

# ROBERT MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

THE CANNIBAL ISLANDS:  
CAPTAIN COOK'S  
ADVENTURE IN THE  
SOUTH SEAS

Robert Michael Ballantyne

**The Cannibal Islands: Captain  
Cook's Adventure in the South Seas**

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# **R. M. Ballantyne**

## **The Cannibal Islands: Captain Cook's Adventure in the South Seas**

### **Chapter One.**

#### **A Hero who rose from the Ranks**

More than a hundred years ago, there lived a man who dwelt in a mud cottage in the county of York; his name was Cook. He was a poor, honest labourer—a farm servant. This man was the father of that James Cook who lived to be a captain in the British Navy, and who, before he was killed, became one of the best and greatest navigators that ever spread his sails to the breeze and crossed the stormy sea.

Captain Cook was a true hero. His name is known throughout the whole world wherever books are read. He was born in the lowest condition of life, and raised himself to the highest point of fame. He was a self-taught man too. No large sums of money or long years of time were spent upon his schooling. No college education made him what he was. An old woman taught him his letters, but he was not sent to school till he was thirteen years of age. He remained only four years at the village school, where he learned a little writing and a little figuring. This was all he had to start with. The knowledge which he afterwards acquired, the great deeds that he performed, and the wonderful discoveries that he made, were all owing to the sound brain, the patient persevering spirit, the modest practical nature, and the good stout arm with which the Almighty had blessed him. It is the glory of England that many of her greatest men have risen from the ranks of those sons of toil who earn their daily bread in the sweat of their brow. Among all who have thus risen, few stand so high as Captain Cook.

Many bold things he did, many strange regions he visited, in his voyages round the world, the records of which fill bulky volumes. In this little book we shall confine our attention to some of the interesting discoveries that were made by him among the romantic islands of the South Pacific—*islands which are so beautiful that they have been aptly styled “gems of ocean,” but which, nevertheless, are inhabited by savage races so thoroughly addicted to the terrible practice of eating human flesh, that we have thought fit to adopt the other, and not less appropriate, name of the Cannibal Islands.*

Before proceeding with the narrative, let us glance briefly at the early career of Captain James Cook. He was born in 1728. After receiving the very slight education already referred to, he was bound apprentice to a shopkeeper. But the roving spirit within him soon caused him to break away from an occupation so uncongenial. He passed little more than a year behind the counter, and then, in 1746, went to sea.

Young Cook's first voyages were in connection with the coasting trade. He began his career in a collier trading between London and Newcastle. In a very short time it became evident that he would soon be a rising man. Promotion came rapidly. Little more than three years after the expiry of his apprenticeship he became mate of the *Friendship*, but, a few years later, he turned a longing eye on the navy—“having,” as he himself said, “a mind to try his fortune that way.” In the year 1755 he entered the King's service on board the *Eagle*, a sixty-gun ship, commanded by Sir Hugh Palliser. This officer was one of Cook's warmest friends through life.

In the navy the young sailor displayed the same steady, thorough-going character that had won him advancement in the coasting trade. The secret of his good fortune (if secret it may be called) was his untiring perseverance and energy in the pursuit of one object at one time. His attention was

never divided. He seemed to have the power of giving his whole soul to the work in hand, whatever that might be, without troubling himself about the future. Whatever his hand found to do he did it with all his might. The consequence was that he became a first-rate man. His superiors soon found that out. He did not require to boast or push himself forward. His *work* spoke for him, and the result was that he was promoted from the fore-castle to the quarter-deck, and became a master on board the *Mercury* when he was about thirty years of age.

About this time he went with the fleet to the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, and took part in the war then raging between the British and French in Canada. Winter in that region is long and bitterly cold. The gulfs and rivers there are at that season covered with thick ice; ships cannot move about, and war cannot be carried on. Thus the fleet was for a long period inactive. Cook took advantage of this leisure time to study mathematics and astronomy, and, although he little thought it, was thus fitting himself for the great work of discovery which he afterwards undertook with signal success.

In this expedition to Canada Cook distinguished himself greatly—especially in his surveys of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, and in piloting the fleet safely through the dangerous shoals and rocks of that inland sea. So careful and correct was he in all that he did, that men in power and in high places began to take special notice of him; and, finally, when, in the year 1767, an expedition of importance was about to be sent to the southern seas for scientific purposes, Cook was chosen to command it.

This was indeed a high honour, for the success of that expedition depended on the man who should be placed at its head. In order to mark the importance of the command, and at the same time invest the commander with proper authority, Cook was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in the Royal Navy. He had long been a gentleman in heart and conduct; he was now raised to the social position of one by the King's commission.

From this point in his career Cook's history as a great navigator and discoverer began. We shall now follow him more closely in his brilliant course over the world of waters. He was about forty years of age at this time; modest and unassuming in manners and appearance; upwards of six feet high, and good-looking, with quick piercing eyes and brown hair, which latter he wore, according to the fashion of the time, tied behind in a pig-tail. It was not until the end of his first voyage that he was promoted to the rank of captain.

## Chapter Two.

### Shows what Men will do and dare in the Cause of Science

Men who study the stars tell us strange and wonderful things—things that the unlearned find it hard to understand, and harder still to believe, yet things that we are now as sure of as we are of the fact that two and two make four!

There was a time when men said that the sun moved round the earth; and very natural it was in men to say so, for, to the eye of sense, it looks as if this were really the case. But those who study the stars have found out that the earth moves round the sun—a discovery which has been of the greatest importance to mankind—though the importance thereof cannot be fully understood except by scientific men.

Among other difficult things, these astronomers have attempted to measure the distance of the sun, moon, and stars from our earth. Moreover, they have tried to ascertain the exact size of these celestial lights, and they have, to a considerable extent, been successