuries ahead, had begun.

Sir Robert Walpole was Prime Minister. The second George was England's King, and, unlike his royal father, spoke his subjects' language. Across the Channel the fifteenth Louis reigned in France. Curled wigs and buckled shoes, bad morals and good conversation were in fashion. The human mind was gaining confidence.

There still was much to learn.

The very form and content of the globe itself remained uncertain. Chart makers, it is true, no longer made the empty, great sea-spaces populous with mermaids and undulant serpents long as a battle fleet in line. But maps were the duller for it. In the two hundred years since Magellan hardly more than fragments of discovery, wraiths of coasts, stray headlands and scattered islands of vague but romantic reputation had been added to the immense half-world of the Pacific. Australia was *Terra Incognita*.

The learned argued that obviously the world would totter on its axis unless to balance it there existed a Great Southern Continent, large as all Eurasia, somewhere as yet beyond all voyagers' reach of courage and of sail. It went without saying there must be a Northwest Passage. That awaited only a more patient search.

A tall, spare Yorkshireman with a long nose and kind and level eyes was to answer all the great remaining questions. No voyager before him had ever sailed so far. None—it was a prime reason for his triumphs—had ever shown such care for those with whom he sailed. His name was James Cook. When his tremendous work was finished the world had assumed the shape we know.

Like all the fine, small company of the supreme adventurers he was an artist. If to create is to discover, then is not to discover, to create? James Cook sought perfection, to bring order where none had been before.

The quest ended with his life in a burst of savage fury on a vast mid-ocean island he had found, then so far away that a year passed before the

fact was known. It began—the life and the adventure—in the village of Marlon, in the shire of York.

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James Cook's father was a farm laborer. He was thirty-four years old when, on October 27th of the year 1728, his second son was born. His wife, whose name was Grace, was twenty-three. They were as naked of property, of family, of "connections" as was their new-born son of clothes.

Cook Sr. was a hired hand on the farm of a modest country gentleman named Thomas Scottowe. Their house was of a kind which was quickly built, cost nothing but a little time, and almost as quickly weathered. It was made of clay and it had two rooms. In that part of England such cottages (the word was Saxon) were called "biggins."

There were as many strata of social classes above the Cooks as lie between the Eocene and an asphalt pavement. But there were many below them, too. They were respectable. If they had no land, nor were ever likely to have any, they had employment while their wits and their bodies lasted. Cook was a good farmer. Though the record is dim, it is believed his birthplace was north of the Border, and that his father was an elder in his village church. He may have known his letters and even how to figure a little. It is doubtful if his wife—the mother of one of the greatest masters of all time of the sciences of navigation and celestial reckoning—ever learned to write her name.

It was no matter. Their northern breed was tall, and sound. Above all, they were free. Not free of worry or of work, sometimes, in all likelihood, not altogether free of hunger; in the long, dark Yorkshire winters surely they were often cold. But their land was England. It was the Eighteenth Century. They felt they were free. Free to want, or labor, free to change masters, free to go, free to make of their lives or their children's lives what chance and capacity allowed. They were not pitiable people.

They had space around them. In the whole Kingdom there were then only about ten million inhabitants.

Marton like the country round it was lovely. It lies on a richly green and fertile rolling plain sheltered from the sea winds and, one would think, from all thought and allurements of the sea, by the long smooth ridges of the Cleveland Hills. The gnarled hedgerows of hawthorns bordering the winding lanes were already old. Fat cattle and foolish sheep like children's toys browsed in meadows safer, far, than fortresses. The grain grew tall and its greens and golds changed everlastingly under the fitful English skies. It was not hard to live in such a place, easy to go on living and to die there.

Genius alights at random. James Cook was not driven to the world's ends by whips of misery, nor elbowed on his way by crowds, or ugliness.

---

Seven days after the child was born James Cook Sr. and his young wife, who was now up and about again, wrapped up the new arrival against the autumn chill and took him to be baptized at the little steepleless church of St. Cuthbert's, near the highroad. The ceremony ended, a line was scrawled in the parish register:

*"James, ye son of a day labourer."*

The page and the line—and the name—survive.

In a century in which blood and family were still highly regarded, and in then the most snob-ridden of all callings, that of the Royal Navy, it is remarkable that James Cook never made any attempt to hide his plain beginnings. Indeed, he was quietly proud of them.

In many ways he was a modern man.

---

Subsequent recollections of notable traits in neighbors' children who have astonished their community by becoming famous are rarely valuable. An ancient of the Cleveland district, interviewed a full three generations later, did dredge up the expected memory that James Cook, when still hardly more than an infant, had a knack for leadership, blended with a dour habit of going his own way even if no one followed him. A lady who lived near Marton, a Mrs. Walker, is believed to have taken an interest in the child and to have taught him to read and write. But the Marton chapter was short. It ended when James Cook was eight years old.

Mr. Scottowe owned another farm near the more considerable village of Great Ayton four miles away. It was called Airy Holm and a proper house, not a biggin, went with it. Cook's father was made bailiff.

The arrangement was a usual one for the time. A bailiff worked the land, received regular wages and turned over all produce to the owner. The proprietor enjoyed whatever profits were earned. In lean years he also assumed the risks and met the losses. The system was not unfair.

In that section of Yorkshire, as in the greater part of Europe, farmers lived companionably in villages, in a common center ringed by many fields, not, as in the New World pattern, in wide-spaced isolation.

The Cooks' house at Great Ayton,<sup>[1]</sup> was, like its neighbors, made of yellow-gray stones quarried from the Cleveland Hills ("Cleve" means stone). They were set and mortared to last for an eternity. Those stones with age become touched ever so faintly with green moss. Each bears a herringbone pattern from the saws of the quarrymen. They have a solid, peaceful look.

The house which belonged to the Airy Holm farm had a steep roof. A shed of the same stone was built against one outer wall, and two doors and

one large and one little window with tiny panes opened on a curve of road. The smallest of brooks crossed by a stone bridge whispered by not a dozen feet away. Brown, smugly domesticated ducks, often accompanied by flotillas of their young, quacked and drowsed and paddled just over the road where for a few yards the rivulet deepens and widens. And everywhere, over the stream and near the house, round the edges and in the midst of every meadow, there were trees, each one a poem of the English land.

There were some friends, some kindred, though not many. There were the cycles of the seasons and the sun, the summers soft as down and sweet as hay, honest work on honest earth, and quiet, dependent cattle. Only in winter when the nights were endless and days so short and leaden gray they hardly counted, and sometimes when the snow lay so deep in the lanes the post horses could scarcely flounder through, was existence grim.

Childhood, like the rest of life, is not altogether easy anywhere. Great Ayton was probably as good a place to be a child as any.

Grace Cook and her husband had eight children, perhaps more who lived too short a time to be noted. Only two others, a brother John, one year older, and a sister, twenty years younger, named Margaret, grew up. The rest, as was the wasteful fashion then, endured the hard business of being born and dying to no effect at all. Only the second son had inner light.

People marked it. James Cook's back was straight, his hair brown, his watchful eyes a hazel gray, his expression thoughtful. His hands were strong, the fingers longer than is common in a laborer's son. He had powers of concentration, a silent but remorseless curiosity. He learned quickly. He had a flair for figures.

On Great Ayton's High Green was a village school kept by a Mr. Pullen. The family's employer Thomas Scottowe gambled the few pounds needed for James' tuition on the chance the boy might have talents, as they put it then, above his station. Mr. Scottowe lived to be rewarded. Repayment, though, was long postponed. As a farmer's son, James Cook was not distinguished.

He did nothing disgraceful. He did nothing downright badly. The skills of small farming are not hard to learn. With a strong back anyone born to the land's life can do the work with only half a mind.

Can do it, but not well. Young Cook was restless. He knew he was tired of Great Ayton, of life there, the little house and those who lived in it. He felt that sense of suffocation—it is a common complaint at seventeen—which can only be relieved by change and movement. In adolescence (the word then had no currency, nor did the condition arouse sympathy) James Cook had attained a sprawling largeness of frame; a still larger, a truly massive, obstinacy.

Farmers even more than most men expect their sons to work beside them. It was not the future James Cook wanted. Just what he did want then, was hard to say. But it was not that.

After long and bitter argument and far more bitter silences, the will of the younger man proved stronger. It was agreed that he would go away. An arrangement was made with one William Sanderson who kept a general store, a dull and meager store in a dull and dour and wind-whipped town called Staithes, to receive the bailiff's son into his shop and household.

There was an informal "agreement." Sanderson and young James Cook would try each other out. The boy would learn the trade. Sanderson was obligated to teach him. Cook would get his keep and a monthly wage of a few shillings. They would see—mutually—what came of it.

In the opinion of all concerned—except young Cook himself—it was a bold step upward. The son of a field laborer was going into trade. Instead of feeding pigs and raking hay he would be privileged to stand in a musty room behind a counter and take hard cones of sugar, packets of salt and sacks of flour down from the wooden shelves and hand them to customers, open the store and sweep it in the mornings, and put the shutters up at night.

Staithes lies a day's walk from Great Ayton. . . . The roving which began then stretched on until James Cook had put behind him more leagues of the earth's and the sea's surface than had any creature of his kind since the stir of life began. In its influence on him that first short journey was perhaps the greatest of them all.

Space is relative. The two villages, in miles, are close enough together. In the essential feel of them, they are an infinity apart.

Great Ayton is secure. Quiet men and the quiet fields have come to an agreement. Earth's moods are tamed. Its days and years melt, invisibly, like wax into each other. Staithes is at war, a bleak, a ceaseless and a losing war between the English island's rim and the cold, unresting sea.

The hamlet of Staithes stands in a deep cleft at the foot of barren cliffs. It looks due north to the sea which so well earns the name of North. It lives hardly and sleeps fitfully to the harsh whining of the wind, the endless pound and scrape of surf. If you climb up from Staithes you see few trees. Those which do cling to the margins of the high and storm-smoothed fields are dwarfed and crippled. Every branch and twig and leaf points inland.

Great Ayton, sufficient to itself, is sufficient for the needs of men. Staithes is incomplete. Only the spiritless and those of small ambition can remain. You are pressed back against a wall. The good land to the south beyond that rude bunker of the windy hills seems strangely far away. In that direction there is no escape. One gate and only one is open from that little prison of a town.

The sea at Staithes issues no friendly invitation. It is as unromantic as a granite precipice, gray and dark as time. It smites and waits and changes. But its challenge is as plain as a blow across the face. Either you must cringe your whole life long or you can accept the sea's cold wooing and go forth and conquer her. There is no other choice.

The chance that the shop of the storekeeper to whom he was bound was at England's remotest edge and not inland, was the deciding accident of James Cook's life. Till then he had never smelled salt or the heady tang of tough seaweed rotting on wet rock, never felt salt's stickiness on his calloused palms or between his pliant fingers. Very soon, Cook understood. The adventure of change and of living he sought lay outward where risk of death and promise of life were tangled in the tumbled waters. At Staithes there was no future on the land.

Sanderson's store was close to tide mark, so close that a proprietor in a later generation, in fear one more tempest might engulf it, had the building taken down and put up in a safer place. As Cook went about the business of shopkeeping he could never have been free of sea thoughts and the sea's sounds.

In a year and a half James Cook convinced Sanderson he was as unfitted to be a village shop assistant as to be a farm laborer. The agreement between them was concluded. Happily, no rigid articles of apprenticeship had been drawn up, so the thing was simple. Cook made a very small bundle of his whole possessions and took the road to Whitby.

---

It would be nonsense to think that at eighteen and a half James Cook, even in the most fanciful dreams to which all youth, one trusts, is prone, had any desire to be an explorer. As Europe had grown in wealth, commerce, and self-satisfaction, exploring had declined in fashion. Except for a few far-wandering and badly publicized Dutchmen in the Sixteenth Century, no discoverers had caught the imagination of the far from completed world for more than two hundred years. The track of that ambition was overgrown and all but lost.

Cook wanted simply to be a sailor.

Whitby is only nine miles from Staithes, up the cliff road, over the high meadows skirting the moor, ever in sight of the North Sea. Staithes is a village. Whitby is a port.

Like its lesser neighbors, Whitby is built at the foot of twin cliffs on either side of a river's estuary. But instead of being half drowned by the nearness of salt water, much less defeated by it, Whitby looks to salt water for its living.



Whitby has changed, of course. But not profoundly. Cook's ghost, today, would find much of it familiar. The Gothic ruins of the abbey of St. Hilda by its tarn on the summit of the East Cliff were in his time already gaunt and roofless. The red brick houses of the Whitby merchants and shipowners, with their small, comfortable rooms, pressed close together on the narrow, climbing streets, all but overhung the River Esk just as they do now. A bridge crossed the Esk in the center of the town.

Where the river widened upstream into a pool protected from wind and weather, there were important shipyards. Whitby Harbor, in the lee of a stone breakwater, and always full of ships, was everyone's front yard. And, so close that Whitby seamen had to tack within inches of ugly rocks and smartly beat up into the wind while they could still all but make out the color of their wives' eyes watching their departure from the shore, there, forever and unforgettably, was the gray and open ocean.

In one of the best of the brick houses, entered from Grape Lane, with a tiny, stone-flagged garden at the edge of the inner harbor, James Cook found a trade and master to his liking.

He was accepted as an apprenticed seaman by an honest gentleman of Whitby named John Walker. Both parties signed simple "articles," binding for three years. The Walker firm owned ships. It had an interest in a yard where they were built. The Walkers were in the coasting trade, sending coal to London and transporting general merchandise to and from ports on the continent. There was little about sailing vessels, their use, their making, or the men who managed them they did not know.

They were Quakers. They were kind. The tall young man, who wore his brown hair tied behind in the fashion of his day with a neat black ribbon, whose habitually simple clothes were a loose shirt tight at the cuffs and open at the collar, coarse woolen breeches tied below the knee, gray wool stockings, and low, blunt-toed shoes with pewter buckles, had an oaken, enduring look which pleased them.

Though he talked little, they were not long in discovering that unlike many of a silent habit he listened well. There was nothing turned inward or secretive about this youthful stranger from beyond the Cleveland Hills. What mattered most to the just John Walker, and to his two grown sons John and Henry who shared with him the management of the firm, they soon saw that their apprentice had "character." To them—luckily for him—it was of no importance that James Cook had no more blood or breeding and hardly more useful education than a stray dog.

The Walkers owned a sturdy, broad-beamed ship named the *Freelove*. She was in the North Sea coal carrying trade. They put Cook aboard her.

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All tastes are strange to those who do not share them. None, to a convinced landsman, is harder to understand than a love for the sailor's calling. Even the most devoted seamen of a later age would not find it easy to comprehend a lifetime's dedication which had such unpromising beginnings as an apprentice's life in the Seventeen-Forties on a North Sea collier.

It was true the Walkers combined humanitarianism with a natural prejudice against shipwreck and rarely sent their vessels out in the worst of the winter months. It is also true that service aboard any British merchant ship, even the worst—and Walker ships were nearer best than worst—was better than in the Royal Navy. The men were paid regularly. Voyages were shorter.

Still, the coasting and the North Sea runs were as hard as any in the world. Bad weather in those waters—bad, foul and intolerable—is the rule. Winds are cruel and currents tricky. Cold, marrow-chilling, lip-quivering, finger-numbing cold, is as common as horizons lost in a universal gray. The cave-dark quarters below deck where the crews swung their hammocks were almost perpetually wet. Food, though not outright rotten as so often in the Navy and on all long voyages, was monotonous, cheap, and abominably cooked.

The profession James Cook had chosen did offer one supreme reward. In that reward lies the clue to the repeated mystery. The basic fact of survival was daily bought at the price of skill. If you learned quickly enough the seaman's arts, you lived. If you did not, or if you grew clumsy or forgetful, you died.

That sharp, private joy which comes from the body's aptness, the hands' and the mind's cleverness gaining quiet, recurring victories against the heavy forces of God and earth and sea, is one of the great intangibles, one of the strongest motivations of the human spirit. It is what makes men climb ice mountains, sail tiny ships alone, dissect the structure of the elements, fight bulls, wage needless wars, explore the highways of the sky. The experience of life earned and earned again by wits and courage cannot be bought or borrowed. It can scarcely be communicated.

Once learned, some find it is all they really care for. For the cautious, the adventurers discover, life slowly withers, like an apple in a cellar. And safe folk have but one life only. Sailors, fliers, wanderers begin afresh with each new venture. They know, if only for a bright-lit moment, the fine pure sense of youth again after each skirmish with disaster.

Because, often obscurely, even to themselves such men are aware they have hit upon the finest that life offers, they do not care deeply for much

else, for homes, for money or for women. If they have a taste for fame it may be because fame, too, is hazardous.

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The *Freelove* ran down to London, occasionally carried hard English coal to Holland and to Norway. Most of her runs were coastwise.

All sailors know there is more of the seaman's craft to be learned in offshore sailing than in crossing the widest ocean. Lee shores, rocks and shoals are never far away. In the climate of the British Isles nearness to land all too often does not mean a ship is in sight of land. Or in sight of anything but its own foremast. Sails must be trimmed smartly, the course watched and altered like the figures of a minuet. Bad navigators have short careers. Cook had much to learn. Sedulously, he undertook to learn it all.

During the breaks between voyages and the winter layoff the apprentice lodged with his masters. The Walkers owned the textbooks in which were set down in what most untaught young men would regard as a hopeless labyrinth of figures all that was then known of the as yet far from complete science of marking the whereabouts of a dot of a ship on the globe's surface.

They gave Cook access to those books. He devoured them. He had seaman's eyes and seaman's hands. But his mind, that part of it which was not soaring imagination, was, strangely, out of nowhere, that of a mathematician. Figures spoke to him with the faultless diction only figures have. He understood them almost without effort.

Textbooks were not Cook's only reading. *Robinson Crusoe* had been published in 1719, thirty years before.

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The house of Walker prospered. As the *Freelove* earned profits they ordered the keel laid in the Whitby building yard of another, larger ship. The name chosen for her was *Three Brothers*. She would rate 600 tons.

When the stout oak hull was completed, the massive planks steamed and bent and pegged, and the still mastless hulk was floated, Cook helped in fitting her and in spinning the great web of her rigging. The experience was precious. When he had done, his sensitive and perfect memory, whipped by his intense interest, had recorded forever the name, the function and the whereabouts of every foot of standing and running rigging of a three-master.

James Cook was wind-carried on many ships. Till his life ended none wholly pleased him which was not the prototype of a North Sea collier, Whitby-built.

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[1]

It now stands in a park in Melbourne, Australia, where it was shipped in 1934 in 253 packing cases and minutely reassembled.

## Deep Water

1750-1756

Some days crawled. Some flickered past like the twinkling of stars. The three-year term of James Cook's apprenticeship was over. Henceforth he had to find and pay for his own room and food ashore. Beyond that there were few changes.

Cook went on serving the Walkers. Now they were no longer his masters but simply his employers, and, despite the gap of age and circumstance, his friends.

He sailed aboard the ship he had helped to build. If there was any fault with her he found it and knew why. His big body learned grace along the swaying yardarms, his hands and wrists and elbows the angry, wily feel of wet canvas in high winds when it is murderously unwilling to obey.

He saw come up from the horizon the shores of Norway, of Denmark and of Holland; he discovered the joy of foreignness. He savored the variety of the earth, its shapes, its peoples and their languages. His taste for the mixture grew.

Grade by grade, he was rising. The long War of the Austrian Succession (which almost no one understood) had faltered to its weary end. For some months James Cook, Able Seaman, was aboard a transport fetching tired, ragged, wounded, but chiefly bored veterans of already forgotten battles home from Flanders' ports to Liverpool and Dublin. What he then saw and heard did nothing to make war seem glamorous to him.

Though wars were almost constant during his lifetime and Cook joined a fighting service, the whole evidence of his career is that he thought war—dull. Its heroics and the honors earned by them did not entice him.

Few men were ever braver. He was to prove it a thousand times in the terrible loneliness of unknown waters, years of time—for time is the frightening dimension—away from help and his own kind. But he had already learned there were more useful things to do than kill, harder victories to gain than triumphs over other men, far more intoxicating odors than the stink of blood and powder.

When he was twenty-four the Walkers made James Cook mate of another ship they built, the *Friendship*. He held the berth for three years.

Five years after first feeling a deck slope and lunge under his feet Cook had earned the rank of officer in a very considerable ship of the British merchant service. A mate, in all but ultimate responsibility, is the senior officer of a ship.

The promotion meant he had mastered every phase of his profession. He was in charge of deck, sails and men. It was part of his duty to reckon with instruments none too exact the sun's height in the sky, the moon's ever-erratic veering, the place and time and balance of the stars; to read the compass and estimate to a hair's line its baffling variations.

He had begun late. In the century in which, after a long lull, Britain for the second time was regaining preeminence on deep water, most sailors began their training when they were scarcely more than children. Twelve was a usual age. When Cook first went to sea his fellow apprentices came to his elbows. His rise was brilliant.

Then, in the summer of 1755, Cook enlisted in the Royal Navy. The *Friendship* was at anchor in the lower Thames. It was understood that if Cook would have a little patience, the Walkers would appoint him captain, if not of the *Friendship*, then of some like ship. His future was assured.

But the restlessness was in his bones again. He lacked patience and, heaven knew, he never sought safety. Quite simply, the fruit of his experience in Whitby ships in those nearby northern waters, nourishing though it had been, was now sucked dry. To go on any longer would be repetition. What had begun as an adventure was an adventure no longer.

When men of James Cook's breed sense that, they know the only fear they ever know, the fluttering, secret dread of being dead-alive. When that fear comes, the vista of tomorrows all in a row, all alike, as they diminish down the curve of years ahead, becomes intolerable.

It is to the credit of the Walkers that they understood. Cook was their man, though they were wise enough to know they had not made him. He was a business asset. His decision might have been construed by testier employers as desertion. The Walkers were men before they were businessmen. They thought nothing of the sort.

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England's fight with France, centuries old, was simmering. Soon it would boil again.

England's German King, George II, owed a double loyalty. George, who was born in Hanover, found it impossible to forget his birthplace. A German to the marrow, his fear and hatred of France was as much a part of him as his conviction that war was a natural condition.

That dilettante of letters and master of the arts of arms, Frederick II of Prussia, was alight in the tinder-box of Europe with the menace of a white-

hot meteor. Not yet called “the Great,” Frederick had made it clear that Prussia proposed to grow in power and lands at the expense of Austria. Europe’s rulers, like heavy cavalry, were wheeling into place.

The French and the Russians took the side of Austria. England, persuaded always that whatever would weaken France would strengthen England, became the ally of Prussia.

War, clearly, when it came, would be more than a continental skirmish. There were splendid properties overseas which were the real prizes. Canada. The profitable Sugar Islands of the West Indies. A diplomat (or a sailor) of imagination could foresee decisive conflict for the golden fruit of India, and the bleak islands of the North from which men impervious to cold sailed to the richest fishing banks the seas of the world afforded.

---

It was the day of the Press Gangs. The majority were enlisted in the Navy because they were in jail or were caught unconscious from cheap gin in wharfside stews. (Public houses hung out signs which read: “Come in and get drunk for a penny.”) Most gentlemen followed the sea and took the King’s commission because of insufficient property ashore. A few sought honor, or answered the sea’s call. A handful were moved by patriotism. James Cook, mate of the *Friendship* out of Whitby, ‘joined the navy to see the world.’

The Lords of Admiralty, with a war on their hands and the burden upon them of maintaining Britain’s sea supremacy with crews all too commonly composed chiefly of sots, the lame, the maimed, and gallows-bait, were desperately in need of trained seamen. But Cook need not have joined. As an officer of a merchant ship, his papers were in order. His person was safe from the pounce of tough Marines—often led by a boy of a midshipman who found the sport exciting—who, remarkably, were restoring the glory of Britain’s Navy by ingloriously raiding dives and slop-filled alleys by torchlight and bearing off their prey trussed like squealing pigs.

For a safe man the tall Yorkshireman’s decision would have been impossible. The dark age of total wars when necessity demanded that every able-bodied man serve Mars, was still two centuries away. Cook could have stuck to his ship without a shadow of disgrace.

Enlistment meant loss of rank. His pay would be far less, if and when he collected it. In the British Navy of the mid-Eighteenth Century crew and non-commissioned officers often waited years for the pleasant sound of clink of coin on coin. Sometimes, they were never paid at all.

How far Cook hoped to advance in his new calling no one can tell. At twenty-seven he had greatly gained in confidence. There were, it is true, a

few officers and even an Admiral<sup>[2]</sup> who had risen by simple ability from obscurity to braided tricorne hats and epaulettes. But “James, ye son of a day labourer” knew well that every inch of the long, intended journey from forecastle to quarter-deck would be slowed by his common origin.

Aboard merchant ships and in the employ of men like the Walkers it had not greatly mattered. In the Royal Navy he would carry the fact of the clay biggin, of Marton and Great Ayton like an incubus whenever he dared take a forward step.

Never mind. He had a strong back. Unlike some of the fine gentlemen aft, he knew his trade. The Navy offered what he wanted, long voyaging and new experience. Cook had made up his mind. When that happened London Tower itself could be moved more easily.

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Having exchanged letters with the Walkers, the mate of the *Friendship* went to a naval recruiting station at Wapping, in London City. There, on June 17th, 1755, he signed as an able seaman for service aboard H.M.S. *Eagle*, listed as a fourth-rate ship, mounting sixty guns, with a complement of 400 men and 56 Marines.

In just over a month, Cook was advanced to Master’s Mate. The Captain of the *Eagle*, one Joseph Hamer, did not take long to discover the new recruit had an asset which distinguished him from most of his shipmates. He had been to sea. What was still more wonderful, he understood the management of sail and the art of navigation. There is a strong possibility that that is more than Captain Hamer did.

Cook’s calm confidence in himself was not misplaced. He had earned almost instantaneous advancement. In thirty-seven days he had regained in the Royal Navy the rank he had surrendered in the merchant service.

In the golden age of sea power from Drake to Nelson a custom prevailed which a modern finds hard to comprehend. The chief commissioned officers of a naval ship often had little to do with the ship’s routine management. If an officer were sufficiently gifted—and it was no hindrance if he also was wellborn and well connected—he could conceivably win the rank of Admiral and be buried in Westminster Abbey and still remain ignorant of the use of a sextant or how to set a course.

Officers assumed command in battle. They fought the ship, they didn’t sail it. Seamanship and navigation too closely resembled trades to be quite socially acceptable. “Logarithms” and “azimuth” fell on aristocratic ears with as dismal a sound as the professional jargon of a blacksmith.

It followed that aboard each British naval vessel there was a plain man whose duty it was to find the ship’s course and keep it. He was called the



ship's Master. It was the Master, not the Captain who ordered sails set or reefed, who, via mate and bo's'ns, gave orders to the crew. It was the Master whose business it was to find the daily position while at sea, sometimes, very delicately, in the midst of a sea battle, even to hint to the Captain on his quarter-deck that his gallant order to engage the enemy was not easy to fulfill since, just at the moment, there wasn't any wind.

Masters, in brief, kept the Navy afloat. Rarely did they win commissions. Their reward was to be called Mister and on occasion be invited to take wine with their betters in the after cabin.

So far and no farther in the normal course of events had James Cook the right to aspire. With his beginnings, even to rise so high would be an astounding journey. There is no evidence Cook thought so.

From the day he began his service he kept a log. It was no part of his duty. During that first month in the navy Cook probably had the distinction of being the first able bodied seaman on record to take that trouble. Though his handwriting, surprisingly, was clear and gracious to the point of elegance, his spelling was sketchy. (Later, he vaulted that hurdle, too.) The margins were embellished with crude but useful drawings.

The salt-stained pages of the ledger entered daily heaven knows when or how among the stink and snores and swinging hammocks below decks, or by what fitful light, are strictly a mariner's log and not a young man's diary. Cook had a passion for whatever related to his calling. The state of the bottom as revealed by the muck, the sand, or clay adhering to the anchor's flukes when it broke water, the set of currents and of winds, the lay of rocks and depth of water, all were carefully set down. Once the exercise was completed, that fragment of information became a part of Cook's equipment, on permanent file.

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Britain's strategists judged rightly that the critical issues of the combat to come (not being clairvoyant they did not know it was to be the Seven Years' War) would be decided in the New World. Though the formality of a declaration of hostilities so far had been neglected, the Navy already had assumed the task of blockading the French coast to hinder the sending of reinforcements to the French settlements in Canada.

The *Eagle's* assignment was to patrol a reach of windy waters from Land's End to the southern tip of Ireland and to pick a quarrel with any French ship sighted.

The *Eagle's* Captain felt afflicted. He deluged the Admiralty with complaints. He was one hundred and forty men short of his complement. "And those," Hamer wrote bitterly, "only landsmen. I do not believe there is

a worse-manned ship in the Navy. Yesterday I received twenty-five supernumeraries, but not one seaman among them.”

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Luck plays its part in every career. Had chance assigned Cook to a first-rate ship-of-the-line he might, for a time at least, have remained invisible. Among the left-handed, seasick lubbers of the *Eagle* he stood out like a solitary palm tree in the desert.

On the *Eagle*'s first tour of duty the ship was so badly handled in a gale she came close to foundering. Thoroughly alarmed, Captain Hamer—who was himself no great shakes as a seaman—turned back to Plymouth for repairs.

His mainmast, he averred, had sprung. Unfortunately for the naval career of Captain Hamer, it hadn't. Cook would have known. But the Master's Mate was not consulted.

The Lords of the Admiralty were annoyed. Captain Hamer was relieved of his command. He was replaced by a rising young naval officer named Hugh Palliser. Palliser, though just turned twenty-three, was a full Captain.

Remarkable men in the early stages of their growth need others to remark them. Cook's stars again were kind.

This young Palliser, too, was a Yorkshireman. Though his family was as old as Cook's was non-existent, he had what sometimes seems the curious advantage of not having much money. His father was an army captain. Hugh had been sent to sea as a midshipman in what another century would regard as downy childhood and had won his Lieutenant's commission at eighteen. Hugh Palliser followed the sea as a profession.

He was an attractive man, tall as Cook himself, with a high forehead, small eyes set wide apart, an alert, amiable and thoughtful mouth. He had been marked already as a man who would go far. Despite the rank which separated them and the gulf of class which lesser minds and smaller hearts found it impossible to bridge, Palliser became Cook's friend. He lived to become his devoted advocate; lived on after Cook was dead to erect a memorial monument to the navigator on the estate to which Palliser had retired. Hugh Palliser, future Lord of Admiralty, Baronet and Admiral, thought—quite simply—James Cook of Marton one of the greatest men who ever lived.

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In those first days Captain Palliser did no more than take a liking to Cook and find him useful. The *Eagle* quickly put to sea again. In the spring, after a winter of bad weather, one brisk engagement, and a few small

captures, it joined a small fleet set to keeping an eye on a French battle squadron at anchor in Cherbourg.

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As the weeks at sea lengthened into months and the pale Northern spring came round again, Cook encountered for the first time an enemy of seamen more murderous by far than the French could ever be.

Men aboard the *Eagle* began to die. Those who did, died slowly, their bodies rotting, bones aching, overwhelmed by frightful lassitude. Scores sickened.

In June of 1756 the *Eagle* put back to Plymouth.

Hugh Palliser wrote the Admiralty:

“Put ashore to the hospital, 130 sick men, most of which are extremely ill: buried in the last month twenty-two. The surgeon and four men died yesterday and the surgeon’s two mates are extremely ill. We are now in a very weak condition.” (None was a casualty of battle.)

The sixty-gun man-of-war had cruised in home waters. Rarely had it been more than a hundred miles from land. With reasonable frequency it had returned to port. Palliser was both competent and kind. His ship had not been afflicted by a rare or sudden plague. Yet there the record stood.

Those of later centuries who look back to that time are puzzled by more than one aspect of the institution of the Press Gang. Why, in a maritime nation, when the life of the poor was beginning to grow desperately hard, was it so difficult to find seamen that the government had to resort to thuggery and kidnaping to recruit its naval crews? How was it that Britain, whose island sanctity and growing empire depended on naval power, was compelled for the most part to base that pyramid of power on the very scum and dregs of its society?

True, naval management was bad. Ship’s stores, ordered by corrupt officials and supplied by even more corrupt contractors, were of shocking quality. But neither was there comfort ashore for the poor.

No fear of war itself dissuaded volunteers. When the fiercely thrilling hours of battle came—and never has human combat attained such fiery brilliance, such compact, bloody violence and wild heart-bursting excitement as attended a close-quarters sea engagement in the years of the tall sailing ships—those same spavined, lubberly pressed men found sudden skills and touched heights of courage so lofty as to make the hated Navy the greatest the world had ever known.

What landsmen dreaded was not the sudden death but the slow death sea life threatened.

In the Eighteenth Century all disease was frightening. No one knew what caused it. Few were curable except by luck and a strong constitution. Doctoring, at best, was kindly guesswork. There were then half a hundred sicknesses which aroused the dark fear, the sense of mystery and hopelessness of human help which in our time is inspired only by the one most stubborn malady.

Nowhere was the risk greater than at sea. The debtors, vagabonds and criminals who shortened their detention ashore by serving out their terms afloat brought in their filthy rags and body lice the infection of “gaol fever.” We call it typhus. Many were tubercular or syphilitic. On a heavily overmanned war vessel, where the crews slept in the damp and dark of the ill-ventilated gun deck in three shifts in hammocks slung fourteen inches apart, contagion traveled fast.

But worst was the sea’s own sickness—scurvy. A few physicians had begun to make shrewd guesses. One or two observant commanders by experiment with diet had improved the lot of single crews for single voyages. Palliser believed the high mortality among his men was due to their ragged, inadequate clothing. But no one knew.

Since naval crews were so unwilling to serve that thousands every year ran risk of hanging by desertion, it was the custom to keep ordinary seamen aboard ship for months and even years, even when in port. Marines with flintlocks kept round-the-clock watch to prevent homesick, ailing and miserable men from dropping overside and attempting to swim ashore.

That custom obscured the clinical picture. Scurvy did not kill and cripple sailors only on long voyages. In the Navy the malady was equally apt to break out on men-of-war—like the *Eagle*—which never left home waters.

The victim grew tired, so tired that the slightest exertion exhausted him. Acute pains developed in the joints and the arms and legs swelled. The gums bled, teeth loosened and fell out. The long bones spontaneously fractured. The sick sailor at last was unable to leave his hammock. Though mind and speech remained clear to the end, death would strike suddenly. And another carcass stitched in a sack of worn canvas and weighted at the feet with shot would be slid from a board into the sea.

What was most fearful of all about the malady was that it showed social prejudice. Ordinary seamen were more apt to die of scurvy than able seamen or petty officers. Commissioned officers were least subject to it.

It was very puzzling. It was so puzzling that most men whose business it should have been to solve the riddle, simply accepted it.

James Cook did not. He loved the sea. This was his vocation. What use was it to build ships, launch fleets and scour England for men to fill them, if they rotted away before they became useful either to themselves or to their country? Or still worse—from a practical viewpoint—if crews died when at last they had learned their trade and become good seamen? The process was not only cruel but wasteful. Cook hated cruelty. He hated waste.

It was pretentious, his superiors would have thought, for so plain a man even to reflect upon such matters. As they persist in saying of those inquiring few in any age whose whole life is education, he “had no education.” He knew no more of disease or of medicine—well, than a ship’s surgeon. Scurvy was a phenomenon, like wind or waves. Wise men let natural phenomena alone.

Cook’s private log is top-heavy with details of deep-sea housekeeping. How much food was taken aboard. What kind. The list was not long for the menu never varied. Naval crews lived (or failed to live) year in year out on salt pork, doubtful beef afloat in bloody brine, and rock-hard browned crackers called, after the French, “biscuits,” which is to say, “cooked-twice.”

Cook had served on merchant ships. The food on them was no better. But, it was not the same. The larder was replenished more often. It was the custom to add fresh supplies at every port. Scurvy afflicted merchant seamen far less than sailors of the Royal Navy. Might those facts have some connection?

Cook kept silent. It was not his place to reform the British Navy.

Not yet.

Like all hard and hazardous pursuits—soldiering, coal mining, deep water fishing—the trade of sailing resisted reform with a kind of perverse pride. Such callings were rough. Of course! It was their very roughness—so the dull tradition ran—which distinguished them from other trades, and those who followed them from other men. Clerks and shoemakers might sleep in beds and be warmed by cosy fires. But such folk were denied the joys of swagging.

It was—it is—a convenient tradition. It saves the authorities time and money. To propose change, to hint there is room for improvement, is thus, by that school-yard rule, to complain; to complain of hardship, of hunger, cold, even of needless death, proves the reformer somehow unworthy.

Cook was ambitious. Openly, he demurred at nothing. Inwardly, not with red rage that burns itself out in futility, but with clear and patient anger, Cook hated the sordid misery, the cold, the dirt, the wet, the harsh punishments and the fixed habit of abusive language to which those who followed the sea were subject.

Cook had no outward look of the peasant. His hands were fine. His nose was Roman. He carried his large frame with grace and dignity. But the debt he owed to Marton and to the tough northern stock from which he came was beyond estimate. His long body was impervious to cold. Great heat, he was to learn, troubled him as little. He had the digestion of a python. The sicknesses which scythed down his shipmates like fields of standing corn, left him untouched.

The immunity strength gives makes most men coarse. Their own physical good fortune dulls them to the pain of others. James Cook was planned to a larger scale. The more by his quiet persistence that he learned, the more he sympathized with ignorance. Since he was strong he pitied weakness. Because he was well, the illness of others touched his heart—and stirred his mind.

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[2]      Memorably named Sir Cloudesley Shovel.

“Mister” Cook, R.N.

1756-1757

A stir ran over England and far out to sea. It was like a clean, dispersing wind. Fog blew clear from dank official corners.

War had been declared. That in itself was welcome. It was at least more honest than the charade of the past year when the British naval raids against French shipping, in London were called “reprisals” and in Paris, “piracy.” What counted, though, was that a new man and a great one had become Secretary of State. His name was William Pitt.

Straightway Pitt gave this fumbling war of continental dynasts new direction. Every hostler and topman could understand it now. In England it no longer mattered if the Prussian Frederick kept his stolen province of Silesia or if the Austrian Empress regained it. Nor did many care whether King George kept title to what Pitt called his “despicable electorate.”

Pitt by actions as vivid as his words cut to the heart of the matter. France and England had resumed the conflict which had gone on for centuries. There was an instinctive feeling on both sides of the Channel that this would be the decisive engagement.

William Pitt despatched great sums of English gold to Frederick, then all but turned his back on Europe. More money, a Fortunatus’ purse of it, was showered on the neglected Navy. Every yard round the island’s rim was set to building ships.

In the world of the Eighteenth Century, Pitt recognized, old values and old quarrels had assumed new meanings. Whether nations now would grow or shrink depended not upon a few man-worn acres more or less of Europe, but upon their wealth of land abroad.

The great prize was North America. The British settlements from Massachusetts to Georgia had come into collision with the French. The colonials of the two nations had reached the same objective by different routes, the British overland, the French by swift penetration along the water highways of the St. Lawrence and the Lakes. That objective was the vast, inviting, fertile plain of the Mississippi and its tributaries.

There had already been sharp encounters. General Braddock, accompanied by a promising twenty-three year old Virginia colonel named

George Washington, had met his death in a forest campaign in Western Pennsylvania.

Pitt had vision. This war for the world and the wealth of tomorrow must first be waged at sea. The Americans had lately shown signs of being rather more than faltering in their allegiance to the Crown. But given active aid against the French, Pitt cannily reckoned, they would be aggressive in their own interest. If by blockade and relentless chase of every French ship afloat Canada could be cut off from France, total victory in North America would be in reach.

Lord Anson, who a dozen years before had gleaned triumph from disaster in a sail around the world, was at the Admiralty.

It was high adventure just to be an Englishman. It was best—the change to glory from contempt came swiftly—to be an English sailor.

Cook had been beforehand. He had joined before Anson, Pitt and France had made enlistment fashionable. The rush to join up found him well established—and as impatient to go forward as he had been when he dawdled behind the counter of Sanderson's shop in the windy cleft of Staithes.

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In January '57 the *Eagle*, her bottom foul and sails and rigging rotten as her men, returned to Plymouth and was put in proper fighting trim. She went to sea again in May.

As Master's Mate, Cook rated a "cabin" in which to sling his hammock. It was on the lower gun deck between two lashed and chocolate-color-painted cannon. The space measured seven feet by four. What privacy it offered was provided by a curtain of old sailcloth fixed so that it could be ripped away and flung overboard at a call of "clear for action." Mere inches away were the first of the 400 slung brown cocoons of the crew's hammocks, one-third of them at least bulging at every hour of day or night with the tired and dirty bodies of the men off watch.

The gun deck was dark and when not wet from rough weather, usually just as wet from the obsessive scrubbing of the main deck above where began and ended most commanders' zeal for cleanliness. For light by which to keep his log, and for reading every printed page which came his way, Cook had a tallow candle.

The coarse planks of the hull against which the farmhand's son from Yorkshire leaned when he sat on the deck with long legs braced against the gun carriages, and pored with marvelous concentration over his writing and his beloved figures, were painted a dull red. Little—paint, style of ship, or clothes of officers or men—was uniform. But that red at least was standard



naval practice. It was held to be good for morale. In battle the splash of blood was less conspicuous.

Until the supply ran out, usually after about a month at sea, Cook, like every man aboard, was issued one gallon of beer a day. At noon and again at night he was entitled in addition to one-eighth of a quart of West Indies rum diluted with half its volume of water, sometimes spiced with a little lemon acid and a dash of sugar. The mixture was called “grog.”<sup>[3]</sup>

Cook drank sparingly. Not to drink at all in mid-winter Channel and North Sea weather would have been impossible. But like many who enjoy the private pleasures of the mind he had no taste for drunkenness. His sobriety was as useful to him as his talent for navigation. Both were so exceeding rare. He did not lose by it. Grog allowances could be saved up and profitably traded.

On Tuesdays and Saturdays Master’s Mate James Cook ate two pounds of gristly beef which had been soaked in brine and stored away in casks until it had acquired the consistency of sole leather. On Sundays and Fridays he ate a pound of salt pork, which was more esteemed. If, as was too often the case, the dishonest naval contractors had shirked the curing process, both meats were infested with maggots.

Hard peas, oatmeal, two ounces of sugar and two ounces of salt butter three times a week completed the menu.

Except bread. Round, four-ounce ship’s biscuits made of a mixture of wheat and pea flour, baked to a brown, hard permanence, were issued at the rate of four a day. Since, though, when they were kept too long or turned damp each became a hive of weevils, it was the custom to eat ship’s biscuit as a bedtime snack, in the hammock and after dark. At night the weevils were invisible. It was agreed they were more unpleasant to see than swallow.

Man is hardy.

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Within the month the *Eagle* was in action. Her repairs completed, she had been sent back to her duty of keeping an eye on the approaches to the French coast.

On May 30th, toward midnight, lookouts at the masthead glimpsed the shadowy white of sails. All that was certain was that she was big. Captain Palliser gave chase. Though there was the fair chance that the unknown was as British as themselves, he took the precaution to make ready.

As the pursuit continued through the darkness—they were close to the tip of Brittany—all hands were alerted. Every hammock, marked with its number, was roped into a neat bundle and stowed in nettings strung above

the main deck bulwarks. There they were out of the way and acted as a buffer against enemy fire.

All clutter, all that was dispensable and much that was valuable, was thrown overboard. The order to clear for action took courage. The Lords of the Admiralty frowned upon the cost and waste involved unless real action followed.

As the pale pink light of the spring morning paled the horizon to the east, Palliser attacked. He was just two short ship-lengths away. It was for these few hours that line-of-battle ships carried such a heavy complement of men.

None had been idle. Every gun hatch in the *Eagle's* side had been lifted and lashed up and her sixty cannon run out into firing position. Red-coated Marines with long rifles took stations in the rigging to fire directly down upon the enemy when her decks should come in range. The foot-square leaden aprons had been untied from the touch-holes of the guns, the tallow-smearred wood plugs taken from their muzzles and stowed away. Lye-soaked wicks of cotton stood ready by each gun-carriage in sand-filled tubs awaiting the instant of firing.

Under the main hatch, accessible from both upper and lower gun decks, the surgeon and his aproned assistants prepared their "cockpit." They had little skill. On warships surgeons ranked very low and were usually the worst of their profession. But they would do their clumsy best.

A heavy table was lashed firm and covered with canvas. Handy to it were a charcoal brazier for warming saws (warm steel was less painful to raw flesh than cold), buckets for amputations; even a leather bit on which the wounded could bite hard to suppress their screams.

The chase, they could see now, was a French East Indiaman converted to fighting duty, a 1500-tonner mounting fifty guns.

Both vessels burst into simultaneous fire at point-blank range. In a second the narrow sea-space between them was so thick—it was quarter to four in the morning—with acrid, billowing, black smoke that all that could be seen were the tips of the masts and bowsprits, the upper rigging and the fierce red punctuation of each fresh explosion from the mouths of the opposing guns.

James Cook's position amid the frenzy of haste, smoke and noise, was in the semi-darkness of the lower gun deck, supervising the boys who brought round iron balls and cylindrical cans of small shot from the storerooms forward and black powder in its silken sacks from the magazine. It was his duty to make sure the supply kept moving, that no gun waited and that none had too much powder at hand at any moment to be dangerous.

It is evident—no more is known—he performed that function coolly and with skill.

The furious firing continued for forty minutes. While both ships heeled and swung crazily from the recoil of their guns, and the eddies of hot wind tugged and twisted at the flapping sails, the gunners first poured round after round of heavy ball into the Frenchman. Then, on orders from the quarter-deck, the hardwood wedges by which the cannon were aimed were hammered back to elevate the red-hot muzzles to rake the enemy's rigging with grape, two-pound balls fired a canvas-bagful at a time.

Just as the sun came up the French ship struck her colors. In a minute or two as the smoke cleared it became apparent why.

First her mizzen, the aftermost of her three masts, ripped to splinters by the *Eagle's* gunnery, bent slowly and with a tearing and flailing of rigging, pitched over and plunged into the sea. Next, like a strange scene which had been rehearsed, her mainmast went, and then her foremast. The Frenchman—they could see now her name in gilded letters on her high, carved stern was *Duc d'Aquitaine*—was totally dismasted. Those forty minutes had made of her a helpless hulk.

The *Eagle* had got almost as good as she had given. The French losses were fifty dead and many wounded. Aboard the *Eagle* ten had been killed outright and—as was the practice in the midst of battle—at once thrown overboard. Thirty-two were wounded, seven of whom, as Captain Palliser put it in his report, were “in a dangerous way.” He added: “Our masts, rigging and sails are very much shattered, and I am afraid the whole must be shifted.” There were twenty shot holes through the *Eagle's* sides, a hole through her foremast, ten shots and bars of iron sticking in her main and mizzen masts, and, as Palliser wrote, her sails were “rent almost to rags.”

The victorious *Eagle*, fresh from the Plymouth dockyards, was close to a total wreck again.

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Cook, who had enlisted in the King's Navy to cross wide seas, did not propose to spend the better part of his young manhood superintending ship's repairs in drydock. He had already wrung that experience dry in Whitby.

He asked to be transferred. Captain Palliser understood.

While in Plymouth, as was his habit, Cook had kept in touch with his friends in Yorkshire, with the Walkers at Whitby and—the probability is strong—with his father's employer Mr. Scottowe who had paid for his few years of schooling.

James Cook had already done well. He proposed to do better. He asked their help to win a Lieutenant's commission.

Cook was capable. He had intelligence. Neither would have been enough had he not also had charm. Other men of ability and intelligence liked him. They did not think he was presumptuous. Cook was merely in a hurry. He had far to go.

Mr. Walker gladly complied. It brought warmth, a remote flavor of excitement to the little rooms of the brick house on Grape Lane to learn of their protégé's adventures. . . . That lank, almost voiceless boy in the gray wool stockings, with his brown hair tied behind with the neat little string of black ribbon, who had come that afternoon of wind and rain over the hills from Staithes. . . . How well they remembered him. And now, bless you, that same James Cook was demanding the King's commission!

Mr. Walker wrote to his local representative in Parliament. The M.P., like any politician, added his approval and sent the correspondence through channels. It went to the Secretary of the Navy. Then—and it is a tribute to Eighteenth Century bureaucracy that it was not lost—the letter reached Hugh Palliser.

Captain Palliser was sorry. He was genuinely sorry. But there was a rule. Indeed, orders had only lately gone forth that the rule must be rigidly enforced, even in wartime. It was forbidden for anyone to apply for a commission until he had served at least six years on a king's ship.

Cook had been in the Navy not quite two years. He must have known the regulation. And thought it stupid.

In replying Palliser reminded the M.P. of the regulation but suggested: "A Master's warrant might be given him, by which he would be raised to a station that he was well qualified to discharge with ability and credit."

In the autumn, on his twenty-ninth birthday, James Cook entered on his new duties as Master of the warship *Pembroke*.

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In February the *Pembroke* was one of nineteen ships-of-the-line under Admiral Boscawen despatched to drive the French from Canada.

General Amherst would follow the fleet on a fast ship commanded by George Rodney. Wolfe was in Halifax. Montcalm directed the French forces in the St. Lawrence.

It was Cook's first ocean crossing. The season was wrong, the winds adverse. The *Pembroke's* Master was severely tested. The westward voyage across the shortest span of the Atlantic normally lasted three weeks, or even two. Instead, it took eleven.

Once more Cook was brutally reminded where lay the sea's most mortal danger. The crew was fresh, the ship well found. Yet like the creeping horror that it was, scurvy broke out aboard her.

Amherst's first objective was the fortified French port of Louisburg on Cape Breton Island. The *Pembroke* did not take part. Nor did a critical number of her sister ships. There were not enough well men to take her into action. They were hardly enough to sail her. The *Pembroke* lurched on to Halifax.

It was incredible. Yet everyone, including the dying and presumably the dead, accepted it. The condition was unthinkable. Yet no one seemed to think of it.

France and England, whichever was to be the greater when the war was over, stood at one of time's great corners. Beyond it opened limitless horizons, wide as the world itself. Anyone with imagination could see the importance of Europe was fading. These immense new continents which reached almost from pole to pole were not fruit merely to be gathered and sucked dry but, it might be, the very tree itself. Beyond in the Pacific, still so little known, and below the girdle of great tempests which swept around the Horn, there must be countless undiscovered islands, perhaps even waiting, golden continents.

And this sickness, like a wall of iron, set a narrow limit to all voyaging. Only the most resolute dared at fearful risk to pierce beyond it.

It was not enough to conquer or discover. Until some way was found to defeat the great enemy, exploration was romantic pedantry and wars beyond the seas a gamble for uncertain stakes. The paths to the new lands must be made safe for all who wished to follow them.

Scurvy struck first at common men. It was deadliest to those who worked the hardest. But the work of the ships which must be the veins, the very bloodstream of this enlarging planet was hard, and it was done by common men.

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[3] The greatly resented order to temper the British Naval issue of raw rum with water was imposed by Admiral Edward Vernon, the famous captor of Portobello, in 1740. In bad weather Vernon was wont to wear an old black greatcoat of the stuff the French call *grosgrain* but which British tongues had changed to groggram. . . . So Vernon's nickname was "Old Grog."

## The New World

1758-1766

His biographers are sure Cook was humbly satisfied with the long, the frighteningly long, decade of his life between his thirtieth and his fortieth birthday. They note that he made progress. He had adventures enough to satisfy a normal taste. He must, then, have been contented.

It is more than doubtful whether James Cook shared that satisfaction. He was not humble. Those who thought him so were deceived by his reserve. He was not contented.

With no help but what he had justly earned he had, it was said, gone far. Gone thus far, and not a millimeter farther.

At twenty-nine, after sober comparison of his own talents with those of the quarter-deck, he pulled what fragile strings he could lay his hands to, to be commissioned. He was reminded he must first serve the King six years. In this pompous, rule- and prejudice-imprisoned business of becoming a naval officer, his apprenticeship aboard the Whitby colliers, the exacting, thorough training aboard merchant vessels and his own hard-found learning went for nothing.

On that small patch of afterdeck and in the Great Cabin whose leaded windows looked out upon the water, Mister Cook the Master would speak when spoken to and keep his hat in his hand. Every sulky, idle child of a midshipman who was a gentleman's son would pass him by and the useful, nay grant it, the quite indispensable Mister Cook who was handy at figures and knew the names of stars would call him "Sir."

The six years passed, then six years more.

Those years between thirty and forty are long years. Plain men, timid men, must use them carefully to find their niche. Great men—or so they think—must use them desperately for time is running fast. In the Eighteenth Century, which toward its end saw the son of this same William Pitt Prime Minister at twenty-three, Horatio Nelson a Captain at twenty and Napoleon a General at twenty-four, they were longer years than they are now.

James Cook, it seemed to him, came close to marking time.

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The Anteus-touch of solid earth quickly effected its mysterious cure of those least touched by scurvy (twenty-nine had died on the way from England) and the *Pembroke* was soon able to rejoin Boscawen's fleet before Louisburg.

That since-forgotten fortress was as formidable as any in the New World. What dim interest still attaches to its taking is due to its having been assaulted by land and sea forces working in unfamiliar harness. Troops under Wolfe landed in small boats through rough surf on a beach commanded by French guns. The harbor's entrance was barricaded by four ships sunk for the purpose.

Cook, without emotion, set down in his own log that he took part in a successful night try by fifty British boats to tow two of those ships out of the channel and set fire to them. Beset by sea and land at once, Louisburg surrendered. Cook was competent but won no special commendation.

Part of the fleet sailed into the broad mouth of the St. Lawrence. Some munitions dumps were destroyed, some gray, fish-smelling villages on the coast of the Gaspé Peninsula were burned. Then the ships put back to Halifax to winter.

With the coming of spring and what all nations then agreed was the end of war's closed season, Admiral Charles Saunders came from England to take charge.

This Saunders was a sailor's sailor. He had served with Anson as First Lieutenant on the most recent circumnavigation of the globe fifteen years before. Saunders had seen the world and its wide waste of waters. Cook knew his reputation. Now he found the famous adventurer to be modest, unaffected, generous.

The winter of 1759 had been the severest ever known and ice was heavy at the river's mouth. But as soon as movement was possible Saunders and young General Wolfe urged forward their campaign.

Quebec on its heights was the objective. A squadron moved slowly up-river.

As navigator and sailing master Cook was put to a new test. These were enemy waters. The few charts of the St. Lawrence the British had obtained by guile and capture were incomplete. Local pilots who were dragooned into the invaders' service were hardly to be trusted. To proceed safely through this labyrinth of rocks, shoals and rapids called then for special care and special knowledge.

Most mariners know nothing of how to make charts. Nor need they know. It is enough if they can read them. Cook himself then knew little of that infinitely patient craft. It was a reminder that his education was not complete.

The squadron was confronted with a passage called the Traverse. It is still regarded as nasty a problem in navigation as the St. Lawrence offers. On the 9th of June Cook noted “ye boats of ye fleet engaged sounding ye channel of ye Traverse.” Two days later he observes: “Ret’d satisfied with being acquainted with ye Channel.”

He was still having trouble with his spelling. He was learning, painfully, that though few gentlemen could spell, and there were Admirals who knew nothing of triangulation, and Captains who were hard put to it to take a latitude, he, because he was a laborer’s son, must excel in everything.

It was a curious rule, a wrong rule, but he recognized its truth. He was not a Yorkshireman and part stubborn Scot for nothing. He would learn. He would know more of every aspect of their complicated trade than they did.

James Cook was not a stern man. He was a gentle man. Time would even weld those last two words into one. There was nothing pious in his resolution, for learning gave him great pleasure. Perfection was the purest joy he knew.

Before the siege of Quebec was over Cook had become the fleet’s most expert mapmaker. He was tireless. He was thorough. When Cook had noted rocks and shoals and current and meticulously put his findings down on paper, the job was done for generations.

Wolfe consulted him. The senior officers of the fleet, through that trying summer, came to depend on him. Cook—dangerously for his ambition—had become a useful man.

He was a specialist. Many a career has foundered on just that. Lieutenants and Captains who could direct a fighting ship in battle were ten to the penny. In the British squadron on the St. Lawrence there was only one James Cook. They would not have promoted him for all the tea in China.

On the night Wolfe scaled the Heights of Abraham, Cook was within hearing of the guns. But for him there was no glory. Because of his excellence he was chained to his obscure but all-important duty.

Ten days later, at the particular request of Saunders, Cook was superseded aboard the *Pembroke* and appointed Master of the Admiral’s flagship, the H.M.S. *Northumberland*. The *Northumberland*’s Captain, Lord Colville, who succeeded Saunders on the Admiral’s return to England, was aware of the prize he had secured. Nothing so quickly ironed the wrinkles from a Captain’s brow as a capable Master. To Colville, Cook was worth six hours’ sleep a day.

On the passage down-river in the autumn three of the squadron went aground. The *Northumberland* did not.

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In these gray waters and on these sparsely populated shores which lay still and white in frozen quietness more than half the year, the season for inaction was long; of action, short.

Again—England was receding into a memory—the fleet wintered in Halifax.

The crews, when their routine duties aboard ship were done, were quietly miserable when sober, and noisily miserable when drunk.

The officers formed clubs and messes, exhausted the romantic possibilities of local Nova Scotian society, and also got drunk. Local beer could be had for ninepence a quart, and for threepence more you could get London porter. Gin, fast gaining vulgar popularity at home, had not yet reached the New World in any useful quantity.

Had not Cook had inner resources of an extraordinary kind, he would have been driven in those sunless, cold, interminable winters, to get drunkest of them all. He belonged to neither class. He was neither officer nor man. His post as Master separated him by an all but unbridgeable gulf from the crew; more narrowly, but as by a high, cold crystal wall through which one could look but never pass, from those who held commissions.

Again—it was the destiny which had dogged him ever since he had left the common, warm familiarity of Great Ayton—James Cook was utterly alone.

If for four-fifths of his life that tall figure seems all but lost against the crowded background of his time, it is because he wore the invisible cloak of solitude. His associates aboard ship admired him. It was impossible, within the code under which they served, for more than a very few to be his friends.

For all of them, exiled by war, weather and necessity, winter station at Halifax was hard to bear. Cook fared better than most.

With the sharp, strangely pure excitement which is known only to mathematicians, he discovered Euclidian geometry—and devoured it. Till now his knowledge of the sky, extensive though it was, was the knowledge of a mariner, who reads the wheeling stars like fixed lights upon a friendly shore always in their relation to his ship. In that winter Cook reached farther into space. He began the study of astronomy.

Though he faithfully sent money home, Cook, for his needs, was fairly prosperous. Before various deductions, he was earning (though it was often a long wait till pay day) five shillings a day. He no longer had to rely on books which came his way by chance. He could buy them.

As Master of the squadron's flagship, Cook rated a tiny cabin below decks, with a plank berth softened by a sack of straw, a table which hinged against the curving side, and candles bought from the ship's stores.

Since the ship was his perpetual care even when it lay at anchor, most of his long winter was spent in it.

The lean now weather-beaten man, his brown hair tied behind with its invariable black ribbon, his tireless body bundled and jacketed against the black cold of the unheated ship, sat crouched on the berth's edge to catch the single candle's light. Hour by hour, week after week, through the void dark months he pored over the pages of numbers, the tables of equations which grew ever more intricate, like forest growth, the deeper he sought to penetrate their mysteries. When he was baffled, there was nothing for it but to go back and try to puzzle it out again. There was no one by to help him.

Another summer came and went. New France had not yet been won. Once more the weather-worn fleet sailed up the St. Lawrence. At length, in September, the French surrendered their Canadian provinces. But it was not over yet. Since there was a possibility of counter-attack, the squadron was doomed to still another winter.

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Cook's unwearied zeal in the midst of the fleet's vast weariness was attracting attention. The icy January was considerably warmed for him by Lord Colville's directing "the storekeeper to pay the Master of the *Northumberland* fifty pounds in consideration of his indefatigable industry in making himself master of the pilotage of the River St. Lawrence."

What was fully as rewarding as that small fortune was that back in England Admiral Saunders was arranging for the publication of Cook's charts.

They were in use for nearly a century. Many of the originals still exist. Cook had become a nautical surveyor and a draughtsman of rare skill. His handwriting gained clarity and strength. His spelling improved.

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Not for another summer and another winter did the war in the New World end and the *Northumberland* put at last upon the eastward course for home.

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Cook had been away nearly four years. He asked for his discharge from Colville's ship. Permission was given and he was paid off.

His purchases from ship's stores had been modest. The bill came to two pounds, one shilling. His health had been miraculous. He owed the Hospital (as was the custom) just one pound and sixpence. That left His Britannic Majesty's government in his debt to the extent of £291, 19s. 3d.

It was a handsome sum. It would buy at very least ten times more than the same sum would get today. Taxes, which had been deducted before the

total was reckoned, came to threepence in the pound. It was more than James Cook Senior could have put together in three lifetimes. Cook, by any standard but his own, had been wonderfully successful.

Lord Colville had bent from the giddy heights of the quarter-deck to become James Cook's admirer.

In December 1762 the Admiral addressed the Secretary of the Admiralty:

"Sir,—Mr. Cook, late Master of the *Northumberland*, acquaints me he has laid before their Lordships all his draughts and observations relating to the River St. Lawrence, part of the coast of Nova Scotia, and of Newfoundland.

"On this occasion I beg to inform their Lordships that from my experience of Mr. Cook's genius and capacity, I think him well qualified for the work he has performed and for greater undertakings of the same kind. These draughts being made under my own eye, I can venture to say they may be the means of directing many in the right way, but cannot mislead any.

"I am, Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,  
Colville."

It is not known if Cook saw the letter. If Colville sent him a copy, the pleasant flush brought by the words "genius and capacity" would have been drained by the phrase "undertakings of the same kind."

He would, if he must, repeat. But the seaman whom the French explorer Dumont d'Urville two generations later called "the most illustrious navigator of both the past and future ages, whose name will remain forever at the head of the list of sailors of all nations" was not, in the inmost substance of him, a steady man.

He was dependable, but that is different. That he gave himself wholly to whatever task he was set, did not mean his roving mind, his body which he had so severely tested that now he knew it capable of anything, accepted repetition. If he had been inwardly as well as outwardly patient, he would never have left Great Ayton, never Staithes, or the sea rut of a safe career on the ships of Messrs. Walker.

When it came to that, he would never have quit his berth on the *Northumberland*.

For the time being, he had even had enough of the sea.

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He found lodgings in Shadwell below London Bridge within smell and sound of the Thames.

In London there were all the books he needed. There were great gaps still to be filled in. And there were his countless notes and sketches to be put in final shape.

After the cramped spaces of the ship it was pleasant to sit at a flat wide table that stood still. There was almost sensuous pleasure in the clean sheets of fine paper, in the readiness to his fingers of fresh quills and inks of different colors.

Some of the charts he drafted to completion were immense, five, six and seven feet long and half again as high. In the waste portions of the paper where he wrote the sailing directions, each line of writing ran without wavering four feet long. It requires a concentration as remarkable as Cook's own to read them without the eyes going hopelessly astray.

His style was confident. There were no ifs and buts about it.

“. . . To sail into the harbour there is no manner of danger, you may anchor anywhere above the island, the best place for small vessels is in the Bason. . . .”

(Spelling, curse it, was harder to master than astronomy! This “Dictionary” of Dr. Samuel Johnson's would be worth having. How, without some such book as that, was a man to know?)

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He had had enough of being alone. He met a girl and married her.

Cook was thirty-four. His bride was twenty-one. Her kin were small London shopkeepers, stations and stations, in the intricate social hierarchy of the obscure, above what Cook had been, but roughly his equals now. Her name, improbably, was Elizabeth Batts.

Wraithlike, the impression comes across that width of time that she was pretty, tender, cautious, and not overwise. Since despite their infrequent meetings she gave Cook six children, two daughters and four sons, she was as fertile as a Kentish hopfield. Like most of her contemporaries she had, however, no great knack for keeping them alive.

They were married in the Parish Church of Little Barking in the county of Essex on December 21st, 1762. While they were “looking about” they lived at Cook's Shadwell lodgings, close to undistinguished Wapping where Miss Batts had grown up.

Then, they bought a house on Mile End Road.

The neighborhood has sadly changed. Number 88, which is still standing and in moderate repair, is now a kosher poultry shop, malodorous and deep in feathers. When the Cooks moved there in 1763, Mile End Old Town, as it

was called, lay east of the stir and dirt of London and there were green fields not too far away.

The three-story house, built of the colorless gray-yellow bricks London has long favored, had the great merit of its century. Its rooms were small and the tiny fireplaces with coal grates were adequate to heat them even in the bleakest British winter. There was a fine tree in the walled back yard.

It was the best of all times in which to shop for household goods. Mr. Thomas Chippendale, Mr. Thomas Sheraton, and Mr. George Hepplewhite all being at that moment hard at work, Mr. and Mrs. Cook acquired for modest sums a few pieces of delicate mahogany of designs now fought for by museums, and a tea set of exquisite china.

Elizabeth was no hand at mathematics. To her class, astronomy smacked of irreligion. One did not expect more of women. Her inattention sought refuge in mock-fashionable shudders of dismay at the tale of his adventures. But the house was warm. Elizabeth was young and fair and yielding. The pleasures of bed, of women, of fresh food, of fires, of something and someone of his own, above all the sweet pleasure of privacy, none had he ever known before.

But even two hundred and ninety-one pounds, nineteen shillings and threepence with Lord Colville's gift of fifty pounds on top of it, do not last forever. And soon Elizabeth of the oval face, the aquiline nose, and the soft mouth, as was to be expected, was expecting.

The seven years of the Seven Years' War at long last came to their end. Never before had England won such victories. Mysteriously, in spite of the war's great cost, everyone was richer. But prices were higher, too. And with His Majesty's ships homing from all the world, there would be a glut of sailors.

It had to be admitted after all that a man was only half alive ashore. To ears long used to the seductive or the raging wash of water inches away outside an oaken hull, the creak of straining yards and the hard rattle of taut lines against the masts, the house on Mile End Road sometimes seemed strangely still. And—could it be admitted?—just a little dull. Cook's besetting restlessness was in his bones again.

Elizabeth was of the tradesmen's class. She was a realist. She knew she had married a sailor. Besides, at the onset of her pregnancy she was beginning to retire into a preoccupied female world where no man could follow her.

Cook told the Admiralty he was available for duty.

He had not long to wait. A Captain Thomas Graves had been reappointed Governor of Newfoundland, a colony now enlarged by the addition of the grim coast of Labrador and a number of islands.

That region of dark greens, dark grays and grayer skies had one use. It was handy to the fishing banks. Fishing meant ships, and ships were inviting trouble on such windy, fog-haunted seas while the adjacent coasts and harbors were incompletely known.

Graves wanted his colony mapped. He knew Cook's reputation and asked for him.

There were no impediments. Cook agreed and for this special service was put down in the pay book for ten shillings a day. It was a glittering wage, as much as was paid to the commander of a squadron.

On May 8th, 1763 James Cook, just four months married and freeholder of a "Messuage Tenements and Premises," had the feel of a deck under his feet again. He was headed, rather regretfully, not for new worlds, but back to the small, bleak part of it which he knew best.

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Five years went by. They were not intolerable years. Each winter when the ice thickened so that surveying became impossible and the North withdrew into its unlistening silence, Cook came home where Elizabeth and the house were waiting. James Cook III was born in the early autumn, six weeks before his father's first return, Nathaniel the year after, then, as souvenirs of later winters, Elizabeth and Joseph. Life at Number 88 became somewhat overwhelmingly domestic.

Cook performed his task to perfection. In these years of the repetition which he dreaded, perfection was his life's whole focus. Rod by rod the coasts were measured, the rocks marked and the whole immutably set down.

At the beginning of Cook's second tour of duty Graves was replaced by Captain Palliser. The attraction the two men had for each other deepened.

It was recognized at the Admiralty that the Newfoundland Survey could be more efficiently conducted if Cook had his own vessel. A tiny schooner called the *Grenville* which could be sailed by ten men was found and Cook, with no increase in rank, was given command of it.

Mid-summer of the second year was marked by the first wound he had ever suffered.

One August day, while peacefully aboard the little *Grenville*, a large powder flash he held in his right hand exploded with shattering effect. His men, who were devoted to him, pressed the schooner as fast as she could sail for the nearest port where by luck there was a French surgeon. In that terrifying time before antiseptics the Frenchman did his best.

It proved to be an able best. The rent which almost separated his right thumb from the palm and the deep black powder burn did not infect. The scar remained. It one day had its purpose.

Cook does not seem even to have troubled to convalesce. Within a few days the *Grenville* was close inshore again, and her crew out in the boats, dropping the lead, noting soundings, patching together those mapmakers' triangles by which our globe is measured.

If London and Newfoundland offered little variety, heaven offered more. The King's Surveyor persisted in his study of astronomy.

The ambitions with which Cook's imagination had played had come, not to nothing, but to so much less than he had hoped. As life does, it had thrown its coils around him. His hour had passed. The war was over. In a young man's service he was growing old. They would not commission him now. This shabby little schooner *Grenville*, no bigger than a fishing smack, was the tallest ship he was ever likely to command.

Recklessly—they said—he had left his family, a kind patron, a safe future at Great Ayton. Foolishly—they said again—he had given up what might have been a promising career as a shopkeeper in Staithes. It had been madness for one who had already tried Fortune so often to trade the certainty of advancement under such masters as the Walkers for the hazards of the Royal Navy.

He would not change again. He had Elizabeth now and children. He was thirty-eight.

Of what use was it to speculate? Even if the years and the responsibilities could be washed away there was no clear turning left for him to take. The sea had claimed him as surely as if he had drowned in it. Even if his love of that cold friend and great antagonist were dead, no other way was open to him. What in his young heart he had always feared, had happened. James Cook, who had belonged nowhere, had found his place.

Acceptance called for a calmer courage than had dangers of storms or cannon fire. He would—how grim was the safe, the common phrase—"make the best of it."

## The Guiding Stars

1766-1768

Each April Cook sailed west. The long days and the short nights of the northern summer were spent, sometimes at peril, always at high pressure, close to the lonely but in its monotony of gray rock and straight dark pines often lovely coast of Newfoundland. In the autumn they sailed east and home again.

A long table was found for him at the Admiralty. The fog-haunted London winter was scarcely long enough for Cook to translate into permanence the great packets of salt-stained notes and sketches which represented the summer's work.

Sometimes the beckoning of the unknown became stronger than the drag of duty and Cook with a few of his men had himself put ashore and struck inland. Most of the interior of Newfoundland was then as virgin in its simple mystery as the far side of the moon. There Cook heard for the first time the gong-like tremendous silence of the unseen places and felt the tingle in his bootsoles which only comes with treading upon primal, untouched land. No one would know, and none would care, but he had discovered, he had explored.

What irked like an ache in the very vitals of that tall and disciplined and silent man was that the space destiny and Authority had allotted to him was so small.

If earth had narrowed, there remained the sky. There were no limits there.

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On the 5th of August 1766, from a rocky little island off the southwestern tip of Newfoundland, Cook observed an eclipse of the sun. The self-taught astronomer had computed the place and the instant the phenomenon would be visible. The weather was kind. He had a serviceable telescope.

No mariner was ever more sedulous than Cook in filling out his logbook. But in the *Grenville's* log of that date there is no reference to the eclipse. His observation of it was no part of his duty. It was a private pleasure only.



When he returned to England in the fall he sent his short, precise report to the Royal Society.

It was read to a meeting of that body on April 30th, 1767 and printed in condensed form in the next issue of the *Philosophical Transactions*. Cook was described as “a good mathematician, and very expert in his business.”

The curiosity of the learned gentlemen was piqued. Though the report of the observation of the eclipse shook neither earth nor heaven, in its special field, it was perfect.

This Cook, who was he? The answer was more astonishing than the report. A non-commissioned Naval surveyor? Of no family? And quite self-taught. Indeed? The minds of the members of the Royal Society were capacious. The name stuck in their memory.

It was the most fortunate incident of James Cook’s life.

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He needed good fortune.

In that summer of 1766 he had been accompanied aboard the *Grenville* by a young man named William Parker, a capable surveyor who drew the pay of Master’s Mate. On their return in the autumn Parker was commissioned a Lieutenant. Cook was not.

The slight by the Lords of Admiralty could not have been more cruel had they contrived it. On the contrary, the insult was doubly cruel because they had not planned it.

It was, quite simply, the way things were. Young Parker was a gentleman by birth. The master navigator, the master mathematician and surveyor who had been called a “genius” by Lord Colville, who had now put eleven years of distinguished service in the Navy behind him, was not.

Henceforth, if they chanced to meet, James Cook would stand in the presence of the young man whom he had trained and made and speak when spoken to.

Mister Cook was nearing forty. He had three children. Stiffly, he bowed his head.

In 1767 he returned again to Newfoundland. Though he did not know it, it was to be his last summer there. Like the gradual meshing of an intricate machine, men he had never met, chances he had never made, patterns of interest over which he had no influence, were blindly at work for him.

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The Seven Years’ War had stimulated curiosity. The provincialism into which Europe had lapsed after the discovery of the New World and the bloody adventures of the Sixteenth Century, had come to its final end. Spain and Portugal, who once had shared the world, had grown old and tired.

Though both still had vast possessions it could be seen now that they had failed. Their greed for gold and spices had lured them like marsh lights to the hot, sick countries. The sun had stricken their once great energies.

Much of the world was left. It was realized how much of it, astonishingly, was still unknown.

In the war just finished England had won, but France was far from beaten. Both nations, with the clarity of mind which was the mark of the Eighteenth Century, had learned the same lessons.

Sea power was what counted. The richest possessions overseas were not those where the veins of raw gold could be tapped until hope, life, and the very land itself were bled dry, but lands where Europeans could live, work, and by their work make wealth, not simply find it. Trade was the true source of riches. They knew that now. And—this was the freshest and most exciting discovery of all—knowledge, exact knowledge, was precious in itself.

It had taken the long voyages of the Seven Years' War to remind the two nations of the grave deficiencies of the art of navigation. By the use of available instruments and by computations that were not too difficult, latitude could be accurately reckoned. That is to say, the navigator of a ship at sea or the surveyor of a point ashore could accurately fix his distance from the poles. But the reckoning of longitude was far from satisfactory.

The contradiction had led to queer confusions. Nowhere were they so confounded as in the immense stretch of ocean which reaches around two-thirds of the circumference of the globe between the west coast of South America and the east coast of Africa. Over and over again explorers who were honest men had gone to their graves with the reputation of liars because they had reported discoveries which later voyagers could not find.

The trouble lay with that matter of longitude. A Spaniard named Mendaña, for example, had found the Solomon Islands in 1567. He reported—correctly—that they lay between the Equator and ten degrees South Latitude. But since he could not tell within many hundreds of miles how far to the west or east they were of any known position, those majestic islands were as completely lost for two hundred years as if they had never been. What was peculiarly embarrassing was that on a later voyage Mendaña himself could not find them. The same mathematical fog obscured most of the Pacific.

All that was sure was that on the far side of the globe there must be undiscovered lands—and that if the British did not find them, France would.

Future claims, however, would depend on how accurately any fresh discovery could be located. To make tenure sure, they would have to be precisely charted. Ambitious neighbors like the French would hardly consent

to British ownership of a new archipelago if its claimants had no more than a sketchy idea of where, literally, on earth, it was.

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A Naval Commander named John Byron was sent out in 1764, the year after the war's end, with two small ships to explore the South Atlantic, beat his way through the Strait of Magellan or around Cape Horn, then sail north and look for the Pacific end of the Northwest Passage.

After a two-year absence, "Foul Weather Jack" came home, glad to be alive. He had spent three months of monstrous misery getting through the Strait. His crews had been racked by scurvy. He managed to thread his way across the Pacific from Chile to the Dutch East Indies so as to miss almost everything. The voyage had been an adventure but no more.

On Byron's return his ship was refitted and sent out again under a Captain Wallis. It was accompanied by a sloop commanded by Captain Philip Carteret. This time the voyagers were to search for the Great Southern Continent.

Their luck was a little, but only a very little, better.

Wallis took not three months but four to claw from Atlantic to Pacific through the Strait of Magellan. The two ships lost contact. Scurvy began killing off the crews so rapidly the question was whether enough would live to get the vessels home.

Meanwhile, interest in the South Pacific was heightened by a purely scientific consideration.

About eighty years before, the English astronomer Edmund Halley, friend of Sir Isaac Newton, had informed the Royal Society that twice within seven years the planet Venus would pass between the earth and sun. The phenomenon, he said, would first occur in the summer of 1762 and again in 1769. The next performance would not take place until 1874. The prediction was filed—skeptically—and all but forgotten.

Halley had also predicted that the comet which bears his name would sweep back into human view from the ice-dark void in 1759. Sure enough! Just as he had said, the ghostly visitant did appear. Never before had the reappearance of a comet been successfully predicted. As a result of that cosmic advertisement Halley's fame was burnished and the dusty files reopened. No one now questioned his figures.

Accurate observations of the Transit of Venus across the sun's disc, if taken from many points on the globe at once, would, it was hoped, settle the question of the sun's distance from the earth. If that figure could be accurately computed, a number of astronomical mysteries would be closer to solution; not the least of them the knotty problem of how to reckon

longitude. Longitude, in essence, was time, and the sun was the earth's clock.

Efforts to trace the movement of Venus across the sun's face in 1762 were not successful. The weather was almost everywhere bad, and the observers insufficiently prepared.

But that newcomer in human experience, the scientific spirit, in all its dogged wonder, had been born.

. . . A French astronomer went to India for that one moment—and missed it. His ship, delayed by storms, failed to reach land in time. Since the second showing was only seven years away, he stayed on. Sadly, his second try was no more successful, for in the critical hours the sky was overcast. Observing that it was impractical to wait for the next Transit 105 years hence the Frenchman went home—to find he had been accounted dead and his estate divided.

Much of that spirit pervaded the Royal Society. Disappointed in '62, they did not propose to fail in '69.

On November 12th, 1767 a committee was appointed to make plans.

It chanced that on that day Cook returned to England. It was also chance that a member of the committee was a Dr. Bevis who had read Cook's paper on the solar eclipse to the Society six months before.

The committee's recommendations were ambitious. They proposed that two skilled observers should be sent to the South Seas—the place to be decided later—two to the top of Europe, and two to Northern Canada.

Chief emphasis was to be on the expedition to the South Seas. His Majesty's Government was to be asked to supply a ship. Since the Royal Society was congenitally without money, the Crown would be urged to pay the bills. They guessed they would come to about £4000, "exclusive of the expense of the ships."

It was pointed out there was no time to be lost. The voyage would take a year at least and in that almost totally unknown region one must count on reasonable delays while the expedition found an ideal site and set up its instruments.

The King consented. The thing seemed done.

The Royal Society had chosen their man. He was a Scot named Alexander Dalrymple. His qualifications were obvious.

Dalrymple was a wanderer, a sailor, and a proficient mapmaker. It was not to his disadvantage that he was the brother of a Lord. In that stimulating century when young men leaped into life almost before they had shaved, he had gone when very young to India as a clerk for the East India Company.

Hampered in his clerkly duties—it is alleged—by an atrocious handwriting, Dalrymple had traded for some years through the Malay

islands and had visited China. His curiosity about the world turned into an interest in geography. Dalrymple had become an expert hydrographer and one of the best informed men of his time in the scattered and largely disregarded records of Pacific exploration.

Nothing had occurred during the course of Mr. Dalrymple's career to lessen Mr. Dalrymple's esteem for Mr. Dalrymple.

On being informed that the choice of the committee had fallen on him he accepted promptly, and added: "It may be necessary to observe that I can have no thought of undertaking the voyage as a passenger going out to make the Observations, or any other footing than that of having the management of the Ship intended for the Service."

The Royal Society agreed.

On February 29th, of the leap year 1768, the Admiralty was instructed to find a suitable vessel.

The record is empty. But there can be no doubt that Cook was consulted. His acquaintance Dr. Bevis was a member of the Society's committee. When the time came to find a ship for so special a mission the task fell to some lesser functionary. My Lords of the Admiralty didn't do their own shopping.

What was more natural than to ask the opinion of Mister Cook? He was in London, in daily contact with the Navy Office. He was an astronomer. As his work on the Newfoundland survey had proven, he was an expert in inshore sailing and the navigation of unfamiliar waters.

At the working level of the Admiralty it had not passed unnoticed that the tall Yorkshireman had ten times sailed the tiny *Grenville* across the North Atlantic without harm. He was a practical man, worth listening to.

The proof that his advice was asked and taken is the ship herself. She was a round-nosed, toughly made, shallow draught bark of 368 tons. She was built to carry coal. She came from Whitby.

She was rechristened the *Endeavour*. That ugly little three-master shares the highest fame which ships have ever won with only two great peers, the *Santa Maria* and the *Golden Hind*.

The Royal Navy, with many brilliant victories so recently behind it, was already ridden with tradition. Scores of taller, faster ships lay ready to hand in the Royal dockyards. A stubborn, slow-sailing Whitby collier was no part of that tradition.

Clearly, a forceful mind and will were invisibly at work.

The *Endeavour* was the exact prototype of the vessels on which Cook had learned his trade and had helped to build.

His advice was disinterested. In this glittering adventure it was not likely there would be a place for him. Knowing it must almost have broken his patient heart. His whole life, every dream he had ever cherished, had been

training for just such a voyage as this would be. But of what use was it to regret? So small a ship could be filled thrice over with famous Captains, distinguished men of science, wealthy amateurs. James, “ye son of a day labourer” had failed even to win a King’s commission. And he was forty.

There is no proof Cook even applied for a berth on the *Endeavour*. Historians must abide by written records. But our predecessors had tongues as well as pens. What they wrote often vanishes. Of what—sometimes far more importantly—they said, there is rarely any proof at all.

The post of leader of the expedition was filled. But logic and likelihood persuade that Cook offered himself for consideration as the *Endeavour*’s Master. If he did, he was given no encouragement.

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The *Endeavour*, built only four years before, was bought from her owners for £2840, 10s. 11d. On April 7th (1768) the bark was delivered to the Royal dockyards at Deptford in the Thames just below London to be sheathed, ballasted and fitted; as it turned out, at the cost of another £2294.

On that same day James Cook wrote the Admiralty on a minor matter relating to the *Grenville*. While the chosen of fortune prepared for the great journey, James Cook made ready, for the sixth year, to go back to Newfoundland.

Considering the forces involved, plans had progressed swiftly. Suddenly, there was a monstrous hitch.

It turned out that the Admiralty and the Royal Society had been functioning in separate vacuums.

The Admiralty, with ponderous politeness, wrote the Royal Society asking what persons the scientific gentlemen would like to have included in the *Endeavour*’s company? Did the R.S. have any special instructions for the *Endeavour*’s commander?

The President of the Royal Society, Lord Morton, called upon the Admiralty’s First Lord. He was that redoubtable veteran of two deep water wars, Admiral Sir Edward Hawke.

Lord Morton said there was clearly a misunderstanding. He explained the thing was settled. Mr. Dalrymple would not only act as chief observer, but, it had been understood to this moment, Mr. Dalrymple would command.

The victor of the battle of Quiberon Bay stared and used bad language. Pressed, he pounded the table. He’d be damned if he’d ever heard such nonsense! This—this *Endeavour*, was it, was being bought and paid for with public money. That made her a naval vessel. Naval vessels of whatever rating would never, while Sir Edward lived, be commanded by civilians. Back in ’98 of the last century they’d let that astronomer chap Halley command a King’s ship to go and look at some comet or transit or other and

what'd happened? There'd been a mutiny! The Royal Society must be mad. The peer and the baronet parted trembling with rage.

Mr. Dalrymple was informed. This time the record is quite clear. Mr. Dalrymple was an ass.

Refused the whole cake, he would accept no slice of it. Mr. Dalrymple withdrew into limbo from which the snarls of a malignant disappointment could be faintly heard until he died.

It was ridiculous. Everyone concerned knew it was ridiculous. The whole carefully wrought scheme was in danger of collapsing. That must not be allowed to happen. The mission was more important than any personality. The ship existed. That precious instant in which the planet would cross the sun's face was hardly more than a year away.

An association as precise as the bringing together of chemicals in an explosive mixture had been made in official minds. Such associations, it can be argued, must be made. They are not born spontaneously. Cook and the *Endeavour*. . . . Cook and astronomy. . . . Even, Cook and the Royal Society.

An official at the Admiralty proposed Cook's name. Once made, the suggestion was so eminently right that there was instant consent.

Hugh Palliser, who knew Cook best, was consulted and had nothing but good to say of him. Sir Edward Hawke knew of the fellow and approved of him.

This Cook had a knack of keeping his men alive. . . . During ten crossings of the Atlantic and the long summers of hard living and hard work off the Newfoundland coast the little *Grenville's* people had not once been touched by scurvy.

It was a hobby—at that date one might almost call it an eccentricity—of Hawke's, keeping sailors alive. In the war he had kept the French fleet blockaded in the ports of Brittany through a whole summer and in the next winter still had his crews fit to go in and smash the Mounseers to matchwood because he'd kept them fit by insisting on fresh food for 'em. . . . A good man, this Cook. Too bad about his birth. Didn't show it when you talked to him. His record, dug up from the files, was first-rate. Had earned his commission, really, long ago.

For the better part of a week after the decision was made to give the almost forgotten nobody of a Yorkshireman the most enviable command in England, no one thought of telling him.

How, when or where James Cook did hear, we do not know.

Though time and circumstance and most of all himself had laid every brick of the structure which the decision merely roofed over, to Cook it was a miracle. Good God, London was awash with heroes, with veteran adventurers any one of whom would have jumped at the appointment! . . .

Could it be that this disordered spectacle of life, this harried, chancy world was more ordered and more just than he had thought? Those adventurers did not know the stars as he did. The years of weary hours when his eyes burned and his head ached with learning, with slowly, slowly mastering all that he knew now, had been rewarded. But this—product of accident and Dalrymple's thrice-blessed stupidity though it was—went beyond justice. He . . . he who was forty, who had no fortune, no family, no friends, who had been passed over half a hundred times, to be given this chance!

Though the light of glory that had been lit behind his eyes never went out again, the great frame steadied. It was in truth a chance, no more. He would give to the fulfilling of that chance such zeal as they had never dreamed of.

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The bark *Endeavour* lay at Deptford, just two miles down the Thames. At the Navy office on Crutched Friars they suggested that since she was to be Cook's ship, he had best give an eye to her fitting out.

It was homecoming.

There she lay, hauled clear of the Thames' roiled waters. Sturdy oak props held her upright on the great greasy beams which sloped down into the sucking eddy of the river. Her masts were bare, her hull was aswarm with workmen.

To neutral eyes the *Endeavour* would have seemed less than beautiful. Her rounded bow was wider than her squared-off stern. She was just ninety-seven feet, eight inches long. Her beam, at the widest point, was twenty-nine feet two inches. Fully loaded, she would draw just over thirteen feet. The *Endeavour* was made for work, not war; certainly not for elegance. In an age of tall and gilded ships, the line of her deck, close to water-line, was almost level.

To Cook, whose vision looked beyond his century, she had the beauty which comes from function. As a sailor he knew her worth. He wrote:

"She is of a construction that will bear to take the ground and in case of necessity may be safely and conveniently laid on shore to repair any accidental damage or defect. These properties," he added firmly, "are not to be found in ships of war, in frigates, or indeed in any other but North-country ships such as are built for the coal trade."

She was a dray, not a thoroughbred. No matter. He loved every inch of her. He knew her powers, her limitations. She was his youth again. She was his.



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Because the enterprise had the King's blessing, the purse of the Navy Board was bottomless. Whatever needed to be done was done. Whatever Cook asked for he could have.

For a month while the *Endeavour* was made ready the Royal Society floundered. Cook would command, but that was only half the errand. Dalrymple's defection had left them without a candidate for the role of the expedition's astronomical observer.

That knot was cut by a member of the committee. Why not Cook himself? Inaccurately, but in unconscious tribute to his stature, they had already begun to call him "Captain."

Cook was summoned. The years of enforced silence—it was no paradox—had taught him to talk well. He spoke from complete knowledge. The eminent gentlemen were impressed. Before the meeting rose, the matter had been settled.

Cook, the self-taught astronomer, the master mathematician who had scarcely been to school—astonishingly—was no less learned than themselves. And, in voice, dignity of bearing, even to the very shape of his long Roman nose and the grace of his fine hands, no less a "gentleman." The circumstances of his life, in such company as theirs, gave him a tang of mystery.

Cook accepted from the Society an honorarium of one hundred guineas as payment for his services as Observer. He would have in addition an allowance of £120 a year "for victualling himself and the other observer in every particular." His pay from the Navy would be five shillings a day.

If, as was anticipated, the voyage which was to take them around the world lasted two years, James Cook's gross earnings from the enterprise would be about £440.

Elizabeth and the three children would be able to manage. It was unfortunate she was expecting again in the late summer. But he had been away when each of the babies had been born. They would manage. . . . This voyage, if he succeeded at it, would make his reputation. Though he did not say so to Elizabeth, he must go, of course, even if he died at it. She knew it as well as he.

Three weeks later, on the 25th of May, 1768, they got around to it at last. Cook was commissioned a Lieutenant. One of the three Lords of Admiralty who initialed the Commissions Book was his old commander before Quebec, Charles Saunders.

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On July 21st the *Endeavour*, ready for sea, fell away down river on the ebbing tide. London, with her population of 800,000 the largest city in the

world, receded in the summer sunlight.

Lt. Cook, very straight and still and tall in his new blue uniform with white cuffs, a touch of white lace at the neck and a tricorne hat, stood by the stern rails with his long hands gripped behind him and looked back.

. . . A great city, great indeed. How little he knew of it, or it of him. How little he had made it his. In his whole life till now he had spent scarcely two years in London. All cities are a challenge. London was a challenge he had failed to meet. His broad shoulders stiffened.

In that to him almost uncharted labyrinth of gray slate roofs between the dome of St. Paul's and the towers of the Abbey, overhung even on this fine day of summer with its veil of smoke, lived men whose names were on every tongue. William Pitt, and Charles James Fox, and Edmund Burke. Dr. Johnson who was reputed to talk so well. The actor Garrick. Those two painters named Gainsborough and Reynolds. Smollett the writer.

. . . The list was wonderfully long. Though the great world of Almack's, Boodle's and the Ranelagh Gardens, even the smaller, more inviting circle of the coffee houses were as remote to plain James Cook as the unknown seas where he would sail, the names of the great men who made those worlds were as common, even to him, outsider though he was, as the copper coins he rattled in his pocket.

Fame must be a pleasant thing. In these last few weeks, after a lifetime of waiting, he had gained so much, perhaps he would win that. One day, those others might hear of him.

At Gallions Reach where the Thames widened, the *Endeavour* lay at anchor while the naval armorers fitted her light guns and stowed balls and kegs of powder below decks.

Cook returned to London for one last visit, then, in a flurry of bad Channel weather and head winds, sailed round to Plymouth.

The gentlemen of the Royal Society's party, informed that everything was in readiness, came down by coach from London.

At two in the afternoon of August 26th, 1768, the *Endeavour* set sail with her bowsprit pointed south.

PART II

# The First Voyage

1768-1771

*Bark Endeavour*

1768

It was the first voyage in history wholly dedicated to the cause of Science. No ship had ever before been so carefully equipped for the pursuit of knowledge. It looked, at first, as if none had ever promised to be so uncomfortable.

The *Endeavour*—less than a hundred feet long by less than thirty wide—had aboard her that afternoon when she left Plymouth, ninety-four men. As safeguard against the quarrels they might have with unknown people in unknown lands, she carried ten light cannon and twelve smaller brass artillery pieces called “swivels,” mounted on universal joints so they could be aimed and fired handily. In the jam-packed hold—it was only eleven feet deep—were provisions for eighteen months.

An impressive array of astronomical instruments, botanizing equipment, books, chart paper, clothes, ropes, sails, lumber, tools, powder, sporting guns, pistols, ammunition, personal possessions and a variety of knickknacks for trading with the natives, were stowed somehow, to the point of suffocation in the fifteen tiny cabins and five cramped storerooms which had been constructed on the two lower decks.

Even the main deck had not escaped. Hencoops, a longboat, a sailing yawl, a dory, a skiff, lashed-down stacks of spare yards, coils of tarred line, and hillocks of roped chests and boxes cluttered it from bowsprit to quarter-deck and from bulwark to bulwark.

Those who watched her sail, smiled broadly. Those who sailed with her did not. At Deptford and Plymouth there had been a number of desertions. At the last minute it had required a deep tapping of the wells of pride for several of the gentlemen of the Royal Society’s party to bring themselves to go.

Rarely had a vessel bent upon a gallant errand less looked her part. For all of the Royal Ensign at her maintop, the *Endeavour* with cruel plainness was what she was, a cargo ship; now, with her monstrous load aboard her, as heavy in the water as a barge.

And rarely had ship carried such a motley company.

There was a cook with only one hand. (At the commander's protest he had been substituted for a cook with one leg.) The working crew numbered seventy-two. That was far more than was needed, but on a voyage of such duration the Admiralty was making allowance for deaths from scurvy of up to two-thirds of their number.

The reputation for thoughtfulness Cook had earned in the submerged, pauper world of common seamen had helped greatly to fill the complement.

The majority were English with a scattering of Scots and Irish. There was one Brazilian. The youngest was a boy of sixteen named Isaac Smith. The eldest, Thomas Ravenhill the sailmaker, was sixty-odd. Most of the rest were in their middle twenties.

At Plymouth the Naval authorities had put aboard twelve mightily unwilling Marines. They wore white-buttoned gaiters, red tunics with stiff flaring skirts and a black leather ball and powder pouch slung from the left shoulder. They carried bayoneted rifles almost as long as themselves. Except in moments of combat—which Lt. Cook grimly intended should be rare—they would be idle and as much in the way as a troupe of performing seals. One of them—it really did not seem necessary!—was a drummer.

The delegation from the Royal Society was headed by an enthusiastic amateur naturalist, Joseph Banks. Mr. Banks (a baronetcy came later) was tall, vigorous and handsome. At twenty-five his private income was estimated at £6000 a year, or as much each fortnight as the expedition's commander would earn in a year. Since Banks was not only immensely rich but a friend of the Earl of Sandwich, the distinguished decadent who had been First Lord of the Admiralty, and was to assume that post again, his request to be included in the *Endeavour's* company had been promptly granted.

He brought with him at his own expense Daniel Solander, a Swedish botanist who was a friend of the great Linnaeus; an assistant naturalist, and three artists.

Since Banks was accustomed to good living and, miraculously, imagined he could continue to live well even aboard the *Endeavour*, his party also included four servants. Two of them were white and two Negro.

One shipboard figure was absent. Cook had refused to take along a chaplain. It had been his observation that at sea the gentlemen of the cloth gave more trouble than comfort.

Over them, untried, tortured by shyness into almost total silence, was set James Cook. The lives of all of them were in his two hands. And none of them knew him, except a few foremast hands. Under this almost unparalleled burden of responsibility, in all honesty, he did not know himself.

For four months he had worked day and night. He had supervised the refitting of the *Endeavour* in every detail. The Admiralty had been helpful. But it was he who in the end had reckoned and ordered the thousand meticulously selected items which made up the ship's stores.

And, after each long day, as the whirl and rattle and cries of London subsided into the night's silence and Elizabeth and the children slept upstairs he had pressed his temples between the hard heels of his hands and read, reread and all but memorized every book and chart he could find which gave any hint to the mystery of those vast spaces below the sun where he was going.

He was tired, he was mortally tired.

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Part of the joy the wild, dark mistress sea promises her lovers is the sense of release, of cares put down, all tangled things made smooth, that comes from putting land behind and setting forth upon deep water.

This time it was not like that. The task of bringing order from this chaos seemed almost beyond human power, his cares a maze through which he must grope his way as in a dream forever.

They were hideously crowded. You could take no step at any hour of day or night without careening into someone. With all these damned gentlemen and idlers about there was no privacy even on the few square yards of quarter-deck abaft the wheel which should be the Captain's sacred province.

Of course luck would have it that they promptly ran into a storm.

Just five days out from Plymouth, off the coast of Spain, the wind mounted to a gale.

The *Endeavour*, it had to be admitted, behaved badly. She took aboard so much green water that several dozen hens in their coops lashed on the main deck were drowned. The carpenters at Deptford, it was discovered, had left leaks in her upper works through which salt water poured abundantly. Several of the Marines and most of Mr. Banks' party were as abundantly seasick.

What was worse, the sea got into one of the sailrooms on the lower deck. Days had to be spent in getting the new canvas dry. It was a reminder on what small things their lives depended. . . . If the wetting of those spare sails had not been discovered and promptly attended to before mold got into them, it could mean they would not come home but would stay marooned forever, God knew where.

Yet, oddly, when that short storm blew out it was better.

While heaven howled and the fierce seas smote them, as happens at such times, all eyes were on the Captain. What they saw was good. The tall Yorkshireman, to whom of course this blow was no more than the patter of

raindrops to a Londoner, was imperturbable. His voice was clear and his orders simple. He knew this plain little ship which was to be their home—or their tomb—as he knew the shape of his scarred right hand. His trust in her was contagious. After all, the *Endeavour* had come through it easily enough. The leaks could soon be caulked and her faults corrected.

During the same storm something had occurred which James Cook for his part found mightily reassuring. Joseph Banks, he had privately confessed to himself, made him uneasy. For months, probably for years, they must live together in an intimacy closer and more confining than landsmen ever knew.

What basis of friendship, nay, what means of communication was possible between this young millionaire, this intimate of Earls, this Fellow of the Royal Society at twenty-two, this product of Harrow, of Eton and of Christ Church College, Cambridge, and self-taught James Cook, the son of a Yorkshire laborer?

At the gale's height young Banks had come on deck. He had the look of liking it. Then, while Cook at his place by the stern rail watched half in amazement, half in consternation, young Mister Banks, in full forgetfulness of his six thousand pounds a year, had dashed forward and perilously swarmed up the rigging of the bare mainmast, oblivious that it swept the gray skies like an inverted pendulum. Before Cook could protest he was down again, clutching in one arm two storm-stunned birds which had taken refuge there.

Through the rain and across half the length of the cluttered, sea-swept deck the two men caught each other's eyes. With an awkward gesture Banks flourished his capture. Both men smiled. They understood each other from that moment: they had everything in common. Both loved life. It would be all right.

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Eighteen days after leaving England the *Endeavour* reached the Portuguese possession of Madeira, the island where Christopher Columbus once had lived with his mind in whirl, where he had wandered wondering on the rocky beaches searching the flotsam for hint of the hidden world of which he had already dreamed.

The stop was usual enough. But the *Endeavour's* company was beginning to realize their commander was no ordinary man. The Whitby collier was admittedly a slow sailer. She had run through twenty-four hours of gale. She was grossly overloaded. Yet they had made the run from Plymouth to Funchal in remarkably good time. Cook gave few orders. But they had not wandered a hand's breadth from their course and they made their first landfall without a moment's groping.

Nerves below deck, always strained at beginning a voyage under a new captain, began to relax. Inevitably, the word had got round that Cook's beginnings were as plain as those of the least of them, so he was being watched with crossed fingers.

In a time when harshness and sometimes studied cruelty were the common rule at sea, the few officers who had fought their way from forecastle to quarter-deck were often worst of all. It had been a relief to learn Cook wasn't of that dreaded breed. He was not soft. You could tell that from the set of his jaw. Though he never shouted, no one had to be told it would be wise to obey him smartly.

He was no longer "one of them." They were British seamen. They would have despised him if he were. But—you had to reckon this from what he did, for he made no speeches—he did care about his people.

Before sailing Cook had seen to it every man got two months' wages in advance; for the common seamen, that came to a whole pound. It was unprecedented. He had been frank at the same time in telling them they might never get any more, but after all men didn't go to sea to make their fortune. And he had set up a schedule of duty of which not one of them had ever heard.

The rule in the Royal Navy was to work and rest the crews in four-hour stretches, four hours on and four hours off around the clock. Cook, on the *Endeavour*, invented the eight-hour shipboard day, four hours' duty followed by eight hours off duty. He was nearly a century and a half ahead of his time. He believed in his men getting decent rest and he saw no more reason why a sailor's sleep should be caught in snatches than a landsman's.

He also believed in their eating. In that particular, it was beginning to be suspected, he was a theorist. There was already some grumbling.

Take this routine stop at Madeira. Any fool who had been far enough at sea to be over his boottops, knew there was only one product of that sleepy, changeless isle worth taking aboard, her golden wine. The *Endeavour* was so well provisioned she could hardly float. They'd made scarcely a dent in their supplies. Yet no sooner was the hook down in Funchal Roads than Cook was off in the longboat, his stiffness forgotten, ransacking the native markets as if they had been out eighteen months instead of eighteen days.

From the fuss he made you'd think their lives depended on it!

A line officer would sooner have been burned at the stake than have seen one of His Majesty's ships turned into such a spectacle. There was so little stowage room below, much of the stuff bought in Madeira had to stay on the already congested deck. The tuns of wine for the after Cabin were almost lost under loads of bananas, mangoes and guavas and, bless the man, *three thousand pounds of onions!*



Though there was enough of the salted product aboard to have fed an army, he also bought fresh beef. The casualties of the hencoops were replaced.

What was more, Cook made them eat it. The strong element of iron in him abruptly showed its gleaming edge. Two oldtimers, a marine and a sailor, who mutinously preferred the standard salt-meat-and-ship's-biscuit to the less strongly flavored stuff bought in Funchal were sentenced to twelve lashes each.

In the climate they were entering, spoilage was rapid. Cook avoided waste by having twenty pounds of onions served to every man aboard and all but standing over them himself till they were eaten. Then, after a few days' respite, each was given ten pounds more. The *Endeavour* was near awash with their onion-induced tears.

No one was let off, even the scientific gentlemen. It made you turn away to hide your grins to see the commander with that serious long face of his munching his way through his own thirty pounds of raw onions like a damned rabbit. . . . But, there was this to be said. Lt. Cook imposed no order on any man he did not obey himself.

No one could put his finger on it, or say precisely when it happened. But soon after leaving Funchal ship and crew had shaken down. It became a happy voyage.

Part by plan, part by instinct, the ninety-three men aboard (one had been drowned in an accident in Funchal harbor: he had got a leg fouled in the anchor cable and been carried to the bottom) began to fall into a fixed routine. More careful disposal gave them a trifle more space. Cook, Banks, Solander the botanist, Mr. Green, the astronomer chosen by the Royal Society to assist Cook in the Transit observation, and the junior officers had in their various ways transmuted their tiny, almost airless little cabins into private sanctuaries.

It is part of our folklore to repeat that women, uniquely, have the knack of turning a mere habitation into home. It is a tradition (though the danger is obvious) which is open to question.

Men, like turtles, can build their homes around them, often of the most unpromising materials; a tent, a lean-to, even a saddle by a lonely tree, and always and anywhere, a ship. One may only ask what ninety-three women would have made of the *Endeavour*? Men with a great man quietly ruling them made comfort out of its discomfort, a place each of them learned to love till his life's end more than any other place he ever knew.

Even the fact that she lay low in the water and was a slow sailer was turned to advantage. By rigging rope slings under the bowsprit the curious

could dangle happily for hours on end just a few inches above the ocean's sunlit, ever-living surface.

Silver dolphins played around them. Colored jellyfish were netted, to relapse at once into mushy inconsequence. A shark was caught, and the more venturesome who tried them declared its steaks not unpalatable. . . . And one day when the *Endeavour* lay motionless in a glassy calm Mr. Banks enjoyed the curious sensation of paddling about in a small boat in mid-ocean. . . . A flying fish came in a cabin window. . . . They shot a gull off—they hoped—a previously unknown species. The naturalists struggled to comprehend the mystery of phosphorescence.

Their collections, labeled, dated and put away in the first of the vast supply of glass-stoppered jars, blotter-books and tin boxes Banks and Solander had brought, were already growing.

Growing, too, among them was something rarer than any rarity the naturalists would ever find, yet connected with their quest—the sense of joy.

In London this voyage to the world's ends for no one quite knew what had sometimes seemed grim and frightening. There was still the probability that half of them, the very real possibility that none of them, would ever see again the pale mists upon the living green of England. Yet the voyage was frightening and grim no longer.

Almost at the beginning the adventurers upon that little ship had reached a destination, a destination which once found forever claims its pilgrims like an enchanted garden. Innocently, they had come back to the first things.

Their errand was unlike any on which men had before embarked. They had no concern with trade or gold or war. Their quest was the quest for knowing, their business was the stars, the air and sea and living things. So they were supremely happy.

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The *Endeavour* took the worn sea track from Madeira south. Passing the Canaries, they had the good luck one late September afternoon to see, lit with the red sunset like a torch, the mighty peak of Teneriffe thrust three miles up into the sky. A week later Lt. Cook checked the course by a sight of the Cape Verde Islands. Then they bore for South America.

Time, as it must at sea, assumed a new dimension. Work, sleep and work again and the unhurried conversation of men who know that whatever store of talk is in them may have to last forever, slowed to the tempo of the oily plup and gurgle past the sides and the lazy creak of the rigging as they ran easily before the Trades.

Like all good ship's masters, Cook had a passion for cleanliness. After the *Endeavour's* refitting she was as good as new. He proposed to keep her so.

The bark's sides and lower masts were bright with pine varnish. Her spars were painted black. As the crew ate its way into the barrels and boxes of provisions in the hold and more room was found, it became possible to shift some of the deck cargo below. Since the clouds of sail she carried in the light winds of the Atlantic tropics were brand new and still a snowy white, the impression most of the *Endeavour's* company had had of her plainness began to be forgotten.

To her master's eyes, with all her canvas crowded on her and her taut lines singing, with blue sky above her and brighter blue beneath, the *Endeavour* was more pleasing than any ship they had ever rested on. At night in the mid-ocean silence, when except for the still figure of the helmsman and the half-glimpsed, shadowy shapes of the watch forward the deck was empty, and a tropic moon washed the great sails with silver and the moon-path danced away across the sleeping sea, her beauty held Cook's beating heart as in a hand.

The crew was taking shape. On fair nights he could hear the below-watch softly singing. The song was a century old . . . .

*Country men of England, who live at home with ease,  
And little think what dangers are incident to the seas,  
Give ear unto the sailor who unto you will show  
His case, his case, how e'r the wind doth blow.*

*Our calling is laborious, and subject to much care:  
But we must still contented be with what falls to our share,  
We must not be faint-hearted, come tempest, rain, or snow,  
Nor shrink, nor shrink, how e'r the wind doth blow. . . .*

*. . . You gentlemen of England, that live at home at ease,  
Full little do you think upon the dangers of the seas. . . .*

The old words were not complaint. They were habit. They were content.

Fortune had been kind to him. It had been marvelously kind. The long gray years of waiting could be forgotten now. It was for such hours as this, alone with the light breezes lifting his loose white shirt and touching his forehead and bared throat like a woman's fingers that his whole life had shaped itself.

He was just at its beginning.

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No one aboard the *Endeavour* but Cook himself knew the extent, the danger or even the full purpose of their mission.

He had sailed from Plymouth under two sets of orders, one public and one secret.

The first dealt with the Transit of Venus.

While the *Endeavour* was being got ready, Captain Wallis had limped home from his trip around the world in H.M.S. *Dolphin*. As the most recent visitor to that part of the South Seas from which the phenomenon could be observed, Wallis had been consulted. His recommendation was specific. He had discovered a large and singularly beautiful island its inhabitants called Tahiti.<sup>[4]</sup> Its skies were generally clear and it lay exactly in the area where the movement of the planet across the sun could best be witnessed.

Wallis had also pointed out that provisions on the island were ample, and its people—though he had had an initial dust-up with them—approachable.

It had been decided they would go there. Because it was often more difficult to find a place the second time than to discover it, the *Dolphin*'s original charts and notes on Tahiti were turned over to Cook to help guide him.

So much they knew. Those instructions “by the Commissioners for executing the Office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain and Ireland, etc.” had been handed to Cook when the *Endeavour* lay at Gallions Reach. They concluded:

“When this service is performed, you are to put to sea without loss of time, and carry into execution the additional instructions contained in the inclosed sealed packet.”

Following what seemed to be the Sea Lords' intention, Cook did not read those instructions until England was behind them. Then he shut himself in his cabin, took the packet from the locked steel box in which he had put it and, controlling the trembling of his hands, broke the wafers of red wax.

“Whereas,” he read, “the making discoveries of countries hitherto unknown and the attaining of knowledge of distant parts which though formerly discovered have yet been but imperfectly explored, will redound greatly to the honour of this nation as a Maritime Power . . . and whereas there is reason to imagine that a continent . . . may be found to the southward of the tract lately made by Capt. Wallis . . . or of the tract of any former navigators

...

“You are to proceed to the southward in order to make discovery of the continent above-mentioned. . . .

“If you discover the continent . . . you are to employ yourself diligently in exploring as great an extent of the coast as you can; and making charts of such bays, harbours, and parts of the coast as may be useful to navigation.

“You are also,” the secret orders went on, “carefully to observe the nature of the soil, and the products thereof, the beasts and fowls that frequent it, the fishes that are to be found, and in case you find any mines, minerals, or valuable stones, you are to bring home specimens of each, as also such specimen of the seeds of the trees, fruits and grains as you may be able to collect. . . .

“You are likewise to observe the genius, temper, disposition and number of the natives, if there be any, and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a friendship and alliance . . . and shewing them every kind of civility and regard; taking care, however, not to suffer yourself to be surprised by them. . . .

“You are with the consent of the natives to take possession of convenient situations in the name of the King of Great Britain. . . .

“You will, upon falling in with New Zealand, carefully explore as much of the coast as the condition of the Bark, the health of her crew, and the state of your provisions will admit . . . without suffering yourself, however, to be diverted from the object which you are always to have in view, the discovery of the Southern Continent so often mentioned. . . .

“Given, etc.; the 30th of July, 1768.

Ed. Hawke.  
Py. Brett.  
C. Spencer.”

James Cook read the pages of soft rag paper a second time. Only then did their full purport mark itself upon his mind.

It was staggering. He sat on the edge of his narrow plank berth a long time, his legs thrust out, his strong, long-fingered hands resting on his thighs. His pulse had quickened. He could feel the skin of his face flushing.

The three signatures scrawled at the bottom of the last page were those of Admirals. Each had sailed around the world.

James Cook, who had failed of promotion for so many years, who had been relegated for so long to an obscure technical service, had thought himself forgotten.

Forgotten, indeed! Those men to whom a few short weeks ago he would have hardly dared to bow had chosen him—*him*, James Cook—for what

beyond cavil was the greatest maritime enterprise of the Eighteenth Century.

They were sending him to find a new continent, to claim a new world.

There had been no errand like it since Columbus beat westward over these same warm seas almost three hundred years before. If he succeeded—whatever doubts flickered he put out like candles—never could any man follow them upon that road. Earth's pattern would be complete, the last voids of its mystery filled.

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It was the consensus of learned opinion in all nations that a Great Southern Continent did exist. *Terra Australis Incognita*, as the Latinists called it, was believed to cap the South Pole, then reach upward in a gigantic, unbroken land mass into the temperate zone of the South Atlantic and in the Pacific perhaps even into the tropics. An argument which had great force was that such a continent must have been placed there by Providence in order to balance Eurasia, or the globe would be top-heavy.

Islands like Wallis' discovery of Tahiti were thought to lie just off the continental coast. The headlands the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman had sighted in 1642 and named New Zealand, and a few other fragmentary discoveries, it was believed, were promontories of that continent.

All that was wanted was a sailor bold enough to push on farther south. There he would come upon *Terra Incognita*. By sailing either east or west he would trace its coast.

It was assumed the Great Southern Continent was peopled. It was pleasant to imagine its inhabitants had developed a high level of civilization (though it was hoped they were deficient in the arts of war) and that they were both innocent and rich.

The choice had fallen upon Cook to prove or to disprove it beyond all doubt.

. . . It made him smile a little to see how much they expected of him! He was to be sailor, discoverer, botanist, surveyor, geologist, ambassador, piscatologist, zoologist—and politician. And until the Transit had been observed the secret orders indicated he must be all those things unaided.

At present all his shipmates knew was that they were going to Tahiti.

First, Cook told them, they would stop at Rio.

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[4]

I have followed in this book the arbitrary but I believe useful convention of referring to all places by their present-day names and spellings. Wallis, for example, named Tahiti, “King George III Island” and for several generations it was spelled with a plethora of vowels. But who now cares?

## Land of Fire

1768-1769

Why some races of mankind have a knack for the sea and others have not, is an unsolved mystery. Where that talent exists it is as evident in harbors, customs houses and along foreshores as in the midst of a naval battle.

Those nations which are either born or become landridden, much as those who have lost their love of life become bedridden, show their allergy to all the arts, customs and courtesies of salt water in everything from ragged sails to unshaved pilots.

In Cook's time the Portuguese, who once had been the greatest of the world's sea rovers, had plunged into the second category.

The *Endeavour's* stop at Rio was an unmitigated nuisance.

Fifty days after quitting Funchal they sighted the coast of South America. They had put fifty-five days behind them when they reached the mouth of Rio harbor. It was only natural to wish to get ashore.

With the utmost correctness Cook had the two-masted longboat lowered and sent the *Endeavour's* Second Lieutenant, a capable young man named Zachary Hicks, ahead in it to announce their arrival and request a pilot.

Whatever insular prejudice the *Endeavour's* crew and cabin already cherished against foreigners was at once handsomely sustained.

Lt. Hicks was seized and held as a hostage. When, with British calm, the *Endeavour* went on into the magnificently beautiful Rio harbor anyway and anchored close to the city, a ten-oared boat filled with swarthy soldiers came out and paddled round and round her in moody, idiotic silence.

The next day Cook put on his full dress uniform and called in person on the Viceroy.

He explained to that suspicious dignitary that all they wished was a chance to refill their water casks and buy provisions, and that there were some scientific gentlemen aboard who asked permission to come ashore so they could collect botanical specimens.

As to the reason for the *Endeavour's* voyage, the tall, sunburned Yorkshireman gravely explained, nothing could be simpler.



Ninety-three men were sailing around the world so they could stop off at a South Pacific island no one had ever heard of, where, (if, of course, they happened to have a good day for it) they would spend a few hours of daylight watching one of the planets of the night sky cross the sun.

The Viceroy had heard some tall ones in his day. He had also heard that these English were peculiar. But this, really, was going too far! He made it plain he was not going to be taken in by any of Cook's nonsense.

The two men grew flushed. The Swede who was interpreter perspired freely.

Cook was dogged, the Viceroy dense. Cook noted later in his journal that the nearest the Portuguese proconsul ever came to comprehension was an addled notion of: "The North Star passing through the South Pole. *His own words!*"

The comedy of irritations lasted for three weeks. Now unshakably convinced that Cook was some sort of smuggler or spy, the Viceroy had him tagged by a Brazilian officer. Cook soon had enough of that and stayed aboard. But his time was not entirely wasted. From a perch on the masthead Lt. Cook proceeded calmly to make a chart of the harbor.

The water, obtained from the public fountain in Rio's main plaza, was worse than the now slimy fluid they had brought from England. Fish, fruit and other produce had to be bought in a prescribed way so that a profit stuck to official palms.

Only Dr. Solander was allowed complete freedom, probably because he was a Swedish citizen. There is the impression he made the most of it.

A chronicler of the voyage, after noting: "The women in general are more ready to grant amorous favors than those of any other civilized parts of the world" describes the local tradition:

"As soon as the evening began, females appeared at the windows on every side, who distinguished such of the men as best pleased their fancies, by throwing down nosegays. Dr. Solander received so many of these love tokens, he threw them away by handfuls!"

Rio was already an imposing city. Its population, in the proportion of seventeen blacks to each white, was over 600,000. It had forts, a reasonably impressive Viceregal Palace, quantities of balconied, two-story houses built of stone, and an abundance of churches.

The visiting Protestants also noticed: "Small cupboards, placed before almost every house having a glass window, in which is a tutelary god and a

lamp is kept constantly burning, lest the old proverb should be verified 'Out of sight, out of mind.' ”

But, fouled in red tape from the beginning of their stay to the end, none sorrowed at leaving. It was perhaps as well the travelers had not been happy. It helped them to forget that the next time they would feel solid earth under their feet would be months away; the next time they saw a European, years away.

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To travelers on liners as big as office buildings the sea seems lifeless. We wonder at the men of yesterday who could endure voyages lasting months and years on comfortless, crowded ships often no bigger than the harbor tugs which nose a modern steamer out into the stream.

Their smallness was their virtue. Those aboard the *Endeavour* were not detached from the sea. They and their vessel were a part of it. There it lay, almost at arm's reach. To them it was as changing and as living as a garden. Wind and weather were not remote as they are to people in great cities and on great ships but were as much a part of them as the blood in their own veins. It was the power they used which drove them, and gave them either life or death. To those who journeyed in wooden sailing ships Nature on deep water was sometimes hostile, sometimes kind. It was never dull.

The *Endeavour* set her course southward toward Cape Horn. It was more than a month before they sighted land again. There was hardly time enough for all the small, day-filling and thought-filling things they saw.

Banks was no dilettante. His passion for the limitless wonder of life was real. It was an immeasurable relief to Cook when he was sure of it. Boredom aboard the *Endeavour* would have been almost as great a peril as jail fever. For the malady is catching.

Banks and Solander, splashing happily in their sling below the bowsprit, so marveled over the protoplasmic life which covered and tinted the sea's surface that they involved half the crew in that gentle mystery. A shark was hooked and hauled on deck. Everyone from the sailmaker to Banks' Negro menservants was fascinated when, from chance Caesarean section, five unborn young popped out of it and on being put into a tub of water swam busily around. . . .

Another time they shot an albatross. It measured nine feet across its spread of wings. . . . One night the earth's shadow crossed the moon, to the great satisfaction of Lt. Cook and Mr. Green. One day they captured a giant turtle and on another sighted whales.

The Holy Festival of Christmas was celebrated as the tradition of the Royal Navy so sternly demanded that not even Cook the innovator dared demur.

Having saved up their grog rations most of the way from Rio, the whole crew got roaring drunk. The sober contingent in the Great Cabin confided to each other that they were glad the day was favored by fine weather. For there weren't enough men left upright to bring the *Endeavour* through a blow.

Then, suddenly, off the starboard bow, at the world's end, were the gaunt rock mountains Magellan had called the Land of Fire. And, just as the first circumnavigator had seen it 248 years before, there was the smoke column of a native fire.

The skies were gray. It grew bleakly cold. Cook had every man supplied from stores with an extra pair of heavy trousers and a thick woolen jacket. It had been holiday till now. Now all knew that they were facing battle.

Cook's orders were to round Cape Horn. Since his mission—still hidden from his companions—was to search for the Great Southern Continent, the farther south he pressed, the greater would his chances be of sighting that undiscovered land.

Most mariners favored the shorter though perilously broken passage through Magellan Straits. Both routes were terrifying. It was here that voyage after voyage had come to grief. Cook's most recent predecessors, Byron and Wallis, had taken three months and four to get from Atlantic to Pacific. Their ships had suffered heavily and their crews far worse.

In the description of Anson's expedition of thirty years ago, which Cook had with him, there was this account:

“. . . We had a continual spell of such tempestuous weather as surprized the oldest and most experienced mariners on board and obliged them to confess that what they had hitherto called storms were inconsiderable gales compared with the violence of these winds, which raised such short, and at the same time such mountainous waves, as greatly surpassed in danger all seas known in any other part of the globe; for had any one of these waves broke fairly over us, it must in all probability have sent us to the bottom. Nor did we escape with terror only; for the ship rolling incessantly gunwale to, gave us such quick and violent motions that the men were in perpetual danger of being dashed to pieces against the decks or sides of the ship. One of our best seamen was canted overboard and drowned, another dislocated his neck.”

Anson's report of a still more dreadful peril of that place was even more disturbing:

“The scurvy began to make its appearance among us. There were but few on board who were not in some degree afflicted with it, and in that month no less than forty-three died of it. But though we thought that the distemper had then risen to an extraordinary height, in the following month we lost near double that number. The mortality went on increasing, and the disease extended itself so prodigiously that, after the loss of two hundred men, we could not at last muster more than six fore-mast men in a watch capable of duty.”

James Cook of Great Ayton could hardly be expected to do better than Lord Anson. That was why they had given him so large a crew.

. . . Those young men who'd got so very drunk on Christmas, whose faces were so familiar to him, who ran so nimbly and with such fluency of life through the great web of the *Endeavour's* rigging, were his to kill. They were as expendable as worn-out rope or the fowls in the hencoops by the mainmast. Not long ago Cook had been one of them, his life had been just as farthing-cheap as theirs. He knew well that knot of fear as heavy as cold suet which now had taken lodging in their bellies.

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The big island of Tierra del Fuego swings far eastward. Beyond, still farther east, is a smaller island. The sea passage between them is called, after its Dutch discoverer, LeMaire Strait. The route round the Horn lies through it. Cape Horn is not a part of the mainland but a mountain island of gaunt rock.

On January 14th, 1769 the *Endeavour* entered LeMaire Strait. Its defending demons were alert. The blunt vessel was driven back so fiercely that its bowsprit was frequently forced under. Happily, inshore sailing in bad weather was Cook's trade.

With a black-varnished sailor's hat crammed down over his brow, his little pigtail of brown hair sticking straight outward in the wind, and his hands buried in a coarse woolen jacket, he stood by the stern rail and directed operations as imperturbably as though LeMaire Strait were the English Channel and the *Endeavour* still carried coal.

They found a sheltered cove and anchored. The two tireless naturalists Banks and Solander went ashore at once and did not return until the long southern twilight was failing. They came back laden like market women with nearly a hundred new botanical specimens, their countenances lit like lanterns with that pure light of discovery which illumines only the faces of good children and good scientists.

Cook, though he didn't say so, was disappointed. He had hoped for something edible.

He wrote that night in his journal: "They brought with them several plants and flowers, etc., most of them unknown in Europe, and in that consisted their whole value."

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Four days later they had cleared the Strait.

No one could quite believe it. It was a new world's record for the passage. What was more, Cook, with Astronomer Green's assistance, had found time to make a series of accurate celestial observations, to map a portion of the shore and to set down such detailed sailing directions for LeMaire Strait that they are still in use.

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Contact with solid earth, even with so poor a part of it as this, was too important to be passed by. Their longest reach still lay ahead of them. They needed water.

The *Endeavour* anchored in a protected bay and Cook accompanied Banks and Dr. Solander ashore. A small crowd of strongly-built, light-brown people with straight black hair and flat, round faces, had gathered on the beach.

The moment was important. This was Cook's first contact with a primitive people.

The gulf between the age of iron and the age of stone is wide. Many, however consciously they try, can never bridge it. If Cook had the right touch it would appear at once. If he lacked it, it was probable that he would never learn. The consequences of that failure might be fatal to them all.

Two native men, their shoulders covered with rough skin capes, sat on the ground in advance of their companions. As the three Englishmen approached them, they rose and threw away some small sticks they had been holding.

Obscure though the gesture was, Cook interpreted it as one of peace.

Three better emissaries of civilization to the bare and humble courts of natural man than Cook and Banks and Solander could not have been found. All had inexhaustible curiosity. All were kind.

In the delicate relationship with people without wheels James Cook had genius. A keen eye could have detected it that first day.

It was not because the son of the North-country plowman was a simple man. He was a very complicated man. The simple fear the simple; plain men distrust the unfamiliar. Cook's life had been a search for what he did not know and for what he had not seen. Because these half naked savages of

Tierra del Fuego were as strange to him as migrants from the moon they at once delighted him. Barbarians, as do others, like to be thought charming, and respond to it.

The two native emissaries concluded the strangers meant no harm. Some beads and ribbons were presented and received with the rather embarrassing calm with which such trinkets are usually accepted by middle-aged men and women whatever their race or lack of clothing. Mutually unintelligible conversation became general. Everyone relaxed.

Three of the tribesmen summoned what under the circumstances was conspicuous courage and consented to go aboard the ship. Since no one who has visited Tierra del Fuego has failed to feel vicariously chilled by the fact that the inhabitants of one of the coldest regions of the world this side of the polar icecaps go almost naked, Cook presented his three guests with woolen jackets. Foolishly, it seemed to the Englishmen, the Indians declined both rum and brandy.

It was observed that on getting back to shore the trio suffered the usual fate of returned adventurers. Their friends showed no interest whatever in hearing of what they had seen.

Two days later the Royal Society party, accompanied by the ship's surgeon and Banks' four menservants, since they were not needed for the work of refilling the water casks and gathering fresh plants and grasses, decided to explore.

They left early and planned to return before nightfall. With Banks and Dr. Solander in the lead the party struck inland, entered a tangled scrub forest and began to climb a mountain.

Like all mountains, it turned out to be bigger and steeper than it looked. It was already afternoon when they reached its summit. Ahead stretched what looked like level ground. In so remote and wild a spot plant life could hardly fail to be remarkable. Fired by the botanists' enthusiasm, the twelve men kept on.

Disconcertingly, the high plain, though it was covered with a dense three-foot growth, turned out to be a bog.

As they struggled on over their ankles in muck there was a terrifying change of weather.

It was mid-January, that is to say, mid-summer. The morning had been warm. Suddenly a wind of biting cold struck down on them and it began to snow.

At that ill-chosen moment one of the sketch artists Banks had brought on the expedition, had an epileptic fit. A fire was built and while most of the party stayed with the sick man, the others went on. The snow, now coming

down hard, had confused them. It was necessary to make sure in which direction the coast lay and what was the best way to return to it.

Fortunately Alexander Buchan, the artist, recovered quickly from his attack. But eight o'clock and near darkness had come before the twelve had reassembled and began to make their way back across the swamp.

Dr. Solander, the most experienced among them, advised them their most immediate danger would be the almost irresistible desire to sleep. As he put it: "Whoever sits down will sleep, and whoever sleeps will wake no more."

Ironically—and frighteningly—the North-inured Swedish botanist was the first to forget his own warning. With alarming vacancy of mind he began to insist he must lie down and rest. They had to struggle bodily with him to keep him from it. The next to be seduced by that deadly wish was one of Banks' Negro servants. When they told him he would die, he said he would welcome it. Several went ahead and built a fire. Black night had come now, the snow was deep, it was still falling and they were blindly lost.

The cold was no longer a distress but an acute agony. Their boots had become thoroughly wet in the passage through the bog.

All that night the hard, almost silent struggle for life went on. A final effort to get the separated segments of the group to one place in the saving radius of a fire they had managed to keep going failed to include the two Negroes. They would go no farther. Nor, though the Englishmen did all they could, were any of the others strong enough to carry them. In the morning, poor motes in the high and aimless winds of chance, those two lost children of the sun were dead.

As the sky lightened they shot a vulture, cooked and meticulously divided its meager and unpleasant flesh. Healthy men can live and remain fairly active for many days without food. When lost, nearly everyone forgets that simple truth. Fear sharpens an imagined hunger.

All around stretched white desolation. Soon after the ten survivors resumed their trudging they made a common, an anticlimactic, but a far from amusing discovery. They had wandered almost in a circle. The bay where the *Endeavour* was anchored was quite close by.

James Cook, wrapped in his greatcoat, his alert hazel eyes peering hopelessly into the all-pervading wool of hushing snow, had spent the night on deck. The decision was unpleasant, but he knew it was purposeless to go in search. The night was opaque. No one knew where they had gone. To attempt to look for them would only be to lose more men. The disaster—for in such killing cold it was almost impossible to believe disaster had been avoided—was complete.

In the party was the whole representation of the Royal Society; except for himself, the expedition's entire scientific staff. Those lost, those foolish, men were in themselves a great part of the reason for the voyage. And Broughton Monkhouse, the ship's surgeon, was with them.

Cook bitterly blamed himself. If any of them survived, he resolved no such unplanned fools' picnic would ever set out again. It was he, the Commander, who was guilty. That Banks and his troupe of gentlemen were not members of his crew made no difference. From now on they would be subject to his orders. Searchingly, he examined his own mind. Had he allowed their wealth, position, breeding to make him timid about imposing his government upon them? He had. He had been a coward. This was a high price to pay for it.

When the bedraggled wanderers appeared it was difficult to decide what he wanted to do more, to kiss them or to knock them down.

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After all the casks were filled with clean water and the *Endeavour's* lower deck looked almost like a hayloft with the quantities of grass and wild celery which had been gathered ashore, there was nothing more to keep them. . . . The water was welcome. The crew knew from experience that by the Commander's strict orders the cow-food would be mixed with everything they ate. They would have to choke down the stuff with every mouthful until the last blade of it was gone.

But they were growing used to Cook's fantastical notions about food. And there was the comfort of knowing the Captain and the idlers aft were gagging over the same fodder.

They had seen, too, enough of the local natives. The more literate contingent had tried their hardest to admire them. Jean Jacques Rousseau was their contemporary. His Noble Savage, happy in his pristine innocence, had become a part of the polite tradition.

Face to face, they found these Fuegian primitives, though inoffensive, dirty, dull and miserably uncomfortable, their transient villages ill-built and even their simplest wants of food and drink badly provided for.

If, wrote one of the voyagers firmly, they really were content, "it must have arisen from stupidity."

Though the rounding of the Horn was still ahead of them and the dread of the vast sea-space lay beyond it, when the grunting men at the capstan hauled her anchor in and the dangling yardsmen high above unreeved the canvas and the white sails snapped round and tight and full with the wind, and the sound, strong little ship turned her blunt nose out into the gray and coiling waste of waters, none looked back. None, strangely, was afraid.



## Isle of Eden

1769

On January 22nd, 1769, almost five months after leaving Plymouth, the *Endeavour* quit Success Bay on Tierra del Fuego. Just six days later they beat round Cape Horn. Since the Great Southern Continent might as well lie here as anywhere, Cook continued three hundred miles farther to the south.

Sighting nothing, and observing that in these high latitudes the ocean was free from the currents which indicate the nearness of large land masses, Lt. Cook then ordered the course changed to the northwest.

February passed, and March. They were in warm seas again where the sun was friendly and the soft wind steady. They sighted some of the low ring islands called atolls, and came close enough to see through their telescopes tall, brown-skinned natives with black hair.

Unable to find anchorage, the *Endeavour* sailed on. . . . God knows what legend of her passing she left behind her to be remembered as the very stuff of wonder by the little fires in the kind years which still remained to them before their world and ours would meet again. . . .

On April 11th they sighted their objective, Tahiti, and on the 13th came to anchor in a bay which Captain Wallis had described.

The *Endeavour* had taken 81 days from Tierra del Fuego for that enormous journey. There had been no scurvy. Not a single man of the crowded company had even fallen ill.

It was unheard of. The *Endeavour* had suffered no particle of damage. She had come as straight to her vague destination through unmapped seas and more than halfway around the world as if she had been making from Whitby to the Nore.

It had seemed easy. But few were so inexperienced as to fail to realize what had happened. They had participated in an astounding miracle, one wholly without precedent. There had never been a voyage like it since time began. This silent, this shy, this almost distant man who was their commander—hard though it was to admit in anyone so near—was a great man. In their puzzled, grateful hearts they knew that now.

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Tahiti's reputation, though freshly minted, had already spread. Cook had been fortunate. At the last minute he had succeeded in getting as the *Endeavour's* sailing master, master's mate and third lieutenant, three men who had just returned with Wallis. Their recollection of that fancifully beautiful island undoubtedly helped persuade them to sail so soon again.

The *Dolphin* had stayed at Tahiti only a month. That hadn't been enough.

All the way from England the circumnavigators had regaled their shipmates with accounts of Tahiti's bounty, animal, vegetable and sexual. If Rousseau's Noble Savage existed anywhere, it was there.

Tahiti's women, they reported, were not only willing. They were enthusiastic. Some of the young girls were wonderfully pretty. Their skin was hardly darker than that of many Europeans. Those (fairly limited) portions of it which had never been exposed to the sun were as fair as Jersey cream. After an initial misunderstanding and a show of force by the Englishmen, the native men had been peaceable.

The three veterans may also have mentioned the Tahitian scenery.

Curiosity was high. They had left England almost eight months before, but here, in essence, the adventure was just starting.

Almost at once, it began to look as if the travelers' tales were true. The weather was perfect, the mist-hung Tahitian mountains exquisitely romantic.

The "Indians" (the voyagers stubbornly called *all* native races "Indians") began to demonstrate their welcome while the *Endeavour* was still in full sail. Long, slender canoes met them far beyond the reefs. Though the well-built, brown-skinned people in them refused all invitations to come on board, they had brought with them bunches of green plantains, bananas and cocoanuts which the Englishmen nimbly caught in mid-career.

The Tahitians had with them green tree branches. These, they indicated by gestures, should be fastened to the foretop. The ancient, universal symbol was understood and Cook complied. The *Endeavour* came to her destination bearing the branch—if not precisely the olive branch—of peace.

It was all unimaginably strange. There was not a leaf, a blade of grass, a contour of the land, a face, a color, or a man-made thing which was not utterly unfamiliar to this northern man. And yet what was strangest was that, obscurely, it was as if he had come home.

The phenomenon they had come to watch was six weeks away. They would probably stay in Tahiti for several months. The visit could be happy and profitable. Or it could be quarrelsome and disastrous. Much depended, Cook thought, on how they began. Since he could obviously not be guided by experience, he must govern at first by theory.

They had guns and the islanders did not. Large though that fact was, it was at best a reed. Only fools would lean on it too heavily. It was the fixed opinion of Cook that it would be downright criminal ever to fire a shot. Before the *Endeavour* came to her anchorage he had impressed that primary order upon every man aboard.

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Cook was what was called a “Free-thinker.” In the conventional sense, he had no piety. He had something better. He had virtue.

In the second half of the Eighteenth Century, if life perhaps was not as cheap as it had been, one could hardly say it was held dear. They still hanged men on Tyburn Hill for stealing bread. If the Lords of the Admiralty had issued him ninety men like so many rations of salt pork so that half of them could be expended, who would ever raise any question if the commander followed the dark tradition of men of arms and by a “show of force” impressed their power upon these swarming savages?

Cook had not crossed the world to be a murderer. He had never killed.

. . . He could, by other means, strive to impress these primitive folk with white men’s superiority, and by that seek to rule them. . . . It was not even beyond hope that he could persuade the Tahitians that the white strangers were divine.

James Cook did neither. There would be no killing. There would be no bluff. He would meet these bearded, almost naked islanders as he had so often passionately wished his world would deal with him, as equals. Though ten thousand miles and twice ten thousand years divided them, they lived by the same sun as he. On this globe to which it was his errand to give final form they were his kinsmen. He would treat them so.

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The *Endeavour* dropped her hook some three miles offshore in Matavai Bay, at Tahiti’s northwest corner. They were immediately surrounded by a great number of canoes. Some were manned by as many as forty paddlers and had high bow and stern pieces elaborately carved and colored. Others were crude with hardly room in them for one or two passengers.

Admiration and astonishment were mutual and of roughly the same order on both sides. White and brown were alike impressed—neither was overwhelmed. Though the Whitby collier was as startling as a yokel’s first sight of a giraffe, the Tahitians knew a ship when they saw one. They, too, were people of the sea. They knew, in detail, what sailors wanted.

Cocoanuts, lumpish, rough-hided breadfruit, even trussed and squealing pigs were thrust up from the bobbing little craft into the reaching hands of the crew in exchange for beads and whatever odds and ends the Englishmen

had by them. It was only because of restraining orders from the quarter-deck that more intimate commerce wasn't as promptly offered and accepted. It was observed that the Tahitian women—a hundred and fifty years ahead of the mode—followed a becoming fashion of cropping their hair short and that “their faces in general are handsome and full of sensibility.” The men, on the contrary, wore their hair long and usually wound into a topknot studded with bright feathers.

Conveniently, one of the first to reach them was an elderly citizen who had had friendly dealings with the people of the *Dolphin*. The three men who had been with Wallis welcomed him in a clamor of mutual recognition and the self-appointed ambassador was hauled aboard.

Cook, though he was aglow with the excitement of this bright-lit, propitious hour, was acute enough to observe at once that the haphazard, tourist-like barter taking place over the *Endeavour*'s rail was already going badly for his fellow-countrymen. If the British, as has been remarked, were a nation of shopkeepers, sailors were a poor example of the breed. Even as he watched, prices were going up. If ruinous inflation was to be avoided a system would have to be imposed.

Before the afternoon was out, orders were drawn up and read aloud to the assembled crew.

First, the natives of the island should be treated “with every imaginable humanity.” Second, no officer, seaman, or any person belonging to the ship, except those especially appointed for the purpose, should trade for any produce. And third, no one should embezzle or secure from the ship's stores any article, especially of iron or cloth, for purposes either of trading or winning favors.

Those practical matters disposed of, James Cook in a loose white shirt, tight blue breeches, stockings and a three-cornered hat, was ready to set foot on what, indeed, did look remarkably like Eden.

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Eden, it was soon discovered, after, not before, the Fall.

It was amazingly beautiful. There was no doubt of it. The mile or so of level foreshore which ringed the great island between the mountains and the sea was a single shady and sun-dappled grove in which every tree bore fruit.

As was proper on earth's underside, everything was topsy turvy. The finely made thatched houses had no walls. Tahitians slept in gregarious clusters—but ate alone. They were as sociable as herrings, but their huts were widely spaced. In the ordinary sense of the word, they had no villages. They were as dignified as elder statesmen, and had the morals of alley cats. They were charming. And it did not take long to find they could be intensely irritating.

But so, alas, could Englishmen.

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During the first days everything went well. Walks ashore were like a royal procession. Admiring throngs followed them. Both Britons and Polynesians beamed like jack-o'-lanterns. Gifts were exchanged. It was astonishing how complicated and even informative a conversation could be carried on simply by means of gestures. Neither in Yorkshire nor in the Royal Navy did grown men gesture. Now James Cook found himself spreading his hands, waving his arms and shrugging his shoulders like a damned Mounseer—and liking it.

No one could be more hospitable than the Tahitians. No one. In no time the “females” had Cook, Banks and Dr. Solander blushing like schoolboys. And brooding over the local architecture.

“They showed us all the civility of which, in our situation, we could accept; and, on their part seemed to have no scruple that would have prevented its being carried farther. The houses, which as I have observed before, are all open except a roof, afforded no place of retirement; but the ladies, by frequently pointing to the mats upon the ground and sometimes seating themselves and drawing us down upon them, left us no room to doubt they were much less jealous of observation than we were.”

Mrs. Cook would have been scandalized. Lt. Cook was merely amused. Trouble broke like a thunderclap in sunshine.

It had not taken long to learn the Tahitians were light-fingered. It was too bad of them, but Cook did not have to dip far into the deep well of his tolerance to understand it. To their eyes the *Endeavour* seemed a treasure ship, a bottomless mine of wonders. It was asking too much of Polynesian human nature when exposed to such glittering marvels not to want them. All that really seemed necessary was to be firm, and to take precautions.

Joseph Banks had set up a tent on shore. To protect the collecting equipment the naturalists kept there, Cook set a guard of Marines over it under the command of a midshipman.

One afternoon when Cook and several of “the gentlemen” were some distance inland, they were startled by the sound of two musket shots. There was instant and instinctive recognition of disaster. The usually cheerful faces of the natives who were with them became bleak with fear. In a moment they fell back and silently disappeared into the woods.

Their leader, who was acting as guide on the excursion, proved he was cut from better cloth. The brown-skinned, barefoot gentleman stood firm

and expressed his intention of returning with Cook and the others to the scene of the firing. He ordered three men who had not yet run off to break off branches as a sign that they at least had no quarrel with Toote (which was as close as the Tahitian tongue could get to Cook) and to accompany them.

They soon found what had happened. It was less easy to guess what the consequences might be.

A man had suddenly stepped from the crowd which had gathered idly round Banks' tent and snatched a musket from the hands of one of the sentries. The midshipman in charge had instantly ordered the Marines to fire. Several Tahitians had been hurt. What was worse, when the first blast of small shot had failed to bring down the thief, he had been pursued a few paces and killed.

Except for the dead man, all the Tahitians had now vanished.

Volumes have been written on what constitutes the qualities of great leadership. They might be condensed to—common decency and common sense.

Small men in Cook's position would have thought of prestige. Lesser captains, puffed with that queasy gas called pride of rank and race, would have thought first of "backing up their subordinates."

James Cook was savagely angry. He made no effort to conceal it—or its direction. The offending midshipman was broken on the spot. Cook never forgave him.

For the dead thief he had only pity. There was no shadow of question in his mind as to who was wrong and who should most humbly ask forgiveness. The four Tahitians who had been bold enough to accompany him saw and understood.

The red spark which might so easily have lit the flames of war and led to bloody massacre, turned gray and flickered out.

Gradually—for the islanders had been badly frightened—friendly relations were reestablished. The barter for food on which the survival of the *Endeavour's* company depended, was resumed.

It can be fairly argued that Cook, by that blaze of honest anger, by the sure reach of his strong hand for the most effective instrument with which men can deal with men—pure justice—saved every life within his charge.

On the island of Tahiti the reputation of the white race has always remained high.

Some days later, Cook's view that what was right was right, and what was wrong was wrong, without respect to condition, clothes or color, was further emphasized.

The ship's butcher quarreled violently with a native woman because she refused to accept an iron nail in trade for a stone axe. (Why, is a question, for the neolithic Polynesians valued iron above all else.) The butcher was doubly guilty. In defiance of orders he had stolen from the ship what amounted to a portion of the national gold reserve. He had been violent to a native.

In the Royal Navy the classic penalty for every offense was flogging. Under some captains that bloody punishment was of almost daily occurrence. For such high crimes as striking an officer, men were flogged to death. It was a spectacle for which James Cook had no taste. He had seen floggings too often and been sickened by them. He agreed with those few who thought flogging "made a bad man worse and broke a good man's heart."

But this, so close on the heels of the midshipman's imbecile act of murder, was different. These brown people, for all of their stature, their crude weapons and their great numbers, were weak. In any encounter with the techniques, the tools, or most of all with the inborn self-confidence of Europeans, they were as defenseless as little children. What excuse was it that they were sometimes as provoking as children? Cook was like many essentially kind, gentle and even-tempered men. Offenses against the weak filled him with white rage.

The procedure of a flogging was prescribed as formally as the reception of an Admiral. The butcher's name was inscribed on a "list." At 11 a.m. the malefactor was brought before the Captain. In response to the bo's'n's piping, all hands, as well-washed and as trim as they could make themselves, assembled on deck, each in his assigned place. Cook, in his strong, clear voice, read the Articles of War. One of the heavy, latticed hatch gratings was set on end against the rail and the malefactor, his back bared, was tied to it.

The "cat" was kept in a red bag. It was a short stick, covered with red cloth, to which were attached nine "tails" of knotted cord, each two feet long. By tradition, the executioner was the bo's'n's mate. He struck with the full sweep of his strong arm. One stroke lacerated even the toughest skin. At six the victim's back was raw and oozing blood. Yet in the service Cook half loved, half hated, some sadists in epaulettes ordered three hundred lashes.

Cook's talent for making himself understood by signs was so conspicuous that everyone remarked on it. He was already beginning to learn some words of the Tahitian language. By combining the two he had invited on board a number of Tahitians who seemed to belong to the vaguely defined ruling class, to witness the white man's punishment.

It was to their credit they were horrified, that they shed the ready tears of which adults in the Pacific islands have never learned to be ashamed, and that they begged the punishment be cut short.

Cook's anger burnt out as quickly as it came. Here, ten thousand miles from home, it was his heavy burden that he must be judge and jury, King and Parliament, nurse, priest, physician and Bow Street runner all in one. There was no escaping it. But he was mightily glad when it was over.

This pure, far land had now been stained by the blood of both races. Fate willing, that should serve.

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A site was chosen on the shore from which the Transit could be observed. To ward against what was now beginning to seem the unlikely chance of an attack, the *Endeavour* was warped in closer to land where her guns could command the area. As a further precaution, intended primarily to discourage the islanders' incurable thievery, the site was fortified.

In Cook's opinion, there was no indignity in work. He did not hesitate to set his crew at the hardest sort of labor under the hot sun in plain view of any natives who might care to look on. He knew what succeeding generations of white men in the tropics forgot, that the indolent children of the sun are impressed, not scornful, when they see Caucasians sweat.

The quantity of it those first South Sea excavation-watchers saw would have impressed anyone.

The huts and tents of the observatory-to-be were protected on two sides by an embankment four feet six inches high, flanked by a dry moat ten feet wide and six feet deep. Everyone had a go at it. Probably more earth was moved than ever before in Pacific history. The sun was hot. Sweat poured. The Tahitians stared. A few were even induced to lend a hand.

The third side of the enclosure, facing the bay, was guarded by an embankment topped with a fence, and the fourth, a river bank, by a double row of water casks.

One virtue of the project was that it gave the *Endeavour's* crew something to do. Neither ashore nor afloat did Cook believe in idleness. Sometimes he was hard put to it to think how it could be avoided.

It was reckoned the place was impregnable. In joint tribute to the planet they had come to watch and to Polynesia's favorite sport, it was named Fort Venus.

But Lord! the "Indians" could be annoying!

No sooner had it been declared that the fort was as impenetrable as London Tower than it was discovered a valuable quadrant was missing. It had never been taken out of the case in which it had been tenderly packed in England. The case had been stored in the fort's inmost fastness. A sentry had



stood within five yards of it all night. It was part of the precious equipment provided by the Royal Society. Now the cursed thing had vanished into thin air.

Cook had shown his firmness with his own people. Now, when given cause, he resolved he should be just as firm with the Tahitians. As firm—but never as severe. Guilt, he thought, must not be measured by an action, but by the understanding of an action.

The quarreling, larcenous butcher had known better. The Tahitian thief had not.

Nevertheless, there was to be no dilly-dally. The theft was serious and the islanders must be made to realize it. Banks started with several other gentlemen in pursuit. Cook, becoming uneasy, assembled an armed party and landed to go in pursuit of them.

At such a show of resolution the quadrant—bit by bit—was made to reappear.

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As the 3rd of June, the day of the expected phenomenon, approached, arrangements were made for observations to be taken from three points. Cook, the astronomer Green, and Dr. Solander would watch from Fort Venus. Banks and some of the ship's officers took the two-masted pinnace to Moorea, a small island which lies to the west of Tahiti, and another small group of officers were sent as far to the east as they could conveniently get.

Days were spent in cramming the amateurs in repeated rehearsals with all the astronomical information they could contain.

When the long-awaited Thursday came heaven was kind. Not a cloud drifted before the telescopes. The massive astronomer's clock in its own private tent ticked off the magic seconds.

At 25 minutes and 42 seconds after nine o'clock in the morning, the dark circle of the wandering planet bit the sun's edge. By mid-day the obtruding disc was plainly visible even through a mariner's telescope. Soon after three o'clock, the show ended. Each group had had equally good luck. The only complaint had been the heat, which at one time rose to 119°.

Disappointingly, when the observers came to compare notes, they found irreconcilable differences. Cook and Green had used identical telescopes, Solander one slightly larger. All three were the best the century could provide. But each reckoned the instant of contact at a different time. Since time, literally, was of the essence, those differences were serious.

There was no use bewailing the misfortune. Whatever fault there was lay with the instruments, or perhaps in the inherent difference of human eyes. . . . It was comforting to learn years later when all the findings were in that at least no one else had done better.

In due course the Academy of Paris received more than two hundred computations of the sun's distance from the earth reckoned from the transit. The observers' figures varied from 87,890,780 miles to 108,984,560 miles. One, who had gone to Lapland, a German priest who was burdened with the name of Father Hell, was so far off that the world of science concluded he must have been asleep or drunk.

Cook had performed his mission. He had fulfilled the trust the Royal Society had put in him as ably as he could.

Nevertheless, the Lords of the Admiralty had been wiser than the men of science. As practical men their vision was perhaps wider. Never, privately, had they been convinced it was worthwhile to buy and equip the *Endeavour* at such high cost for the sole purpose of sky-gazing. In their minds the Transit of Venus had provided the excuse. The exploration of the southern half-world was Cook's real mission. Until he had read his secret orders he, too, had been deluded.

Now, the lesser business done, he was ready to begin the greater.

## Terra Incognita

1769

Many have explored. Few have been explorers. To visit and examine new places, or even new bits of places—new, that is, to one's own branch of the human family—is pleasant. But a wanderer from the trodden highways who is content with merely looking round and when he is comfortably home perhaps jotting down some vague descriptive prose remains an amateur. He has added nothing to the sum of knowledge.

James Cook was never content with private knowing. Wherever he went and whatever he saw he made known. Where the record was blank he filled it in. In that pure meaning of the term Cook, in the opinion of his peers, was the greatest explorer the world has known.

Wallis, who had discovered Tahiti, had sketched its northeast corner. Before Cook took the *Endeavour* to sea again he made a complete circuit of the island in a ship's boat. The maps he made of its coast and the soundings of its lagoons and bays were so accurate and so exquisitely done that every hydrographer—as we call them now—who has gone over the same ground has had little more to do than edit and admire.

Good workmen always have more fun than dilettantes. There is every evidence Cook enjoyed himself as thoroughly as a fox terrier in a meadowful of rabbits. That lovely place, those inoffensive, smiling people, were as relaxing as a Turkish bath. The north-of-England stiffness which had been born in him, the rigid habits of respectfulness and cherished, walled-in pride imposed by a dozen years in the Royal Navy, and the starch of his new eminence, all alike seeped out in the Tahitian sunlight.

The big Yorkshireman and his good companion Joseph Banks slept on mats in native huts—and Cook had his stockings stolen from under his head. They sat cross-legged in the groves by fire and moonlight and were formally entertained by Tahitian wrestlers and dancers. (And, after the first hour or two, admitted they were bored to tears.) Since it was the commander's rule they must all of them "live off the country" whenever the *Endeavour* lay at anchor, they learned to choke down the overrated breadfruit and consume sticky handfuls of a starchy goo much admired in Polynesia, except when fortune favored them and they could get roast pork. Once they were served

baked dog. They had journeyed so far from England that they admitted it was rather good.

There were “incidents.” The islanders did steal now and then. Some of the sailors misbehaved and had to be punished. But never has so early an encounter between modern man and stone-age man gone so well.

Three months after their arrival, when the *Endeavour* was preparing to leave, two young Marines of the ship’s company decided they would stay. They had found two compliant maidens with whom they had fallen head over heels in love. They could remember nothing and no one at home in gray and rainswept England that had pleased them half so much. Intoxicated with themselves, each other and their great renunciation, the four disappeared into the forest.

Lt. Cook could not approve. In the secret corners of his heart he might sympathize. For that very reason a stand had to be taken. Once wink at such adventuring and the thing might become epidemic and all of them would stay! Technically, the two young soldiers were deserters. It was extremely awkward. To send an armed party in pursuit at this last hour could easily disrupt the good relations which had been so carefully established.

Cook kept his temper in firm leash. It disturbed him to know how quickly he could sometimes lose control of it.

After waiting for a day and night Cook quietly informed some Tahitians of chieftain rank who were visiting Fort Venus that he would not let them go until the Marines had been brought back. When night came on, the hostages were taken aboard the ship.

Until that moment they had taken their detention calmly. But on being rowed out to the *Endeavour*, gloom descended like a summer rain. The ladies of the group burst into floods of tears. The great ship and its tall master, they knew, were ready to set sail. It was painfully easy to imagine they were being kidnaped, that they would never see their beloved island again.

The local chiefs were fortunately popular with their subjects. Since Tahiti had the characteristics, if not the dimensions, of a village, gossip had kept close track of the romantic runaways. Their hiding place in the mountains which they had thought so secret seems to have been known to everyone. They were promptly pursued, taken, and brought back.

The hostages were at once released and the emotional skies were clear again. The crestfallen Marines, torn from the bosoms of their loves—they had thrown away their clothes and were wearing flowers in their hair when they were brought back—looked forward miserably to anything up to and including hanging from the yardarm. They were agreeably disappointed. Cook had them flogged and sent them back to duty.

The small drama had a happy sequel. The storm of talk which had broken when it seemed the chiefs were to be taken away when the *Endeavour* sailed had given final form to an idea with which one middle-aged and highly intelligent native had been toying. His name was Tupia. He was a high priest and had voyaged to a great number of nearby islands. Like many Pacific islanders, Tupia had a remarkable knowledge of the stars and of the traditional mysteries of offshore navigation.

Tupia, with a dignity of which only Polynesian aristocrats and actors playing statesmen, are capable, informed Cook he would like to join them. He had with him a twelve-year old boy who was willing to come as his servant. They had paddled to the ship's side in their own canoe. If Cook consented, they were ready. Perhaps his English friends might some day bring him home. If not, Tupia was prepared for whatever the seas and lands and years below the horizon's edge might hold for him.

The bargain was struck at once. Tupia could not fail to be useful. He was a man after Cook's own heart.

When the *Endeavour* sailed, the bay in which she had lain for those three happy months was literally filled with canoes. Half Tahiti had come to see them off, to press final gifts on them and weep the tears of parting.

Banks and Tupia went to the masthead to watch the fairest of all earth's islands lose edge and substance and turn a paler green in the golden light of the declining afternoon. Tupia's brown, quiet eyes of the adventurer were wet. But his head was high and there came from him no murmur of regret.

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The Whitby collier had justified her choice. Toward the end of the stay in Tahiti she was jockeyed at high tide into a shallow with a bottom of firm sand and there made fast. When the tide ran out the ship's rounded and heavily reinforced keel settled comfortably aground and the crew, with no more trouble than getting their feet wet, were able to scour and scrape the bottom.

After a year afloat in every water from the Thames to Tahiti it was bearded with green weed and crusted with barnacles. Once cleaned of that accumulation—during the last weeks at sea it had begun perceptibly to reduce her speed—the *Endeavour* was as good as new.

Because of Cook's passion for getting fresh supplies at every stopping place, the basic stores of salt meat, oatmeal and ship's biscuit which had been put aboard in London had scarcely been touched. . . . Except for the draughtsman Buchan who had had a final and fatal attack of epilepsy while they were in Matavai Bay, not one member of the company had died of disease. The compound of good work and good nature called "morale" was high.

At a comparable stage of every previous round-the-world voyage the vessels had been strained, rotten, or lost altogether, disease rampant, casualties terrifying and stores dangerously depleted. The *Endeavour* was as ready for the vast, dimly defined adventure which lay ahead of it as it had been when they quit Plymouth.

Cook's achievement was without precedent. What made the miracle doubly miraculous was that it seemed to have been accomplished so easily. Cook had procured fresh food at every opportunity. He had seen to it that no one was idle and that everyone had ample rest. He had kept his ship meticulously clean and had waged ceaseless war to keep the usually dank and moldy quarters below decks dry. At every opportunity the casks had been refilled with fresh water. On naval vessels the standard ration was five pints per man per day. Cook set no limit. That, really, was all.

His revolutionary discovery of how to keep both ship and men fit during long voyages now appeared so simple as almost to escape the notice of the very ones who had most directly benefited from it. Cook had used that excellent instrument, his mind. He had supported its conclusions by force of character. He had insisted they eat fresh food he got for them, however unpalatable it might be.

Once done, any fool could understand it. Why praise the obvious? The first man to use a lever and a fulcrum and the first to shape a wheel probably suffered the same fate.

It was true, during the last weeks in Tahiti—ashore and not at sea—the *Endeavour's* hitherto spotless health record had become badly clouded. Nearly half the crew showed symptoms of what appeared to be a venereal disorder. Surgeon Monkhouse diagnosed it as syphilis, or as he called it, the pox.

Cook was tortured by a feeling of guilt. He had done all he could, but in the face of the Tahitian women's unparalleled fleshly generosity, that had been little. Now he was possessed by the idea that by the fault of his coming this clean island, these—as he thought them—pure and innocent people had been fatally infected by one of the ugliest of Europe's maladies.

He tried to convince himself the disease had been introduced not by the *Endeavour* but by Captain Wallis' *Dolphin*. Or perhaps by the crew of a third mysterious European ship which the natives insisted had touched at the island in the interval between the visits of the two English captains. He was never fully persuaded. Till his life's end, Cook's conscience was nagged by the thought of his responsibility, and of the harm which had been done.

The possibility seems never to have occurred to anyone, either then or since, that Surgeon Monkhouse's diagnosis was, quite simply, wrong. There was then as now an endemic disease in Tahiti called yaws. The superficial

symptoms of yaws, which is highly contagious, are so like those of syphilis the two are still frequently confused. What amounts to proof that Cook's fears were unfounded is the fact that the sores of the infected members of the crew cleared up during the next weeks at sea and left no ill effects. The sickness, in short, followed the characteristic yaws pattern—frightening, unbecoming, but not serious. Yaws is not a venereal disease.

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For three weeks the *Endeavour* cruised among the islands northwest of Tahiti. They sighted seventeen and went ashore on five. In honor of the Royal Society, his patron, Cook called the group the Society Islands. The name has stuck.

Then the *Endeavour* headed south.

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One hundred and twenty-seven years before, a Dutch navigator named Abel Tasman had sighted a chain of green mountains. They lay well to the south of the Tropic of Capricorn and somewhere—the notes of his voyage were inexact—far to the west of the longitude of the Society Islands. Huge, ornately carved canoes had swiftly come out from shore. One of the small boats from Tasman's ship was rammed, sunk, four sailors clubbed to death and their bodies carried off, it was suspected, to be eaten. Not unnaturally discouraged by that reception, the Hollander made no other attempt to land.

The place which he had sighted lay within the temperate zone. Tasman named it New Zealand after his province in the Netherlands. Geographers had assumed for more than a century that the discovery was a peninsula of *Terra Australis Incognita*, the vast habitable continent with a climate like that of Europe which capped the southern hemisphere, which Cook had been sent to find.

Others before him on that quest had always failed for the same reason. When almost in reach of the goal their ships and the men aboard them had been too weak to go on. As the sun lost warmth and the light winds of the Pacific gave way to heckling storms their strength failed and with it their courage.

The time for dreaming was at an end. There had been too many sailors' yarns and romantic speculations. If he found the Great Southern Continent, he would walk with kings. But he must make sure.

By temporizing, a less honest man might still gain great credit. Cook, as the wise old Lords of the Admiralty had sensed, would bring back the truth, whatever it might be.

A great sailor knows the sea. The knowledge is deep and subtle.

Before leaving England and during the long voyage down the Atlantic James Cook had read every record he could get of what his predecessors in these high southern latitudes had done, seen, and experienced.

In stubborn defiance of nearly all the best opinion of his age he had already reached the conclusion that the Great Southern Continent, certainly as imagined by Dalrymple and his like, did not exist. When the *Endeavour* rounded Cape Horn, and again in the cold seas through which they had sailed before heading for Tahiti, he had checked that belief against visible phenomena. His conviction was strengthened.

And now, again.

The very tang and look of these bleak Pacific waters had a feel of the great deeps. There were no currents, as everywhere are found off continental coasts.

The farther south they drove from the Societies into hard and baffling winds, the more was the *Endeavour* tormented by great swells. Every timber, every cord of her rigging, every man aboard, was strained to snapping point by the tireless, tiring, lift and fall, lift and fall of the slicked gray bosom of the ocean. Sometimes the summits of those vast rolling swells were as much as a mile apart. They came from the south.

Cook believed they tokened almost limitless distances beyond. If a continent existed within many many hundreds of miles this force of wind and wave would have been broken. Every sailor's instinct in him convinced him these great winds, this mighty pulse of ocean, must run unchecked right round the globe.

It was October. Cook had delayed among the islands until the worst of the southern winter would be past. For nearly a month they had sailed west. Then, high land was sighted straight ahead and on the next day the *Endeavour* anchored off the mouth of a small river. Cook made preparations to land.

He had made it a rule that he should be the first ashore in all new places—and this great land stretching away as far as they could see to north and south was the newest of the new. Perhaps, contrary to Cook's theorizing, it was a part of the Great Southern Continent. Or it might be an eastern shore of the place Tasman had sighted from the west and named New Zealand.

Only one thing was certain. No man of their race had ever set eyes on it before. They could see the smoke of little fires, clusters of huts and rudely planted fields. To these people, whoever they might be, they would seem as strange as voyagers from the moon.

The ship's pinnace—the two-masted longboat—and the smaller yawl were lowered. The established orders stood. No guns were to be used, except as a desperate measure of self-defense. It might be true, as Dr.



Samuel Johnson once remarked, that “one set of savages is like another”—or it might not. If there was to be danger, Cook would be in the midst of it. He asked no man to do what he would not do first himself.

Undergrowth came all the way to the water’s edge, but some hundreds of yards away was a cluster of grass huts. Cook, with Banks, Solander and “some of the other gentlemen” got out of the pinnace and began walking toward them.

Dr. Johnson was wrong. Though Cook had no way of knowing it, this was the country of the fiercely aggressive Maoris. They had already watched the approach of the incredible apparition of the *Endeavour* under her tall trees which bore white wings and, according to one legend which has been handed down, had made up their minds about her.

She was a floating island. They would capture it. These repulsively pale-skinned creatures in their queer costumes who came ashore from her were inhabitants of the island.

For a matter of minutes all seemed peace and emptiness. Then with a silence which made them all the more terrifying, some big, almost naked men leapt from concealment and brandishing twelve-foot-long lances rushed down upon the yawl. The young sailors who had been left in it managed to push off, but the stream was narrow and the Maoris came on. The petty officer in the larger boat some distance away fired a shot over their heads.

The sound startled them but they recovered themselves. The whole affair lasted no more than seconds. One of the tall native men drew back his spear as if to hurl it at the boys in the small boat. There was no time for indecision. The junior officer in the pinnace fired again—and one of the Maoris fell dead.

His companions were stunned into paralysis. For the first time in the tale of their fighting race they had witnessed the miracle of sudden death when no enemy was near and no visible weapon lodged in the dead man’s body. They incontinently fled.

At sound of the shots Cook and those with him hurried back to the boats and returned at once to the *Endeavour*.

They could not have made a worse beginning. But this time no one except the too-resolute savages had been at fault. The question was: how could the damage be repaired?

They must not show they were afraid. Nor, if it could possibly be avoided, must this senseless fight go on. Their position was like that of peaceful visitors from the planet they had lately watched. In the rude minds of these rude people, because they were strange they were enemies.

Another attempt was made the next morning. This time the Tahitian priest Tupia went with them. To everyone’s amazement—and Cook’s delight

—at this great distance from his native island Tupia could understand and be understood.

These people were bigger, more hardy-looking, their skin was a somewhat darker brown, and their accent curious. But it was only as if they spoke a dialect of the same tongue. The softer people of the tropics and the inhabitants of this wild shore were of the same far-wandering race.

The second encounter was no more lucky than the first. Though Tupia was as persuasive as he knew how and the glowering Maoris were induced to accept some presents, it was all too clear that the desire for peace was one-sided. Beads manifestly bored them.

The twenty or more big men who had gathered around Cook's little group began snatching at the white men's weapons. Their own—huge spears, clubs set with a stone spike, and thin, exquisitely made stone blades—were formidable enough, but as warriors they had instantly recognized implements of war better than their own.

When one of them jerked a dagger from the belt of Astronomer Green and the rest showed a strong impulse to join him in an all out tussle, Cook swiftly ordered the aggressor shot.

It was the first time he had ever been directly responsible for the taking of a human life. The act horrified him. These savages had sought blood first. There could be no doubt of that. But neither was there any doubt in Cook's mind that this place was theirs. The *Endeavour* was the intruder. How awesome it must seem to them. In the unintelligent—some of his own crew had shown it—strangeness begat fear, and fear hatred. He felt no anger, only a sick puzzlement.

The third day was more disastrous still.

Some means, Cook knew, had to be found to convince these lusty, stormy-tempered barbarians that friendship was possible between them. When two canoes were sighted some distance offshore it occurred to him that if some of the Maoris, by force if necessary, could be brought to the ship they might be wooed into trustfulness. They would then report to their fellow tribesmen that no harm but only benefit would result from mutual dealings.

Cook ordered a shot fired into the air to make the canoe halt. The gesture was fatal. The Maoris had quickly learned that sudden sound meant death and war.

With incredible speed one of the slim, carved little craft made off for shore. The occupants of the other, grabbing their weapons from the bottom of the canoe, flung themselves upon the nearest of the ship's boats with plain intent to kill.

The frightened Englishmen fired to save their lives. Four native men were killed. It was butchery. None knew it better than James Cook. Banks called it “the most disagreeable day my life has yet seen; black be the mark for it, and heaven send that such may never return to embitter future reflection.”

It was no comfort that the little plan, which had been intended so innocently and which had gone so desperately wrong, came close to working. Three young Maoris who were fished out of the water and taken aboard the *Endeavour* quickly learned the lesson Cook had found it impossible to communicate. The brown men were fed, not eaten. The death of their friends seemed not to trouble them. The school of their lives had been as harsh as it was simple. They were as completely creatures of the moment as May flies on a sunlit pond.

Disappointingly though, the trio would not agree to Cook’s plan to send them back the next day to their people as ambassadors of good will. They had a lively image of being thought spies or traitors. The local punishment for those crimes was to end one’s earthly journey in the role of entrée. It was only after much persuasion they could be made to leave.

Fortunately their alarms had been exaggerated. At any rate when last seen with their kin—to whom they had been returned loaded with small gifts—the conversation seemed to be going well.

## New Zealand

1769-1770

The swift series of tragedies shadowed Cook's mind and conscience like a winter storm. The whole ship felt it. He had become so completely their leader that every mood was colored by his own. A few short days before—it seemed an age—all had been more than well. Now uncertainty, the infection of Cook's sense of guilt, had entered into the ship's spirit like worms into her hull.

Though in his impatience and disappointment Cook had named their first stopping place Poverty Bay, it did not take half an eye to see that this new land which they had found was a discovery of first importance. It had a temperate climate. It was what was called "white man's country."

Some day, when they took word of it home with them, others would come after them; the adventurers first, then if not tomorrow the day after, plain folk would come. The world was growing smaller. By coming this far safely Cook knew he had done more than anyone before him to make shorter and more easy the highways of the sea. He should feel immensely proud—and he could not.

They had begun by spilling blood. Were the years ahead to be washed in it? If that were true it would have been better if the secret of these green hills had been kept forever.

How incalculable were human beings! It could not be denied there were occasions—like this—when James Cook preferred mathematics.

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The shadow passed. The weather of all life, like the weather of the sea, was changeable. If the formula of how to deal with primitive races which had worked well in Tahiti was useless in New Zealand, another would have to be found. None might be better still. You could not sail by formula. Or, probably, manage men.

Before them lay an unknown coast. Though Cook's confidence in himself as a diplomat had been shaken, the physical problem did not daunt him. He was happiest where other mariners were most miserable, close to shore. His swift, intuitive brain worked all the better if the coast along which

he managed his cumbersome little ship was unmapped. Every yard they advanced was a victory, with the stimulus of victory.

According to the detailed instructions of the Admiralty, the *Endeavour* first sailed south.

During every instant the vessel was in motion two vigorous and quick-witted men stood on platforms outside the bow rail, “swung the lead” and called out soundings. That simplest of mariner’s instruments was the most useful tool Cook had.

It was an octagonal-shaped cone of lead about eighteen inches long, weighing about four pounds. The tapered end was attached to a long line tied every six feet, or fathom, into small knots which were easily counted as they ran through the leadsman’s fingers. The larger end was indented and filled with a thick grease so that whenever it touched it brought up a sample of the bottom.

Isolated rocks or sandbanks and reefs with deep water at either side—the New Zealand coast is rich in them—could be avoided only by keeping constant lookout both from the masthead and the foredeck. The ceaseless casts of the lead, all of them precisely noted, indicated the ever-changing contour of the sea’s floor.

Taking soundings by the lead is a laborious business. Few voyagers before Cook or after him on hazardous first journeys have ever tried to do more with it than try to save their ships. Cook charted as he went.

Almost never, unless wind-driven, did he sail the *Endeavour* to the safety of deep water. So sure was Cook’s instinct for anticipating every trick of air and current and every configuration of a shore that day after day, week after week, he took his ship through tight channels and past perils which no captain today would risk without the help of local pilots.

Whenever the weather permitted, the ship’s boats were lowered and sent ranging into every cranny of the coast. The commander had infected the most able of the officers and crew with his own passion for marine surveying. The boats, like extra, agile hands, filled in the gaps, completed the pattern.

As the *Endeavour* made her way along the New Zealand shore by a track no stranger’s ship had followed since our globe spun out of stardust, sheet after sheet of fine blank paper on the hinged table in the big cabin became covered with clear, sure pen-strokes and peppered with fathom markings. Under Cook’s long-fingered hands, all but finished maps of incomparable accuracy grew like the emergence of photographic prints in a solution of developer.

It was an achievement without parallel.

The *Endeavour* reached a cape at 40° South Latitude, then reversed her direction and headed north.

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The “Indians” as they still persisted in calling them, were as unpredictable as what lay beyond each headland. Usually they were as ready for a fight as gamecocks.

At last the Marines earned their rations. It was necessary to keep alert watch every instant. The war canoes, making straight for the intruding monster, might come darting out from shore, or from the concealment of an island at any moment of the day or night. They were a sight to make the heart skip and to remember till you died.

The mightiest of the Maori warboats were nearly seventy feet long, six wide and four feet deep. They held up to a hundred men. Prow, stern and sides were ornamented with elaborate fretwork carving of abstract involuted patterns and edged with fringes of black or white feathers. They leaped over the water under the rhythmic thrust of fifty or more long, carved paddles with amazing speed.

The attackers were as frightening as the craft which carried them. They were harder muscled than their Tahitian cousins. They were bearded and wore their black hair in a twisted crest. Their faces and most of their bare bodies were covered with blue-black tattooing that was like “filigree work and the foliage in old chased ornaments,” and often they were smeared with red ochre.

Their weapons were pointed javelins sixteen feet long, feathered darts and formidable sculptured clubs of green stone held to their wrists by a thong and set with a great fang of bone.

Fortunately for Cook and his thoroughly impressed companions, Maori military manners were formal.

The war vessels—prototypes of the great canoes in which during the unrecorded centuries the Polynesians had migrated ever east and south over the immense Pacific distances—would come to a halt fifty yards from the *Endeavour*’s side. An old man dressed in a dogskin cape, with every inch of his leathery skin tattooed, would rise in the bow of the leading boat, extend a carved scepter of whalebone inlaid with shells, and make a speech. At its end the warriors, who often outnumbered the Englishmen many times over, would make the air tremble with a concerted shout the burden of which was: “Come on shore, come on shore, and we will kill you all with our clubs.”

When the “unknown creatures,” or “goblins” as they were afterward called in Maori legend, failed to respond to that invitation, the canoes came gradually nearer.

By this time the invaluable Tupia from Tahiti was in the forward rigging talking his head off. The Maoris were in no hurry to begin. They conversed and answered questions most politely until they were close by, then began an astonishing dance which was the prelude to the assault.

“Their limbs are distorted and their faces agitated with strange convulsive motions. Their tongues hang out of their mouths to an amazing length, and the eyelids are drawn so as to form a circle round the eye. At the same time they shake their darts, brandish their spears and wave their clubs to and fro in the air. . . .”

For Cook to delay his defense so long took extraordinary coolness. To hold fire until you can see the whites of your opponents' eyes is nothing to waiting until you can see the backs of their tongues. Sometimes, even at the last minute, vocal persuasion did the trick. Cook—he never failed to be recognized as the “goblins'” leader—who had continued to make progress in the soft tongue of Polynesia, added his assurance that they had not come to do harm.

If he and Tupia were believed, the Maoris, mercurially forgetting their war plan, were occasionally induced on the spot to sell, instead of use, their weapons (for which Mr. Banks had a collector's passion) and even consented to come aboard.

More often, they pelted the *Endeavour's* sides with stones and let fly their javelins. Not until then did Cook permit his people to reply by so much as a threatening gesture. By his orders the ship's rifles were loaded with extremely fine shot instead of ball. A few rounds aimed into the boats stung the warriors' skins painfully but harmlessly. The shock of feeling a wound from an antagonist still out of reach and, far more, the noise, the flash and smoke of gunpowder, usually were enough to make all but the bravest retreat as fast as they had come.

If it looked as if the battle might begin again Cook gave the nod to a waiting gun crew to fire a cannon.

The result was the most shattering burst of sound which had ever echoed from the New Zealand hills. The four-pound iron ball, aimed near the boats but never at them, made a resounding splash.

That final hint was always taken. Maori fighting men did not care greatly for their lives. They did care as much as could any battleship Admiral for their canoes. Since their only tools were fire and smooth-stone knives and adzes, the finest had taken years to build. Each boat had a name and a tradition. Fun was fun and war was war, but the thought of such loved

and laborious creations being reduced to kindling by magic could not be faced.

Just as unpredictably, some of the New Zealanders were friendly. The closest Cook came to a solution of the riddle was to observe that the curve of amiability seemed to rise in direct proportion to the destitution of the land. Where the soil was thin, sandy, and littered with gaunt rocks the inhabitants were less aggressive than where the land was kinder. As has sometimes been noted in other latitudes, the manners of the poor, in short, were excellent and the manners of the rich abominable.

At the slightest hint of welcome Cook turned himself inside out to be agreeable. More depended on good relations with the Maoris than restoring the atmosphere of trust, of joy of living aboard the *Endeavour* which had been lost in these cold waters; more even was at stake than the future reputation of the white.

For the first time in the records of long voyaging his crew was in good health. Deduction had indicated, then experiment shown that to keep them healthy it was necessary to have frequent access to shore to get fresh food and water. Properly, those supplies should be obtained by barter. It *was* difficult, when all you wanted was to buy groceries, to be greeted with spears and to have people stick their tongues out at you.

So anxious was Cook to begin trading that when some peacefully inclined natives paddled out to the *Endeavour* with a load of fish which all too plainly had passed their prime, he bought them anyway—then had them surreptitiously dumped overboard.

The most curious encounter was with one lone fisherman.

The *Endeavour* had entered a wide bay where no ship remotely like her had ever come before. Cook with several companions, in all the weirdness of colored cloth, black varnished hats, shod feet, pale skins, blond hair, and numberless contrivances beyond a neolithic man's hope of comprehension, set out in one of the small boats to reconnoiter. They approached the canoe of the solitary fisherman. When they came close he glanced at them. And then—and then, he went on fishing.

The explorers, after a moment of crushing silence, quietly rowed away. Plainly, they failed to interest him.

It was a solemn moment. Every British record for taking the calm view had been broken. It could only be concluded the lone Maori fisherman was waiting to be introduced.

Warmly—wonderfully—James Cook of Marton, in Yorkshire, where the stale tradition is that minds are narrow and hearts cold, developed an enormous liking for the people of this new world which he had found.



It was true, they were often troublesome. Trading was frequently complicated by the rude and greedy who snatched at what they wanted and tried to make away with it. But they had courage and dignity. . . . It was remarkable that Cook detected beneath the smears of red war paint and the weird tattooing that “they appear to be of a gentle disposition and treat each other with the utmost kindness and . . . are as modest and reserved in their behaviour and conversation as the most polite nations of Europe.”

The fact that most of the tribes were perpetually at war he generously ascribed “to the want of food in sufficient quantities at certain times. As they have neither cattle, sheeps, hogs nor goats, so their chief food is fish which being not always to be had, they are in danger of dying through hunger. . . . Notwithstanding the custom of eating their enemies, the circumstances and temper of these people is in favour of those who might settle among them as a colony.”

No judgment could be more tolerant. And as the history of New Zealand would show, none could have been more accurate.

So, they in their turn liked him. It is as simple as that.

A glimpse<sup>[5]</sup> of James Cook as he was seen through Maori eyes has been preserved. In his old age a man remembered that long ago, when he was a little boy:

“We sat on the deck of the ship, where we were looked at by the goblins, who with their hands stroked the hair of the heads of us children. There was one supreme man in that ship. We knew that he was the chief of the whole by his perfect gentlemanly and noble demeanor. He seldom spoke, but some of the goblins spoke much. But this man did not utter many words; all that he did was to handle our mats and our weapons, and touch the hair of our heads. He was a very good man, and came to us—the children—and patted our cheeks and gently touched our heads. His language was a hissing sound and the words he spoke were not understood by us in the least.

“We had not been long on board of the ship before the chief of the goblins made a speech, and took some charcoal and pointed to the shore and looked at the warriors. One of our aged men said to our people: ‘He is asking for an outline of this land.’ And that old man stood up, took the charcoal, and marked the outline of the Ika-a-Maui (*the North Island of New Zealand*). And the old chief spoke to that chief goblin and explained the chart that he had drawn.

“When the chief goblin had been away in that part of the ship which he occupied, he came on deck again and came to where I and my two boy-companions were, and patted our heads with his hand, and he put out his hands towards me, and spoke to us, at the same time holding out a nail towards us. My companions were afraid and sat in silence; but I laughed and he gave the nail to me. My companions said: ‘This is the leader, which is proved by his kindness to us; and also he is very fond of children. A noble man—one of noble birth.’ ”

Their instinct was as sure as his.

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During the year and a half since they had left England, ship and voyagers had been lucky in the important matter of weather. Among some of the members of the crew Cook was beginning to acquire an undeserved reputation for managing that, too.

As the *Endeavour* reached the northernmost tip of New Zealand with the plan of turning it to discover what was on the other side, the long run of good fortune ended. It was December, the equivalent in that hemisphere of June in Europe. Skies should have been fair and the ocean quiet as a summer pond. They weren’t.

A calm gave warning, a calm so dead the *Endeavour* was helpless against a stray current which carried her close enough to a stretch of rocky and murderous beach to enable Tupia to talk to some Maoris who were standing on it. A stray breeze saved them. Then, as if regretting its kindness, the breeze grew steadily stronger until it mounted to a gale.

During the night of December 12th, 1769, with land still alarmingly in sight, the *Endeavour* was brought under double-reefed topsails, just canvas enough to give the tiny craft some steerage way and keep her from whirling like an orange crate among waves that had climbed mountain high.

There was no rest that night nor for many days and many nights afterward. They had taken the most tender care of every yard of canvas which they had. Under Cook’s vigilant eye, no scrap of it had been allowed to molder. But even the best flax wears with time. One grim morning two sails split like rotten handkerchiefs. At the end of one desperate twenty-four hours rude observation taken from the bounding, twisting deck showed the *Endeavour* had not gained an inch upon her forward course.

They had all seen storms. But none of them, even Cook, had ever seen one like this. Gale winds and rushing, savage seas began to seem not an incident of time, but time itself, the stark, unchanging rule of nature. There was no escape, no solution. The ship’s life and their own had to be fought

for, tenaciously clung to with tired hands which must not tire every instant of every black and screaming night and sunless day.

Cook, tall, wet-darkened in his soaked greatcoat, left the deck so rarely that it was as if he were a part of it like the storm-curved masts and the humming rigging. His fine long face grew thin and his eyes turned red with sleeplessness. Fatigue and concentration deepened his habit of quietness so that for days at a time he never spoke except to give a low-voiced order.

The ship was sound. She was Whitby-built. He believed in her and in his own knowledge of her. The silent, marrow-wet, marrow-cold, and marrow-frightened men with him believed in him.

He was glad that because of his firm insistence there was no chaplain aboard to pray. More often than not the men of God put sailors in a worse plight than the one they were already in. It disturbed them, it made them fumble, to think of death. It was their business to work, not think, and by their work to stay alive.

For himself, he had no intention of preaching to them. The dulllest foremast hand aboard was, like himself, a man, and it was his fixed instinct and belief that men should respect each other. They knew their risk as well as he. No one but themselves knew where they were. If the ship foundered no one would ever know.

If the *Endeavour* was dismasted—it had been a near thing a dozen times—or failed just once to shake off the mighty weight of green-gray hissing water which often swept her decks waist-deep, the four small boats she carried would not be of much help. In such weather it would take a miracle to launch them safely. There was room in them at best for only a small portion of the company. If any did get ashore on such a chancy coast it was not comfortable to wonder how long the Maoris would make them welcome.

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Around Christmas there was a lull. The wind failed and the waves leveled enough to allow them at least to sleep. But on December 27th the gales roaring up from the west began again.

In three weeks they advanced thirty miles. In five weeks they covered just one hundred and fifty miles.

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Though no one was to know it for many years, the angry waters just above New Zealand just then were not as empty as they seemed.

In France the same causes were at work as in England. There was a like release of energy at the long war's end, a comparable curiosity about the earth's blank spaces. Other explorers had set forth.

One, the Chevalier de Surville, had sailed for the South Pacific from a port in India six months before. In that hurricane-whipped December he, too, had sighted New Zealand's northern tip. It has been reckoned that at one time the *Endeavour* and the French ship the *Jean Baptiste* must have been within thirty miles of each other. They never met. Therefore neither had what in those drenched and tumbled days would have been the ghostly experience of sighting another visitant from their own distant world, there in the enormous loneliness.

De Surville, being less gifted than his English rival, was less lucky. Though his ship got home he had missed great discoveries as consistently as Cook made them. Food aboard the French vessel was scarce and rotting. Though they had been at sea less than half as long as the *Endeavour*, the crew of the *Jean Baptiste* was racked with scurvy.

The contrast, when the world learned of it, was not lost. Two ages and two dispensations passed there unknowing in the storm—the innocently harsh, from old, bad habit, and the new sea fashion which James Cook wrought from common sense and common kindness.

The geographical puzzle of New Zealand was not yet solved. It does not seem to have entered Cook's mind that it might be left unsolved. Neither time nor space had the power to intimidate him. He was an astronomer. Space and time were the materials with which he worked. So long as the *Endeavour* held together and his crew was healthy and reasonably happy he would obey the compulsion that was in him—to go on.

What wonder or reward of earth could compare with the lure of each horizon, with the excitement—they all shared it—of climbing ever up the world's slow curve to see what lay beyond?

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The *Endeavour* at last rounded the North Cape and began to beat her way down New Zealand's west coast. Their progress now was rapid. Since the wind blew strongly toward the shore even Cook was not willing to venture too close.

In mid-January (1770) they sighted the most impressive mountain they had yet discovered, an 8300-foot peak covered with snow, which they named Mount Egmont. Soon after they found a sheltered bay where the ship could rest.

It was none too soon. The *Endeavour* was badly in need of a spring cleaning.

The weeks of storm had loosened everything that could come loose and much that shouldn't. The bottom was again foul with weeds and worms. Their supply of water was low. Even the casks which held it were falling apart.

A camp was established ashore and the ship beached and scraped. The work was hard, but after so long a time at sea any change was welcome. No one minded. The blacksmith set up his forge on solid land. The carpenters repaired the casks. One group was set to gathering firewood from the forest, others fished—with astonishing results. Still others collected wild plants to add to the Spartan, but most of them now realized, life-saving menu. Mr. Banks and Dr. Solander went botanizing. The Marines kept cautious watch on the fretful, rather unlovely, and cannibalistic natives of the neighborhood.

And James Cook went exploring.

Though the job of scouring, repairing and re-supplying the ship was exacting and Cook was no less a perfectionist than he had always been, his stature as a commander had increased. He had done what he should have done. In eighteen months he had fitted together the different parts of the intricate human mechanism of the *Endeavour's* crew into a single whole. Each man knew his function. It was no longer necessary as it had been at first for Cook to direct everything himself. Subtly, he was doubly their commander now that he no longer had to command in little things.

Near their stopping place was the mouth of a great bay, or gulf. Or, perhaps, a strait. Tasman had sighted it in 1642 and left the question unanswered.

Cook had learned to respect the geographical knowledge of the Maoris. He began to question them. Local opinion was unanimous that the sea passage led to the farther ocean; that New Zealand consisted of two great islands and that neither lay in reach in any direction of any larger mass of land which could be called a continent.

While the ragged, barefoot crew, as lithe-muscled as boxers and as brown as Tahitians, did their work, their captain did his. At least, that fiction was preserved.

Blessed as he was by honest liking in every face turned toward him, Cook did not have to dissemble. In the most serviceable of the ship's boats he pried into every bay and around every headland which could be reached in a day's sail. Inevitably, he took the simpler of his surveying instruments with him and as inevitably used them. But it wasn't work. It was picnicking, as it was when he and Banks went shooting in the vast and colonnaded woods or when with grunts of delight Lt. James Cook R.N. gave a hand to the hauling in of three hundred pounds of fish in a single net-cast. If that was work, then it was of the same order as the explorations he had made of the smoothed Cleveland Hills at home in Yorkshire when he was ten.

Though it is questionable if either ever admitted it to the other in plain words, the quality he shared with Joseph Banks which both had recognized so soon, was that each retained the tireless, asking, questing zest of

boyhood, a zest which brightened with experience and years rather than grew more dim. The middle-aged Yorkshire sailor and the rich young amateur of science had first sensed and then made sure that if half the secret of happiness was curiosity, the other half of the perfect whole was knowing. By this time Joseph Banks had learned a great deal about navigation and Cook was on the way to being a good botanist.

The stop for repairs in Queen Charlotte Sound—for Cook named the place after his King's lady—lasted three weeks. By the time they were up, Cook, as lesser tourists than he have sometimes claimed, had "seen everything."

One day, with a contempt for hidden dangers he would have disapproved in anyone else, he climbed a mountain with only one sailor along for company. Though the view from the summit was not completely satisfactory, Cook thought what he saw from that elevation gave further evidence the seafaring Maoris knew what they were talking about; that there were two big islands and that ahead lay the strait which divided them.

There was one way to prove it. The *Endeavour* sailed through. Then, like the tracing of the figure 8, the ship made a complete circuit of the coasts of both South and North Islands back to its first starting place.

The future Dominion of New Zealand had been plucked out of the fog of the undiscovered and given complete definition. It was no part of that fast-receding continent Cook had been sent to find. But it was a noble, a healthy, and a handsome land. By the completeness of his exploration of it James Cook had established England's claim beyond all question. No war in British history, at whatever cost in blood and gold, had ever won so much.

Cook, who was a full century ahead of his contemporaries in almost everything he did, followed a rule which was not universally accepted by explorers until comparatively recent years. When he could learn them, he marked the local, native names of places on his maps. But in New Zealand 'when he could' left many gaps.

The milder-mannered Maoris who confided in him perpetuated their names and their traditions on his charts. Their nastier-tempered neighbors, by the same rule, by stone-throwing have, geographically speaking, vanished without trace.

It is because of that, that the common names today of so many New Zealand bays and straits and offshore islands are a living record of the wanderings of that lonely little ship, of the men who sailed with her, and of James Cook's friends . . . Cape Palliser . . . Banks' Peninsula and Solander Island and Hawke Bay, named after the Admiral who approved of captains who cared for the lives of common sailors.

The Bay of Plenty is where fresh food was plentiful and Poverty Bay where there was none. It was Banks' suggestion, not the commander's, that the sea passage between North and South Islands be called Cook Strait.

No task like it had ever before been done so incomparably well.

Perhaps not strangely, they were just in time. New Zealand's hour had struck. The quiet of these veiled places, which had lasted for a million years, was ending. The most restless of the tribes of men, the best and worst, the gentlest and most cruel, the most foolish and most wise had begun another of its times of wandering. De Surville's ship and Cook's came almost within sight. A year later another French expedition sailed for the same destination.

It came too late.

Its leader was killed by the Maoris. The gentleman-adventurer who succeeded him learned of the futility of their mission on reaching home. He bowed with perfect grace.

"As soon," he wrote, "as I obtained information of the voyage of Cook, I carefully compared the chart I had prepared of that part of the coast of New Zealand along which we had coasted, with that prepared by Captain Cook and his officers. I found it of an exactitude and of a thoroughness of detail which astonished me beyond all power of expression. I doubt whether our own coasts of France have been delineated with more precision. I think therefore that I cannot do better than to lay down our track off New Zealand on the chart prepared by the celebrated English navigator."

In six and a half months James Cook had explored 2400 miles of the coast of the imperial inheritance he gave his English nation.

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[5] My grateful acknowledgment is due to Mr. Hugh Carrington for his discovery of this quotation in John White's *Ancient History of the Maoris*.

## Shipwreck

1770

Faulty human memory, which often has a higher regard for spirit than for fact, has sometimes given Cook the title of the “discoverer” of Australia. He never claimed to be, for he was not. Had he lived to hear it, that false flattery would have made him redden with one of his quick rages. He was honest and clear-headed. He expected others to be honest and clear-headed, too. It made life so much simpler.

The immense island continent, at once so sterile and so rich, had first been made known by those remarkable and remarkably neglected Dutch voyagers of the Seventeenth Century. They had named it New Holland. Tasman, following a southerly track, had discovered the big pendant island now called Tasmania,—he thought it a projection of the mainland—and established a claim in behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. At the end of the same century the English pirate-adventurer William Dampier traced a portion of the northwest coast. Less famous men had filled in many blanks.

By digging deep and assembling every fragment of data, as Cook had carefully done before he left England, a not too vague outline of roughly three-quarters of the edges of Australia could be put together. The west coast was fairly well charted, the north coast less well charted, the south coast still less—and what in the course of the next century and a half was to become the dominantly important east coast, not at all. It was toward that great gap in knowledge and in space for which Cook set the *Endeavour*’s course when they quit New Zealand. Nothing whatever was known of any part of the Australian interior.

The stout little collier was still sound but it could no longer be denied she was beginning to show wear. Her sails, which once had been so shining white, were now a dingy gray and as patched and over-patched as were the clothes of those aboard her. Though Cook had done his utmost to avoid using them, their basic supplies of salt meat, oatmeal and ship’s biscuits, at long last were running low. What was gravest of all, there was a new hazard to combat. Its name was fear.

Most of the *Endeavour*’s company, perhaps everyone but Cook himself, had had enough. Since this extraordinary man who had been snatched out of



nothing and from nowhere to be their leader had done them the unique service of keeping them alive thus far, they were suddenly impatient to be home.

They were like combat fliers who had completed forty missions. At the beginning every man aboard, privately, with as much heart for it as any man can ever summon, had been reconciled to not returning; with the equally private conviction, of course, that for himself that reconciliation would not be necessary.

The marvel of having survived so long, instead of giving them greater confidence, on the contrary was fast draining whatever confidence they had left. They had tempted fate enough. They had safely skirted more than their just share of dangers. They were homesick. They were hungry for roast beef.

When he had completed the New Zealand survey Cook had consulted with his officers. He did not conceal from them that for all practical purposes they had completed their assignment. They had successfully observed the errant planet of the erring goddess. By circling New Zealand they had disposed of the legend of a Southern Continent existing in the temperate zone, at least in the great quarter of the globe between South Island and Cape Horn. Even Joseph Banks the romantic, who had clung to that delightful speculation to the very last, was now convinced.

Cook was far too competent a mariner to pretend the *Endeavour* was now fit for any spectacular new adventure. So, three choices awaited them. He soon convinced them that there was only one.

They could go back the way they had come, around Cape Horn. But this was the end of March (1770), the beginning of the Southern autumn. It would be winter when they reached that zone of tempests. In the present state of the ship and their supplies it would be far too perilous. At the first hard blow the *Endeavour*'s sails would burst like rotten rags.

They could sail west for the tip of Africa and make for England round the Cape of Good Hope. But that had been Tasman's course. It was a trodden track. They would discover nothing new. What was more persuasive, along that route lay nothing but empty ocean, and the probability that most of the time they would sail into the teeth of the prevailing wind. Was that worth risking? With no land nearby they might exhaust both food and water. Or—begin to die.

By his persistence he had held scurvy at bay. He did not pretend that he had beaten it. Had they forgotten? Was anyone aboard so dull now as not to understand—he had no name for the mystery, only the solution—that they owed their health, their lives, to their frequent stops ashore?

The third alternative seemed best. Cook would set a course for the Dutch East Indies. There, with Java as its center, the Hollanders had established a

flourishing empire. In the capital city of Batavia they could find almost everything which Europe itself offered—new sails, new rope, food in plenty, and, precious, during the time it would take them to refit, the society of Europeans. They would go home from there.

Did not logic demand then, that they proceed to the Dutch East Indies by way of New Holland? According to Tasman's notes the far southeast corner of it which he had called Van Diemen's Land lay only twelve hundred miles from their present position. Unless the eastern portion of New Holland should turn out to be merely an infinite litter of small islands with no true mainland behind them, as some suspected, they must sooner or later fall in with a shore which they could follow toward the north.

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True, every voyager who had sighted New Holland (there had been none in seventy years) had given an unflattering description of it.

Opinion differed as to whether its inhabitants were giants or impoverished savages, but all agreed that whatever they were, there were very few of them. Much of the country appeared to be desert and those few portions of the shore which had been skirted were singularly devoid of bays or protected anchorages. . . . It was because of those uniformly unfavorable reports that the work of the discoverers had had no sequel.

The year was 1770. The Eighteenth Century, the century of knowledge, was at spring tide. It was the age of Voltaire, of Benjamin Franklin and Linnaeus. In North America the birth of the new Republic was only a few years away. But nowhere on that last and lusty continent of Australia had a single European encampment, much less a colony, been planted. Except to a few specialists, Australia's very existence was as yet unknown.

Cook did not set his hopes too high but, for reasons which could be clearly stated, he was nevertheless optimistic. He had not failed to note that everywhere they had been—Tierra del Fuego, Tahiti, New Zealand, Cape Horn—the weather had been generally better, the soil most bounteous and the inhabitants less formidable than those who had come before him had written.

It was hard to avoid the conclusion that they had been less capable. Rather, their natural enthusiasms, their skills, and their wits had been diminished by disease. For it was blunt fact that every commander before him by the time he had reached these far lands and distant waters had been a sick man and had captained a sick crew. Their judgment of places and of men had inevitably been colored, and the color was always gray.

They would see for themselves.

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During the night of the 18th of April, 1770 Cook came on deck. He had been unable to sleep. They had been at sea eighteen days since leaving New Zealand. Though he earnestly hoped neither his face nor his manner showed it, he was unreasonably excited.

Comparison of their own reckoning with Tasman's fragmentary charts indicated land was not far off. During two days of stormy weather and heavily overcast skies he had ordered that the *Endeavour* proceed no farther to the west but tack north and south. During the day just past they had been visited by a number of land birds. Now, more potent than that evidence—and quite suddenly—he smelled land. His instinct told him it was close at hand.

In itself that certainly was nothing new. There were obvious precautions—a sharp lookout both forward and aloft, reduced headway, a leadsman constantly taking soundings—lest they “discover” terra firma by smashing into it. His officers and crew had been trained to the last notch. He could trust them as entirely as men confronted by that greatest danger of the sea could ever be trusted. He could trust himself.

Why then did he feel this special sense of—what was the word for it?—imminence? Of the approach of the minute hand of the great clock of endless time to an instant unlike all others which had gone before?

Inbred habit—the training of his lifetime (and Yorkshire)—made Cook distrust any flight of imaginative fancy in himself. In the Age of Reason, even in so romantic, so irrational a spot as the *Endeavour's* quarter-deck at the farthest margin of the world in dead of night and close upon a wild and all but nameless shore—he preferred the processes of reason.

Very well. He had been sent upon an errand to find the Unfound Continent. Never in heart or head, somehow, had he believed in it. Why had the gentlemen-geographers who sat at home, so stubbornly rejected the partially known for what did not exist?

New Holland was no island. When the open mouth of its huge, sack-like shape was filled in—he would pull the drawstring tight—there would lie within that faintly traced ring of savage coast a majestic land. It was strange to him it had been ignored so long. Was not this the continent they sought? It could not all be wasteland. Nature was never so penurious as that. . . . Somewhere, off there in the darkness, waited the last wonder of the world. Others had been too blind to see it, to know it for what it was.

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As the night wore on Cook went below to his cabin. The regimen of sleep and hours of rest he had imposed upon the others was rigid. It was, he knew, part of the solved mystery of survival. Like them, he too, must rest. He must be fresh. He did not take off his clothes.

Soon after dawn, at six o'clock, a cry from the deck brought him up all standing. He found the watch crowded forward, some shouting and some awed. A few had climbed into the rigging. He was met by Second Lieutenant Zachary Hicks, the officer of the morning watch. Hicks pointed.

There unmistakably, across twelve to fifteen miles of the gray waste of waters lay the dim shape of a low shore marked by a rocky point which jutted south. Cook named it at once—Point Hicks.

Judged without implication, or viewed simply as a landscape this fragment of coast was not impressive. It had no grandeur. It was not beautiful. Compared with the soaring snow-mountains, the dense forests and the green and reaching meadows of New Zealand, it was nothing. Yet Cook's excitement persisted. The faint line of "low and level land; the shore white and sandy; and the inland parts covered with wood and verdure" gave him a sense of destiny as New Zealand had never done.

He promptly gave the unusual orders to let out all reefs, to pile on all the sail they had. All watches were on deck now. Cook commanded that the old, patched mainsail be replaced with the last and best they had. The creaking, blunt *Endeavour* fairly flew, her bowsprit dipping in a roil of white water, her taut lines singing in the morning sun.

They had sighted Australia's southeast corner. Now, the course lay north. Those who were faint-hearted—and these last hours had bred again a forgetfulness of fears—did not have to be reminded that north meant that they were homeward bound.

Ten days passed before they got ashore. The coast here offered few anchorages. Once when a bay looked promising, the wind disobligingly blew from the wrong direction, straight offshore. In spite of his curiosity Cook was unwilling to waste the time it would take trying to beat in. To him they were days of endless fascination.

In truth there was not much to see. Without imagination, indeed, is there ever much to see? ". . . A very agreeable aspect, diversified with hills and ridges, plains and valleys, with some few small lawns."

But now and then through the telescope they could see the smoke of fires . . . the fires of an undiscovered race of castaways marooned through endless time upon this undiscovered land. It was like astral voyaging within sight and hail of a far planet in the sky.

There upon *Terra Australis Incognita* fire burned. That was all they knew. It was all that anyone knew. In all probability within that colossal, secret space no wheel had ever turned. No human ear had ever heard the ring of metal. No sound louder than the cry from a man's throat had ever threatened the enormous silence.

Once they were close enough to see a knot of naked men standing watching them from shore and to observe through the glass that their skins were darker than any they had seen. . . .

On April 29th (1770) the *Endeavour* dropped anchor in the shelter of a bay. Eventually, because of the lavish collection of specimens Banks and Solander collected there, it was named “Botany Bay.”

Cook and Joseph Banks, accompanied by Tupia in the hope he might still prove useful as interpreter, started for the beach. Close behind them came the largest of the ship’s boats filled with armed men under emphatic instructions to keep silent, to stay at a discreet distance and, above all, not to use their guns except on the orders of Cook himself.

As usual, James Cook was confident. From the glimpses they had had of them, the aborigines of this great continent appeared singularly primitive. In comparison with their own strength, their own weapons, and even their numbers, the blacks’ helplessness touched Cook’s heart, softened his firm mouth with smiling tenderness.

Near the place on the beach toward which the first boat steered on that historic Sunday morning was a cluster of eight huts. They were peculiarly shabby and ill-built, with more the look of a temporary camp than a village.

While the *Endeavour* had anchored and the sails were being furled and the boats lowered the camp’s inhabitants had been in full view.

Some men were spearing fish from rude little canoes made of a single piece of bark tied together at the ends; an old woman, quite naked, walked out of a wood, accompanied by three naked children. Three other children joined them and the soot-black crone set about the making of a cook-fire. The fishermen beached their boats and “set about dressing their dinner with as much composure as if a ship had been no extraordinary sight.”

The lone Maori who had snubbed them had been odd enough. This was downright ghostly. Travelers like themselves from outer space and from a point in time almost literally removed from them by twenty thousand years could have no counterpart in the whole experience of these black people’s race. The London of Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson would not have found flame-sheathed invaders from Jupiter more different from themselves.

But these belated, naked wanderers still in the world’s first dawn, did not even seem curious! Either that, or they were displaying incomparable courage.

When Cook’s boat came near the beach, two of the aborigines “their bodies, thighs and legs painted with white streaks, and their faces almost covered with a white powder” advanced with the plain intention of stopping

them. They were armed “with long pikes, and a weapon resembling a scimitar.” (It was the Australian boomerang.)

They shouted “in a harsh voice”:

*“Warra warra wai!”*

Alas, Tupia, the invaluable interpreter, was valuable no longer. These black fellows were no kin of his.

Cook, who in the justice of his heart saw no particular reason why they *should* land where they were not wanted, ordered the rowers to stop and undertook with gestures to convince the two warriors that they came in peace and that all they wanted was fresh water.

Either his knack of conveying ideas by sign language had left him, or the aborigines didn’t care. Standing in the bow of the boat, with Banks, Tupia and four oarsmen seated quietly behind him, the commander, who was bareheaded and wearing a loose white shirt and knee-breeches, smiled as winningly as he knew how and tossed far up onto the beach a handful of beads, nails “and other trifles.”

The Australian Defense Force picked them up and seemed pleased with them. Cook signaled to the rowers to close the narrow gap of water between them. But the two were instantly menacing again.

A musket was fired in the hope the noise would frighten them off. One was startled enough to drop a bundle of light lances he carried, and that was all. He picked them up. His companion threw a stone.

The Englishmen were awed, and touched. Never, even in the romantic legends of the middle ages had knights in bright armor ever faced odds with such intrepidity as those two tiny, naked black men. After all, St. George was used to dragons.

Regrettably, more was at stake than the satisfaction of the white men’s curiosity, though it is understandable that having come right round the globe and found a new continent one does want to have a look at it. Their need for water was real. They had been at sea a month. The larder was overdue for restocking with fresh greens.

Cook ordered a musket loaded with fine shot to be fired low. The shot stung the elder of the two men in the legs and drew blood. He turned and ran to one of the huts. The explorers, thinking the battle over, grounded the boat and stepped out. They were mistaken. The fearless warrior had simply gone to get a shield, with which he came hurrying back. It was of wood, oval, painted white in the middle, and had two holes in it to see through. The two ran forward and hurled their long wooden javelins.

Another all-but-harmless charge was fired. Two more lances were thrown which the Englishmen successfully ducked. And at last, having done

their utmost, the two black fellows ran away. The conquest of Australia had begun.

It was never much harder than that.

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In the following days the Englishmen roamed the neighboring countryside with ever-growing confidence. A few more pointed sticks were thrown at them and a shot or two fired in return with no harm done on either side. But usually the small parties of these frailly built black people, when they came upon them, simply ran away. Efforts to make friendly contact with them came to nothing. Presents left in the poor little huts were untouched. It was Cook's only disappointment.

Fish were so plentiful in Botany Bay that often a hundred pounds or more were brought in by a single throw of the net. The shallows abounded with oysters and mussels. Birds, some of them, like quail, more or less familiar and many more unknown, were as plentiful in the park-like woods as in an aviary. The trees were straight and tall and without undergrowth. Cook noted that farther inland the soil was a "deep black mould, which appeared to be calculated for the production of any kind of grain." He perceived at once, as some of his companions did not that this, again, was "white man's country" which waited all but empty for the poor, the bold, and the outcast who were to come.

Each day the British flag was hoisted on shore. "*Endeavour*, 1770" was carved on a tree near the stream where they refilled the casks. Cook named the region New South Wales.

A sailor named Sutherland died of "a consumption" from which he had suffered a long time and was buried on high ground from which his ghost could watch the vacant sea. It could now be said that Englishmen had lived and even died there. The British claim to the Australian continent was never seriously challenged.

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The pull of the north, the pull of home, was strong. Some of the crew were growing restless. The *Endeavour*, though still safe enough, was beginning to have more than ever a look about her of weariness. With quite possibly a year's voyage still ahead before they would reach England, Cook recognized he could not make as exact a scrutiny as they had of the shoreline of New Zealand.

Nevertheless, by steering a course which any other mariner would have thought perilously close to land, a remarkably accurate sketch of Australia's eastern shore was laid down.

In two weeks, often against head winds, they put behind them eight hundred miles. The opening to what is now the broad magnificence of Sydney Harbor was observed but not explored. Every prominence was named; at first, after Lords of Admiralty, officers of the Royal Society and other figures in public life to whom Cook felt he owed some obligation, then friends, then acquaintances, and at last, when those sources were exhausted, after almost anyone they could think of.

Any incident—such as the shooting of a big bird on which they sumptuously dined—was seized upon and given immortality. Bustard Bay chronicles that dinner. Indian Head was where several natives were seen exchanging stares with them. (For even the Australian aborigines were called Indians!) Wide Bay and Breaksea Spit are obviously descriptive.

The obligation to dredge up some sort of name for every peninsula and promontory, every isle and inlet, is by no means one of the least of an explorer's tasks. Since Cook discovered and labeled more configurations of the earth's surface than any man who ever lived he did not, all in all, do too badly.

The local citizens were even less help in that important matter than had been the Maoris of New Zealand. Cook regretted it. But though the smoke of fires was seen almost constantly, each effort to overcome the black men's pitiful shyness was as unavailing as the first.

Though the Englishmen did not know it, those columns of smoke they saw ashore were a warning which ran always ahead of them. The news of their coming and a description of them—what a very queer one it must have been—was being telegraphed from nomad camp to camp faster than the *Endeavour* sailed.

They sailed past the site of Brisbane and correctly noted from a change in the color of the water that there a river emptied from the ever more arid land. Soon the line of the lonely shore leaned away to the northwest.

The next two ventures ashore were more than disappointing. They were disturbing. The country was "worse" than at Botany Bay, the soil thin and sandy—except where Mr. Banks floundered into a swamp—and they could not find fresh water. From the traces of their melancholy stopping places which were found, Cook and his officers had concluded that even should they make friends with the native blacks their numbers were so small and their lives so primitive it was unlikely they would have any surplus of fresh food to barter. Nowhere had they seen any traces of native cultivation or any signs that they kept domestic animals.

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It could no longer be fairly said that the *Endeavour* was a happy ship. The acuteness of their longing to be done with voyaging was infecting all of



them. Some of the younger men had taken to saving up their rum rations and then drinking more than was good for them. One night there was an ugly incident.

The captain's clerk, after getting helplessly drunk with some midshipmen cronies, was brutally hazed. First his clothes were cut from his back, then, on second and worse thought, his tormentor staggered back to his cabin during the night and cut off bits of both his ears.

It made it no better that the schoolboyish code of mid-deck honor made it hard for the commander to learn the truth. An innocent middie was reduced to a common sailor for three weeks before Cook found the real culprit.

It was indicative. Such indecent conduct was unheard of on Cook's ship. There must, he recognized, be no avoidable delay in getting to the Dutch ports of the East Indies. There, there would be a semblance at least of civilization, a temporary escape from the prison of their tiny ship, the change of food and companionship they needed.

Wrongheadedly, chance chose that very hour to lead the *Endeavour* into what beyond all contest is the most dangerous sea passage on the globe.

They crossed the Tropic of Capricorn. Soon they were tracing an intricate course among a labyrinth of islands. Some were hilly. One, presumably because its core consisted of metallic ore, was so magnetic as to make the compass twist uselessly as much as thirty degrees away from its proper bearing—never a pleasant experience for a mariner. Most of the islets were low and sandy. Surf foamed over jagged rocks.

What made them most apprehensive was that casts of the lead—an average of three was taken every hour—showed a curiously uneven bottom. Transitions from deep to shallow water came with no warning.

Though Cook could not know it, since no one had ever been here before him, the *Endeavour* had blundered into the tremendous trap for ships which extends for nearly a thousand miles between the Australian mainland and the Great Barrier Reef.

Most of the Reef, a mighty wall of stone and coral which begins just north of the Tropic of Capricorn and reaches almost to New Guinea, at high tide lies just below the surface. During the eons of time in which the full force of the Pacific has beaten on it with white and boiling rage it has grown ever stronger and bigger, like the living thing it is. Coral grinds into sand and the sand makes islands, islands numbering in thousands, then sometimes the solid islands wear away. Chunks as big as skyscrapers break off. Within the Great Reef there are lesser reefs and countless hidden coral pinnacles, tall and sharp as steeples, that lie ready to rip a ship's soft belly like a knife.

That was the maze through which Cook must find the way.

He was immediately conscious of their danger. Though both the mood of the crew and raw necessity urged him to hurry, the *Endeavour's* progress was slowed down to a crawl. The yards carried only enough canvas to give headway. A small boat was lowered and went ahead of them to take soundings and find the channel, if a channel existed. Another leadsman took soundings from the bow and the clearest eyes in the ship, often Cook's own, kept watch every instant from the masthead.

In spite of those precautions time after time it was necessary to let the anchor go (they kept it hung by the bow by a loop of rope with a man by it with a cutlass) to bring the ship up often with no more than inches between disaster and her weed-grown planks.

The moon waxed till it was round. In the warm tropic night it was so bright they could see almost as well as by day. With a full moon the tide ran higher so it was reckoned they could count on deeper water. Since they had come into an open reach with few islands in view and the mainland far away upon their left, Cook decided to keep on.

At nine o'clock of the evening of June 10th (1770) the leadsman reported the comfortable depth of twenty-one fathoms—one hundred and twenty-six feet—under them. The comfort was short-lived, for in a few minutes the excited cry reached the quarter-deck that the lead now found bottom at eight fathoms. Instantly every man aboard was ordered to his station. But before the decision to anchor had been made, the same leadsman's voice, high with relief, shouted that they were safe again with twenty fathoms clear. It was concluded they had passed over a shoal. When the next hour showed no appreciable change, the commander and all who were not on duty went below to rest.

The ship was barely crawling. Her forward speed was scarcely better than one mile an hour. Cook left instructions the lead was to be cast every seven minutes or so, or as rapidly as it could be thrown and pulled in again. Though there was danger, there seemed no more than the common danger in this damnably intricate passage.

At approximately ten minutes to eleven the voice of the leadsman forward, subdued by the night and the partly sleeping ship droned "twenty fathoms." At three minutes to, the call was "Seventeen!"

Hand over hand the sailor began hauling in the long, wet and snaky line, throwing it in smooth, untangled loops into his left hand.

Before he could cast again there was a grinding, tearing crash so violent he was almost flung into the sea. The *Endeavour* had struck upon a rock.

In seconds the deck was aswarm with men. They were silent men. No one shouted questions, for everyone knew. After nearly two years of motion,

sometimes violent, sometimes gentle, the deck of the *Endeavour* beneath their feet was deadly still.

Nothing could be seen around them but open ocean, roughened by little waves. No rock broke the surface. It was all the more evident what had happened. The ship had crashed upon a coral eminence which rose as steeply from the bottom as a rampart and hid its murderous jaws less than a dozen feet below the surface. Already, as the *Endeavour* settled and they felt once more the movement of the sea against her, they could hear and feel the coral's grinding bite upon her planks.

With perfect outward calm James Cook took charge. There was no panic. The fear which made their faces white in the white, still moonlight was too icy cold to boil into hysteria. That might come later.

Cook began to give orders. He did not have to raise his voice. The quietness of this far, lost place was as complete as it must be in the deep, sharp-shadowed craters of the moon. Barefoot sailors as agile as monkeys ran up the rigging to clew up the last inches of the meager sail that had been set. Even in that night's light winds, had the *Endeavour* been carrying much canvas she would have instantly been torn apart.

Others lowered the four small boats. No one needed to be told that if the ship went down there would be room in them for less than half their company. Even then they would be dangerously overloaded.

The nearest land was the Australian mainland—dry, hungry, wild and peopled only by secret savages—nearly twenty-five miles away.

The others—carpenters, sailmaker, cook, servants, clerk and gentlemen combined like the fingers of a single hand—began swiftly and desperately to lighten ship. By the uncertain light of tallow candles the deepest portions of the vessel were ransacked. Sweating, panting men struggled up the ladders with armfuls of spoiled stores, with empty casks, oil jars, hoops, staves, anything that could be spared and much that could ill be spared.

At a word from the captain the six small carriage guns mounted on the main deck were unbolted and thrown overboard. Even the stone and pig iron ballast below the planking of the hold and most of the firewood was brought to the deck and heaved over.

Thirty tons of precious fresh water was let out of the lashed casks which held it, to run down into the bilge where the pumps could deal with it.

Every ounce counted. They had struck upon the coral at high tide. The topmen, working with furious energy, got down the topgallant yards, then struck the main yards and topmasts, lashed them together with detaining lines, and threw them, too, into the sea where they could be got back if ever the *Endeavour* might be free of the vise which held her.

All night the concentrated work went on under the uncaring stare of the white moon.

As the tide fell the wounded ship beat so violently against the rock that the crew could hardly keep their footing. In the moonlight “we could see the sheathing-boards float from the bottom of the vessel, till at length the false keel followed, so that we expected instant destruction.”

Toward dawn they found some shred at least of satisfaction in the fact that although the *Endeavour* began to heel over to starboard, the grip of the coral was unbroken. If she had broken free she might have gone to the bottom at once. While she held, hope remained she could be refloated when high tide came again.

With enormous effort five anchors were got into the small boats and carried astern and dropped and their hawsers reeved to capstans on the maindeck. It was Cook’s plan as the tide rose to haul against them in the hope of pulling the ship off by sheer manpower.

It is a phenomenon of Australian waters that the tide does not rise as high during the day as at night. An enormous effort was made to get the ship free at eleven in the morning. Though close to fifty tons of weight had been thrown overboard, nothing came of it.

Their next chance would come at midnight. It might be the last chance they would have. Providence had been kind. During the day both wind and sea had fallen to a dead calm. Should the wind rise, the *Endeavour* would be pounded to matchwood.

There could be no pause, no rest. In the hot daylight every cranny of the vessel, every cabin, was again searched for whatever could be disposed of. The course they were following was not the only course, but the one Cook deliberately chose.

A more timid—or more reckless—commander would have spent that precious day of calm in an attempt to ferry the men to the mainland eight leagues away; then spend whatever remaining time luck left them in returning to the hulk for supplies.

The prospect did not tempt him. No one in the world knew where they were, even to within a circle of many thousand miles. They might vainly hope, but they could never count, on rescue. The small boats might carry some of them, at great risk, to more frequented waters. But who would decide who should go and who should stay? How long could any of them survive on that barren coast?

Though he confided it only to his logbook, Cook had all but given the *Endeavour* up as lost, even if they could get her free. His imagination had grappled with that black prospect and his hope had run ahead of it.

It was hard to believe the honest little collier could ever be made fit for a long journey again after so terrible a hurt. After all, some ten thousand miles of ocean voyaging lay ahead of them. At eight that morning water had begun to pour in through a leak in her bottom, so plentifully that it now took all the strength of the exhausted men, working three pumps in shifts of no more than five minutes each, to keep up with it.

Cook decided he would be content if when the tide rose again during the night they could get her free. Then, if that instant of freedom did not plunge her under, he would be still more content if they could succeed in getting to the coast.

There, if it was impossible to repair the damage, it was Cook's private proposal to use the *Endeavour* as a lumberyard and build a new ship.

It would be immensely difficult, of course. But the task did not daunt him. He was himself a fair carpenter. He had not wasted the years in the Walkers' yard in Whitby. He knew something of shipbuilding. The carpenter Satterly was a first-rate man. The rest would learn.

. . . Waiting was hard. Even though every man was taking his turn at the lung-bursting, killing work of the pumps (there were now nearly four feet of water in the hold) there was still time to think. It was not good to think.

The red sun went down behind the vast and lonely land. The low coast was hardly more than a line on the horizon. It looked very far away. At last the moon came up in the blue-black sky.

By nine o'clock the ship had lifted enough to be again on an even keel. At ten o'clock the bare feet on the night-cool planks of the deck sensed a faint tremor. It was like life returning to a body that was cold and dead.

For a long moment and another there was utter silence disturbed only by the rhythmic creak, rattle, slush of the pumps. You could hear the tired pumpers' breath as it whistled through clenched teeth.

Then, there was a mighty single sigh, sudden, random movements, a few hoarse shouts. That feel of life could no more be mistaken than the lift of a human breast or color come back to waxen cheeks. At twenty minutes past ten o'clock the *Endeavour* floated free. The jettisoning of more than fifty tons of weight had done the trick.

She was still leaking dangerously, but there was no sinking gush of water. By morning it was seen that by steady pumping the level in the hold had actually gone down a little.

They had been reprieved. No more than that. They had not been pardoned.

Bone-tired though they all were there was no chance of rest. The work for them now indeed was harder than what they had done. The rafts of spars which floated alongside had to be got back aboard and the yards replaced

aloft. The five anchors which had been carried out astern had to be hauled in. One, it was discovered, was so firmly stuck in the bottom mud it had to be sacrificed. It did not take long to learn that it was more toilsome by far to get things back than it had been to throw them overboard.

Not until near mid-day was the *Endeavour* ready to run up sail and begin to make her cautious way toward shore.

The suggestion of a young midshipman, which was quickly carried out, greatly lightened the labor of pumping. It was characteristic of Cook that when the boy—his name was Jonathan Monkhouse—made his proposal he not only listened to it but put the crew under the midshipman's orders to put it into execution.

Handfuls of oakum and wool, "chopped small" were lightly stitched to a big square of sailcloth, to the sides of which long ropes were attached. The crude poultice was then coaxed under the ship until it reached the leak, where the suction of the indrawn water held it tight. The process was called "fothering."

The success of the device was immediately apparent. Soon it was found possible to keep the flood below at a safe level with one pump instead of three.

In seven hours the *Endeavour* sailed three miles. The shore was still an estimated twenty-one miles away. But no one had any stomach to repeat the disaster.

The way ahead looked clear enough, but never mind. Once bit, twice shy. It was estimated the leak was letting in fifteen inches of water an hour "but as the pumps could clear this quantity, we were not uneasy." Not very.

During the following afternoon the sailing master was sent ahead with two of the boats to look for a place where the ship could be beached, examined, and, in the buoyance of having survived, everyone was now willing to believe, repaired.

After dark the master, guided by the candle lantern hung at the masthead, came back with good news. He had found, he thought, an ideal spot where the wounded vessel could be careened. It was just six miles away.

As it turned out, it was not easy for the ship, waterlogged and unresponsive to her helm as she now was, to reach it. The channel into what turned out to be the mouth of a river was narrow, twisting, and shallow. Mournfully, like a blind old dog that has lost the knack of running, the *Endeavour* twice more went aground on mudbanks.

Five days after they had struck they lay safe at anchor.

Around them was a region of sand hills, of tall, sun-withered grass, of scattered clumps of gum trees, of limitless and lonely desolation. But it was land. They had been born on land. God willing, they now hoped to die on it.

However much men make the sea or air their element, the roots of life are deep. They go into the earth.

## With Broken Wings

1770-1771

Seen through the reversed telescope of time, the wooden ships seem as fragile as antique toys. But they and the men who sailed them had a power of recuperation which men of the age of steel have lost.

When the leaking, crazy hulk the *Endeavour* had become was dragged by main force onto the sloping bank of the river where the receding tide would leave her high and dry, yet the returning tide would float her free again (such a place must be nicely chosen), they learned for the first time the damage she had suffered. It was a sight to chill the blood.

Four stout oak planks had been cut through as cleanly “as by an instrument,” exposing the timber framework as if she still lay in drydock and the builders had not yet finished work on her. One hole was so big that only an incredible chance had saved them from sinking with a great gush and bubble the instant after they had freed her from the reef.

The lump of sharp coral which had drilled that deadly leak had broken off, wedged tight into the wood, and corked it up. If at any moment of the five days spent in reaching safety that lump had worked free, the tale of the voyage of the *Endeavour* would have ended as another of the sea’s mysteries. For a measurable time the discovery brought back the cold fear they first had felt, so sharply it clutched the chest and caught the breath again.

The pious—in recent days their number had increased—called it a miracle.

Banks remembered and later noted in his journal that during the crisis he had, for a wonder, heard “no grumbling or growling . . . not even an oath, though the ship was in general as well furnished with them as most in His Majesty’s service.” Providence, it appeared, had been appreciative.

An iron vessel of our own century, should it suffer even one-tenth as much hurt, would put its problem in the lap of the nearest salvage company. The matter would be conveniently discussed by radio. Nothing would be more unlikely than to find that officers and crew had the skills needed to do the mending. The age of power has made us singularly powerless.



Perhaps it helped that James Cook and the *Endeavour*'s company had no choice. When there is no alternative there is no debate. Since it was out of the question simply to sit there gloomily and rot, the ship had to be rebuilt.

It was an enormous job.

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A number of the men were sick. Mr. Green the astronomer, probably because his peculiar status made him able to avoid Cook's stringent dietary laws, had a touch of scurvy. It was a matter of scientific interest that Tupia was seriously ill of it. Until his decision to sail with the *Endeavour* the Tahitian priest had never eaten a mouthful of food which was not sea- or forest-fresh. English sailors, by being long used to salt beef and dry crackers, had evidently built up a degree of immunity.

Cook did not fail to observe that the strenuous labor, the loss of sleep and the subsequent exhaustion they all had suffered had hastened the onset of the disease. It bore out a theory he long had held—that scurvy was stimulated by fatigue. That, he thought, explained the phenomenon that on ships where the malady was rampant sailors were afflicted sooner than officers.

Tents were erected on shore and the sick men comfortably installed. Soon, marvelously soon, Earth performed her miracle and they were well again.

The torn ship was emptied of everything aboard her. The blacksmith set up his forge and began to make nails and bolts out of scraps of iron. Twice in each twenty-four hours while the tide was out the repairs on the bottom were pushed forward and the long accumulation of weed scraped from the hull. Between times Cook satisfied his passion for cleanliness by setting gangs to scouring every inch of the ship's interior with sand and water. Every day the boats were out fishing, charting the coast and exploring the extremely dangerous sea approaches to the haven where they lay with a view to their eventual departure.

They were a shabby lot. Time, wet and sun, even after judicious replacements from ship's stores, had worn most of their clothes to rags. Shoes had taken on such value by their increasing rarity that nearly everyone now went barefoot, both aship and ashore. When they worked in the tropic sunlight, often waist deep in the tepid, lapping water, the men were nearly as naked as the "Indians" in whose lands they had been so long, and their once pale English skin was as brown as one of His Majesty's biscuits. Strangely, it does not ever seem to have occurred to them that they were castaways.

Tall, long-nosed James Cook with the gently smiling eyes ruled over them so well they were hardly aware they were being ruled at all. He thought for them so well, they imagined they were thinking for themselves.

Since he had fended Death from them so capably, they were still a numerous company. There were now eighty-eight of them. Even with the mighty labors of refitting it sometimes taxed Cook's ingenuity to keep all hands busy.

Some fished, at first unluckily, later with great success. A day was made memorable by the discovery and easy capture on the outer reefs of huge deep-sea turtles. It was agreed they were the best food they had had since they left England. . . . Mr. Banks was astonished by the sight of an animal which proceeded, most eccentrically, in great leaps launched by its hind legs. It was learned later the local name for the creature was "Kangaroo." Lt. Cook took long, instructive walks, and climbed every hill which he could find.

It never occurred to him he might be beaten. His presence, his quiet orders, the confidence which shone from him like a steady light seems to have nipped the buds of pessimism among the others as fast as they appeared.

The fact was that few ships and few crews had ever been in a worse position. The battered ship with her gray, torn sails still had thousands of miles of unknown ways to travel. Much of what had been thrown overboard would be badly needed. For example, should they be attacked at some future stage of the journey, they were now almost defenseless. Six of their best cannon were at the bottom. Supplies of every sort were perilously low.

Scurvy—Cook faced it—*had* broken out. Since no one surely knew whether it was contagious, there was the nagging fear the terrible enemy that had been kept so long at bay might appear among them again when they went to sea.

Every circumstance seemed an invitation to despair. The reputation in adversity of British sailors, "pressed men" as most of them were, was not high. Had most naval commanders found themselves in Cook's position during those weeks on the Endeavour River, as they called it, they would have kept a guard by their tent around the clock and carried a brace of pistols at their waist in momentary expectation of mutiny, however insane mutiny might be.

By some magic in himself, perhaps merely by the magic of being unafraid, Cook turned their disaster, their dread, and the grim prospect ahead of them into a gay and almost casual adventure.

It was the greatest test to which a commander could be put. He turned it into a triumph.

For the first time since reaching Australia, friendly contact was established with the native blacks. Being first of all rather occupied with his

own affairs and, to be honest, more than a little tired of being rebuffed, Cook now adopted the tactic of paying no attention to them. It worked.

The queer, deep-chocolate-skinned and red-and-white-paint-smeared little nomads began with peeking from a distance. The huge ship lying like a wounded monster on their shore with the swarm of weirdly pallid and still more strangely dressed men—if they were men—mysteriously at work around it, exerted irresistible attraction.

In a few days some of the more daring ventured to come closer.

Cook found their imagination was unequal to discovering any interest in the “cloth, nails, paper, etc.” he threw them. Those common objects were so strange to them that they could not associate them with any idea of use. A sailor saw the difficulty and, instead, threw one of the black men a fish.

The fish broke the ice. A fish, they recognized. The act of giving it away they could understand. So pleased were the first Australian emissaries by that zoo-like gift that they spread the word among their kin that the goblins were worth cultivating.

The idea of equality, however unequal are appearances, seems to be inborn in human kind. The opposing idea of inequality, like so many other disagreeable things, must be learned. The following day a larger delegation of wholly naked little men returned the visit—and the compliment.

They presented Cook with a fish. He accepted it with the utmost show of gratitude.

During the next week the callers became as commonplace as stray dogs.

The impoverished region where chance had brought the travelers obviously had few inhabitants. It seemed ridiculous to be afraid of them. Cook gave one of the blacks an old shirt. There was great joy when the recipient, who wore the bone of a bird, about six inches long, thrust through the gristle of his nose, ingeniously made a kind of turban of the shirt instead of using it to cover any other part of his anatomy.

Who could take people like that seriously?

Only Cook had the perception to realize—it took nearly two centuries before a very few others began to make the same discovery—that, primitive and impoverished though these people were, they had a nimble intelligence and considerable charm. He noted (through the smears of white paint) that “their features were rather pleasing, their teeth white and even, their eyes bright; their voices musical, and they repeated several English words with great readiness.”

But as their novelty wore thin no one paid them much attention.

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The greatly praised discoverers of the big deep-sea turtles on the outer reefs willingly went back for more. Several of those self-refrigerating

delicacies one day were on the deck. Some aboriginal visitors, whose chief concern for the past several thousand years had ever been getting enough to eat, indicated they wanted them.

The Englishmen would rather have parted with the compass.

Till now the blacks had seemed as mild as baby tea. The refusal to give them the turtles put them in a violent and sudden temper. If it hadn't been a trifle irritating, it would have been funny. The savage guests stamped their bare feet in fury. One of them pushed Mr. Banks, who was about twice his size, so vigorously he almost knocked him over.

The disagreement developed into an absurd brawl, the bushmen grabbing at the huge turtles and the sailors hauling them back again. Convinced at last of their defeat, the blacks in a fine pet dashed off in their canoe to the nearby camp where most of the crew were working.

Before anyone realized what was happening, one of them had snatched a firebrand from under a pitch-kettle and set alight the grass at the camp's edge—to windward. The grass was tinder-dry. In seconds the castaways found themselves attacked on the flank by a crackling, wind-swept fire.

The arsonist ran on to a place a little farther off where the ship's fishnets and a quantity of washing were drying and set a second blaze.

It took the best efforts of all of them, led by Cook himself, to save those precious possessions and the camp itself. At that, a live pig was scorched to death and part of the smith's forge was burned. Only by inches were Banks' tent, the nets and the washing rescued. They did not put out the fire. To the voyagers from perpetually damp Britain it was as astonishing as it was alarming to see, hours later, the flames still licking furiously across the hills more than two miles off.

In that senseless fashion had the Englishmen's labored efforts at kindness been repaid. By that outburst of savage, childish temper which had hazarded their chance of ever leaving this silent prison of a continent, these daubed, naked creatures had returned the explorers' patient friendliness.

Cook, still sweating and smoke-blackened from fighting the fire, set out at once with a few companions in pursuit.

His purpose was not to punish them, but to try, if he could, to make friends with them again.

James Cook was not a common man.

The chase was successful. More than a mile away in a patch of woods the fleeing blacks were overtaken.

An old man who seemed to be their leader came forward carrying a lance which had no point and he made a speech. Cook and those with him sat down peaceably on some rocks to listen. When the speech was finished the Captain indicated by gestures, and most of all by his expression—for the

human face and what is behind it is a universal tongue—that he bore no ill will. Soon the other natives put their spears against a tree and came forward.

They made it clear they were sorry and that they would do nothing of the sort again. To show he believed them and forgave them Cook sealed the understanding with some presents.

That night and the next the vast bowl of sky pricked with the pattern of the unfamiliar southern stars, gleamed burnished red. For miles, as far as the awed Englishmen could see, the low hills were blazing. For that season the homeless nomads had ruined their own land and driven off the beasts that lived there and by which they lived. This year hunger must whip them farther on.

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In the last days of August, just over six weeks after they had made the haven of Endeavour River, the wreck in which they had come there was ready for the sea again. The immense task was finished. The work had been done so well that only an inch of water an hour seeped into the bilge. Even the rotten pumps should be able to take care of that.

Cook himself had marked the exit from the creek—Endeavour River was hardly more than that—with buoys. As tenderly as if the hull beneath them were an eggshell they picked their way among the shoals and reefs in search of the open sea.

It took nearly a fortnight to thread the labyrinth. When at last they felt the lift and thrust of ocean under them it was reckoned “We had now sailed above 1000 miles, during which run we had been obliged to keep sounding, without the intermission of a single minute; a circumstance which, it is supposed, never happened to any ship but the *Endeavour*.”

Both ship and those aboard her had come through. It is a very special pleasure, doing something that is unique. They were immensely proud of it.

Their sailors’ satisfaction at being in deep water wasn’t to last long.

The short way to Java lay first north to where the two thousand mile long coast of Australia ended, then west between Australia’s northern tip and the vast wild island of New Guinea. At least, Cook thought it did.

There was still a question among geographers as to whether the continent and the huge island were separated. The consensus was that they were not. Cook believed they were. The documentary proof that he was right existed in the records of the Spanish adventurer Vaez de Torres, the first navigator who had traced that passage in 1606, but in his researches Cook had not come on them.

There was one way to find out. It was as impossible for him to forgo the chance for just one more major exploration as for a drunkard to resist just

one more drink. But they must lose no time about it. They had provisions now for only three more months.

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Three days after putting the Great Barrier Reef behind them, they were back in sight of it, seeking for an opening toward the west. After twice having been betrayed by the wind suddenly failing and being brought within a few yards of being smashed to death, blood and kindling by the tremendous surf which beat on the submerged coral mountains, a narrow opening was found. The *Endeavour* was carried through it by the changing tide at headlong speed.

The question of the strait was soon—and forever—answered, though the passage Cook traced is so difficult that sailors these days give it a wide berth. Within the month the *Endeavour* was among the islands of the Dutch and Portuguese East Indies.

It was the first time in just under two years that the sorely battered Whitby collier had sailed in charted or in traveled waters.

On October 10th they reached Batavia, the low-lying, sun-drenched, already rich city the Dutchmen had built on Java.

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For the crew and the “gentlemen” it was almost like homecoming. Here were other Europeans, white skins, and clothes to cover them. They could catch up on the news of the world they had left such an age ago. (The North American colonists were being difficult about taxes.)

What was incontrovertibly best of all, was the change of diet. Their taste was uncritical. Anything seemed nectar which was different from the dream-haunting monotony of the fare which long since they had learned to loathe. Where there were Dutchmen, there was drink; in this meeting place of seamen and of ships, there were slim brown sailors’ women. After the years of work there was nothing for most of them to do.

Almost for the first time since their setting forth, James Cook felt himself burdened with the discomfort of an unfamiliar mood. His satisfaction at reaching a safe haven scarcely lasted out the day. Perhaps it was that the others while they remained here were free of responsibility and he was not. But that was an explanation which did not explain. Responsibility had not worried him before. It did not now.

Probably the truth was he had been at sea too long. The *Endeavour* had become his kingdom and her people the population of his whole, too-narrow universe. Winding though it had been, he had fallen into a rut. Obscurely, Cook recognized he was now held in it. Perversely, this busy city made him lonely.

Within minutes all those who for so long had been close to him, whose god, friend, and despot he had been, were removed from him. Until they put to sea again—the rest seemed to forget that England still was half the world away!—though he would still occupy his little throne, the court over which he had ruled would be empty. The reflection puckered his kind mouth with a wry smile. Land and sea, it appeared, were hostile elements. It was not in him to be at ease on both.

Meanwhile, there was a vast amount of work for him to do. Though the necessity had an oddly disconcerting feel of anticlimax—or, worse, of preclimax—ships soon to leave Batavia would reach England ahead of them. The opportunity could not be disregarded. It was his duty to draw up a report and send it to the Admiralty by other hands. The *Endeavour* would follow when she could.

The precious packet of logs and journals, of charts, of astronomical reckonings (a fair copy having first been made of everything), was accompanied by a short covering letter.

If ever a library is built—it would have to be a modest building with no sign above the door—to shelter the bare records of British Understatement, that letter of James Cook dated “At Onrust, near Batavia, the 23rd of October 1770” may rank as Exhibit A.

It is a short letter. Many a tourist has written a longer one after two days in Paris. Its modesty—sometimes it is the effect given by bending over backwards—brushes close to arrogance.

Cook had for the first time thoroughly explored what was to become the great Dominion of New Zealand. To that he devoted half a sentence: “. . . until the 6th of October, on which day we discovered the East Coast of New Zealand, which I found consisted of two Large Islands extending from 34° to 40° South Lat. both of which I circumnavigated.”

The unique exploration of the entire east coast of Australia ran to part of another sentence. Cook was firm that there must be no misunderstanding. Others before him had *sighted* the antipodean continents. He would advance no false claim.

There was only one phrase which might be called a boast.

“I have the satisfaction to say that I have not lost one man by sickness during the whole voyage.”

He was to eat those words with bitter sauce.

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In the two years on the blank places of the map, the *Endeavour*'s company had breathed air of primal purity. In those last days of their innocence, the lands of the South Seas were almost free of serious disease. Those years had robbed the Englishmen of many of the immunities which

help defend the inhabitants of more cluttered places. In coming to Batavia they had come to what then was one of the most deadly communities on earth.

Malaria and dysentery were twin blades of the same sword. Within a fortnight three-quarters of the *Endeavour's* men were sick. Surgeon Monkhouse died. Then Banks and Solander were stricken, and pulled narrowly through only because they were moved to the hills.

Even Cook the invulnerable proved vulnerable at last and was as helplessly shaken with chills and raging fever as any of them. With characteristic obstinacy he fought and won the siege of sickness from the sweltering, airless misery of his own cabin aboard ship.

It was a foolish gesture, of the kind that earns merit only if luck helps. Cook was lucky. The bare cabin in which the disease and Cook's own stubbornness imprisoned him lay almost on its side. For while the commander had malaria, the *Endeavour* was "hove down" and the work on the ship went on.

The only good fortune amid the onrush of misfortune was that Batavian shipwrights proved wonderfully skilful. The ex-collier needed the best they had to give. It was a greater miracle than even the gloomiest aboard had imagined that she had stayed afloat.

Several of the planks of the bottom, they now learned, had been scraped by the Australian coral to the thickness of an *eighth of an inch*. Sea worms had bored so deep into the timbers of the keel the kick of a man's boot would have crumbled them. On that hull of rottenness and paper thinness they had sailed, as Cook put it, "happy in being ignorant" close to two thousand miles.

The clever-handed Javanese workmen all but rebuilt her. New sails were fitted, and sound rigging. They worked swiftly, obligingly and well. Then stores were loaded, and fresh water. By Christmas day the *Endeavour* was strong again, her youth restored. The ship fared better than her men.

With one exception which Cook noted with awe, every one of them had been sick. The exception was the sailmaker, a salt-cured ancient of the seas, well past seventy, who relentlessly and successfully combated the Batavian bacteria by getting drunk on arrival and staying drunk until they left.

Seven had died, among them, pitifully, the Tahitian priest-adventurer Tupia and the young native servant he had brought with him.

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For the first time since they had left Plymouth the practical pessimism of the Admiralty in manning the *Endeavour* with double the number needed to sail her was justified. When the time for departure came forty men were too sick for duty.



The course was set for the Cape of Good Hope. There could be no thought of any further adventuring. The race now was against time and death. And death came close to winning.

During the long haul across the Indian Ocean the ship which had been a symbol of happiness for them all was as darkly miserable and as sternly silent as a walled medieval city daubed with the white cross of plague. Gaunt and yellow men, staggering from weakness, their pale northern eyes red and bright with fever, their bodies twisted and emaciated from the foul exhaustion of dysentery, did their work under the stare of the relentless sun in a silence unbroken but for mumbled necessary orders.

The sullen splash into the deep, receiving sea of the bodies of shipmates sewed into shot-weighted sacks of sailcloth, the bodies of men who had lived so close and through so much together that their going was like the bloody tearing away of a part of the hearts and brains of those still living, punctuated that terrible silence.

The maladies they had brought with them from Java, in their bodies, in the tuns of amoeba-poisoned water, in the unsuspected, drowsily humming mosquitoes which had found haven in the dark, wet places of the ship, marked their victories with random, ruthless disregard.

The last shudder shook the wrecked contrivance of clammy skin and aching, pressing bone which was all that was left of young and old, of "gentlemen" and men alike.

The old sailmaker who had escaped sickness could not escape death. Mr. Green, the observer for the Royal Society, followed him. And a corporal of Marines. Two midshipmen. The carpenter. The boatswain. Topmast men, 'tween-decks hands, and 'idlers.' One day four were plummeted overside. Another day, two. It was done quickly. There was no delay. Sailors believed the compass would not point true while there was a dead body aboard.

At one time there were just twelve men well enough to work the ship. When the *Endeavour* limped into Table Bay the death list had reached twenty-seven.

In that uncareful century, when stranded, half-starved British sailors could be found on every foreign waterfront, there was no difficulty in finding new hands to replace the dead. Many, having had their fill of that barren Dutch African colony, signed on—each man making his cross—willingly enough. They had little choice. Abroad as at home a British naval officer had the right to press into sea service any common, friendless man who might take his fancy.

And the dying went on.

The shadow which had fallen upon their great enterprise was black as the great ocean deeps where their comrades in their cocoons of canvas now

stood swaying eerily erect in icy, slow corruption.

They, the dying and the dead, were James Cook's charges, his children and his friends. He had cared for them as no ship's master had ever cared for a crew since ships had sailed.

It was not vanity, it was simple truth that he knew, he knew, he had succeeded. But now he was sure that no one else would ever know it. When they had reached Batavia, as he had written to the Admiralty—how that boast would rise to haunt him!—he had achieved a record for health at sea which had never been approached. Who, now, would remember it or care?

Mariners, like other men, were judged by results. When they reached England the count of those who had survived and those who had not would be as ugly as the record of any dirty, sluggard slaver ruled by a drunken master. It would be pedantic to explain to the families of the dead that at a certain date in October of the year past, their men had been hale and happy. They had not come home. What did it matter where or how they died?

And in his clear mind, Cook was convinced he was guiltless. It was a pitiful and private pride. Never in his life must he speak of it, perhaps not even to his soft Elizabeth. Women were the most harsh of realists. If it had not been for the near wreck upon that hidden steeple of coral, therefore the need of the halt in that fever-cursed Dutchman's city, all of them, he was as sure as he was sure of his fixed stars, would be living when England loomed at last beyond that rounded, patient, ever gently plunging bow.

The sense of the injustice of chance and the world's wrong opinion, tore at him. It was not fair.

He wrote . . . "We find that ships which have been little more than twelve months from England have suffered as much or more by sickness than we have done, who have been out near three times as long. Yet their sufferings will hardly, if at all, be mentioned or known in England; when, on the other hand, those of the *Endeavour* because the voyage is uncommon will very probably be mentioned in every newspaper. . . ." The fame of which he had dreamed, and of which he was now all too uncomfortably certain, had its drawbacks.

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Cook had grown gaunt. He looked taller. His mouth was thinner and his gray-hazel eyes were so large, so hurt, that his people had taken to avoiding them. In those last weeks his natural habit of silence became almost unnatural disease. His uniforms, long mildewed, patched and almost in rags, hung on him in flapping folds.

Guilt? The damned fever had addled him. Disaster had been born of disaster. All else had stemmed from the wreck. Be honest. Who had

commanded then? He had. And at that terrible instant when the tide of their good fortune turned, he had been below.

Four paces to the starboard rail, four paces back to larboard, on that meager curve of quarter-deck abaft the wheel on which by now he must have walked a thousand miles. . . . But he must fight for what he held to be the truth.

The *Endeavour's* Master died, then young Lieutenant Hicks who had been the first to sight Australia. The sails and rigging had again grown rotten. She was sailing crazily. Makeshifts and patching were incessant.

At St. Helena they came up with a King's ship, homeward bound with a convoy of a dozen merchantmen, which would almost certainly make better time than they. Cook gave the Captain a further packet of charts and journals. In the letter he sent with them, he stubbornly pointed out again "that uninterrupted state of health we had all along enjoyed" before reaching Batavia.

They entered the tropics for the fifth time, and the *Endeavour* made her fourth crossing of the Equator. It was May, then June.

Though it was summer the air grew sharper. A new stir of anticipation went through the ship. The fevers and the bloody fluxes that had plagued them at last wore out.

On July 10th, 1771, the same sharp-eyed boy Nicholas Young who had first called that New Zealand was in view, shouted from the masthead. Through the veil of mist he had sighted green. That green was England.

On the 13th at three o'clock of the afternoon, they anchored in the lower Thames. The *Endeavour* had come home. Thirty-eight of the ninety-four men who had sailed with her had not.

It was a Saturday. James Cook had himself put ashore and made his way to London.

PART III

# The Second Voyage

1771-1775

## “Their Lordships Well Approve”

1771-1772

Cook, for the best of reasons, had failed to discover the Great Southern Continent. It did not exist. That had been his private conviction from the first. It would be hard in all conscience to find fault with him for that! Hard, but since the world was what it was and the world of the scientific gentlemen a singularly jealous world, not impossible. The matter of the Transit of Venus was more bothering.

In the opinion of Cook's mathematical friends at the Royal Society that had been the chief purpose of the trip. And there was no blinking it, the observations made by the three parties at Tahiti were less than perfect. Their differences would be hard to reconcile. It made it worse that the R.S.'s special observer Mr. Green was dead and that his own penciled notes were in inextricable disorder.

No doubt of it. There would be those who would say the £20,000 the great journey had cost had been wasted.

Yet in the excitement of homecoming, in the sheer intoxication of the feel of English summer sunshine, like a girl's breath and not a mallet's blow, James Cook found the waves of pessimism which lately had swept over him were passing. His firm jaw stiffened. He had done his best.

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During the three years they had been away, London had subtly changed. Its cobbled streets seemed cleaner, its people less slatternly. The city was growing outward. New buildings were going up. It could be seen at once that the tide of prosperity which had come at the end of the Seven Years' War was still in full flood.

His fears had been sick fears, born of sickness.

The great packet of charts and journals forwarded from Batavia had reached the Admiralty and had been examined. The second lot, sent ahead from St. Helena had been delivered just three days before the *Endeavour* herself arrived.

The Sea Lords were more than satisfied. They were amazed. In fact, they were utterly astounded. All that failed to impress them were the thirty-eight deaths which weighed so heavy on Cook's heart—though not in truth, upon

his conscience. When they had despatched the *Endeavour* they had taken it for granted her losses would be much greater.

In recent months, before word had come from Java, there had been betting that she would not get home at all. Being seamen of experience and intelligence they had not failed to note Cook's achievement in bringing the ship scurvy-free as far as the Dutch islands.

It was now in Cook's favor that until the eve of the *Endeavour* expedition his career in the Navy had been obscure. It even helped him that he was without family or fortune.

The Admirals who had chosen him had known uncomfortable moments. If the farm laborer's son had blundered, lost his ship, or simply vanished, the blame would have been partly theirs. Now he had so brilliantly succeeded, it was pleasant to emphasize his triumph—and their own good judgment.

The hour of his return was exactly right.

Never in her history, even in the age of the great Elizabeth, had England held her head so high or looked forth upon the world so boldly. After many retreats and hesitations the islanders had learned their lesson. England's might, her wealth, her safety, all she was or might hope to be, depended upon sea power. The Navy was high in popular favor.

The Spirit of Empire, well past the stage of stirring, had pecked itself out of the egg of near horizons and was testing vigorous wings. Curiosity about the earth's shape, its people, its products and its promises, had never in any former age been so peering and alert. After millennia of muddle and of mysticism some men's minds at least had hardened. The demand was for plain facts.

And here was Cook!

He had brought them an empire in his pocket. He was both sailor and scientist. What could be pleasanter or more appropriate than to boast that this law-abiding Drake, this thoroughly British Columbus, was the offspring of that nest of eagles, the Royal Navy?

The bewigged gentlemen at the Admiralty had begun the examination of the *Endeavour's* bundles of logs, charts and journals (they had only just begun; really to absorb what was in them would take years) with incredulity.

They had hoped for a neat packet. What Cook had sent them was more like a trunkful. Not only had Cook, Banks and Solander done their work with tireless energy—the spirit of inquiry which had illumined the *Endeavour* like a fireship seemed to have inflamed every literate man aboard her. Never had an expedition in any century or under any flag set down its discoveries in such encyclopedic detail.

Here were all but faultless charts of close to five thousand miles of unknown shores! Scarcely a plant, an animal, or a native fashion had gone

undescribed. So fixed had the habit of questioning become in them that there had been no truce to asking even when the brig lay at Batavia or Capetown. Those outposts of the Dutchmen's power were hardly strange. Never mind. The *Endeavour's* truth-seekers behaved as if they had discovered them. Both cities and the country around them were detailed more thoroughly than in all likelihood they had ever been before. If anyone cared, there in that stupendous treasure trove of fact could be found set down the habits, the architecture, the trade, the unsanitary habits, the climate and even the census of those stopping places!

Lt. James Cook, it was plain with half an eye, was a man of genius. Under the circumstances, that rank of his was embarrassing. That would have to be mended.

His new position was not made clear at once. Due to the official demands for secrecy, the *Endeavour's* actual return was hardly more triumphant than if she had just beat down from Newcastle with a load of coal.

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Homecoming to Mile End Road, one senses, was a disappointment. After three years of infinite variety, it was inevitable that Elizabeth had grown a little strange. Her horizons were narrow. Her husband's were the widest of any man alive. His body had remembered her. His mind had all but lost the habit of her.

Poor Elizabeth. The domestic news was bad. The child she had been expecting soon after the *Endeavour* sailed had promptly died. The household had again put on mourning just three months before for the death of the little girl, Elizabeth, who had been two when her long, lean and most beautifully uniformed father had gone away.

It was accepted, of course, that children were as wont to die as butterflies in frost.

Just the same, in the most secret, ever-to-be-hidden places of Cook's clear mind it was hard not to feel shock. Good God, he had done better in keeping his brood of near a hundred alive through all the perils of the South Seas than had Elizabeth on Mile End Road. Ah well, that damned prying mind of his could blame her. His heart could not. A sailor was a bad husband and a worse father.

It was not until August 2nd—three weeks after the *Endeavour* had dropped her anchor in the Downs—that the mills at the Navy Office ground out the first official acknowledgment.

Brief though the communication was and as flat in most of its phrasing as a sheriff's warrant, the meat of it was enough to nourish all Cook's hungers.

“. . . I have the pleasure to acquaint you that their Lordships extremely well approve of the whole of your proceedings.”

The letter was delivered by hand to Mile End Road. “Extremely . . . the *whole* of—” There was no doubt. ’Twas very satisfying.

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The Earl of Sandwich had become First Lord early in the year. After a suspenseful scramble with a tailor, Lt. Cook was presented.

They were an oddly assorted pair. They took to each other at once.

At fifty-three Sandwich had established an almost unassailable reputation for himself among the virtuous as one of the worst men in England. In the eleven eventful years he was to be at the Admiralty, he is credited with having invented refinements of corruption never before approached. So tirelessly did he use the prestige, the large appropriations, the struggle for place, and the purchasing machinery of the Royal Navy for his own enrichment that before he was done that fine instrument was dulled almost to uselessness.

In gait the Fourth Earl was awkward and shambling. His nose was enormous, his chin heavy, his legs thick, his blue-gray eyes unutterably weary—even after Mr. Thomas Gainsborough had done his best for him. They said of his character, Sandwich was “too infamous to have a friend, too bad for bad men to commend” and of his general appearance that he looked “half-hanged and cut down by mistake.” There was no form of impiety and vice, it was popularly believed, which the Earl of Sandwich had neglected.

And he was a man of the very greatest charm. His splendid house in London, where the money provided by the naval contractors was spent like the energy of youth, was the gathering place of the beauty, blood, and brains of England. For Sandwich liked all three, but most of all the last.

The great decadent recognized that James Cook had a mind of the first order. He had the collector’s eye. It is probable he also saw that the tall lean Yorkshireman with the fine high forehead, the Roman nose and clear skin burned by the years of sun and sea to the hue of walnut, had beauty too. He became his patron.

Other ships and other sailors might suffer from the First Lord’s disinterest or active diversion of supplies. Till his life’s end, Cook never did.

Sandwich informed James Cook he was to be presented to the King.

The King, of course, was George III. He was then thirty-three. His reign, which was to outlast the century and even the great Corsican (whose birth, quite unannounced, had taken place just two years before) was now in its eleventh year. If only in contrast to his grandfather, the third George still seemed a blessing.



He was a devoted Englishman, an exemplary family man and—it was to be Cook's misfortune—an earnest student of agriculture.

Since it was the King's intention to be a patron of learning, though the intention rather outreached his abilities, Cook's astonishing discoveries of everything from continents to kangaroos—potential subjects, both—had been brought to his attention.

The audience took place at St. James' Palace. The farm laborer's son found his monarch affable. The August day was warm and His Majesty's long-skirted, lace-trimmed and embroidered coat, silk stockings and tight breeches, seemed a trifle tight. There was even a suggestion of royal perspiration. But the King, beyond his depth on the immense seas which were the domain of this tall subject, was almost diffident. Cook had brought with him some of the most striking of his charts and gravely explained them.

The interview lasted an hour. The King concluded it with handing Cook a rolled parchment, ribbon-tied. It was a Captain's commission, signed with his own hand.

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Captain Cook had been intending to answer a letter which had come from his friend and one-time master John Walker of Whitby to the address on Mile End Road. It was, humanly, all the pleasanter to write just three days after he had seen the King.

To ourselves, years and circumstances change us little. It was the awkward apprentice boy in the gray wool stockings with his brown hair tied behind, who had come over the windy moors from Staithes who wrote Captain Walker of Grape Lane:

“I had the honour of an hour's conference with the King the other day, who was pleased to express his approbation of my conduct, in terms that were extremely pleasing to me.”

Nor could the obscure youth who had studied so patiently by candlelight in the Walkers' clean little attic room, a room as kind as they were, a quarter century ago, just this once forbear to boast:

“I have explored more of the Great South Sea than all that have gone before me; insomuch, that little now remains to be done to have a thorough knowledge of that part of the globe.” It was the plain truth.

“Should I come to the North, I shall certainly call upon you, and am,” the letter concluded, “with great respect, Sir, your most obliged humble servant,

And that was plain truth, too.

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The Admiralty had lifted its ban of secrecy. Cook, of whom no one had ever heard till now, became a hero of the coffee houses. His name and his choicely modest British character were on every agile tongue. Notes of invitation began to be left at Mile End Road.

James Cook—of all things!—was in fashion. He became a pleased, a decorative, but an uneasy lion in the tiny but hospitably crowded drawing room of the gregarious music master Dr. Burney, father of the loquacious Fanny. Actors and literary gentlemen were pleased to shake hands with him. There was talk of introducing him to Dr. Johnson, who had expressed interest in the voyage. But the Doctor was ailing and the meeting did not take place. . . . There were other, more solemn affairs with dark-suited Londoners who talked of Longitude.

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Inevitably, this late summer woodland of appreciation through which Cook walked in rosy haze, in the first luck, leisure and prosperity (the Admiralty kept him on full pay) he had ever known, had its Beast.

That formidable Scotsman, Mr. Alexander Dalrymple, since he could never forgive himself, certainly could not forgive James Cook. His growls could be heard like an antiphony.

More than ever was Mr. Dalrymple convinced there *must* be a Great Southern Continent. Out came the same old dusty notes and sketchy charts and learned calculations to prove it. Cook hadn't found it because he hadn't looked in the right place. If, declared Dalrymple, it wasn't where the *Endeavour* had been, what could be more obvious than that it was somewhere else? This Cook hadn't been everywhere.

Narrowly speaking, it was true. Captain Cook's chin was no less firm than Mr. Dalrymple's.

The King, being of the simple habit of mind which believes that if one elephant is good, two must be better, had already expressed interest in another voyage. The Earl of Sandwich approved. Dalrymple proved a useful gadfly to prick the project on.

By September, a bare two months after the tired Captain and the worn ship had come home, the decision was made. Cook would sail again, as soon as might be.

Since the memory of their all but fatal solitude in those dreadful hours when the *Endeavour* hung upon the Australian coral was painfully fresh in Cook's mind, this time there would be two ships. They would be manned,

provisioned and equipped precisely as the great sailor wished. He would choose the ships himself.

They were soon found. One, which was renamed the *Resolution*, was rated at 462 tons. That made her roughly a quarter larger in all dimensions than the *Endeavour*. Her companion, called the *Adventure*, was a shade smaller than the *Endeavour*. They mounted, respectively, 24 and 20 guns. It mattered not the least to the Admiralty that the *Endeavour*'s armament had been useful only to throw overboard. They were naval vessels. The ships of the Royal Navy carried guns.

Between them, they would be served by 193 officers and men.

It was a singular prospect. Nothing, a few months ago, could have been farther from Cook's mind. But, as a few have in every seeking century, he had drunk a heady brew. He would never be happy again except when roving the sea's wastes or seeking the unknown.

Dangerous, even painful, it might often be. There would be, Cook knew, agonies of homesickness, sometimes almost a madness that would boil up in the brain at the terrible confinement of a small and lonely ship. Much, perhaps most, of the time the quest for the undiscovered ended in nothing better than long reaches of bare sand or a worthless labyrinth of rocks.

What was it then that sent him on, that made all the common and familiar world seem stale? It was hard, it was very hard, to say. Life held daily in the hands was at once more precious and more free.

The enchanted isles had their own soft call. All who had heard, while they lived, must try their best to answer it.

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Just two months after he had come back to England, to the country which had borne him and which he loved, Cook was writing of Tahiti:

“These people may be said to be exempted from the curse of our forefathers. Scarce can it be said that they earn their bread by the sweat of their brows. Benevolent nature has not only provided them with necessaries, but many of the luxuries of life.”

Forgotten were the quarrels, the propensity for theft, forgotten was everything but the morning sunlight, the laughter of the brown girls who were so in love with love, the rustle of warm wind through the fronds of palms, the thunder of the great seas tamed to kindness by the reefs that ringed the green lagoons.

Never in his life before had James Cook been so fortunate. Yet, queerly, he knew that England and London, all they were and all they offered him, had failed him utterly.

He had looked beyond the edge. Those who do, pay for their intrusion with contentment lost.

Captain James Cook, R.N., fated, famous, had come to learn that in his heart he was now forever homeless.

At the little mahogany desk in the tiny living room at Mile End Road he sat down to write again to his old master John Walker. The rattle of cartwheels on the cobbled road, the murmur of voices outside the window merged into the single, ceaseless and unrelenting sound of London. The sky was reddened with the fires of the brick kilns which had lately sprung up like ugly toadstools just down the road.

The imagination of the grave, quiet man was far away, among the dunes and arid desolation of Australia.

“The natives of this country,” he wrote, “are under the common size, and seem to be of a timorous, inoffensive race of men. Men, women and children go wholly naked. It is said of our first parents that after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, they saw themselves naked and were ashamed; these people are naked and are not ashamed. They may truly be said to be in a pure state of nature, and may appear to some to be the most wretched upon earth; but in reality they are far more happy than we Europeans, being wholly unacquainted, not only with the superfluities, but with many of the necessary conveniences so much sought after in Europe; they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a tranquillity which is not disturbed by the inequality of condition; the earth and sea, of their own accord, furnish them with all things necessary for life; they covet not magnificent houses, household stuff, etc.; they sleep as sound in a small hovel, or even in the open air, as the King in his palace on a bed of down.”

He would go home to Yorkshire. He would see his father and those safe, enclosing hills once more. Then the sailor—who was to say whether he was damned or blessed?—would go to sea again.

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Cook's assignment to his new command was dated November 28th, 1771. It was the usual formal document. All that was wrong with it was that the Admiralty clerk got his name wrong. He called him John.

The officers who were to go with him were his own choice. A kinsman of his old friend and captain Hugh Palliser, who was now Comptroller of the Navy, would be his First Lieutenant. The Second and Third Lieutenants, the

Lieutenant of Marines, promoted to that rank from Corporal on Cook's recommendation, and several of the non-commissioned officers had served on the *Endeavour*.

The attraction of the South Seas, indeed, was widespread. Banks, for all his money, and Solander for all his indolence were both ready to go. When it came to recruiting a crew Cook was the envy of every Captain in the Navy.

So high was his reputation along Thameside that soon he was writing to the Admiralty for advice. He already had more than the needed number of volunteers for both ships. What should he do with the surplus? Send them away? Or lay forcible hands on them and turn them over to other ships?

Some alterations were begun on the larger vessel, the *Resolution*. While they were going forward Cook wished to be away. He asked for three weeks leave, "having some business to transact in Yorkshire, as well as to see an aged father."

It was just at the turn of the year. Cook, who did not notice weather, least of all on land, had to be reminded it was not the best of seasons for traveling. It could not be helped.

James Cook, his father, was 78. His mother had died three years before. Cook had seen neither for more than 20 years.

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There is a suspicion that Elizabeth, who belonged to that segment of the lower middle classes which lacks yeast and therefore finds it hard either to rise or fall, dreaded the encounter. Her incomprehensible but indubitably famous husband, was a Captain in the Royal Navy. That now made James a gentleman. Was it therefore either wise or needful to point out his humble origins? La, it was impossible to persuade the man.

Even Cook was inclined to admit, if only to himself, that a whole gale below the Horn was preferable to a winter coach journey from London up to York. The straw on the floor was dirty. The jolting, swinging motion of the big stage behind its four steaming horses made Elizabeth sick. The only peace or comfort he had was when she let him ride outside in honest wind and rain. Often the huge wheels sank hub deep and his strong shoulder had to be added to the rest to get it free.

In the north, to add to Elizabeth's misery, there was snow.

But at the first glimpse under the gray and heavy skies of the long, smoothed ridges of the Cleveland Hills, the great, now leafless oaks in the rolling meadows, the little wet-darkened houses of stone built close together for companionship, Cook was rewarded.

The enormous circle he had made around the world was joined. He had come back—he sensed with a queer ache of melancholy it was for the last

time—to the place of his beginning. The wonder of that journey was sweet in his mouth. He—and chance—had done well together.

Of course, he wore his Captain's uniform, the long blue coat with its trim of white and gold, the white breeches, and the tricorne hat. For the occasion he had even had his sidelocks curled a trifle and his brown hair lightly powdered. How else could the laborer's son come back to the village of Great Ayton?

James Cook Senior was radiant with pride. Though he was now 78, he was still well and strong. With the help of the small sums his son had sent him through the years the old man had bought the little house they had lived in so long, just by the bridge at the turn of the road.

It was warm. Its rough, plain furnishings shone with polish. If to Elizabeth the two rooms seemed small, to James there they were as familiar as the *Endeavour's* cabin.

The neighbors—oddly few who knew him seemed left—were awed.

But once they had come and the few obvious words were said and the old man had been seen on his tall son's arm by all the folk for a league around, there was not much to do. Elizabeth would move not a step farther. If Mr. Cook must persist in this sentimental pilgrimage he must continue it alone.

His intention had been to go on to Whitby, then back to London by way of Hull. Since that way it was discovered the stagecoaches were inferior and connections bad, the plan had to be altered. A shade grimly, the most venturesome and uncomplaining English wanderer since Drake wrote a friend:

“I am sorry to acquaint you that it is now out of my power to meet you, nor will it be convenient to return by way of Hull as I had resolved upon, Mrs. Cook being but a bad traveller.”

So, instead, the sailor went alone on horseback by way of Staithes, where he had first seen the sea, to the red brick port of Whitby hung between its cliffs, where it had claimed him.

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It is a hard, long ride in winter. It is doubtful if James Cook had been astride a horse since he had left his father's farm. But on the high ground just before one goes down into Whitby half the town was waiting for him. The hero's welcome that they gave him was enough to warm the chill of the Yorkshire winter out of every aching bone in his big body.

Cook had not merely become famous. Whitby's leading citizens were practical men, not easily impressed by fame. What had endeared him to

them most was that for his great voyage he had chosen a Whitby ship and that for his next he had demanded two more like it. Though the word happily was still unknown, that publicity would put pence and pounds in Whitby pockets.

It was the best talk Cook had known since he had come to England. This was his own breed. He was not self-conscious with them. They knew ships. They knew the sea.

If a man committed as he was could plan, here in this sound and honest town sheltered from the wind, but where the north's wind's heady blast was waiting at the jetty's end, he could perhaps put his roots down at the last. But it was idle to think of it. Sailors were given to the sea. And then, there was Elizabeth.

It was with an unexpected wrench of parting that he rode back over the high moor and the Cleveland Hills to Great Ayton. They returned, as they had come, to London.

James Cook never went home again.

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The "alterations" which had been going forward on his new ship during his absence presented a nice problem. As even strong-willed humans sometimes do, Cook tried to deal with it by pretending it wasn't there.

Joseph Banks was a splendid fellow. During the three years on the *Endeavour* he had been trying on occasion, as which of them had not, but all in all he had pulled his oar admirably. In his own department, his work had been beyond reproach. His enthusiasm had never wavered. They knew each other. On a long voyage any familiar was better than a stranger. . . . The point to be borne in mind, dammit, to be firmly borne in mind, was that Joseph Banks was a splendid fellow.

Probably the trouble was that on coming home he had found £18,000 of accumulated income to his credit at his banker's. That was enough to unsettle anyone.

Banks could hardly be blamed for remembering his quarters on the *Endeavour* had been uncomfortable. They were. When he decided to go round the world again, since he was a millionaire, could he therefore be blamed for trying to make himself more comfortable?

The Earl of Sandwich, who was Banks' friend, had approved. The trouble was that the First Lord of the Admiralty didn't know a royal from a rudder.

The scheme they had concocted was entirely to rebuild the afterdeck of the *Resolution*, to raise it and create another cabin on the poop. That would provide for Cook and leave the Great Cabin under the quarter-deck for Mr. Banks.

In addition, a kind of roundhouse was being constructed amidships for the accommodation of members of Banks' party and for the storage of some of the immense quantity of scientific equipment and trade goods Banks intended to take with him.

The essence of the plan, of course, was that the Captain of the expedition was to be ousted from the Captain's quarters. Cook made no protest. Joseph Banks was his friend. And it was still possible, in the year 1772, in the reign of George III, for James Cook to be reminded he was not a gentleman.

Cook, every sailor's and shipbuilder's nerve in him drawn like violin strings, watched with growing anguish and said nothing.

It was May before the naval shipyard at Deptford was done with her, the masts set, the sails fitted, and the two dozen big guns put in place.

Mr. Banks at once sent his servants aboard, presumably to get them out from underfoot.

There were thirteen of them. They were uniformed in silver and scarlet and amongst them they comprised a full band of music. Mr. Banks' surplus £18,000 had gone rather to his head.

In a cautious passage down the River Thames it was demonstrated the *Resolution* could just barely stay afloat.

Cheerful young 2nd Lt. Clerke, who had been aboard the *Endeavour* and was on excellent terms with Banks, wrote him:

"She is so very bad that the pilot declares he will not run the risk of his character so far as to take charge of her farther than the Nore without a fair wind. By God, I'll go to sea in a grog-tub, if required, as soon as you please, but must say I think her by far the most unsafe ship I ever saw or heard of. However, if you think proper to embark to the South Pole in a ship which a pilot will not undertake to carry down the river, all I can say is you will be most cheerfully attended, so long as we can keep her above water."

Cook made a polite, feeble suggestion that the harm might be remedied by stowing in the hold some of the "heavy and useless articles" belonging to Mr. Banks. To his relief, he was briskly overruled.

For six months he had contained himself. He had more than done his duty to his friend and he had bowed to the wishes of his patron Sandwich. Now there was to be an end of such lubberly nonsense. The Navy Board had come to its senses.

The *Resolution* went back to drydock. All the rubble and outbuildings were stripped from her. This time the Navy suggested that Captain Cook superintend the work himself.



Mr. Banks, chagrined, decided not to make the journey. He and His Majesty's Government between them had wasted a great deal of money—about £5000! Half a year had been thrown away. By keeping his mouth shut, Cook had escaped all blame. Banks remained his friend.

There was no further interference. This time the *Resolution* was rebuilt and fitted down to the last plank and spar to Cook's orders and under his own eyes. Banks' paraphernalia was returned to him. Two French horn players were among the last items to be got rid of.

To console himself, Mr. Banks shortly embarked for Iceland. Iceland, though less exotic, was nearer. The foolish incident was over.

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It did, though, leave the expedition without a specialist in natural history, and there was not much time. The hasty choice fell on a naturalist named Johann Forster and his eighteen-year-old son Georg. They came of a Yorkshire family which had settled in Prussia and intermarried there.

It took no time at all for everyone to discover the Prussian strain was dominant. One thing certain about the uncertain voyage ahead was that the Forsters would be perfectly terrible shipmates.

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The last, most vital piece of equipment to be put aboard was a silver watch more than six inches in diameter.

For centuries navigators had known that the answer to the puzzle of longitude, the reckoning of position in the east-west dimension, must be provided by a timepiece. It was possible by reasonably simple computation to tell what time it was where you *were*. But that was little help unless you knew at the same moment what time it was at some other known, fixed place upon the globe. The matter was of such prime importance that sixty years before the British government had offered a prize of £20,000 to the inventor of a chronometer which in a return voyage from England to the Caribbean would indicate longitude within half a degree.

A Yorkshire clockmaker named John Harrison had been working on the problem all his life. In his old age he had succeeded. His wonderful watch had been tested and found to be close to perfect and—after the inevitable wrangle—he had been paid his £20,000. In five months at sea, in two climates and rough weather, the exquisite instrument had lost less than two minutes.

A master craftsman, Larcum Kendall, had spent three and a half years making a copy of it. That copy, nested in velvet in a mahogany box, was tenderly borne aboard the *Resolution* at Plymouth. Cook loved it as it was

never his good fortune to love a woman or a child. The Kendall chronometer returned that devotion with almost perfect performance.

It is now in a glass case in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. It is still running.

On July 13th, 1772, exactly a year to the day after the return of the *Endeavour*, the *Resolution* and the *Adventure* set sail from Plymouth and set their courses to the south.

## Farthest South

1772-1773

It began well. All that was strange was the mood of the commander. Deep within Cook there was a hard core of melancholy his will could not dissolve.

There seemed nothing tangible. He had nothing to complain of. The Navy, Sandwich, even the King himself, had exerted themselves generously to give him everything he wanted. The two ships were almost new and perfect for their purpose. Never had any expedition been so well equipped. At his request the Admiralty had given the officers and crews of both ships two months' wages in advance, and most of their arrears of pay. Cook pointed out with justifiable pride that it "was an indulgence never before granted to any of His Majesty's ships."

His orders were uncomplicated. His service and his country had made it clear they had faith in him. He had set the objectives of the trip himself.

He was to proceed to the South Pole, or as close to it as he could get. In the high southern latitudes in which no ship had ever sailed before they would circumnavigate the globe.

In no other way could the Dalrymples of the world be silenced.

If any habitable Great Southern land mass existed, however fragmentary, he would find it. If it did not, that negative fact would become forever a part of the exact knowledge of their world which men now craved. At the end of each short Antarctic summer—for they would be gone for several years—he was to take his ships north into the tropics and with intervals for rest and refitting complete what he had so brilliantly begun, the exploration of the Pacific.

What plagued him then?

As a common seaman his studious habits and his ambition had isolated him from other seamen. During those interminable years when he had served as Master, because a Master was neither flesh nor fowl, he had lived in limbo between quarter-deck and forecastle. Heaven knew he should be used to solitude.

He was not. Never had he been so lonely. He was a Captain now and by undeviating rule all captains of ships at sea were as alone as if they were

anointed kings. Not one of all the men who crowded the little ship could speak to him without permission. Cook, shy by habit and made shyer by his elevation, had little skill in inviting talk.

As only he himself and a very few who loved him knew, he was a warm man. Yet officers on the *Resolution* complained later that sometimes days would pass and meal after meal be eaten at the Captain's round, white linen-covered table in the Great Cabin without a word being spoken.

It was a sad, a puzzling business. It would not be true to say that he had attained his dream, for every dream had been exceeded. He had seen the King. He was a Captain. He had been a guest at Hinchinbroke, the great Earl's country seat. The First Lord had dined aboard his ship. It was no secret that if he continued his successes he—James Cook of Great Ayton, son of a field laborer—could in due time expect a knighthood.

And it all was as flat upon his tongue as a brown ship's biscuit stamped with the King's seal.

Though he had gladly enough poured into her warm receptiveness the stored fierceness of his strong body, Elizabeth was more remote to him than the familiar stars. She had not seen what he had seen or done what he had done. She lacked imagination to enter into his world. He had no slightest wish to be of hers. He was a stranger to his children.

Aboard the *Resolution* he had efficient officers. He had no friends.

He missed Joseph Banks. There was no doubt of it. Banks was spoiled perhaps, and sometimes petulant, but at the foundation level of their beings they understood each other. Both shared the same deep passion for whatever was living and whatever was new.

Ah well, the mood would lift. The course was South. Soon he would look over the horizon's rim again. Then, there would be the Islands.

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Cook's Luck—as they were beginning to call it—gave them fair winds and weather most of the way to the Cape of Good Hope. . . . The two ships kept in contact. . . . A carpenter's mate fell overboard and was unnoticed until it was too late. Troublingly, two men aboard the *Adventure* died of fever. . . . Herr Forster was seasick but recovered—astoundingly—on mulled port wine. . . . They stopped at Madeira—Cook was still wrangling with the Admiralty over who should pay for the three thousand pounds of onions he had bought four years before—and the Cape Verdes. But by and large the voyage was uneventful.

The run from Plymouth to the Cape was fast. Or so they thought in 1772. It took only 109 days.

It was soon apparent that the scientific department was below the standards set by the first voyage. Forster's description of the inhabitants of

one of the Madeira islands as “of a tawny color with large feet and oblong faces,” though memorable, lacked thoroughness. He discovered that the Cape Verdes “abounded” in lions, tigers and camels, which wasn’t true, and that “the men are particularly fond of wearing breeches” which may have been. But the *Endeavour*’s amateurs had done better.

The Forsters, though lions, tigers *and* camels would not have dragged the admission from them, felt their limitation. In Capetown they met a twenty-four-year-old Swedish botanist who had been a pupil of Linnaeus and invited him to join the voyage. His name was Anders Sparrman. Cook met him, liked him and approved. His expenses were to be met by the Forsters—who could afford it. For with gross unfairness the Admiralty had agreed to pay the father and son £4000 for the voyage. It was nearly ten times what Cook himself would earn.

Both ships carried sauerkraut, messes of crushed oranges and lemons, portable broth, malt, and fresh wort. Cook had taken great quantities of fresh food aboard at both stops en route. At sea he had insisted with even more than his usual firmness on the ships, the below-deck quarters, the men and their clothes being kept clean and dry. His precautions had been successful. Both ships were free from scurvy.

There was therefore no reason to dally at the flat, white town of the Cape of Good Hope, nestled between its mountains. But as seemed the rule in the world’s outposts, what should have been the simple business of taking on fresh water, spirits, and live goats, hogs and chickens, took longer than it should. Three weeks passed before the two ships put out again.

The French explorers Bouvet and Kerguelen had reported two isolated, fog-hung specks of land in the wild waste of waters far to the icy south. Technically there was the possibility—however dim—that either or both of those remote discoveries might be part of a continental mass. Cook decided to find them and make sure.

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The colors of sky and ocean, the feel of the wind and height of wave, changed with extraordinary suddenness. At the Cape of Good Hope it had been full summer, lazy, easy, warm. Three days later the cold was so penetrating that Captain Cook had every man aboard both vessels provided with thick woolen trousers, a coarse jacket of shoddy and a kind of short greatcoat called, over-optimistically, a Fear-naught. The chill ate deep.

Till now, to most of the men aboard, used as they were to worse food, longer hours, harder work and harsh masters, this voyage had seemed a holiday. Overnight the clammy consciousness came to every mind and wrenched every stomach like a touch of nausea of what, in truth, they were about.

Their silent Captain was bent upon the maddest errand upon which even he had yet embarked. He had left all known lands, and probably unknown too, behind. If there was one thing certain in the uncertainty ahead it was that in such a region of storm and cold there could be no living men. They had left the world behind as surely as if their course was set upon a curve of space and they were bearing into the dark emptiness of time.

Captain Cook was to be trusted—if any man was to be trusted—in such a place. Yet it could not help but be as chilling as the wind itself to realize that in their company of close to two hundred men there was but one mind and will. This Captain Cook did not turn back or turn aside. Men like that were sometimes madmen. Though he confided in no one, all knew that their destination was the South Pole. If he literally tried to take them to it they were all dead men.

For a week a storm of such violence raged that during part of it neither ship, in perilous, occasional glimpse of each other through the rain and fog and down the lunging troughs of the huge waves, was able to carry a yard of canvas; they were churned and whirled and beaten like the helpless driftwood they had become. It was impossible to keep dry or warm. There was no source of heat on either ship except the cook's brick stove in its bed of sand, and the heat of their own bodies. Captain Cook in the tradition of the British Navy did all he could. He increased the allowance of brandy.

Men, being the most resilient of living creatures, survived. Most of the goats, pigs and hens expired from the drenching of the icy waves.

Rain turned to hail and hail to heavy, clotting, blinding snow. Soon in awed silence they were peering at a sight which few before them had seen since the world was born. They had reached the Antarctic ice pack.

Around them were vast floating fields, some of them miles across. For frightening variation there were huge icebergs. They called them ice rocks. One of those floating "rocks" was like a cliff wall more than sixty feet high against which the surf boiled and broke with mighty rage. Though he admitted the danger of it filled him with "horror," Cook thought it beautiful.

With experience he came to prefer icebergs to ice islands. At night or in fog-hung days when you could see neither, it was easier to *hear* icebergs than ice floes. The waves beat louder on them.

On Christmas Day the weather was calm enough and the sea immediately around them sufficiently free of ice to allow the traditional naval celebration of that holy day. Everyone, with the exception of Cook and a corporal's guard of officers, got drunk.

Whales reared and spouted round them. Penguins soberly regarded them and the doleful skies were alive with petrels and great, slow-gliding

albatross. It was conveniently—and puzzlingly—discovered that all that had to be done to get fresh water was to collect chunks of ice and let them melt.

It became physically painful, it broke even the tough hands of English sailors and drew blood to work the ships. “Snow and sleet froze on the rigging and every rope was covered with fine transparent ice.” Oddly, it was not as cold as they felt it was. The salt seas which stretched about them completely around the world tempered the Antarctic winds. The actual air temperature ranged near 35°.

On January 17th, 1773 James Cook in the *Resolution*, closely tailed by the *Adventure*, crossed the Antarctic Circle for the first time in history. Further progress was soon brought to a halt. In Lat. 67° 15 min. South they were confronted by immense ice floes, minutely traced by thin lacings of black water that stretched impenetrably east, west and south as far as the best telescopes could sight from the royal topgallant yards.

Cook had no choice. It would not be foolish to attempt to find a way through; it was quite simply impossible. He gave the order to turn north.

On the eighth of February while they were searching unavailingly for the almost inconceivably lonely outpost of stone and barren, frozen earth now known as Kerguelen Island, the *Adventure* disappeared.

The two ships had rarely lost sight of each other. Now in a fog so dense that it was impossible to see the mastheads from the deck, the smaller ship dropped out of sight as completely as if the sea had opened.

For three days Cook cruised slowly in a narrow circle, firing guns and setting buckets of flaring penguin fat at the forepeak during the short southern night. There was no answer, no trace of her upon the empty ocean.

To Cook and the veterans of the *Endeavour* it was nothing new to be so monstrously alone. The separation—if it was no worse—weighed heavily on the green hands. Herr Forster was particularly oppressed. But the Prussians had moaned and muttered about everything from the beginning. Never had mortals suffered as they did. They were good for morale. The Germans’ gloom and fear made gloom and fear ridiculous.

The chance of the ships separating had been allowed for. If the *Adventure* was at the bottom, it was too late, in such a latitude, for rescue. If she wasn’t Captain Tobias Furneaux, her master, who had been around the world with Wallis, was a competent seaman and he had his instructions. If both survived, they would meet in New Zealand.

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Toward the end of March the *Resolution* came to anchor in a sheltered bay at the extreme southwestern tip of South Island. No nobleman of lesser stature than a king had such an estate as this. To Cook it was more like

coming home than it had been, at least in the fulfillment, to get back to England.

The shore shelved so steeply that the *Resolution* was able to moor so close to land that “our yards were locked in the branches of trees, and near our stern ran a delightful stream of fresh water.”

There was little for so big a crew to do but hunt and fish—with the astonishing success for which New Zealand has ever since been famous.

When at length a few timid and impoverished Maoris appeared Cook was so happy to see them—though neither he nor any other European had been here before—that he embraced the first naked brown man he saw. Those with him stared at such a burst of gaiety in the tall Captain. They had heard of the Maoris’ reputation. It was even more astonishing to see how Captain Cook’s unconventional approach succeeded. The Maori, a male accompanied by two women, was delighted.

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He could now confess it. For him this second adventure, this second voyage had begun badly. Neither ships, crews nor supplies had been found wanting. The accident that at the last minute, as he put it, they had “pitched upon” two such uncongenial spirits as the two Forsters to be, perforce, his closest associates during the confining years the voyage would last, was a misfortune. With his perspective now recovered Cook saw it was a minor misfortune. What had discontented him, what had come perilously close to failing him, was himself.

He had been melancholy. Silent. Distant. The immense preoccupation of the perilous thrust into the Antarctic had glossed those faults over. Self-examination—and New Zealand—cured them.

For thirteen years of service in the Royal Navy, and many of them had been gray and weary years, he had sought a commission. A philosopher might say it was a vain ambition. Perhaps. But it was more than the mark of what men called “success.” That familiar warrant bearing the King’s seal meant recognition. Cook had known as a fact as sure as the place of Aldebaran in the sky that he had a better mind, a surer hand, a greater mastery of his profession than any of the young “gentlemen” he had seen set over him. The world—Authority—must recognize that fact.

Well, it had. He had been commissioned twice. And it had been like the cold banking of the very fire which had warmed and driven him.

Since his boyhood in Yorkshire he had daydreamed of distant people and strange lands. . . . Viewed clearly, it was all but laughable. Had he not seen them? More than any man living. Yet in going back in the *Resolution* even though it might be but over a small part of the track he had made in the



*Endeavour*, he had blundered into despondency. Great heaven, he was no longer a restless boy!

Was it, Cook wondered, that there was still in him somewhere a secret, hidden ache that his birth was what the smug called lowly and that all those about him knew it? Time was curing that small sickness. Those “others” who for forty years had seemed to him to live, as it were, in a very dimension he could never enter had forgotten sooner than he.

Patiently, during the long loneliness of command, he had looked into himself. With the attainment of every wish, had growth stopped in him? If that was true then he was dying.

The New Zealand hills coming up from the gray, tormented sea, this happy bay where they had come to rest, most of all the instant in which they had seen from the ship’s boat in a passage of the bay the near-naked frightened native man upon a rock with his two women standing by him, resolved that inner dread.

All, in substance, were familiar. Yet all were new. He had seen a thousand hills, found anchor in a hundred hidden bays. This savage on the shore, except perhaps that he was poorer, less prepossessing than the run of them, would be hard to distinguish from any of his countrymen. Yet Cook saw that he was different. In that discovery the dilemma of his spirit was resolved.

The Maori was afraid. His women, behind him “at the skirts of the wood” were trembling with terror. Others like them, since the *Resolution*’s coming, had fled. These stood their ground. Bravely they waited until the boat swung in, her boards grating on the shale and he, who was so tall, in their eyes so weirdly garbed and shaped and colored, had leaped out, advanced upon them and enclosed the man in his embrace.

It was a small incident. It led to what, Cook knew, wiser men might think a small discovery. It sufficed for him.

The riches and reward he sought in life were not to be found now in ceaseless change. Variety was the coin which youth must jangle, or youth is poor. Middle life, the winning of maturity, brought the deeper pleasure of perception.

These hills were like no other hills. This bay had no fellow on the globe. This native was—a man. Being a man, he was unique. The moment of insight gave Cook the reassurance his soul needed. The weight he had carried within him lifted. The fine, strong face which had lately grown dour lighted again with the pure joy of living.

He would relapse. He would forget, of course. Moods alter like the changing sky. Sometimes, because he too was a man and therefore like, as well as unlike, all others, he would grow tired. But now he saw with a new, a

clearer vision. He need not fear. No one need ever come to the end of the tale of the world's wonder. He would grow and keep on growing till he died.

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Never on either journey had a halt been shaped so clearly to the needs and moods of holiday. On that farthest edge of the habitable world it was autumn. The leaves in the forests were beautifully turning. Inland were rocky mountains topped with snow, and any but Englishmen might have thought the rain excessive. But the vacation from the alarms of deep water was a complete success.

It had been well-earned.

The *Resolution* had been at sea for 117 days, all that time out of sight of land, during part of it within the Antarctic Circle, and had sailed 3660 miles.

No voyage like it had ever been attempted. Another great quadrant of the bottom of the globe had been proven to be merely a waste of stormy waters with nothing which would conceivably be fitted to the definition of the long-imagined Continent.

By every rule but those Cook followed, after such a trip at least half of them should be dead and the rest ailing. Not one had died. Just one sailor had even been sick from scurvy, and he had been quickly cured.

Cook's triumph was complete. He now knew beyond cavil that he had broken forever the most dangerous weapon with which the great sea-spaces had waged their long defensive war against mankind. The regime he imposed, worked. The killer could be beaten by fresh food, by working men 'board ship like men and not like beasts of burden, and by keeping clothes and quarters clean. Any ship's master who did as he had, would have the same result. If they heeded him, he had saved countless thousands from anguish and slow death.

In some degree, the British Navy did learn from Cook. In the mighty naval pursuits and battles which at last destroyed the dictator Bonaparte, the health of the crews on British ships was perhaps England's greatest single asset. But we learn slowly. Life was long held cheap. Deaths from scurvy—which had become as needless as deliberate murders—were still common on tall ships more than a century after Cook was dead.

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Six weeks later, the *Resolution* headed out to sea again and sailed north for the familiar inlets and islands of Queen Charlotte Sound. There, as Cook had steadily and confidently believed, the *Adventure* was waiting.

In the fog three months before, Captain Furneaux had sailed toward the sound of Cook's signal guns. But in fog there is nothing so deceptive as sound. The *Adventure* had sailed in the wrong direction.

After Furneaux had searched for a reasonable time he had made for the New Zealand rendezvous. Being more cautious than his commander, he had followed a track below Australia considerably to the north of the one Cook took.

It did not matter. What did matter, was that despite Cook's emphatic orders to Captain Furneaux to follow the same rules of diet as aboard the *Resolution*, a number of the *Adventure's* crew were dangerously ill. Furneaux, it was evident, had been only superficially convinced. Privately he thought Cook something of a crank and faddist. The dying men were paying for his doubt.

Cook promptly took them in charge; put them on a diet of native grass and vegetables and dramatically cured them.

On the easy theory that New Zealand was as pleasant a place to winter as any, Furneaux had practically taken the *Adventure* apart, to clean and refit her, and indolently not got round to putting her together again. Cook ordered him to make ready for sea at once and to be smart about it. Extra hands were sent from the *Resolution* to help.

In one particular Furneaux did earn Cook's approval. He had planted parsnips, carrots and potatoes. It had been the King's own idea and a sound one it was. The well-intentioned, dull, domestic monarch, who would have been a happier farmer than he was a King, had an instinct for the earth.

It was at his urging that, before the Antarctic intervened, both ships had been overloaded, stinking, and a bedlam of grunts, snorts, moos and cackles, with domestic livestock. The seeds they had brought had survived better—and had been better traveling companions.

If, pondered George III, these distant, hard-to-imagine lands were one day to be part of his domain, not a moment should be wasted in trying to encourage in them what he called "the arts of husbandry."

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The ocean lying to the east of the southern extremity of New Zealand was unknown. That was enough for Cook.

Even in winter, though it no doubt would be stormy, that latitude would not be obstructed by ice. He was not, if he could help it, going to leave any portion of the underside of the globe untraversed. If he did, some quibbler was sure to say that there—just where he hadn't looked—was the unfound continent. And suppose such a quibbler were right?

Lest there be any misunderstanding, Cook put his instructions to Captain Furneaux in writing. Both ships would proceed eastward to a point about halfway to the coast of South America. Then they would make for Tahiti. Tahiti offered an abundance of fresh food which by then they would badly need. If that good reason had not existed he would have found another.

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For six weeks the two small ships plunged and wallowed in the high gales and the vast, mast-shaking swells of the Roaring Forties. There was no land. At last the welcome order came to go north.

Damn the fellow!

In late July (1773) it was discovered that aboard the *Adventure* twenty men were down with scurvy and the cook had died. Furneaux either couldn't or would not learn.

Grimly the Commander lowered a small boat and sent a new cook over—a cook with orders to feed the *Adventure's* people not the eternal salt beef and hardtack they liked and Furneaux seemed spinelessly to approve, but fresh wort, preserve of carrots, and thickened essence of lemon until they gagged—and lived—of it.

A few scattered islands were discovered and their positions marked. At last one evening—with the sea tepidly warm and the cooling air flowing down from the lovely mountains—the two ships came to rest at the *Endeavour's* old anchorage in Matavai Bay in Tahiti. There were the earthworks and the fences of Fort Venus, overgrown a little, weathered a little, but much as they had left them.

To James Cook it was like the reliving of a beloved reverie. But perhaps no dream should be repeated, much less lived out in the brash, bright daylight of another hour.

On the magic island all was outwardly the same as it had been before. There were the soaring, pointed, mist-hung mountains near as friendship, yet inaccessible as certainty, the same soft, contented people. He was of course remembered. The chiefs came aboard the ships and gifts were given and received. They still danced under the moon in the rustling groves of palms. And, it was not the same.

It is unlikely if anyone but Cook himself was conscious of it. The young brown girls with mouths as red as the red flowers in their hair had not lost their love for making love. There was not the slightest disappointment voiced by the hundred and eighty-odd men of the two ships' company.

Obscurely, but as plain to the touch of Cook's sensitive mind as the feel of burlap, the islanders were afraid. Instinctively they sensed that the isolation of all the centuries that had gone before had ended.

Wallis had come, and Cook. A French ship had visited the island. After the *Endeavour* had gone a Spaniard had broken through the veil of time which now no longer hid them or their island from the strangers' world.

The Tahitian innocents had felt the searing flame of the Spanish violence which for two centuries had gutted South America. So ruthless had some of

Charles II's sailors been that even their Captain had been displeased and had hanged four of them.

The islanders had seen the hanging. The idea of violent death inflicted in cold blood on other men was new to them.

And here was Cook again.

They liked and trusted him. But he had returned with two ships and twice as many men. Would there be four ships, then eight, until neither their island nor the kind communicating sea was any longer theirs?

James Cook, I think, knew then that never while life lasted would any part of earth be truly his. The spur of his deep-founded restlessness would drive him on forever . . . from Great Ayton and from Staithes, from England, from his wife, from his house which was not his, even from these islands which in the secret places of his imagination he had fancied might always truly welcome him.

The brown people on the outer islands of the Society group were more cordial, more as they had been before. They had been less visited and for shorter stays. The folk there were so well satisfied with the hatchets, axes, glass and metal buttons, fish-hooks, red baize, old shirts, beads, looking glasses and above all nails, which this time both ships carried in abundance for trading, that they sold the voyagers near four hundred live hogs, a welcome, though under the warm sun, a malodorous addition to their stores. It was more like old times. But something, Cook knew, had been lost. Some subtle essence of freshness was gone and could not be recaptured.

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The ships bore south and west where the ocean had not been traced by anyone before them. Each night sails were reefed close to the yards so that in the darkness no opportunity for discovery would be overlooked. The device succeeded. Islands were found which no one from Europe had ever seen. They were duly named and marked upon the charts. Today that still-not-often-visited, fair and drowsy archipelago is called the Cook Islands.

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It was curious how human beings differed. There was no explaining it. To the fresh eyes of wonder the jeweled litters of the tropical Pacific islands were much alike. Some, it is true, were large, some small, some mountainous and others, those called atolls, scarcely higher than the surrounding ocean. But human life on them followed a like pattern, and the circumstances of Cook's visits were certainly alike.

He had exerted all his energies to make sure of it. The rule was unchanging; frankness, as modest an air as such strange visitants could

assume; patience; the offering of gifts; above all no show of force. Yet—you never could tell.

Cook's great predecessor Abel Tasman had left an account and a rough indication of the position of some larger islands farther to the west—what today are called the Tongas. Though the Dutchmen had dropped in for their short stay more than a century before, they were still remembered. Indeed, nothing whatever had happened since.

The first discoverers had evidently behaved themselves, for even before Cook's ships had found anchorage it was clear their reception would be cordial. The easygoing Tahitians, who were now used to Europeans, were amiable. The Tongans, of far more sober mind and habit, who had not laid eyes on a stranger for a century, outdid their neighbors tenfold in friendliness.

They were big people, of the fairest of light browns, the men, though a shade soft-looking, were handsome and laughed easily, the girls were lovely and both sexes wore from next to nothing to nothing at all. The matting on the floors of their open-walled huts was of fine, smooth texture and exquisitely clean. Food, which they grew with skill and care, was plentiful.

Except that the younger, more desirable women were not as instantly available as the crew had hoped, the Tongans' only other discernible fault was a tendency to snatch and make off with anything from books (a peculiarly useless choice) to the shoes of an officer who was hopelessly marooned by their loss on coral too sharp for his bare feet until someone came and got him.

But larceny had become as familiar as cocoanut palms. Cook's temper was notably controlled. As on this voyage he was never quite so innocently happy, so borne up with pure elation as he had been on the *Endeavour*, neither did he ever descend into such dark or flaring moods.

He thought well enough of these energetic and contented folk to dub the group the Friendly Islands.

No visitor to them since that time, even in these short-tempered years, has found reason to alter that opinion.

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Herr Forster who wrote copiously and usually miserably about his long adventure, later complained in print that Captain Cook had the bad habit of never letting his associates know where he was going. It is true the big Yorkshireman was not garrulous. On this voyage he had no confidant like Banks. But the record makes it plain enough that he simply failed to confide in the Forsters.

Their mission was clear. It was to go south, south and ever south. If there was no habitable continent in those bleak antipodal reaches, there might at

least be islands. If they existed it was Cook's task to find them. The season for that search was short. When the brief Antarctic summer ended they must retreat.

It was October. Spring, or what passed for it amid the ice islands, was on its way.

## Dark Islands

1773-1774

As they neared New Zealand once more, wind and wave mounted to gale force. The tip of the *Resolution*'s mainmast was snapped like a match stick and carried off into the turmoil of the rain, dragging with it torn sail and broken lines. The two ships again became separated.

That was not amazing. The storm blew without let-up for a week. But when it was over the *Adventure* did not reappear.

That was wearisome. Sound though the principle had seemed, the accompanying ship from the beginning had been more trouble than it was worth. Furneaux made a bad business of his duty of being the *Resolution*'s shadow. It had to be assumed he would this second time follow instructions as before and make for Queen Charlotte's Sound where the two vessels would once more join forces.

For his part, Cook had as little interest in yet another visit to that only too familiar New Zealand stopping place as for an outing on the Thames. But there was no choice.

So to Queen Charlotte's Sound at the head of South Island they sailed. In that shelter the restless Captain loitered for three weeks of mounting irritation. If the *Adventure* was at the bottom his impatience was unjust. But he saw no reason why it should be. The storm had been violent, but any English sailor had seen worse.

At last, he could wait no longer.

The date was November 25th, 1773. They had left England sixteen months before. The *Resolution* was in good condition, her stores were ample, the health of the crew good and their spirits high. Cook noted with satisfaction that the rest thought as he did, that "the dangers we had to go through were not in the least increased by being alone." There was more, much more he could do.

He had thoroughly explored the southern ocean eastward from the Cape of Good Hope to New Zealand. While he could keep his ship afloat and his men alive—and he was coolly confident he could—the gigantic task remained of completing the circumnavigation of the bottom of the world—



on to the longitude of Cape Horn, then back to the tip of Africa. That would join the circle.

Since in the high latitudes the season was so brief, a single summer would not be enough. To complete his plan would take at least two years.

As usual, Forster the naturalist was acutely unhappy. £4000 was a lot of money. This voyage, if he survived it, would make his reputation. Yet even those considerations did not mitigate the discomfort of heat, of cold, of wet, of storms, of the dreadful food these lusty, cursing, rum-swilling English sailors (clearly, this barbarian race had no sense of taste) ate with such appetite. Nevertheless, Johann Forster, after Cook himself, was probably the most intelligent man aboard.

He alone saw in Cook's remorseless patience, in the great scheme which Forster only dimly understood, a kind of possession. The German, as the more simply organized English mariners were not, was afraid.

He remained clear-headed enough to realize Cook's seamanship was impeccable, his mind masterfully attentive to every detail and his regulations wise. What Forster feared in the big Englishman, who was so coldly polite to him yet so oblivious of his existence, was Cook's lack of moderation. He was like some incalculable machine which once wound up could never stop. Time seemed nothing to him and space still less. As for danger, it did not exist for him.

Forster shook his round blond head in bewilderment. One suspects that in the privacy of his damp, creaking, cell-like cabin he was sometimes close to tears.

But Cook's was a sober madness. Its colors were blue and gray like the elements of sea and sky which had claimed him. There was no red in it. Years passed and Herr Forster was safe on land again before he found the name for it. That invincible force against which he had struck like a rudderless ship upon the hard coral of a reef, was Genius.

The great plan was exactly and literally fulfilled.

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On December 7th it amused Cook to compute that the *Resolution* had come to that point on the globe's surface which was the exact antipode of London. They were as far from home as they could get without quitting the planet altogether.

The temperature fell below freezing. Icicles formed at the sailors' nostrils. "Our ropes," the Captain wrote, "were like wires, sails like plates of metal." Living was an agony and the work of the ship scarcely to be endured.

Cook had again deliberately taken them and their frail cockleshell of a wooden ship into the region of eternal ice. Towering icebergs, loud with the

smash of surf, and limitless, breaking, grinding, mumbling ice plains crowded so close around them it was an hourly miracle they were not crushed to kindling. One Sunday “we saw a very extensive field of ice, and within the field we distinctly enumerated ninety-seven hills of different sizes.”

The common opinion aboard the *Resolution* was that the ice masses extended all the way to the South Pole. Cook himself was of the view that beyond the ice there was indeed land—as Sir James Clark Ross, with two immensely strong ships, was to prove nearly 70 years later—but that it lay so far to the south it was impossible for it to be inhabited or in any way productive. His sixth sense, compounded from observation of every trick of wind and water, birds’ flights and the life of sea creatures, convinced him of it. But a Great Southern Continent, fertile and peopled, which the geographers had synthesized for centuries, he had proved an illusion.

For more than a month the *Resolution*—no ship was ever more aptly named—prodded and pried at the ice barrier. On January 30th, 1774, Cook reached the then—and for generations to follow—inconceivably high latitude of 71° 10’ South.

It was so lonely a point upon the map of nowhere that one of the most thorough students of the Cook record, Mr. Hugh Carrington, has reckoned that never since that day has another ship come to that same place. Just once, then, since this planet formed has that speck of watery, formless desolation been troubled by the presence of our kind.

Cook had gone as far as desire or duty drove him. When chance offered, he would be reckless with his own life. Yet Mr. Forster need not have been afraid. Captain Cook would not be prodigal with the lives of a hundred men or with the King’s ship that carried them.

He knew himself with singular clarity. “I,” he wrote, “who hope ambition leads me not only farther than any other man has been before me, but as far as I think it is possible for man to go, was not sorry at meeting with this interruption.”

The “interruption,” as he called it, was an unbroken floe of solid pack-ice barring the way ahead, which extended to the east and west as far as topmast lookouts with telescopes could see in clear sunlight.

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Even the Captain proved mortal. As the *Resolution* came at last out of the ice and almost ceaseless storms of the far south into warm air and thawing sunshine, his strength broke. Cook, to his own complete astonishment, was ill. He embarrassedly called it a “bilious colic.” Diagnosis at such a distance is difficult. But it was worse than that. Cook came close to dying.

The peasant strength, the temperate habit and the iron will which had carried him through forty-six years of as harsh and hard a life as any man of his century, collapsed under him like oaken keel beams which had been too long used and too much punished.

Wrapped in his everlastingly wet greatcoat, a battered, shapeless three-cornered hat crushed down over the tied brown hair which now was fast beginning to show white, he had kept interminable watches in the biting Antarctic cold. He had slept only in snatches. For days at a time his responsibility had weighed on him so heavily that even during those caught hours of sleep he had not taken off his sodden clothes. He had eaten sparingly and drunk little.

He was beset by constant vomiting. Neither the coarse and tasteless food which was all the ship offered nor the questionably useful medicines with which the *Resolution's* surgeon, Mr. Patten, plied him, could be kept down. The big, always spare frame became thin and haggard.

The ship's company was almost as stricken as her master. No man ever sought love less. In the deep humbleness which was a part of him it was as if he scarcely knew the word. Yet on every ship on which Cook served he inspired that emotion—there is no weaker term for it—in all who sailed with him.

It was as if the very walls of the house which sheltered them had fallen. The silent figure was gone from the little half-circle of quarter-deck abaft the wheel and it was as if the sun had vanished from their sky. The sailors whose violence, heedlessness and profanity so shocked the German naturalists that in the book they wrote when they got home they referred to it over and over again—most of them in fact were the scourings of the London slums—walked on tiptoe, spoke in whispers and worked the ship like cautious ghosts.

Mr. Patten the doctor proved as tender a nurse as any woman. One morning word got forward that the Captain was better, "which," a sailor wrote, "each might read in the countenance of the other, from the highest officer to the meanest boy on board the ship."

What had put the Captain on the mend—to no one did it seem more odd than to Cook himself—was a Tahitian dog, converted into soup.

It belonged to Mr. Forster. He had picked the mongrel up on the island and become fond of it. It was the poor beast's distinction that at the moment it was the only fresh meat aboard. It is one of Forster's few merits that he sacrificed it willingly.

A few days after Cook, as he noted, "received nourishment and strength from food which would have made most people in Europe sick," he was on

his feet again. Part of the term of his convalescence was spent on Easter Island.

That most puzzling of all Pacific isles was not his discovery. Both Dutchmen and Spaniards had been there before him, but observations of its position had been so rusty that no one before Cook had set down precisely where it was.

Easter Island is an inaccessible, barren, seedy bit of land. As the *Resolution* found, there is no good anchorage and the cliff-sided shore can be reached only by a dangerous passage through the surf in a small boat. Cook, though still staggering from his illness, was undeterred and was the first ashore.

Provisions, which they needed badly, were sparse. That was disappointing. The huge, upright faces of black volcanic stone, which stare with blind mystery out upon, upon what?—some believe a continent and a civilization which long ages ago were lost beneath the waves—certainly were not.

There seemed to be dozens of them. A few were prone and unfinished, as if the patient stonecutters who had made them had been interrupted. Those which were upright measured as much as twenty-seven feet high and eight feet broad. The impoverished natives knew nothing of them or of those who had made them. The dark, majestic images had left no tradition behind them. They did not even arouse wonder. Cook found no solution to the puzzle . . . no one has.

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The great circular sweep through the South Pacific that Cook had plotted, which was to leave almost no portion of that vast space of ocean unexplored, then brought them west to the Marquesas, where the islands were lovely, the people beautiful and larcenous, and the pigs so small that two hungry sailors could finish a whole one between them at a sitting.

Technically, the Marquesas were not discoveries. They had been found and named by Spaniards from Peru. But that had been in 1595, a matter of some 179 years before, so there was at least strong flavor of discovery. If the Spaniards had made a bad impression, time had erased it. The light-skinned Polynesian inhabitants were completely cordial.

After a long reach through the atolls of the Tuamotu group, dangerous then as now because they lie so low that a lookout can scarcely detect one on the horizon until a ship is too close for safety, the *Resolution* put in again at Tahiti. The mission was solely one of housekeeping. They needed fresh food, and Tahiti was dependable.

There had been a change. The heavy mood which Cook had sensed eight months before had boldly altered.

During the previous stop Tahiti—land without money, without employers or employees—had shown signs of what Europeans would call “bad times.” Now, there was a boom. In August the coming of the English had added to the Tahitians’ burden of melancholy. In April, they were greeted gaily, and ignored. It was reassuring that this time the *Resolution* had come alone.

Fine new huts had been built. The gardens looked better kept. Surest proof of wealth, there had been a striking increase in the pig population. The people who had seemed so morose before were alert, eager, happy.

The reason was soon clear. It was a saddening one. In this perfect setting of simplicity and peace which had seemed to Cook on that first visit so in contrast with the cruel follies of an older world, it was enough to make a cynic of any man. The Tahitians were preparing for war. The enemy were the inhabitants of a neighboring island. The causes of the quarrel were as obscure as those of the War of the Austrian Succession.

The prospect of that adventure had had the mysterious effect of doubling the visible population. Every latent energy had been released. The indolent islanders were indolent no longer. The individualistic Tahitians were working together for a common purpose.

An invasion fleet of one hundred and sixty huge double canoes and one hundred and seventy smaller ones, for transport and supplies, had been built. Cook reckoned that 7760 fighting men had been assembled.

They made a brilliant spectacle. The captains of the great canoes were decked—for the rehearsal of a landing operation which the Englishmen were invited to watch—in vast folds and skirts of bright-colored bark cloth. Some wore headdresses three feet tall, intertwined with twigs and white feathers. Cook thought them “encumbering.” The canoes were upcurved at bow and stern into carved and decorated towers. The whole bay flashed with color.

On reaching the beach the rowers and the fighting men leaped out, picked the huge craft up bodily and hurried them into concealment in the woods. Cook wrote that within five minutes of the fleet’s reaching shore the “invaders” had vanished.

It was put to him that he would make a useful ally. When Cook with great firmness declared he would under all circumstances remain neutral, there was no ill feeling. Being men, and therefore essentially just in instinct, the Tahitians on second thought liked him the better for it.

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James Cook had spent close to five years in the half-world of sea and land below Capricorn. He had made that vast portion of the globe from Africa to South America, for all who might remember, everlastingly his own.

When Cook left the Society Islands at the end of his third visit there in May, 1774 he was certain he would not come back. He said that to the native chiefs who were his friends. When they asked him what would be his burial place—for among them, each man of substance knew what would be the place of his long rest—he said “Stepney!” But he was by no means done.

## Last Homecoming

1774-1775

West of the Societies lay an archipelago which the Portuguese pilot and explorer Quiros had discovered and reported at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, one hundred and sixty-eight years before. The French navigator Bougainville (who was to win pleasant immortality as the name of a flowering vine) had touched at them again in 1768 and named the group the Great Cyclades. But all that both discoverers had learned of them could have been written handily on the back of a visiting card.

That faint scent was enough to dilate Cook's nostrils. Here again was the kind of problem he seemed to have been sent into the world to solve. Though he had the admiration of a professional for his predecessors, they had been first of all adventurers.

No sailor before Cook had ever ventured farther or at greater and more constant peril. Yet the term "adventurer" repelled him. The infallible accompaniment of what the vulgar called adventure, it seemed to him, was incompetence. A lubber could make an enterprise of great hazard out of an afternoon's rowing on the Thames. It was Cook's ever more conscious purpose to prove not simply that the remote islands and continents he discovered or rediscovered existed, but that the path he blazed could be safely followed.

Such crowd-cluttered cities as London, he had seen all too plainly, needed air. All Europe wanted space. The life of the Old World was growing stunted. The bright century into which he had been born was clouded by a plague which though surely not new in the tale of man grew ever more virulent and ugly—the plague of poverty.

Within a rifleshot's range of the snug brick house where even at this moment Elizabeth and the children were sleeping were scenes of hopeless, drunken, broken misery which he could scarcely bear, and mankind should not consent, to look upon. Cook's own people had been poor. Their poverty and his were princes' riches in comparison with the foul bleakness of the life of the tens upon tens of thousands of the destitute of London, and, he had no doubt, of Paris, Antwerp, Amsterdam.

In the long reflective hours on the *Resolution*'s sand-clean deck, while the strong ship, dressed in her blooming glory of white sails, ran smoothly over a sea as bright and purely blue as the Pacific sky, the squalor of Europe's ever-worsening slums might seem too far away to be reached by even the most sustained flight of the imagination. Cook knew they were not. They were no farther off than the *Resolution*'s main deck.

As on every English ship afloat, better than half of the crew forward were the products of just such cesspools of desperation and misery; sons of mothers so gin-soaked that they visibly rotted, of chance and unknown fathers. Few of them could write their names or had ever tasted meat until they came to sea. It had not been needful to inquire too deeply, but Cook knew that more than a few had known the unspeakable horror of English prisons.

Yes. These same brown, lithe-muscled young men who sprang so quickly to obey an order and now fulfilled it with such ready skill. Brave men. Good men. Men with clear eyes. Men he loved and who loved him.

The transformation had been wrought so easily! There had been no special magic in it. He had fed them. He had taught them to be clean. In demanding respect, he had respected them.

But most of all and best of all, they had seen the islands. They had come across the world with him to places and to people who had no yesterdays, where all life and all life's chances were tomorrow and today. If there was no room in Europe for their kind, there was room aplenty here, in New Zealand, in Australia. They could begin fresh. No one would ask their father's name. Where no one was rich there was no poverty.

First, Cook realized, the way to the new lands, being found, must be posted so clearly that common captains of common ships with common folk aboard them need not be lost upon the way. Meticulously, as he had from the beginning, he was setting down upon his charts where those following ships should drop their anchors, find water, beach their boats. His journal was filled with hard thought out advice as to where a future settlement might make a start. Wherever they had landed he had never failed to smell the soil and crumble it in his farmer's hands.

Never in all his years of voyaging did Cook seek gold. In the close to a million words that, incredibly, he wrote as the record of them, that word is never used.

Never did he hint that in these distant places he had discovered there were easy fortunes to be made. He did not believe it. Spain's example was enough. The Pacific and the Antipodes held out a better promise, the promise of work. It was his mission to make that clear, to mark it so



indelibly upon the page of time which he filled in, that it could never be mistaken.

His second purpose was so close upon the first as often in Cook's mind to overtake and all but overwhelm it. If the great work he had done and sometimes sensed now he would continue to do until his life's end was to be rewarded, plain people, his own kind, must in the years that were coming make use of this space, this emptiness. There was room and to spare in the new lands for millions to make new lives.

But the Pacific, New Zealand, Australia already had their own native people. If the work of his life was not to be human gain, but a waste so terrible that it would have been better had he not been born, no harm must come to them.

He had learned that even the queerest and most naked of them, like the little black folk of Australia, were not "savages." He had found none of them more barbarous than white men. He had learned, in brief, that they were—men and women, wise and foolish, good and bad, kind and cruel. He had learned in great measure to understand them. He had learned to love them.

He had learned. It was not enough. In the time that remained to him, he now must teach.

Most of his crew and officers were young. Some would outlive him and come back. All when they got home to England and went their separate ways would be sources of information and opinion about the Pacific lands. If they took back with them the same ignorant prejudices with which they had sailed, the infection of misunderstanding would be spread. When settlers came they must not come with a burden of distrust.

These islands ahead . . .

They had observed on the *Endeavour* that in the Eastern Pacific where the skins of the islanders were lightest, dispositions were mildest. As one sailed west, the hue darkened and tempers tended to be shorter. From the sketchy notes of Quiros and of Bougainville, Cook judged that the inhabitants of the group where they were now headed were of the latter sort. . . . So much the better. Lessons lost nothing for being hard. If the *Resolution's* men could be brought to like, to trust and to understand them, the rest would follow. Any drunken foremast hand, stupefied with the amorous favors of the brown girls of Tahiti, could tolerate natives like that.

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Paradoxically, had Cook been a less efficient sailor he would have made another great discovery. With his predecessors' notes to guide him, he set a straight course from the Tonga Islands to what—Cook named them—are the New Hebrides. Having set it, he kept it. Had he veered from it a very few

miles he would have discovered the great mountainous group of the Fijis. It is astonishing that, despite a spell of bad weather, he did not. But miss them he did.

At three in the afternoon of July 15th (1774) the *Resolution* beat her way through heavy squalls and a tepid tropical downpour of rain to win sight of their objective, “high land,” an outpost of the archipelago Quiros had piously named Australia del Espiritu Santo.

The islands, they soon saw, were magnificent. They were of volcanic origin. No geologist was wanted to prove that, for some of the volcanoes were as luridly active as if the earth still were being made. They piled up from the sea’s edge in splendid, rugged heights garmented from shore to summit with dense, endlessly various rain jungle. Everywhere the woods were laced with streams of clear, cold water ending in shimmering cascades.

The inhabitants . . . well, they *were* queer enough in all conscience. Though on better acquaintance Cook later amended the description in kindlier terms, truth compelled him to write:

“In general, they are the most ugly, ill-proportioned people I ever saw, and in every respect different from any we had met with in this sea. They are a very dark-colored and rather diminutive race; with long heads, flat faces and monkey countenances. Their hair, mostly black or brown, is short and curly. Their beards are very strong, crisp, and bushy. But what most adds to their deformity, is a belt, or cord, which they wear round the waist and tie so tight over the belly that the shape of their bodies is not unlike that of an overgrown pismire.<sup>[6]</sup> The men go quite naked, except a piece of cloth or leaf used as a wrapper. . . . I cannot say the women are beauties, but I think them handsome enough for the men.” But Cook felt no trace of repugnance.

They amused him hugely. Not a syllable of their language could anyone understand. “They express their admiration by hissing like a goose!” It might be suspected that between races so diverse even gestures would be incomprehensible. How then, to make a beginning?

The look of distaste, even of fear Cook’s quick eyes detected in the faces of some of the crew had quickly to be wiped off.

When the *Resolution* dropped anchor, the first emissaries from shore, as so often happened, were a few exceptionally brave spirits in canoes. After a show of caution they came alongside and were soon induced to exchange their bone-tipped arrows for bits of cloth. Then they came aboard.

The ice was broken. Early the next morning the canoes swarmed round the ship like mosquitoes. Some, not finding transportation, were swimming. "Presently, not only our deck but rigging was filled with them. I took four into the cabin and gave them various articles which they showed to those in the canoes, and seemed much pleased with their reception."

It was an act of extraordinary hospitality. On very few ships which now touch at the western Pacific islands are "natives" admitted, far less invited, to a captain's quarters. Cook was proud of his ship. It was immaculate. Pride in its spotlessness was shared by nearly every member of the crew. Soap, it was evident from afar, had played a small part in New Hebridean culture. But James Cook was without arrogance. There was not an atom of haughtiness in his being. He had come to these islands uninvited. They belonged to the people who lived on them, not to him.

Never did it occur to him that the particular race to which he belonged was superior to any other. He had more than once observed that that curious conviction was unshakably strong only in the most ignorant and worthless members of his crew.

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Even the best laid plans . . .

As the Captain, with smiles, with gestures, by the reassuring tone of his strong voice, still slightly touched with its Yorkshire burr, toiled to make friends with his very black and very naked guests in the Great Cabin, there was a scuffle outside.

Cook grabbed a musket and ran on deck. An islander in a canoe had tried to clamber into one of the ship's boats and on being rebuffed by the boatkeeper had become angry and turned his bow at him.

One of the visitors to the cabin had got to the scene before Cook—by jumping out of one of the stern windows. He was struggling with the short-tempered one—to protect his English friends of not a quarter of an hour's standing. The magic of Cook's personality worked quickly.

But the bowman was resolute. Shaking off the peacemaker, he turned his bow, at full draw and laid with a bone-tipped arrow, at Cook. There was no choice. Cook fired one barrel of his gun.

As was now his invariable custom, it was loaded with shot so fine that the charge could not have been fatal to a barn-swallow. The aggressor, though he "staggered for a moment" was not prevented from holding his bow "still in the attitude of shooting." Cook fired the second barrel. The bowman dropped his weapon, picked up his paddle and made for shore at full speed.

But the noise of shouting and the two explosions of the musket, not surprisingly, had set off a train of nervous excitement. Some grizzled

warriors on the far side of the ship began to let fly a shower of arrows—from a green, gummy substance on their tips the Englishmen believed them poisoned—in the general direction of the crowded deck.

Casually, more amused than alarmed, Cook gave the nod to a gunner to fire one of the four-pounders in the air.

That did it. Like startled ants the *Resolution*'s guests departed, out of the windows, down from the rigging where they had perched, over the rail, landing with almost a single splash in the water. It was irresistibly funny. It was also perhaps, an inept beginning.

To the surprise of the crew and those officers who still did not know him well, Cook did not seem perturbed. No one had been hurt. All that could be regarded as ominous was that immediately after the firing of the great gun there had come to them from the jungled shore the thud-thud-thud of native drums, which Cook took for "the signal for the country to assemble in arms."

They kept early hours in the New Hebrides. By nine o'clock the same morning Captain Cook was ready to go ashore. If all went well, as he expected it would, this might be a demonstration of the very lesson he most wanted to impress upon his men; that harm need not beget more harm; that the sovereign remedy for fear and all the horrors that came in the train of fear, was fearlessness.

Four or five hundred people, "all armed with bows and arrows, clubs and spears," were assembled on the shore. Captain Cook, his own boat accompanied by only one other, ordered the oarsmen to head for that part of the beach where the throng was thickest.

As the boat reached the shallows, he leaped out—alone. The beady-eyed, squat little stone-age men could see for themselves that the big, kind-looking man in the loose white sailor's trousers and shirt open at his bronzed and corded neck, was unarmed. Instead he carried aloft in his right hand a green branch.

Five hundred bows were bent. Many of the gnarled black hands were trembling. But not an arrow was discharged. Slowly, the tight strings slackened, the bows were lowered.

As this astonishing stranger walked toward them, with the drag of the warm salt water at his shins, an older man Cook took to be their chief handed his bow to another and, taking a green branch in his own hand, came forward to meet him. The Eighteenth Century Englishman and the Neolithic primitive exchanged their branches and Cook was taken gently by the hand and led ashore. . . .

Two years had passed since the *Resolution* began her voyage. The shyness with which Cook had begun it, the suffocating silence which had so

oppressed his young officers, were beginning to wear off. It was his fate, queerly, always to be more at ease with strange, far-off people than with his own. But he was talking ever more freely. His speech, like his journal, was filled with dry witticisms.

. . . He spoke admiringly of native combs so ingeniously constructed “they can beat up the quarters of a hundred lice at a time.” In noting a meeting with village elders to whom Captain James Cook, R.N. was to present a brace of hogs, he began: “To them I and my pigs being introduced —.” He described some huts as “something like a beehive, and full as close and warm. . . .”

For forty-six years he had listened and had learned. He was learning now he must communicate. . . . Take his first encounter with “this ape-like nation.” One had been violent. Some had been affable. Sensibly, they had understood his token of peace when he went ashore alone. Obliging, they had not filled him like a pincushion with their arrows. At the same time, though by signs they had given him permission to have the boats’ crews collect firewood they had soon shown impatience for them to be gone.

Human conduct, Cook tried to impress upon his officers, was like the weather of the sea. It was rarely either a whole gale or fair. Far more often it was “variable.”

That was it! Neither here nor anywhere could one make fast rules. Some, yes. Visitors like themselves from what was perhaps too loosely called civilization must try, of course, to rule themselves. They must preserve the decencies of patience, of kindness. They must be honest and meticulously fair. They must rely upon force only and always as a last resort.

Beyond that they must remember that human beings—all human beings, white, black, brown—were unpredictable. He was not always sure of his own temper. Even after he had had the fashioning of his ship’s company for a year or more, he was emphatically not always sure of them. Did it not ask too much then, to demand consistency of these strange people below the sun?

James Cook had met the King. He had been led by the hand upon an unknown shore by a naked bearded black who had never known a wheel and could not recognize the use of iron. He had found they both were men. . . . It seemed to him so simple. Yet it was important above all else. That was the lesson he must leave behind him. Then this fair new world of the Pacific need never know the pain and fear and ugliness of the old.

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It *was* odd that the more primitive people were often more forthright in their dealings.

During their first night at the anchorage only one thing had been stolen, the marking buoy of the kedge anchor. In the afternoon—for Cook had not thought it wise at this uncertain stage of their relationship with these islanders to make an issue of so small a loss—a man was seen walking along the shore with it in his arms.

“I went on shore for it, accompanied by some of the gentlemen. The moment we landed it was put into the boat, by a man who walked off again without speaking one word. It ought to be observed that this was the only thing that they took or even attempted to take from us by any means whatever.”

The name of the island, they learned, was Mallicollo. It has not greatly changed.

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Since the island chain of which Mallicollo—or Malekula—formed an impressive link was evidently a long one and Cook proposed to examine all of it, the *Resolution* heaved in her anchors and ran up her sails early the following morning. It amused Cook to see how the Mallicollo blacks, for all the world like the hosts of a country house at the end of a long week-end, visibly brightened at their going. Their extreme honesty again touched him.

“When the natives saw us under sail they came off in canoes, making exchanges with more confidence than before. As the ship at first had fresh way through the water several of them dropped astern after they had received our goods and before they had time to deliver theirs in return. Instead of taking advantages of this as our friends at the Society Isles would have done, they used their utmost efforts to get up with us and to deliver what they had already been paid for. One man in particular followed us a considerable time and did not reach us until it was calm and the thing was forgotten. As soon as he came alongside he held up the thing which several were ready to buy but he refused to part with it till he saw the person to whom he had before sold it and to him he gave it. The person not knowing him again, offered him something in return which he refused and showed him what he had given him before.”

The *Resolution* entered a labyrinth. Nature had scattered islands in this sunlit sea with a free hand. “We had now lands in every direction and were not able to count the number which lay round us.”

Ambrym. . . . Smaller isles Cook named variously in honor of his patron Sandwich, Montagu, Hinchinbroke . . . Efate, Eromanga, Tanna whose living cones belched ceaseless ash and fire.

Once more, on Eromanga, still of savage reputation, Cook was first ashore, permitting only one man to follow him, "in the face of a vast multitude" and "ordered the other boat to lie to a little distance off."

Again, and wholly without vainglory, he was offering a demonstration to the crew which lined the *Resolution's* rail that trust was better armament than fear. And—that even in the most seemingly fair winds, only a bad sailor failed to keep an eye alert for clouds.

All appeared to be well. "They received me with great courtesy and politeness and would retire back from the boat on my making the least motion with my hand." They brought him water in a thick bamboo, then a yam and some cocoanuts.

"In short, I was charmed with their behavior, and the only thing which could give the least suspicion was that most of them were armed with clubs, spears, darts, and bows and arrows. For this reason I kept my eye continually upon the chief and watched his looks as well as his actions. He made many signs to me to haul the boat up upon the shore and at last slipped into the crowd where I observed him speak to several people and then return to me, repeating signs to haul the boat up and hesitating a good deal before he would receive some spike nails which I then offered him.

"This made me suspect something was intended and immediately I stepped into the boat, telling them by signs that I should soon return. But they were not for parting so soon and now attempted by force which they could not obtain by gentle means. The gang-board happened unluckily to be laid out for me to come into the boat. I say unluckily for if it had not been out and the crew had been a little quicker in getting the boat off the natives might not have had time to put their design in execution, nor would the following disagreeable scene have happened.

"As we were putting off the boat, they laid hold of the gang-board and unhooked it off the boat's stern, but as they did not take it away, I thought this had been done by accident and ordered the boat in again to take it up. Then they themselves hooked it over the boat's stern and attempted to haul her ashore; others at the same time snatched the oars out of the people's hands. On my pointing a musket at them they in some measure desisted but

returned in an instant, seemingly determined to haul the boat ashore. At the head of the party was the chief; the others who could not come at the boat stood behind with darts, stones and bows and arrows in hand ready to support them.

“Signs and threats having no effect, our own safety became the only consideration; and yet I was unwilling to fire on the multitude and was resolved to make the chief alone fall a victim to his own treachery; but my musket at this critical moment missed fire. Whatever idea they might have formed of the arms we held in our hands, they must now have looked upon them as childish weapons and began to show us how much better theirs were by throwing stones and darts and by shooting arrows.

“This made it absolutely necessary,” Cook wrote, with what anyone else of any century would have thought needless apology, “for me to give orders to fire. The first discharge threw them into confusion; but a second was hardly sufficient to drive them off the beach and after all they continued to throw stones from behind the trees and bushes and—” Cook smiled in retrospect—“now and then to pop out and throw a dart.

“Four lay to all appearance dead on the shore but two of them afterwards crawled into the bushes. Happy it was for these people that not half our muskets would go off, otherwise many more would have fallen.”

Captain Cook had come very close to death, the whole boat’s crew to massacre. The *Resolution*’s company was angry, frightened. There was talk of revenge, of “teaching them a lesson.”

Cook silenced it. What lesson, pray, was there to teach? The one to learn is what they must already know, that there were good and bad among all peoples, that human behavior was uncertain.

Revenge? Were they children? When had revenge ever availed for anything?

It was evident enough these blacks of the New Hebrides were, more often than not, inclined to be unruly. There were brushes and near-brushes on almost every island where they touched.

But nothing would down Cook’s hope, his almost passionate desire to trust, to understand, to like. Within the week he was writing: “I found many of the islanders inclined to be friends with us, especially the old people.” . . . He learned they practiced cannibalism, but said: “Since we have not actually seen them eat human flesh, it will admit of doubt with some whether they are cannibals.” Patience. . . . Patience. . . .



The slightest show of good nature or of generosity among them was enough for him. . . . “Thus, we found these people hospitable, civil and good-natured when not prompted to a contrary conduct by jealousy; a conduct I cannot tell how to blame them for, especially when I consider the light in which they must view us. It was impossible for them to know our real design; we enter their ports without their daring to oppose: we endeavour to land in their country as friends, and it is well if this succeeds; we land nevertheless and maintain the footing we have got by the superiority of our firearms. Under such circumstances, what opinion are they to form of us? Is it not as reasonable for them to think that we come to invade their country, as to pay them a friendly visit? . . . There are few nations who would willingly suffer visitors like us to advance far into their country. . . . We never gave them the least molestation, nor did we touch any part of their property, not even the wood and water without first having obtained their consent.”

Cook thought he daily saw more proof his teaching was having its effect. His officers now could be trusted among the blacks without him. With a few incurable exceptions, most of the crew followed the simple pattern he had set.

The thought came to him, as pure and simple—and one should think as commonplace—as a round white pebble in a turgid pond, that maybe liking was as contagious as hate, trusting as distrusting?

To prove that hope was workable was his mission now. Compared to it, to abolish scurvy, even to dispel the fog of not-knowing which had clouded the half-hemisphere he had made his own domain, were almost of small account. . . . His own people were beginning to understand.

Then, there would be the book he hoped to write. It would be packed tight with sailing directions. Because for a time there would be no other, it would be a guide to those who followed. How immeasurably more important it would be, if it could also be a guide of conduct. His responsibility to these people he had discovered, from whom he had rent forever the veil of their age-long privacy, was heavy. In no other way could it be lightened.

Meticulously, for the most part joyously and favored by good wind and weather, the *Resolution* traced minuets and figure eights through the whole of the dark archipelago. For the first time it was mapped, explored and named—for Cook, with few exceptions, learned what their own people called them. Those names have stuck.

Then, he again bore west.

Cook discovered New Caledonia, landed there, made friends and followed and charted the long line of the big island’s shore. He found and

named Norfolk Island, far off the Australian coast. Half a hundred lesser islands were sighted, named and their position correctly given.

Never before or since have any expeditions of discovery or of scientific study, either in what they set out to do, or what they did, remotely equaled those of the *Endeavour*, then the *Resolution*, under Captain Cook's command.

The huge circle completed by a stop again at New Zealand for green food, the *Resolution* set out on the last tremendous lap, toward home.

The weather in the high latitudes for once was kind. The Strait of Magellan was sighted after a record run from New Zealand of only thirty-six days. A fortnight later the incomparable ship and its no less incomparable crew, still, Cook proudly boasted, as healthy and as happy as when they had set sail from Plymouth two and a half years before, bore on along a still colder and more southerly track for Africa.

En route Cook discovered the desolate island at the farthest end of the South Atlantic which he named Georgia, for his King. They reached Capetown in mid-March (1775).

The Southern Hemisphere had for the first time been circumnavigated.

There was definite word of their sister ship. It had stopped at the Dutch colony a year before, then Captain Furneaux had sailed home. A letter he had left for Cook at Capetown confirmed a story which had been patched together with some difficulty during the *Resolution's* last call at Queen Charlotte's Sound.

The *Adventure*, after being driven far off course by storms, had come to the bay of rendezvous only four days after Captain Cook had ended his impatient wait there. At one time the two ships must have been within a few miles of each other.

While he was there Furneaux had had the bad luck which besets lesser men and which greater men escape. A boatful of men sent a short distance to collect green stuff for the larder had been attacked by a group of Maoris, killed, and eaten. What mistake they made, if they made one, or wherein Furneaux's discipline had failed, has never been known. Furneaux had had enough and sailed for home.

He had been once before around the world. Cook was too kind a man and too good an officer ever to hint his associate had any serious failing. The *Adventure* was as sound a ship as the bigger *Resolution*, in every way as fit for her task as the *Endeavour*. But Furneaux was content to move within the narrow frame of the merely adequate, of duty done.

The course for England which Cook laid out was by way of the isolated islands of Ascension and Fernando de Noronha, then the Azores. Though the Atlantic is a long ocean, many mariners of the time made the trip

without interruption. Cook, the most faithful housewife the sea had known, stopped off for shopping and fresh food.

The *Resolution* reached Plymouth on July 30th, 1775. The voyage had lasted three years and eighteen days.

The record of which Cook was proudest was that of the 112 men who had set out with him, 108 had come safely home. Three had died of accident and only one of disease. Others had made great discoveries. He alone had made the great discovery of how to keep men on ships alive. Important though it was that he found Australia and New Zealand, it was of far more importance that he had now made it possible to reach them.

The diet and the care he prescribed for sailors and passengers on long voyages brought the Antipodes within relatively easy reach. Had Cook not made that prime discovery both might have remained curiosities, destinations only for rare adventurers, for another hundred years.

That truth is known in both Dominions.

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[6] Ant.

PART IV

# The Third Voyage

1775-1779

## Departure

1775-1776

The press noted Cook's return.

One newspaper got his name wrong. Two had the first sailor of England still aboard the *Endeavour*. A fourth said he would be made an Admiral. Another reported that he had found a "vast island" somewhere in the neighborhood of China. A sixth journal was moved to announce that Captain Cook had found "a large chain of country" below the Antarctic Circle, the one area where he had found nothing whatsoever. Geography has ever been outside the scope of journalism.

Officialdom was clearer-headed. At the Navy Office on Crutched Friars, Cook was a hero. The Earl of Sandwich was well pleased that his patronage of this Yorkshire commoner had borne such a wealth of fruit.

The large, simply educated, but well-intentioned King again received the Captain of his own making in a painted, heavy room at St. James's Palace within a mere ten days of his return. The audience this time was longer. The agriculturally inclined monarch asked after the livestock with which he had suggested the new world be stocked and was disappointed to hear the poor results of that good intention. The King was pleased to accept some drawings.

Like the first, this interview had its climax and reward. The King promoted Captain Cook to Post Captain, a higher rank.

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James Cook was forty-seven. By his own thoroughness he was convinced he had ended his career. There were no worlds left for him to conquer.

Ten years before, nearly the whole huge quarter of the globe from well to the north of the Tropic of Capricorn down to the Antarctic had been lost in a dark of ignorance. Through Cook's work all of that immense region had been made known. Its empty seas, most of its myriad islands and one coast of its disregarded continent were now so well charted that they could be retraveled by any mariner who could read a map.

Nothing was easier to suppose than that after the brief tumult of praise died down they would have no further use for him. London was full of

Captains of the Royal Navy with no ships under them. Soon he would join their ranks. For some of them it was release, for some a pity. For Cook it could easily turn to tragedy.

He had no money.

During his absence the needs of Elizabeth and the two boys Nathaniel and James, now ten and eleven, had been met by the charity of Lord Sandwich. The back pay which now was due him for the voyage would not last indefinitely. They had the house on Mile End Road and there was no immediate threat of destitution. But even that would not be far off if perhaps the only Captain in the Navy who was without a private fortune should try to live upon his earnings.

A friend at the Admiralty—one suspects Sir Hugh Palliser—gave him good advice.

One of the Captains of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich had just died and left a vacancy there. Only three days after he had seen the King, Cook applied for it.

The old Palace near the river, where Henry VIII and Elizabeth and Mary Tudor had been born, had been turned in 1705 into a hospital for superannuated seamen. Because it was a shore institution of the Navy, the warren of old buildings in their pleasant lawns sloping to the Thames was governed by commissioned officers.

The institution was more old-man's home than hospital, where grizzled ancients from the fighting ships with empty sleeves and peg-legs strolled in the drizzle, sat in the rare sun, and retold old tales of war. Since the administration of the place was in the hands of competent underlings, the post of Greenwich Captain was admittedly a sinecure.

The place paid £200 a year. A suite of rooms was provided if wanted, with firewood and candles, and there was an allowance of 1/ 2d a day "table money." Once installed in a niche at Greenwich none need leave it except in his coffin.

Since the decision rested with Cook's two friends, Sandwich and Hugh Palliser, the appointment was confirmed the same day Cook submitted his request.

The load of worry was lifted. James Cook was safe.

Safe!

He had sought to be many things in his life, but never that. It had all happened so quickly he had not had time to reflect.

Elizabeth was delighted. Now her famous husband would stay home and she would be the Captain's lady. His immediate doubts were foolish and ungrateful and it can be assumed she told him so. Truly, these moods of Mr. Cook—as she always called him, even in the utmost privacy—were

intolerable. Within a week he was dreading the comfortable, distinguished life ahead of them as he had never feared those shocking Indians he liked so much, who ate each other.

Cook sat down once more to write John Walker in Whitby, the birthplace of his ships:

“I must tell you the *Resolution* was found to answer on all occasions even beyond my expectations, and is so little injured by the voyage that she will soon be sent out again. But I shall not command her. My fate drives me from one extreme to another; a few months ago the whole southern hemisphere was hardly big enough for me, and now I am going to be confined within the limits of Greenwich Hospital, which are far too small for an active mind like mine. I must, however, confess it is a fine retreat and a pretty income, but whether I can bring myself to like ease and retirement, time will show. . . .”

There was no hurry for him to assume his duties. He stayed on at the house on Mile End Road and went each day to the Admiralty. He was immensely busy. He was writing a book.

It had been assumed after the return of the *Endeavour* that Cook, who had been to no school anyone had ever heard of, and that for so short a time he himself could hardly remember it, was not fit to write the account of his own voyage. The mountainous notes, logs and journals of the trip had therefore been turned over to a successful literary hack, one John Hawkesworth.

Hawkesworth had followed Dr. Johnson in the editorship of the Gentleman’s Magazine, he had edited Swift, he had adapted plays and written a romantic novel. He had never been outside of England. The actor David Garrick recommended him to Lord Sandwich. Why, is not clear.

Hawkesworth had done badly. He had lumped together in three massive illustrated volumes—they sold like hot cakes at £33 the set—the expeditions of Byron, Wallis, Carteret, and Cook, in fine disregard of the fact that the last name on the title page was by far the most important—as the public promptly recognized.

The truth seems to be that “the affected, insincere man, a great coxcomb in his dress” as Sir Joshua Reynolds described him, did not do much of anything. He is supposed to have turned the masses of material over to a publisher for the stately sum of £6000 and been content to let the bookseller edit and assemble them as he saw fit.

Poor Editor Hawkesworth was so roundly attacked it was supposed to have hastened his death.

What particularly aroused critical fury was the almost total absence in the account of Cook's first voyage of any moral lessons. The customs of the heathen, even their wayward eccentricity of sometimes eating one another, were simply set down. The account of them showed far more tolerance and kindness than the Eighteenth Century understood. It was also discovered by attentive and indignant readers that the *Endeavour's* many escapes from destruction were not ascribed to the intervention of Divine Providence.

There is a suspicion Cook was of precisely that opinion. The *Endeavour's* many escapes from destruction, in his mind, were due to good seamanship and careful navigation. Their encounter with the reef off Australia had been due to chance—and bad seamanship. If it was Divine Providence that killed his men from fever and the flux in Batavia,—and if it was to be credited with everything, It had to be credited with that too—Providence was something beyond both his comprehension and his liking.

As for moral judgments upon the Polynesians and the odd, sharp-witted little blackfellows of Australia, it was inconceivable to him that he or anyone else had the right to make them. They were men like other men, good, bad and indifferent. What mattered it if they wore few clothes and bowed to stranger gods?

Poor Mr. Hawkesworth. If he had been less lazy he would probably have remembered to put in those pious observations the public missed. Nevertheless, the book was a jumble. It had mistakes in it. Cook disliked it as much as anyone, though for different reasons.

In any event, there should be no question as to who would write the account of the second voyage. With achievement and attendant fame Cook had gained confidence. He had kept a careful journal.

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He had forgotten the Forsters. When the *Resolution* had come home, that discontented pair had made contact with solid earth almost as soon as had the anchor. The vast litter of souvenirs bought (often from the *Resolution's* sailors, at a stiff mark-up) and their stacks of specimens had been carted away. It had been a pleasure to be quit of them.

The pleasure was short-lived. By letter and in person the Prussians began to haunt the Admiralty like very solid ghosts. They complained that the £4000 they had been paid was not enough. Sparrman, whom they themselves had hired, had taken some of it. Their collections had cost much more than they had anticipated. They said Lord Sandwich—though not in writing, they admitted—had promised that they would have the exclusive privilege of writing the story of the voyage, and have all the profits from it.



Furthermore, the Forsters declared, the First Lord had assured them that profitable posts would be found for them for all the rest of their lives.

John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, was many things but he was not a fool. He explosively denied he had even hinted at, far less made, any such absurd commitment. But there were the Forsters, as persistent as May flies. A compromise was arranged.

Captain Cook would write of the voyage and its discoveries. Forster would confine himself to Science. What was least satisfactory about the arrangement was the requirement that Cook—not being a Herr Doktor—would submit his manuscript to Forster for editing.

It didn't work.

So promptly did Forster rub everyone the wrong way that Lord Sandwich lost his temper, told Johann Forster to write nothing, and commanded Cook to go ahead.

Ah!—but *young* Forster had not been ordered not to write a book!

In due course it appeared—six weeks before Cook's own impressive and well-written volumes were published.

The world was informed—the truth is, rather readably—that never had two mortals undergone such hardships, such suffering or, one gathers, been in such unworthy company. Since Cook's Journals had been for a time in the Forsters' possession, they had copiously plagiarized.

In essence, of course, it didn't matter. The Forsters faded into limbo. When Cook's two volumes came out two years later, under one of those Eighteenth Century titles which take up half a page, "everyone" read them, or at least "everyone" bought them, and James Cook's quiet fame firmed into a solid, un-strident immortality.

What the snarling, stupid quarrel did accomplish was again to sharpen Cook's distaste for life as he found it in his own country.

He still stayed on at Mile End Road. Since the post at Greenwich Hospital had no real duties and he was busy under Admiralty instructions, there was no point in moving there.

The neighborhood where they had bought their house twelve years before was changing, and not for the better. The brick kilns which now almost surrounded London poured their acrid smoke into their windows. Though a system of licensing had checked somewhat the boundless, squalid drunkenness of the first half of the century, and London boasted it was the richest city in the world, a man with a habit of exploration did not have to go far to find evidence of more misery, violence, and ignorance than the Australian aborigines had ever dreamed of.

Children who were parish charges were too often apprenticed when scarcely more than babies to pauper weavers, chimney sweeps and cobblers

whose own utter poverty made them bestially cruel. Theft had been annoying in the Marquesas. That selfish crime was ten thousand times more prevalent in London. Maoris were too frequently violent. Knifing, bludgeoning and murder were commoner by far in what seemed to Cook was so ironically called civilization. It is true the islanders wore little. But was it not better than the foul and stinking rags which garbed the thronging city mobs of his own island?

The winter passed. The skies had not been more gray in the Antarctic.

There were other London worlds. There was the tiny, incomparably dull world of his wife Elizabeth, that said, "La, Sir!," was coy with fans, played tirelessly at putt, whist, cribbage, and all-fours, wore outrageous ribboned hats, and talked of children and the neighbors.

There was the better one, of talkative and clever men. It was pleasant until the novelty wore off, during that winter and that spring, to gather with them at the Mitre Tavern, to drop in at Dr. Burney's and hear Fanny rattle on, to be asked again by Sandwich to his great place of Hinchinbroke.

Cook sat in full dress uniform for a fashionable painter. Cook of the salt beef, raw grass, and slops of half a dozen ships developed a palate for good wines. He gained in social grace.

And it was once more as stale as water that had lain in its cask too long.

Cook had resolved on the return of the *Resolution* never to return to the South Seas. He had learned there was disappointment in repetition. To repeat still again might be to destroy utterly.

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The familiar path to Tahiti was, however, to be taken once more. That had been decided at the Admiralty soon after Cook came back. A curious point of honor, in justice, one must say a singularly British view of honor and of word-keeping, was involved. But it was one in which Cook need not concern himself.

On Captain Cook's final departure from the Society Islands a number of the islanders had asked to go with him. He had refused them. The death of Tupia and his servant during the last tragic phase of the voyage of the *Endeavour* still weighed on his conscience. Since he had no thought of ever coming back no plea would induce him to carry off one of those innocents to a life of exile.

Captain Furneaux of the *Adventure* had not been so nice. Among his souvenirs he had taken home with him a young native of Tahiti named Omai. Omai had been a *succès fou*.

As solemn Dr. Forster put it: "On his arrival in England Omai was introduced into genteel company, led to the most splendid entertainments of

the great and luxurious metropolis and presented at court amidst a brilliant circle of the first nobility.”

Omai had also been to France. Parisian society, always volatile, had made as much of him as they had across the channel. The first representative of the Polynesian race to reach Europe had learned to speak fair English, and Forster credits him with having “imitated that easy and elegant politeness” which in the German naturalist’s view characterized “those places.” Omai, however, Forster was obliged to say, had neglected the two studies the German thought most fitting for him, virtue—and agriculture.

Omai, in short, had been thoroughly spoiled and had hugely enjoyed himself.

Now, in the opinion of the Lords of Admiralty, and of that paragon of the homely virtues the King himself, it was time for him to return. In bringing him to England there had been the implied promise he would in due course be sent home. Since no ship was bound for Tahiti, one would have to be sent. It would cost many thousands of pounds, but that could not be helped. The Royal Navy had given its word. The Royal Navy kept its word.

Obviously the most appropriate ship for the voyage was the *Resolution*. Since the *Adventure* was now in other service, Captain Cook, as an expert, was asked to help in finding an appropriate sister ship to sail with her. There was no thought that he would go himself.

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On the 29th of February in the memorable leap year of 1776 Captain Cook was elected a member of the most exclusive brotherhood in the world of men of intellect and of scientific achievement, the Royal Society. The vote was unanimous.

The paper which Cook prepared to be read on the evening when he was formally admitted was on the subject of the prevention of scurvy.

In the admirable, lucid prose he had taught himself, he touched upon the importance of fresh food and the value of the various malts and conserves which could be added to a ship’s supplies. But what was at least as remarkable, James Cook declared that even common sailors should have rest, fresh water, that they must keep their persons and their clothing clean, have clean, dry bedding, and live aboard ships kept as dry and spotless as themselves. There was not a factory, a workhouse, a prison, a common lodging house and scarcely an inn in all of England which could not have benefited from that advice.

The paper won for Captain Cook the Gold Medal awarded for the best paper of the year.

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In January a suitable ship of the familiar Whitby build had been found to accompany the *Resolution* on her return to Tahiti.

By this time the palpable absurdity of sending two vessels around the world for no better purpose than to send home one vain young Polynesian who did not particularly wish to be sent home, was beginning to weigh upon the collective Admiralty mind.

While they were at it, could not something useful be accomplished?

It was already recognized that the struggle with the American colonies might bar a great and vital region to British trade for who could tell how long. Commerce could not stop or Britain's prosperity would stop with it. New markets would have to be found. The more accessible they were, the better they would serve.

If a navigable short route to Asia could be found by Englishmen and held for the use of Englishmen, it would more than compensate for the losses the shipowners and merchants were suffering. In brief, would it not be well to search still once again for the Northwest Passage?

The approaches to that chimera from the eastern face of North America had been explored and explored again. Enough good ships and better lives had been lost in the tangle of ice channels and barren frozen islands that lay to the north of Canada. The other approach, from the Pacific, had not been studied.

In 1728 an eccentric genius of a Dane, named Vitus Bering, in the service of the Russian Czar, had proven that the Asiatic and American continents were not joined. But the enormous enterprise had worn him out and he had died. Perhaps, who knew, the Passage could be found if sought from that direction?

So strong was the wish that what did not exist might exist, that for years there had been the standing offer of a reward of £20,000 for the first ship which made the passage.

The Pacific was Cook's particular domain. The whole world knew his mastery of all the arts of sailing. If he could be induced to undertake this final quest . . .

It is an indication of the esteem in which they held him that Sandwich, and Sir Hugh Palliser, now high in authority at the Navy Office, thought only of persuasion. Cook was an officer of the Royal Navy. If they liked, they could order him to any duty. But though he himself seemed unaware of it, he was now one of the greatest men in England. Even the King, who now perilously played at ruling as well as being merely King, would hesitate to command James Cook.

Sandwich knew his man. The *Resolution* was in dockyard being refitted. A companion vessel of the same sturdy type had been bought and named the

*Discovery.* The errand to return Omai to his island had matured into an ambitious plan to explore the northwest coast of North America, the Pacific approaches to the Arctic Ocean, and seek the Northwest Passage. All that remained was to find a suitable commander.

Captain Cook was invited to dinner by Lord Sandwich. Over the port they asked his advice. They wanted a first-rate man. The expedition was important. If the Passage was found and the three-hundred-year-old fancy was realized, its discoverer would be immortal. Of course, there was also that matter of the prize money. £20,000 was not an inconsiderable sum.

James Cook leaped up and struck his strong hand upon the table. The Earl of Sandwich and the other gentlemen from the Admiralty concealed their smiles. Their Lordships willing, he would command. Even as he made it, the declaration astonished him. He had planned these final, these desperately dull, years of his life so carefully. Elizabeth's reaction to the news would not bear thinking on. He astonished no one else.

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On February 10th, 1776, Cook put his request in writing; remembering with sober afterthought to add that he was "relying" upon their Lordships, "if they condescend to accept this offer, they will on my return either restore me to my appointment in the Hospital or procure for me such other mark of the Royal Favour as their Lordships, upon the review of my past services, shall think me deserving of."

This island of England was as dangerous as any he knew. In England you ran the risk of starving.

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When Authority chose, it could snip red tape. The Lords' Commissioners confirmed the appointment the same day and put in writing their promise Cook would not be forgotten when the voyage was done.

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His decision, once made, filled him with uncertainty. The damned restlessness that so strangely had been born in him, had become obsessive. He had studied self-control so long. In this great matter had he no control at all?

The habit he had formed so long ago of confiding in his former master, sensible, kind John Walker of the unchanging little brick house in Grape Lane, Whitby, was still strong in him.

He wrote to him a few days later. (There was no one to whom it was so satisfying to confide his triumphs as the man who had known him as a penniless and almost nameless son of a field laborer.)

“I know not what your opinion may be of the step I have taken. It is certain I have quitted an easy retirement for an active, perhaps dangerous voyage. My present disposition is more favourable to the latter than the former, and I embark on as fair a prospect as I could wish.”

It seemed clearer now. It was his life, his destiny. He had no home but the sea, no permanent abiding place upon either sea or land, no destination but where the vast globe curved into the mists of the unknown.

He might not come home. He told John Walker of his doubt of it. Certainly, there had always been that possibility, since he first put out from Whitby into the gray rage of the North Sea. But now, perhaps, fate, chance, fortune, whatever it was, had grown weary of him.

He must face that too with a cool judgment and a level head, as he had tried to face everything in the forty-eight years of living which of late had begun to seem so long.

Elizabeth bore another son in May. They named him Hugh, after Cook’s old friend and captain, Hugh Palliser.

Two months later, the two ships were at Plymouth.

The Captain appointed to the *Discovery* was Charles Clerke. He had been with Byron round the world and with Cook on both the *Endeavour* and the *Resolution*. One of his Lieutenants was James Burney, a son of the music master and a brother of Fanny. They had for shipmate a promising youth of eighteen with the rank of midshipman, whose name was George Vancouver.

Cook’s sailing master on the *Resolution* was a stocky Cornishman with sharp and searching eyes, a long nose and a great shining cannonball of a head from which the thick hair, at twenty-two, was already retreating almost to the crown of his hard skull. Cook had seen samples of his charts. They were exquisite, as sensitively and as accurately drawn as any Cook had seen. Those who had sailed with him declared he was both resourceful and brave. He was also said to be irascible, but Cook was confident of his ability to deal with him. The man’s name was William Bligh.

Omai, though conspicuously overshadowed by the Northwest Passage, was still one of the main purposes of the voyage. After all, he had inspired it.

Now the time had come to go, he was of two minds, both of them unsettled. Europe had been so kind to him that he wept freely at the thought of parting. Reminded of his own fair and easy island, he was filled with rejoicing.

His fashionable friends had kept him in funds, so Omai was taking back to the South Seas with him those things he most admired. They were:

A portable organ

A machine which when cranked produced an electric shock

A coat of chain mail

A suit of armor.

Dr. Forster gravely pointed out the list contained “nothing useful to his people.”

To within a short six days of sailing, in hours snatched somehow, usually late at night in the big cabin by the light of candles on the firm, round table, Captain Cook was busy with the completion of his book. He called it, in the straightforward fashion of the time, and of himself, “A Voyage Round the World, Performed in His Britannic Majesty’s Ships the Resolution and Adventure, in the years 1772, 1773, 1774, and 1775.” He signed it, “By James Cook, Commander of the Resolution.”

At last it was finished. It was an honest book. He would say no more for it. All that remained were a few pages of an introduction. Soon they too were written. He had come to the last paragraph.

He was tired. A thousand details of the voyage ahead still had to be looked to. This craft of writing, though his habit since boyhood of keeping a journal had at least given him much practice in it, was one to which he was not used. And the book was long.

Cook stared into the shadows beyond the still pale yellow flames of the tapers in the two silver candlesticks.

He had come far indeed since those months of stillness under the Yorkshire winter snows when he had struggled with a squeaking pencil on a black slate to master his letters. The great world into which he seemed so oddly to have stumbled, he knew now, had a short memory. At the Admiralty they had all but forgotten the fact of his vulgar birth.

James Cook leaned forward and dipped his quill. He must make no secret of it. If they had forgotten, he would remind them. It was truth and in the confusions of life, that he was surest of, that truth was the surest course to steer.

Swiftly, he wrote:

“I shall therefore conclude this introductory discourse with desiring the reader to excuse the inaccuracies of style which doubtless he will frequently meet with in the following narrative; and that, when such occur, he will recollect that it is the production of a man who has not had the advantage of much school education, but who has been constantly at sea from his youth; and though, with the assistance of a few good friends, he has passed through all the stations belonging to a seaman, from an

apprentice boy in the coal trade to a post captain of the Royal Navy, he has had no opportunity of cultivating letters. After this account of myself, the public must not expect from me the elegance of a fine writer, or the plausibility of a professed book-maker; but will, I hope, consider me as a plain man, zealously exerting himself in the service of his country, and determined to give the best account he is able of his proceedings.”

At the bottom he put: “Plymouth Sound, July 7, 1776.”

It was done. There was no concealment. It was not the man who was important, but the work he tried to do.

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Big, long-nosed Captain Clerke was late, due to having taken refuge in the Liberties of the Fleet prison to escape arrest for debt. But Cook left instructions for him to follow in the *Discovery* as soon as he could. It was July 12th, the anniversary of the *Resolution*’s sailing four years before. Seamen, like landmen, being superstitious, he did not want to miss a date they thought was so propitious.

Plymouth roads were jammed with ships taking Hessian troops off to the fighting in America. The departure of the renowned explorer at eight o’clock in the still sunlit summer evening, caused little notice.



## The Sandwich Islands

1776-1778

Though the larger ship never had quite the place in his affections as the *Endeavour*, the *Resolution* was Cook's home. He had spent more time aboard her than he had lived in the house on Mile End Road. The Great Cabin aft, with its seven windows looking out upon the wake, with its round dining table and its straight-backed chairs, now that long habit made him crouch a little not to whack his forehead upon the carved deck beams overhead, was comfortable and even had a kind of state. It was even more his on this voyage than before.

Happily, there were no Forsters. Unhappily, there was no Joseph Banks or Dr. Solander. A clever draughtsman, James Webber, who also painted in oils, had the assignment of sketching whatever strange sights and people they encountered. The ship's surgeon Anderson, a veteran of the previous voyage, had shown such aptitude for natural history and botany that that department was to be left to him.

On this trip Cook was to make all mathematical and astronomical observations himself. Since no one in England was more proficient in both those sciences, it seemed superfluous to send an "expert." Cook had learned from experience that the less "idlers," as the sailors called them, there were aboard, the smoother was apt to be the operation of the ship.

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Time was the antagonist. Sometimes the spaces of the sea seemed limitless. They ate time, slow time, with insatiable hunger.

Nine weeks to the Cape of Good Hope.

Seven weeks in Table Bay waiting for Captain Clerke and the *Discovery*. Three weeks more while the storm-worn *Discovery*—for both ships had fought rough weather—made ready for sea again.

Seven months had passed before they reached New Zealand. They had stopped en route. Food and water had been refreshed at half a dozen settled ports, and wild and untouched beaches. The uninhabited—and uninhabitable—*island* reported by the French mariner Kerguelen had been rediscovered, exactly placed and its frigid desolation of barren rock and sea birds' nests explored.

They touched at the Cook Islands and at the Tongas.

A year and a month had been eaten away before they reached Tahiti. And Tahiti was where their voyage was to begin.

Cook was growing tired. The years, fatigue and repetition had taken their toll of him. The proof, though subtle, was sure.

On the eastward course, the two vessels halted at Tasmania. It had not yet been established whether that temperate and mountainous land below Australia was a projection of the continent or an island. Cook left the question unanswered and went on.

In the Cook Islands and the Tongas he sat, as he always had, with native mariners and drew patterns in the sand. He spoke the basic tongue of Polynesia with fair fluency. Omai, to whom the Captain had taken a great liking, was at hand to interpret.

These lithe, brown people of the sun were a race of voyagers and adventurers. They knew their ocean and its guiding stars. They told him, with vagueness and uncertainty, it is true, but with hints that were strong enough to have sent him on past journeys questing like a bird dog, of great island groups to the north and to the west called Samoa and Fiji which no one had yet discovered.

And Cook did not go and search for them.

He had an excuse. Or rather, he made one. His wearisomely horticultural-minded monarch, the third George was more than ever obsessed with the notion that these voyages in English ships would gain virtue if they carried with them to the underprivileged of the new lands such benefits of civilization as potatoes and parsnip seeds, sheep and cows. Both ships were traveling menageries. Cook had wryly remarked that all that was needed was a female of their own species for the *Resolution* to rate as a second Ark.

Having learned how to keep men alive on long voyages he was now trying to learn, with less success, how to make livestock thrive through all climates and weathers.

Halts en route had been dominated by the search for fodder for the seasick, stinking, mooing, grunting, baa-ing, cackling beasts. At Capetown they had added to their stock—and trouble—by hoisting aboard four horses.

Only too gladly, Cook had left a pair of pigs in Tasmania, a pair of goats and two more pigs in New Zealand. The cows and horses tethered in the gun deck stables had filled the inhabitants of the Cook Islands with such total astonishment as to produce a kind of numb disinterest. The goats and sheep “they absurdly inferred,” Cook said, “were birds!”

Plainly, quadrupeds would be wasted on such ignorance. So the lion’s share was still left for Tahiti.

Except for that there was no hurry. The two ships loitered through the Cook archipelago. They dawdled at the King's expense, like idle yachtsmen, amid the perfect beauty and the sweet and childlike friendliness of the Tongas. A year had already passed since they left England. The sense of time was fading fast. It was Lethe. Life drowsed away as if they nodded in white poppy fields. The sometimes too-fierce compulsion which had driven Cook so far had waned like an autumn moon. Only here in the islands, here in the soft tropics and now at last, was he at peace.

He found that all sense of apprehension had left him. It was not that he had grown more brave. All his life he had had courage enough to face with outward calm and inner steadiness any danger which presented itself. But this warm and saturating peace of the islands, soft as a woman's hand, had smoothed away all capacity for fear. Courage had become as superfluous as an overcoat. He had discarded caution.

He loved the island people. He loved with a queer nostalgic passion and a brooding sense of the failure of his own land and race what seemed to him the nearly perfect life they and nature and the sun had made. He trusted them. He sailed with them in their big ocean-going canoes, his lean back naked to the blaze of sky, his long hair wet with spray and his feet bare. When they came to new islands—for, indolent though their pace had become, they discovered many more—he was by old habit the first ashore with no regard for the stalwart savages, and sometimes the throngs of them were vast, who waited on the beach.

In other years some of their traits had annoyed and often angered him. With what he believed was now complete, sure knowledge of them, he forgave them everything.

He wrote: "A propensity to thieving seems to be the only defect to sully their fair character. It should be considered, however, that this exceptional part of their conduct existed merely with respect to us. Allowances should be made for the foibles of these poor islanders, whose minds we overpowered with the glare of new and captivating objects. They were stimulated solely by curiosity and desire to possess something new, and the property of people so different from themselves.

"Perhaps," Cook reflected, "if a set of beings, seemingly as superior to us as we appear to be to them should make their appearance among us, it might be possible that our natural regard to justice would not be able to restrain many from being guilty of the same error."

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Since the *Resolution's* last halt at Tahiti the Spaniards had come again. This time they had mended their manners and had ingratiated themselves.

The Tahitians were growing almost as used to tourists as baggage porters at Calais.

Of all things, the voyagers from Peru had brought with them a house. “Composed of wooden materials, which appeared to have been brought hither, ready prepared, in order to be set up as occasion might require, for the planks were all numbered. It consisted of two small rooms, in the inner of which was a bedstead, a bench, a table, some old hats, and other trifles, of which the natives seemed to be remarkably careful, as well as of the building itself, which had received no injury from the weather, a kind of shed having been erected over it.”

Heady with that immense popular success, the Spaniards had erected a wooden cross a short way off, on which was cut: *Christus vincit. Carolus III. imperat, 1774* for all the world as if Tahiti were their find.

Cook dealt with that impertinence by having inscribed on the other side of the same post, *Georgius Tertius Rex, Annus 1767, 1769, 1773, 1774, et 1777*. The theological observation he declined to argue. And that was that.

But for the purposes of British prestige it was as well they had brought the horses. Those bewildered emigrants from Capetown more than repaid, as he put it, “the extraordinary trouble and vexation that had attended bringing this living cargo to such a distance.”

The mare and stallion were bridled and saddled and Captain Cook and Captain Clerke, both in full blue uniform jackets, white trousers, cockaded hats, and high good humor, mounted them. Omai the inept and amiable, whose official and triumphant return laden with gifts had somehow failed to make any particular impression on his fellow-citizens, already had several times tried to demonstrate their use, but had always fallen off.

Like the clown who comes on before the acrobats, his failure merely served to heighten the Captains’ triumph, as they “rode round the plain of Matavai, to the astonishment of a vast train of spectators. After they had seen the use that was made of these animals they were exceedingly delighted with them; and we were of opinion that they conveyed to them a better idea of the greatness of other nations, than all the novelties that their European visitors had carried amongst them.”

Cook in philosophic vein, for the habit of abstract thought had grown in him, was not far off. Just so hugely have all islanders and simple people of the plains been impressed and their nations and their spirits conquered by the first sight of men on horseback.

The Spaniards’ prefabricated house had been reduced to insignificance and England’s honor saved.

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The *Resolution* and the *Discovery* did not quit the Society Islands until December, 1777, a year and a half after they left England. For a year they had had no contact with their own world or had any news of it. Of the progress of the bloody quarrel with the colonies in America, or of Britain's present relations with Spain and France, they knew nothing.

That ignorance posed a problem. Both vessels were ships of the Royal Navy and were armed. If England was at war and they should fall in with warships of the enemy, they would be fair game. The guns they carried would be nearly useless in a real encounter.

Well, there was no help for it, nor much likelihood of danger. The sea tracks they followed were the most lonely in the world.

Cook need not have been concerned. His fame was wider than he knew, and the civilization he had now renounced with both mind and soul, more civil than he thought.

In the fourth quarter of the Eighteenth Century, pure learning was in high regard. Wars were not yet total.

On the outbreak of hostilities between France and England, the French Minister of Marine sent a special order to all French ships of war, that:

“As such discoveries are of general utility to all nations, it is the King's pleasure that Captain Cook shall be treated as a commander of a neutral and allied power and that all Captains of armed vessels, etc., who may meet that famous navigator shall make him acquainted with the King's order on his behalf, but at the same time let him know that on his part he must refrain from all hostilities.”

Spain, in due course, followed suit.

The two ships set their course for the north.

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The vast spaces of the central Pacific were then, in what seems to us such relatively recent times, almost totally unknown. Not many mariners of any nation had ventured on the journey between the most widely separated of the continents over ocean distances which were thought to be empty of all land. The very few who through misadventure or foul winds had wandered there had left the chart dotted with uncertainties. If there had been valid discoveries no recognizable descriptions had survived.

No one before Cook had attempted to sail the full length of the Pacific from south to north.

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Soon after daybreak on Christmas Eve, 1777, Cook discovered that small, desolate and uninhabited speck of land—which was to become useful in the age of flight—which he named Christmas Island.

Before leaving, the Captain left an inscription in a bottle:

*Georgius Tertius, Rex, 31 Decembris, 1777.*  
*Naves (Resolution, Jac. Cook, Pr.*  
*(Discovery, Car. Clerke, Pr.*

The bottle was well sealed.

One wonders what became of it.

A week later Cook noted in his Journal:

“We daily observed tropic birds, men of war birds, boobies, etc. and between the latitude of 10° and 11° north, we saw several turtles. Though all these are considered as signs of the proximity of land, we discovered none till early in the morning of the 18th [January 1778], when an island appeared, bearing northeast by east. Not long after, more land was seen, which bore north, and was totally detached from the former. At noon the first was supposed to be about eight or nine leagues distant. The next day at sunrise, the island first seen bore east, at the distance of several leagues. Not being able to reach this, we shaped our course for the other; and soon after, observed a third island, bearing west-north-west.”

The language of exploration is not dramatic.

The islands they had seen were Oahu, Kauai, and Nihau. James Cook had discovered the Hawaiian Islands.

The first toward which the two little ships under their white clouds of canvas sailed, was Kauai of the noble, wooded mountains and the great sweep of sun-drenched plain.

“As we made a nearer approach, many of the inhabitants put off from the shore in their canoes, and very readily came alongside the ships. We were agreeably surprised to find that they spoke a dialect of the Tahitian language. They could not be prevailed upon by any entreaties to come on board.”

Fresh discovery roused Cook from inner lethargy like the fine warmth of brandy in the blood, and this, he recognized at once, was a discovery of the

first significance.

First at the rail, he “tied some brass medals to a rope, which he gave to those who were in one of the canoes; and they in return fastened some mackerel to the rope by way of equivalent. This was repeated; and some small nails or pieces of iron were given them; for which they gave in exchange some more fish and a sweet potato; a sure indication of their having some notion of bartering, or at least of returning one present for another. One of them even offered for sale the piece of stuff which he wore about his waist.

“These people did not exceed the ordinary size, and were stoutly made. Their complexion was brown; and though there appeared to be little difference in the casts of their color, there was a considerable variation in their features. Most of them had their hair cropped rather short; a few had it tied in a bunch at the top of the head; and others suffered it to grow loose. It seemed to be naturally black; but the generality of them had stained it with some stuff which communicated to it a brownish color. Most of them had pretty long beards. They had no ornaments about their persons, nor did we observe that they had their ears perforated. Some of them were tattooed on the hands, or near the groin; and the pieces of cloth which were worn by them round their middle were curiously colored with white, black and red. They seemed to be mild and good-natured; and were furnished with no arms of any kind except some small stones which they had manifestly brought for their own defense; and these they threw into the sea when they found there was no occasion for them.”

Through that day the two ships cruised slowly along the southeast side of the island of Kauai in search of an anchorage.

Word had spread of the simple and readily understandable wants of the otherwise inexplicable strangers and many canoes loaded with pigs and “some excellent potatoes” put off from shore to meet them. A number of the paddlers, truly daring—would we as casually climb aboard a Martian spaceship—accepted the outstretched hands of the sailors and allowed themselves to be hoisted over the rail.

“None of the inhabitants we ever met with before in any other island or country were so astonished as these people were upon entering a ship. Their eyes were incessantly roving from one object to another; and the wildness of their looks and gestures

fully indicated their perfect ignorance with respect to everything they saw and strongly marked to us that they had never till the present time been visited by Europeans.”

But still, no place of anchorage.

During the night the ships headed out to sea, standing off and on. As soon as it was daylight they put back.

At nine o'clock Cook sent a Lieutenant with three armed boats to look for a harbor, or at least safe holding-ground and, while he was at it, to find fresh water.

The Lieutenant, one of the three of that rank who served under Cook on the *Resolution*, was an Irishman named John Williamson.

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The official record of the voyage, which was not published until six years later, skims over what happened.

But aboard the *Discovery* was an observer who when he came to write his account in later years was bound by no considerations for the reputation of a commissioned officer. He was a plain man and a good witness and he wrote simply of what he saw and heard.

Henry Zimmermann was a German who had settled in London and made his living as a saddler and harness maker. But he, too, had the restless spirit. When the crews were being recruited for Cook's third voyage, Zimmermann, whose only previous experience of the sea was when he had crossed the Channel as a passenger, applied, was accepted and was signed on as coxswain.

When the three boats with Lt. Williamson's in the lead approached the beach, they were met by a shouting crowd of Hawaiians who rushed neck-deep into the waves to meet them. Williamson's longboat was lifted bodily out of the water.

Experience should long since have taught him that among the Pacific islands that is a common gesture of helpfulness; indeed, is the best and safest of ways of getting a boat through surf onto a sandy beach. But Williamson lost his nerve and the boat's crew caught the contagion. They banged hysterically with their oars at the bare brown knuckles gripping the boat's thwarts.

Williamson brandished his gun and a man in the water grabbed at it. Williamson fired at point-blank range. At the explosion the boat was dropped with a smack and a sway back into the water. The already dying man, shot through the breast, was picked up by his comrades and carried “with great clamor” into the forest.



Lt. Williamson did not return at once to his ship. It is unlikely he looked forward to it. The three boats continued rowing along the coast at a safe distance offshore until the Lieutenant had sighted a large pond of what must be fresh water a short distance inland near a village of grass houses. At least, he had performed that much of his errand. He got back to the *Resolution* at noon.

His reception by Cook is not hard to imagine. In Cook's eyes this young "gentleman" of his was more than a coward and a fool. He was a murderer. By losing his wits and killing one of these island innocents he had broken the paramount rule Captain Cook had hammered into every man of his company from the beginning of his first voyage.

They needed fresh food, water. All their lives depended on it. Without the good will of these manifestly friendly people they might get nothing. Cook's rage and contempt poured out like red lava.

The two ships were a close community. Every incident became common property. Williamson—who carried the King's commission—had hardly emerged, pale and stiff, from his memorable ticking off than everyone aboard must have known of it. What was not known, gossip embellished.

Yet worse was in store for him.

By three o'clock the two vessels, preceded by a boat which had gone ahead with Bligh, had been directed by that competent Master to an at least acceptable place where the anchors would hold in twenty-five fathoms. There they had come to rest, with all sails furled.

Captain Cook commanded three boats as before to be got ready and took his place in the foremost. He ordered Lt. Williamson to come with him.

At the point of the yellow, sun-beaten beach toward which he directed the crews to row just such a crowd of natives was assembled as had greeted Williamson. The boats kept straight on. This time no one rushed into the surf.

As the boat touched, Cook stood, handed the gun he carried to a sailor and leaped out. He wore a loose, white shirt and trousers, the clothes he commonly wore in the tropics. The only indications he was Chief were his weathered tricorne hat and a cutlass at his side.

The first of his race ever to set foot on one of the Hawaiian islands was alone.

At the first step he took toward them, the whole great throng of brown, near-naked men fell on their faces.

Cook glanced about him in surprise and burst into hearty laughter. Williamson was watching from the boat, not many yards away.

Advancing, Cook stretched out his hands and lifted some of the eldest to their feet, embraced them and pressed on them small presents of beads and

metal he took from his pockets. The sailors and marines in the boats watched shamefacedly.

While the rest of the awed natives remained prostrate, the four elders he had raised went a short distance inland and brought back with them a dignitary who Cook surmised must be their king, for as he timidly approached they held over him branches of sugar cane, like protective parasols.

Cook presented the monarch with a mirror and hung a necklace of beads around his neck. By gestures and by partly comprehended words of Tahitian, the Captain explained the immediate errand was to find fresh water. Accompanied by the five natives, he walked in the direction of the pond.

Not until Cook was some distance away did the others rise. The blood which Williamson had spilled was forgotten. In an outburst of happy generosity, they began to fill the strangers' boats with fruit and squealing pigs.

It was enough to have been called a coward. Cook's demonstration had disgraced young Williamson before the eyes of every man of both ships' companies, in terms that neither he nor they were ever likely to forget.

In a lifetime marked by few blunders, Cook's action that bright January afternoon on Kauai was perhaps the worst he ever made.

## Farthest North

1778-1779

The time that would be required for their mission to the north was hard to reckon. But they would need an ample stock of it. If they found no sea passage across the North American continent in temperate latitudes, the Arctic was their destination and the summer there was short.

Yet the inducement was strong to stay where they were for a few weeks at least. The nut-brown natives were the most likable of any Pacific islanders they had seen.

“They appear to be of a frank, cheerful disposition; and are equally free from the fickle levity which characterizes the inhabitants of Tahiti, and the sedate cast which is observable among many of those of Tonga.”

Persistent inquiry, it is true, revealed that they were cannibals. That is, they ceremonially ate tid-bits of their enemies killed in war. But the voyagers had met with that idiosyncrasy so often, they had grown used to it. The Hawaiians stole, of course, but that certainly was commonplace, and could be watched.

The Kauai chieftains wore extraordinarily beautiful capes made of the red and yellow feathers of tiny birds. Nowhere had fresh meat and vegetables been so plentiful or barter been conducted with so little friction. Cook estimated the population of that one island at 30,000.<sup>[7]</sup>

The onset of a spell of heavy rain and a high wind which drove them from the insecurity of the anchorage helped Cook to his decision. When after a short stop at the nearby, smaller isle of Nihau the squalls still continued, the Commander gave up. He gave orders to sail for the coast of North America. On the charts he made he gave the group they were leaving the name of his friend and patron—the Sandwich Islands.

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Drake had been there in the *Golden Hind* in the Sixteenth Century, Juan de Fuca, a Greek in Spanish service, and a sparse handful of others. But in the years in which the American Republic was being born on the Atlantic

seaboard the Pacific shore of what is now the United States, Canada, and Alaska from the site of San Francisco north was almost totally unknown.

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Paradoxically, Cook's fame has been obscured by the sheer mass of his accomplishment. He was of the first and finest rank among the explorers of North America. That, too.

The two ships reached what is today the coast of Oregon on the morning of March 7th, 1778.

Ahead was a coast of wooded hills sweeping to a headland toward which they steered. Cook called it Cape Foulweather. The name still stands.

The names Cook chose—by this time he had had to ransack his imagination for so many hundreds of them—are all that survive of that last brave and skilled adventure.

Few, even among mapmakers, who know those places and familiarly use those names have any notion of their origin. But you can find them in Cook's published journal and in every modern atlas all the way from Cape Perpetual in Oregon (Cook called it Perpetua) along the shore of Washington and Vancouver Island; around the whole vast peninsula of Alaska to Cape North, at the uppermost limits of Siberia within the Arctic Circle. They make a not unimpressive monument.

It was winter and the continent was a deep, dull green patched with unmelted snow. The offshore weather ran the gamut of squalls, light and variable winds, sleet, fog, rain and snow. They were on a lee shore and not liking it.

The weather was so fitful and the visibility so poor that Cook made a serious professional error. He managed, rather remarkably, to miss altogether the entrance to the great strait leading into Puget Sound, named after its discoverer Juan de Fuca. He called it the "pretended" strait and set down that it was improbable "any such thing ever existed."

The storms, it is true, were maddening. Hardly an hour of the day or night passed without the necessity of resetting the course and sails. But James Cook had been bred to the North Sea, he was the greatest onshore sailor of them all. Something was missing.

He was doing his duty. By any other standards but his own, he was doing it well.

Reading the records he left, you know from what he did not do and what he did not say that he was convinced they were on a fool's errand. The long northern journey would not be wasted. This intricate and mighty coast of the new world continent was little known. He would make it known.

But the main mission, the search for the Northwest Passage, he was sure would bear no fruit. He had studied the failures of his predecessors. The

Pacific approaches to that long-imagined channel through a continent, admittedly, had not been explored. But many good men had sought it from the Atlantic side, had died searching, and had failed utterly. It was, then, like looking for one end of a rope when it was known the other end did not exist.

He had an instinct for these things, a feel for the very form and contour of the globe which lay beyond knowledge or reason.

This cold country, this rarely indented wall of fog-bound, windy land was already hostile.

They were headed north.

The theorists of the Royal Society, the politicians who hung that golden carrot of £20,000 before the noses of just such obstinate mules as he, even the cartographers who sat in warm little rooms in Amsterdam and Lisbon did not know the top and bottom summits of their comfortable world. They could not imagine them. They had never crept in a fragile wooden ship as he had among the green-cragged crystal mountains and the plains of floating ice that grumbled in the night.

Cook knew that a navigable passage might exist. The North American continent did by all indications impinge upon an icy sea and broke into many islands as if the land were brittle from the cold. The captain of the first ship to cross the Antarctic Circle knew what they did not, that even if he should win that glittering prize, he would not earn it, for any passage in high latitudes would be worth nothing.

They coasted the shore of the big island to which the twenty-year-old midshipman of the *Resolution*, George Vancouver, was to return years later and to name, and at length found anchorage in Nootka Sound.

They found the local Indians prone to oratory, larceny, feathers, and varicolored paint, but peaceful and glad to trade. The skins of furred animals they offered (Cook prophetically noted that a lucrative fur trade might be opened with this region) and quantities of fish were gladly purchased.

Human skulls and hands, with some of the flesh remaining on them, which, as Cook put it, were “exposed for sale” were shudderingly declined.

The halt lasted twenty-seven days. The masts and rigging of both ships had been found to be in bad shape and had to be thoroughly repaired. By good luck the tall straight trees of the nearby woods provided what they needed.

During the wait, Cook explored the sound and the adjacent country, prying into every cove and inlet in one of the small boats, cross-examining and making friends with the Indians, with much of his old style. For all of their painted faces, and the dirt which so overlaid them that it was difficult to tell the real color of their skins, these Indians of Nootka were simple

people, as direct in their amiability as in their thievery. He could thaw with them and be happy and content as he never could with Europeans.

By the time the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* were ready to take to sea again, Cook's zest for adventure had been renewed. Enough of it at least to pursue with more than mere competence the improbable quest on which they had sent him.

For anyone else, that voyage to the far north would have been phenomenal.

The *Resolution* was showing her years. She leaked badly and had repeatedly to be repaired. Because of the nature of their errand their course most of the time was close to land—a location, landsmen do not always realize, which all sailors, even on the most modern and responsive ships, hate and fear. Shoals, islands, rocks, inlets and the sea itself were uncharted. Weather ranged from merely bad to the very worst.

Cook and his able pupil Clerke managed ships, men and circumstances, as smoothly as if they were on some commonplace run to the Antilles.

They passed—and named—Cross Sound, Cape Fairweather, Cape Suckling, Hinchinbroke Island (after Sandwich's country place), and Prince William's Bay—after the King's son. If you are curious, you can find them on any map of Alaska.

The coastal Indians—for they persisted in calling everyone everywhere, "Indians," whether Tasmanians, Melanesians, Polynesians or Eskimos—changed subtly with the land. Their heads grew rounder, eyes more almond-shaped, and their fishy smell worse. Their canoes now were made of stretched skins, not wood. They wore fur robes instead of paint or bark.

Cook, the champion of all strange and far-off people, greatly admired their handiwork.

"Upon the whole," he wrote with gentle understanding, "considering the uncivilized state of the natives, their northerly situation, amidst a country almost continually covered with snow, and the comparatively wretched materials they have to work with, it appears that with respect to their skill and invention they are at least equal to any other people."

The line of the shore, which had been tending to the west, bent southward. Seven weeks after they had left Nootka Sound on—though not yet—Vancouver Island, Cook had penetrated to its end the long reach of sea now called Cook Inlet. . . . Wherever Cook's own name appears on a map, it was put there by someone else. Never did he do it himself.

For a bit it had looked promising. The wide lane of water had at least pointed in the right direction, northeast. If it kept on indefinitely it might be the Passage. But soon the salt water turned to fresh. They realized they were at the mouth of a river.

At the head of that inlet on the south coast of Alaska is a point marked *Turnagain*. There ended forever the three-hundred-year-old concept of a Northwest Passage. It was the *Resolution's* Master, Bligh, later of the *Bounty*, who returned to his ship with two boats in the cold darkness at two o'clock in the morning of June 1st, 1778, with the precise, seaman's report that the hope, faint though it had been, had expired.

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Cook kept on, of course. It was not in his nature to leave anything half done. The two tireless ships, plagued by almost incessant fog, rain and contrary winds, traced the great westward extension of North America, which no one before had suspected, all the way to the Aleutian Islands.

It seemed world's end. There are few more desolate regions on the planet. It was all the more strange, there was about it a note of the uncanny, in such a place to make contact with the Europe that they had left so long ago.

It was a baffling contact.

Some fur-garbed "Americans" had put off from the mist-shrouded land in three skin canoes and made for the *Discovery*. On overtaking her, one of the Indians had risen in his seat, bowed politely, in an oddly familiar way, and turned over to Captain Clerke a thin wooden box. The canoes then paddled away.

In the box Clerke found a paper, carefully folded, on which appeared writing in what, it was presumed, was Russian. All that was intelligible to the Englishmen were two dates, 1776 and 1778.

Since there was not a soul aboard either ship who knew so much as a letter of the Cyrillic alphabet, the meaning of the message was as opaque as the mystery of the great stone faces of Easter Island. All that was plain was that they had come by sea around the globe to the vague frontier which the Russians had reached by their enormous journeys overland.

The next day a lone Aleut in a canoe was discovered beneath his fur wrappings to have on "a pair of green cloth breeches, and a jacket of black cloth." Beyond doubt, Europe had preceded them.

On the ninth of August, 1778, they sighted the most westerly point of the North American continent and named it Cape Prince of Wales. The next day, just across Bering Strait, Captain Cook went ashore on the coast of Asia. . . . He was the first man who ever lived who had felt beneath his bootsoles the solid substance of every continent.

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A week later the two ships had crossed the Arctic Circle and come to the edge of a limitless, floating plain of pack ice. The men went out in boats and shot walrus for food, and were dismayed by their great trumpeting and grunting close around them in the night.

They were on a lee shore with quadrillions of tons of ice remorselessly drifting down upon them. Once they thought themselves surrounded by it.

Often there was dense and blinding fog. The worst hazards of the Antarctic had been less than this. Any other mariner would long ago have given up and turned back toward safety and the south. The short northern summer was fast ending.

On August 29th the welcome, long-awaited command came.

The Commander “did not think it consistent with prudence” to go farther. Without further loss of time they must somewhere find wood and water. Then he would decide where to pass the winter so they could return to the improbable, dogged, hopeless search when spring came round.

The private sense James Cook had sometimes felt that he had no real stomach for this voyage had made him drive the harder.

He gave the fatal order. They would go back to the Sandwich Islands.

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They worked back down the Alaskan coast, completing the first thorough examination of that twisting, desolate, fog-hung shore.

They fell in with some Russian sailors and a Muscovite traveler who was evidently a man of learning.

He and Cook became warm friends. Ismyloff, as Cook spelled him, and the great navigator, though they shared not a word of any common language, gestured, grinned, dined and wine together, pored over charts and figures—those at least were understandable—and in the mysterious way one can, exchanged a surprising store of information.

At the Russian’s departure, Cook entrusted him with a long letter and some newly drawn charts addressed to the Admiralty in London.

The packet was duly transferred from hand to hand across Siberia, across Europe, and was delivered safely a year later.

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At daybreak on the morning of November 26th, 1778, land was sighted.

“An elevated hill appeared in the country, whose summit rose above the clouds. . . . We now perceived that our discovery of the group of the Sandwich Islands had been very imperfect.”



A heavy gale had thrown the two ships off the course which Cook had laid to bring them back to the northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The “country” before them was the large island of Maui—the “elevated hill” the majestic pyre of the extinct volcano of Haleakala.

They learned from the first canoes which put off to greet them that the tidings of their first visit had been carried to the other islands. . . . The *Resolution* and *Discovery* were floating islands. . . . The strangers’ clothes were a most singular kind of skin which fit none too well and was of many colors. . . . This hide of the god-like mariners had holes in it into which they could reach and bring forth astounding gifts. . . .

Not unnaturally, curiosity was high.

Four days later at dusk, another, greater island was seen to the south. The paddlers in a big double sailing canoe told Captain Cook it was called Hawaii.

It was maddening.

There was the great island, its green slopes rising more than thirteen thousand feet into the bright blue sky to glittering—and astonishing—caps of snow. Both crews were tired, in need of warmth and holiday. Their anxiety to get ashore was acute. Though the canoes which swarmed around both vessels satisfied their most immediate needs with fresh pork, fruit, roots, and armsful of green sugar cane, supplies were uncomfortably low. Hulls, masts and rigging once more needed a complete overhaul. . . . As the days wore by, and then mounted into weeks the desire to be ashore rose to a pitch of desperation.

For they could not.

It was the wind.

It was as if it were the island’s sly, protective demon. Day after day it blew down upon them hard and chill from the cloud-lost peaks and forced them farther out to sea.

It was worse when it wheeled round and blew steady as misfortune from the east. The shore was like a fortress wall. The narrow beach behind which the land rose up, now in vertical masses of gray-green cliff, now in pale cane meadows that sloped steeper than a deck in storm, was as unbroken as a line drawn with a draughtsman’s pencil. There was no bay, no harbor in which such ships as these could find shelter. And when there was no wind there was dead and drifting calm.

The calms broke in hard squalls, or they slatted under a gloomy deluge of warm rain, punctuated with sonorous, crashing rolls of thunder and sharp flickers of yellow lightning. One night “we were left wholly at the mercy of a northeasterly swell which greatly impelled us toward the land; insomuch that before morning lights were seen upon the shore which was then at the

distance of about a league. It was a dark night, with thunder, lightning, and rain.”

Through the glass they could see people on the beach and watching from the slopes.

A month after they had come within an easy canoe paddle of Hawaii, not a man aboard either ship had set foot on it. A few ill-conditioned seamen reached the singular conclusion that Cook was standing off deliberately. One sailor, from New England, then whispered and later wrote: “It appeared manifest Cook’s conduct was wholly influenced by motives of interest.” But the Yankee was unable to explain.

All that kept the weary wait within the limits of endurance were the amiable, handsome folk who paddled out to them and brought them food. The prospect of making some port here—if they could ever manage it—became increasingly delightful.

Cook, who had a gentle fondness for all primitives, liked these Hawaiians most of all. They had singular, unprecedented virtues.

“We met with less reserve and suspicion in our intercourse with the people of this island than we had ever experienced among any tribe of savages. They frequently sent up into the ship the articles they meant to barter, and afterwards came in themselves, to traffic on the quarter-deck. The inhabitants of Tahiti have not that confidence in our integrity. Whence it may be inferred that those of Hawaii are more faithful in their dealings with each other than the Tahitians.

“It is but justice to observe that they never attempted to overreach us in exchanges nor to commit a single theft. They perfectly understand trading and clearly comprehended the reason of our plying upon the coast. . . .”

Warily the two ships tacked and beat and hedged their way around Hawaii’s easternmost extremity, then round its southern cape.

The traffic with the shore continued. Some of the canoes of this almost amphibious race of islanders ventured as far as fifteen miles at sea.

If Cook was delighted by their unprecedented virtue, the crew were still more charmed by their unprecedented vice. With rather unfeeling juxtaposition, Cook wrote:

“. . . A large village is situated at this point, many of whose inhabitants thronged off to the ship with hogs and women. The latter” [Cook always endeavored to be clear] “could not possibly

be prevented from coming on board; and they were less reserved than any women we had ever seen. They seemed, indeed, to have visited us with no other view than to tender us their persons.”

All that was wanted was an anchorage.

Half a mile from shore a line of a hundred and sixty fathoms did not reach bottom. Squat, capable, disagreeable Bligh was sent out in a small boat and had no better luck. The land they had now reached was hideous with the gray ash and black lava of ancient eruptions.

A second search a few days later was successful. Bligh had found a bay faced by dark volcanic cliffs, but flanked left and right by low, fertile land on which were villages of grass huts. The mouth-filling native name of the bay was Kealakekua.

At eleven in the forenoon of January 17th, 1779, the two ships thankfully let go their anchors within a quarter of a mile of shore.

The district was extraordinarily populous. That day and most of the one before it the *Resolution* and *Discovery* had been surrounded by “at least a thousand” canoes “crowded with people and laden with hogs and other provisions.” Hundreds of both sexes swarmed up the sides and came aboard.

Cook had been hasty. Theft, he quickly discovered, was not unknown. When the rudder of one of the ship’s boats was stolen, some muskets and a couple of small-bore cannon were fired in the air as a general warning. The effect of the noise, Cook noted, seemed to be more surprise than fright.

The swarm of canoes increased. They made an almost solid carpet of bright, excited, shouting life over the lightly dancing whitecaps of the bay.

Once in the Tonga Islands Cook had estimated a gathering of natives at twelve thousand. Yet he wrote:

“In the course of our voyages, we had nowhere seen such vast numbers of people assembled at one place. Besides those who visited us in canoes, all the shore was covered with spectators and hundreds were swimming about the ships, like shoals of fish. We were struck with the singularity of this scene; and few of us lamented that we had not succeeded in our late endeavours to find a northern passage homeward. To this disappointment we were indebted for revisiting the Sandwich Islands and for enriching our voyage with a discovery, in many respects, the most important that has been made by Europeans in the Pacific Ocean.”

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The clear mid-ocean sunlight of late afternoon streamed in the seven sloping stern windows of the Great Cabin. The pad and tromp of bare and shod feet echoed on the deck above. Outside, below those windows, this harbor they had found was clamorous with the laughter, the water-like ripple of the island tongue. James Cook could hear the faint shock of the bows of their canoes against the sides.

He had passed his fiftieth birthday the previous October. The brown hair, tied neatly back as always over the nape of his bronzed neck, was graying at the temples. The lines of watchfulness around his steady eyes had deepened. The strong, firm-lipped mouth was faintly smiling.

It had been a long journey. No man had ever made a longer one. Though there had been disappointments and too often aching loneliness, he had done what he had hoped. In the far North and the far South he had brought the light of knowledge where before there had been only darkness.

The lean, unknowing, hopeful boy who had walked so long ago over the green and misty hills from Great Ayton to the cleft-hidden town of Staithes and his first sight there of the summoning sea, had made the greatest of Earth's oceans immutably his own. There were a few voids left to be filled in. But not many. Not many. The sharp lash of restlessness, after half a century, could now be put away. With the finding of these great, thronging, thriving islands, he knew his work was done. He was content.

The ink with which he had written the last words on the page of his Journal was dry. There was no need to reach for the shaker of clean sand on the round, firm table before him.

James Cook thrust his quill pen with its ragged feathers back into the holder filled with little leaden shot.

There is no evidence he ever took it up again.

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[7] There are now less than 15,000 pure-blood Hawaiians in the whole archipelago.

## “Friend of the Human Race”

1779

The eight weeks of frustration during which both ships had been in sight of land but had been unable to land, had strained nerves and shortened tempers. Since they had been seen, or heard of, by every inhabitant of the island one could not help but wonder whether the suspense had spoiled their welcome.

The next morning dispelled all doubt.

When it was realized the two weird vessels had come to rest and that the remarkable strangers would stay among them for a while, excitement was intense.

“The inhabitants came off in astonishing numbers, expressing their joy by singing, shouting, and the most extravagant gestures. Women and boys who were unable to procure canoes came swimming round us in great multitudes, some of whom, not finding room to get on board amused themselves the whole day by playing in the water.”

Those who did clamber aboard, swarmed in such numbers that the lighter *Discovery* began dangerously to heel.

It was discovered that this island of superlatives was unique not only in the height of its mountains and the size of its multitudes, but in having what appeared to be definite political organization.

There was a King who ruled not merely over Hawaii but over a number of the adjacent islands. Under him were local chieftains of high authority, a blooded aristocracy, and a caste of priests.

Rank was more than nominal. The plain people obeyed their betters instantly. Two handsome, bearded young chiefs on being appealed to, had only to give the word and the overweighted craft was cleared in an instant. With perfect good temper all the visitors jumped overboard.

Such a social system had its obligations. Since the Hawaiians were used to their own great men, Captain Cook had to act like one. Though it was

hard to get it straight, there also seemed to be some religious significance attached to their arrival.

. . . Ages, ages since, according to one version, an Hawaiian citizen had murdered his wife. Unhinged by his crime, Orono, as the Englishmen spelled it, had wandered through the islands, taking on all comers in bouts of wrestling and boxing. At last, Orono had sailed out to sea in an *odd-shaped canoe*. Orono, by some inexplicable process of the human mind, and like many unworthies before him, was later deified.

Everything hung on the odd shape of that canoe. What, after all, could be odder than the shape of the *Resolution*? Cook, it was decided (it was less than flattering), was Orono the wife-murderer and wrestler, come back.

It is doubtful if many believed it. But some explanation was wanted and professional priests in all climates are quick to latch onto whatever they think will help them in their trade. Clearly, it would add to their luster if they could claim the miraculous visitors as their own.

Cook, bewildered, embarrassed and more than a little bored, found himself being orated at, at fearful length, in his own cabin, offered a small pig, and draped in a piece of sacred bark cloth dyed red, by a “little, old emaciated figure, having sore red eyes, and his body covered with a leprous scurf, occasioned by immoderate use of *kava*”—the local, nonalcoholic tipple.

The charade persisted when Cook went ashore.

“We were preceded by four men, bearing each a wand tipped with a dog’s hair and pronouncing, with a loud voice, a short sentence in which the word Orono was very distinguishable. The crowd which had assembled on the shore retired at our approach and not an individual was to be seen, except a few who prostrated themselves on the ground.”

The center of pious observance in the district was a *morai* on the beach at the southeastern arm of the bay—“a square solid pile of stones of the length of forty yards, the breadth of twenty and the height of fourteen.”

It still stands there, dark, ashy, ugly, but not, as it was then, “with its flat top surrounded with a wooden rail on which were displayed the skulls of those natives who had been sacrificed on the death of their chiefs. A ruinous wooden building was situated in the center of the area connected with the rail by a stone wall dividing the whole space into two parts. Five poles of about twenty feet in height supported an irregular kind of scaffold on the side next the country, and on the side towards the sea were two small houses with a covered communication.”

The ancient, red-eyed priest, whose name was Koa, acted as master of ceremonies.

Cook and his companions were conducted to the top of the stone pile where a young man with a long beard chanted at Cook and introduced him to “two large wooden images with most distorted features, having a long piece of wood proceeding from the top of their heads, of a conical form inverted.”

Next the unhappy captain, looking in his blue uniform jacket, white breeches and three-cornered hat like George Washington who had wandered onto the wrong set—and assisted not at all by the broad grins of his friends, was led by Koa to the top of the perilously rickety scaffold, wrapped in red cloth and ceremoniously offered a deceased and quite, quite putrid pig. He was not let off until, following the priest’s lead, he had prostrated himself before one of the wooden figures and kissed it!

As always with native people he had deferred as well as he could understand them, to their wishes. He had been monstrously obliging. Perhaps this time it was a mistake. Innocently, James Cook (how Elizabeth would have stared if she had seen him!), by being induced to accept adulation and perform worship in the same ceremony, had fallen between two stools. In the brown, half-savage eyes which watched he was now neither altogether god nor altogether man. The situation was perilous.

The affair ended with a feast. Captain Cook “could not swallow a morsel, the putrid hog being strong in his recollection. As Koa, from motives of civility, chewed it for him, his reluctance was much increased.”

Such pompous ritual was something new under the tropic sun. It did, though, have its uses. When a camp was established in a potato field ashore, a chief simply placed the area under tabu. Not a soul came near it. While those aboard ship luxuriated in female companionship, the small party of marines and officers who occupied the camp were wont to die of loneliness—and celibacy.

It did not take long to find out the high style of their reception had its drawbacks. Captain Clerke of the *Discovery*, who had grown progressively weaker during the voyage from a consumption it was thought he had contracted during his stay in the Fleet prison, was at first too ill to go ashore. But whenever Cook made the attempt he became the center of a procession.

He could never be himself, never take the long, unattended walks which had been his relaxation and delight so many years; never putter about in one of the ship’s boats completing the charts which were one of the joys of his being.

The King came. As befitted a monarch, his approach was heralded from afar.

Rather inconveniently, as it happened, for so great, so untouchable, was their Lord that the whole bay was put under tabu. No canoes put off. The natives kept to their grass huts. The plentiful supply of hogs and fresh food on which the voyagers had been relying abruptly dried up.

A chief who busied himself enforcing the tabu was at length persuaded to allow the flow of supplies to be resumed only by firing a musket over his head. The noise had its effect.

But no Hawaiian had seen a musket ball *hit* anything.

The King's arrival was as impressive as could be wished.

“About noon, in a large canoe with some attendants in two others he paddled from the village, in great state, toward the ships. Their appearance was noble and magnificent. Terreeoboo<sup>[8]</sup> and his chiefs were in the first canoe, arrayed in feathered cloaks and helmets and armed with spears and daggers. In the second came the chief priest together with his brethren having their idols displayed on red cloth. These idols were figures of an enormous size made of wicker work and curiously ornamented with small feathers of a variety of colours. Their eyes were large pearl oysters with a black nut placed in the center; a double row of the fangs of dogs was fixed in each of their mouths which, as well as the rest of their features, appeared strangely distorted. As they advanced the priests chanted their hymns with great solemnity.”

The dignitaries, as had first been anticipated, did not come aboard. The first formal meeting between the Hawaiian and the British chief took place ashore. Captain Cook's visit was then returned.

From the moment of the ships' arrival the travelers had been showered with lavish gifts of the produce of the island. The bounty of hogs, feather capes, fruit and vegetables increased with the King's coming. Though “nothing was demanded in return, nor was the most distant hint ever given that any compensation was expected,” Captain Cook knew his islanders too well, and his own sense of fairness was too highly developed, to be content with merely saying “thank you.”

To make a fitting return was not easy. After an absence from England of three and a half years the trade goods they had brought with them were running low. Since what these people valued most was metal, Cook hit on the expedient of having the ships' blacksmiths pound out rods of iron about two feet long, an inch in diameter and pointed at one end, as gifts to natives of the most consequence. The Hawaiians called them *pahuas*. They were delighted with them.



There seemed no risk in it.

“The behaviour of the inhabitants was so civil and inoffensive that all apprehensions of danger were totally vanished. We trusted ourselves amongst them at all times and upon all occasions without the least hesitation.”

Nevertheless, in a fortnight inquiries by the King and his chiefs as to when they would be going became “importunate.” Anyone who has been a host will understand. Exciting though the advent of Orono and his men had been, their depredations upon the local food supply undeniably had been severe.

The senior Lieutenant of the *Resolution*, James King, who undertook to explain the purpose of their voyage, got nowhere. The Hawaiians already knew!

“They supposed we had left our native country on account of the scantiness of provisions and that we had visited them for the sole purpose of filling our bellies.”

Well, it was time to go. If a hard west wind came up, the ill-protected bay would not serve them. If they continued to search they must find a better. Besides, Cook had not completed a survey of the island shores. A day was set.

The Hawaiians’ enthusiasm at the news was equal to the joy shown at their coming.

Cook and Lieutenant King were invited to a final feast. The old monarch overwhelmed them with gifts.

The two tall ships set sail.

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A slatting calm was succeeded four days after they left by a midnight wind of such violence that the near-rotten foremast of the *Resolution* gave way.

It was a major accident. It called for major remedy.

Cook hesitated. It would be ignominious to return. But they had found no better anchorage, it might take weeks, and the *Resolution* was in bad shape. The broken mast would have to be taken out.

Exactly a week after they had quit it, the two ships were back in Kealakekua Bay.

The two-mile reach was solitary, deserted. Hardly a canoe was to be seen. The red-gray volcanic cliffs, pocked with tiny, inaccessible caves,

stared blindly down. The contrast with the festival brilliance which had marked their first coming was uncanny.

Explanations were evasive. They were told the bay had been placed under tabu because the King had gone. But he was on hand the next day. Adherents of the Orono theory surmised that though it was all very well for the god to return once, it was too bad of him to come back twice. Yet the priests seemed not unfriendly.

They would get their business done; stay no longer than necessary.

The badly rotted foremast was unstepped and taken ashore where the carpenters could do their work. The sailmakers spread the torn sails on the beach and prepared to mend them. A corporal's guard of six red-coated Marines with long flint-lock muskets was stationed on the black lava stone *morai* to keep watch.

There was nothing tangible to complain of. Only the mood, the feel, of the place was wrong—until late on the afternoon of the second day. It was Saturday, February 13th.

Some natives were helping a working party of sailors roll the filled wooden casks from the watering place to the ship's boats. Chiefs came and ordered them away. Lt. King thought their manner hostile. When some of the Hawaiians began to arm themselves with stones, Cook, who was summoned, liked the look of things so little he gave the unprecedented order for the Marine sentinels to take harmless grapeshot out of their muskets and reload with ball.

Quiet seemed to have been reestablished.

The impression did not last. As they were starting back to the ship Cook and King heard shots fired from the *Discovery* and saw a canoe rapidly making for the beach. It was not hard to guess what had happened. There had been another of those damnable thefts which had afflicted them so long.

Without waiting to ask questions the Captain and Lieutenant ran along the shore to cut the runaways off. They were too late. The thieves had landed and dashed inland before they got there.

James Cook rarely thought of what later generations among "inferior" people called face. For he did not think of them as inferior. The run down the beach had made him sweat. He was angry. Without hesitation the great Captain and Lt. King, with one puffing Marine in attendance, set off in pursuit.

By the time they had got three miles into the interior, most of it uphill, they began to think better of it. The occupants of the canoe had vanished. Natives along the way, Cook suspected, had been deliberately misleading, and were making fun of them. They turned back.

James Cook never imagined himself to be infallible.

But perhaps, till now, the Hawaiians had.

Cook did not know until the wild goose chase was over toward dusk that the trifling articles which had been stolen (he had guessed from the racket it must be something of great importance) had been recovered. But probably every Hawaiian in the district did.

During Captain Cook's absence, bad had been made worse.

An officer of the *Discovery* who was in one of the boats, seeing Cook pelting off into the interior, had decided to help. It was foolish of him. It was particularly foolish of him inasmuch as it was he who had got back the carpenters' tools which had been stolen and knew that in effect no crime had been committed.

The witless help the Master of the *Discovery* had given had been to seize the canoe in which the unsuccessful kleptomaniacs had fled. By ill chance it belonged to a young chief, one who from the first had been on particularly good terms with Cook. There was a scuffle in which the waiting crew of Cook's own boat joined in, and the chief was knocked down by a violent blow on the head with an oar.

The attack on one of their rulers fired two hundred or more Hawaiian bystanders with sudden rage. They snatched up the coarse, jagged stones of volcanic ash with which Kealakekua is so well supplied and concentrated their fire on the sailors from the *Resolution's* boat so effectively that they retreated into the sea and took refuge just out of range on a partly submerged rock.

Order was restored by the young chief. The blow, remarkably, had not hurt him. His good temper and high breeding rose above the insult and the pain he had suffered. He halted the attack on the Englishmen, stopped the looting of the deserted boat, busied himself collecting and returning what had been taken, and offered his apologies for the whole incident. At parting with the drenched and rattled officers they rubbed noses.

When the story reached Cook that evening he was "exceedingly concerned." For his personal dignity he had no concern. The safety of the crews of his two ships was his business. With her foremast and half her sails on the beach, the *Resolution* was a hulk. There were men on shore, and more would have to go ashore tomorrow.

If, unthinkable, there should be a general outbreak of violence, the explorers were outnumbered, even in the narrow region of the bay, by many hundreds to one. The muskets and heavy ships' guns of the civilization he despised whose deadly effect, happily, the islanders had not yet seen, could no doubt balance the account. But that would be massacre. Open quarreling must stop. It was just as important that a halt be called to thieving. At this

stage of the voyage the loss of some irreplaceable tool or instrument might have consequences it was unpleasant to predict.

The night passed uneasily.

All Hawaiians were ordered from the ships. Fitful lights were seen on shore. An occasional canoe moved ghostlike over the choppy, shadowed surface of the bay.

At the camp on the *morai* the Marine sentinels, under sharp instructions to remain on the alert all night, saw five vaguely defined figures creeping stealthily round the bottom of the gray mass of stones. Realizing they had been seen, they ran away. But toward midnight a single, unidentified man managed to enter the camp. A Marine fired in the air and the marauder disappeared.

The shot reverberating, echoing strangely in the massive silence back from the black cliffs, was heard aboard both ships. Those on watch peered into the darkness till their eyes burned. All below slept fitfully.

At the first pale hint of the dawn's coming on the far side of Mauna Loa, Lt. King rowed out to the *Resolution*. In the shadow of the great volcano the bay was still dark and the air was chill.

As he passed the *Discovery* he was hailed with bad news. During the night, in spite of their watchfulness, one of the *Discovery's* boats had been stolen, the one-masted sailing cutter. How the theft had been managed was an impenetrable mystery.

The cutter had been moored to the anchor buoy scarcely a dozen yards off the bow. The theft must have been even more difficult due to the fact the boat had been filled to her gunwales with sea water to keep her from drying out. But there it was. Clerke, though ill, had rowed over to the larger ship at six to tell Cook.

When Lt. King reached the *Resolution* Cook already had the news. It was what he had feared most. The cutter was the best and most useful of the *Discovery's* boats. It was unique and irreplaceable. This was crisis. Captain Cook was preparing to deal with it.

Lt. King found him loading a double-barrelled gun, one barrel with a blank, harmless charge of paper wadding, the other, for extreme emergency, with ball.

The Captain's instructions were that King should return at once to the camp on the *morai* at the southeast end of the bay, take every precaution against harm to any of his people there, but at the same time use his utmost persuasion to convince the natives they would not be injured. The *Resolution's* great and small cutters, and the *Discovery's* small cutter and yawl-boat (on the tongue of the British sailor corrupted to jolly-boat) were to cruise over the bay and stop all canoes.

Cook himself would go at once in the six-oared pinnace to the village at the opposite, northwestern arm of the bay, accompanied by the flat-bottomed "launch."

He had decided to make use of a simple plan which many times, in Tahiti and elsewhere, had served well. He was on excellent terms with the old Hawaiian King.

James Cook trusted and loved the island people. He had no thought of danger.

The only precautions he thought necessary were quite mechanical. When they reached the shore village where King Terreeoboo was living, he would himself land with nine Marines and a lieutenant in charge of them. As there was no beach at that end of Kealakekua Bay, merely a clutter of sharp, reddish volcanic lava rock, the oarsmen of the pinnace would wait for them a few yards offshore. It would be the duty of the armed party in the launch while standing off a little distance to cover whatever might happen ashore.

Casually, Cook appointed as officer of the launch Lt. John Williamson.

Cook had never been a master of the craft of war. To him violence was admission of incompetence and battle proof of failure. He was not incompetent. He did not propose to fail.

He had, in fact, disposed his forces badly. Lt. King and half the complement of Marines were at the other end of the bay, more than two miles away by water and cut off from communication by land by the walls of cliffs. The boats were scattered. With all of them out, the people aboard the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* were isolated.

Why should he be careful? It had been the study of his life to see that no harm came to such island innocents as these. He intended them no harm. They would trust him because he trusted them.

He would ask the King and his two young sons to come aboard the *Resolution*, then gently detain them there until the cutter was returned.

The simple scheme had worked so many times before. . . .

On the way to Terreeoboo's hut, some hundred feet inland, Cook was greeted by the two princes. He asked them to go aboard. They smilingly consented and went at once to the pinnace to wait for him. They had often been Orono's guest upon his marvelous floating island. They had no hesitation in agreeing to be the guests of the tall, kind man once more.

It was a little before eight o'clock of a fair and sunlit morning.

The emaciated, ancient King had just awakened. In the cool darkness of his grass hut Captain Cook squatted down and talked to him.

The old man was distressed at the tale of the theft of the boat. Cook was satisfied he knew nothing of it. When Captain Cook suggested he come with him, Terreeoboo agreed and "arose immediately to accompany him."

But that morning the air of that shadowed coast, blackened and flame-bitten with the earth's old fires, was rank with poison.

During the short colloquy inside the hut, a great crowd had gathered. Three thousand or more brown, smooth-muscle men and staring, frightened women had gathered. Their faces were opaque and their eyes dark with hatred's mother, fear.

One of the King's wives caught the evil mood and began wailing. She flung a piece of white tapa cloth on the ground before her lord and cried out to him he must go no farther than where the white cloth lay. Two chiefs who were with her grasped the old King's bare arms and shoulders and forced him to sit down.

The crowd pressed closer.

Lt. Phillips who was in charge of the nine tall, white-gaitered and red-coated Marines, said in a low voice to the Captain that he did not like the look of things. His men were hemmed in so tight they could not level their long muskets. If Captain Cook agreed he would order them to the water's edge where they would have their backs to the bay and could draw up in line. Cook nodded. The crowd opened and the little line was formed.

And now the King was taken with the panic contagion and sat trembling and all but weeping on the ground.

It was plain to Cook his plan for the moment had collapsed. He said to Phillips, "We can never think of compelling him to go on board without killing a number of these people."

It was the last thought he ever voiced. It was of them.

James Cook of Marton and the whole wide world was a good man. They are not common, these good men.

An island bully wearing a warrior's jacket of stiff matting pressed forward, his eyes lit with murderous hatred. In one hand he brandished a long, pointed iron spike. It was one of those hammered out by the *Resolution's* blacksmith and given freely and with trust to the chieftains of the bay. In the other hand he held a jagged stone.

Cook swung up his double-barrelled gun and pulled one trigger. The barrel which he fired—for cool James Cook still had his wits about him—was the one loaded with the blank cartridge.

But they were used to the white men's iron wands that spat flame and made a noise. The bully shouted and swung round to show he was unhurt.

The fire was lit. Others joined him, shouting, clamoring, reaching. Stones were hurled.

Cook, moving slowly backward to the beach, fired again. This time it was ball and one of his attackers fell dead. In the frenzy which had now

overtaken the savage mob the death and the means of it seemed to be unnoticed.

Another man raised his iron spike and tried to stab Phillips. The Marine, long and sternly trained by Cook, knocked his assailant down with the butt end of his musket.

The Hawaiians, like wolves who had tasted blood, hurled themselves forward. The line of Marines at the water's edge fired one volley. They did not have time to reload. In the red roar of those few seconds four of them were killed. The rest fell scrambling and panting into the sea and struggled toward the boats.

Captain Cook had reached the rocks at the bay's rim. He was alone, with three thousand screaming, murderous savages around him. He turned his back.

Cook was seen to raise his arm. He seemed to be calling some order. Some say it was to order the men in the two boats just out of reach still—even now—to withhold their fire. The men in the pinnace understood the gesture as an order to come closer in and did so. The commander of the launch ordered his men to pull farther out.

A brown arm rose and struck fiercely down. James Cook, stabbed between the shoulders, fell with his head and outstretched arms in the sea, the rest of his body among the cragged rocks.

He had been trapped, cut off. He could not save himself, as had five of the Marines, by reaching the outstretched hands of the crew of the *Resolution's* longboat.

For Captain James Cook, R.N. the greatest sailor the world has ever known, had never learned to swim.

In a few more seconds he was dead.

A vast and shattering howl went up when they saw the great stranger fall. They fell on him like dogs. The limp and bloody body in its once fine uniform was hauled back from the sea's edge, "where he was surrounded by the enemy, who snatching the dagger from each others' hands displayed a savage eagerness to join in his destruction."

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The question has persisted for a century and three-quarters as to whether there was not a fine-drawn instant there at the very last when Cook could have been saved. When he stood at the edge of the shore he was still unhurt. Even when he fell it is thought he was no worse than wounded.

The launch with a dozen armed and able men aboard it, was not twenty yards away. All but one of them would gladly have given their lives to save him.

But that one was John Williamson, the boat's commander—Williamson who in his secret wretched heart bore the distinction that among all men of all the peoples of the earth he hated Captain Cook.

The launch did not come in.

John Williamson was a coward. He had shown it on the beach at Kauai. In that instant of swift and terrible decision which cost Cook's life he was a coward again. Men said so, openly. But that is a grave accusation and who, at such a moment, could be sure?

The proof was waiting nineteen years away.

Lt. Williamson rose to Captain's rank and commanded the fighting ship *Agincourt* in the North Sea when the British beat the Dutch at Camperdown.

It is odd the way the wheel of chance rolls round. For again John Williamson hung back. But this time there was no question. He was court-martialed “. . . for cowardice, and not having done his duty in rendering all assistance possible.” He was found guilty and “rendered incapable of ever serving on board any of His Majesty's Ships.” Lord Nelson thought the sentence light. Nelson favored hanging.

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The furious storm which had taken the life of the most understanding friend the simple people of the far places of the earth have ever had blew quickly out.

Some ball and grape hurled by the ships' big guns helped to restore uneasy calm.

Williamson had not even dared go in to save Cook's body.

So it was eight days before they sewed what was left of Cook into a canvas hammock and read the burial service over it and slid it down a plank into the sea.

Bit by bit, and only after cajolery and bribes and threats, the Hawaiians had brought back in ugly little bundles Cook's skull, a leg, his severed hands, his ears, some bones. The right hand was unmistakable. The white marks of the wound he had suffered from the explosion of the powder horn in Newfoundland fifteen years before were plainly visible. Some of that horribly dismembered body, it is thought, was cooked and what was left was hidden by the priests because there was rare, high magic in it.

When the men who had sailed with him, and most of them were young and this was their first voyage, had first learned that he was dead, it is said that for an hour or more there was no sound, no spoken word, no whisper, aboard either ship. The quiet Captain had been their leader, their father, and their sun. They could not believe that he was gone.

When that pitifully tiny sack was committed to the sea, to his sea, they wept openly and with no thought of shame.



Three weeks later in Paris an exquisitely dressed elderly gentleman with a high bald forehead and a clever, kind and smiling mouth, sat down at a table and dipped his quill in ink. He was a citizen of a new nation called America.

“To all captains and commanders of ships armed under Commission of the Congress of the United States of America, now at war with Great Britain:

“Gentlemen: A vessel has been fitted out by England, before the beginning of this war, to discover new countries in unknown seas, under the leadership of the celebrated Captain Cook; and as this enterprise, truly praiseworthy in itself, may . . . expand the progress of all sciences useful to the human race, I strongly desire that those of you who may meet Captain Cook’s ship, which is now awaited in European waters, should not regard him as an enemy and should not permit the material which he carries to be plundered, nor his direct return to England hindered. I depend upon you also to treat Captain Cook and his companions with civility and kindness, according to them as to friends of the human race, all the help within your power. . . .”

But Mr. Benjamin Franklin was too late. The friend of the human race was already dead. . . .

The news of Captain Cook’s death, relayed by hand from the Siberian coast—for the two ships went north again before they made at last for home—did not reach England until January 18th, 1780, eleven months later.

It was printed in the papers that His Majesty George III shed tears. More substantially, he ordered a life pension of £200 a year to the Captain’s widow and his family.

James Cook’s sons died when they were still young men. Elizabeth, who was “a bad traveler” lived till she was 93.

The bad travelers live long. If they can be said to live at all.

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[8] Now known in Hawaiian history as Kalaniopu, uncle of Kamehameha I.

### *A note on sources*

Any study of James Cook's life begins with the formal record of the Three Voyages, published in eight handsome, massive volumes in 1773, 1777, and 1784. Other accounts of the journeys which are in various degrees helpful are those by Sparrman, Forster, Ledyard, Zimmermann, and Ellis. Unique mss. logs, journals, etc. may be consulted in Sydney, Wellington, and the British Museum in London. Among relatively recent biographies of Cook I have read with profit those of Mr. Arthur Kitson, Mr. Hugh Carrington, and Commander R. T. Gould. Earlier "Lives" by Kippis and Walter Besant have been found to be inaccurate and have been superseded.

The author of this "Life" also found it useful to visit Cook's birthplace of Marton in Yorkshire, the nearby towns where he grew up, Great Ayton, Staithes, and Whitby, and the place where his life ended, Kealahakua Bay on the Island of Hawaii.

I found it convenient that I knew from former visits some of the native people and a number of the Pacific Islands and Dominions James Cook discovered and explored. I am sure no one has ever been to all of them.

J. W. V.

Delhi, N. Y. 1950.

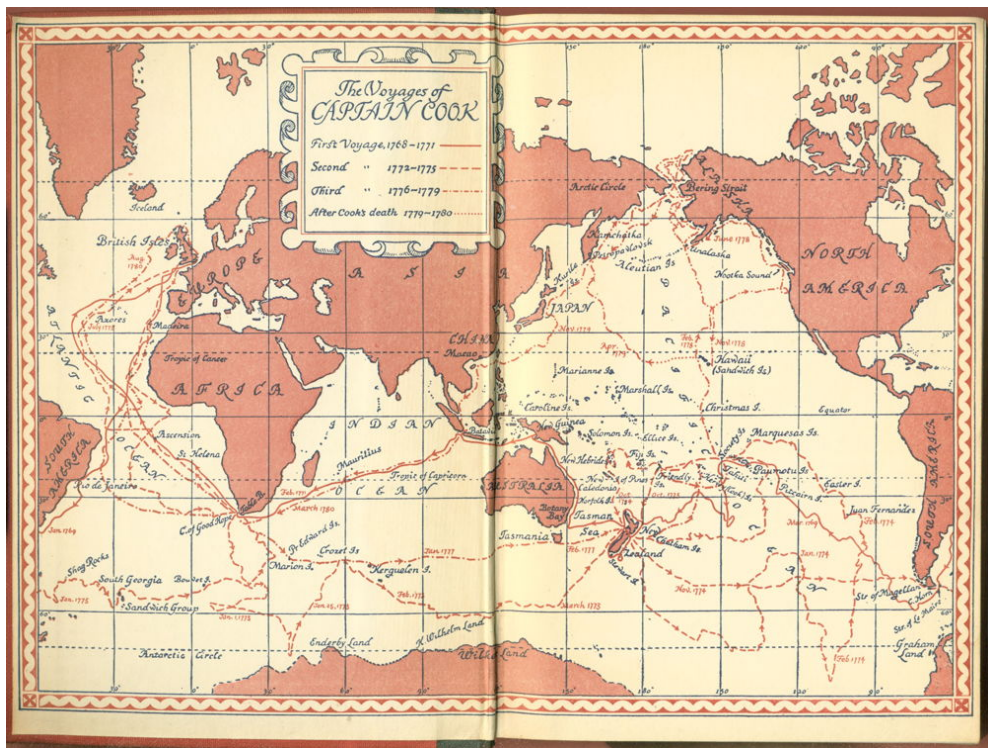
*First Voyage, 1768-1771*

Second " 1772-1775

Second " 1772-1775

Third " 1776-1779

*After Cook's death 1779-1*



## Transcriber's Notes

The footnotes have been renumbered sequentially throughout the entire book.

Minor changes were made to spelling and hyphenation to correct obvious typographic errors and to achieve consistency. Irregular spelling in quotations was retained.

[End of *Great Sailor* by John W. Vandercook]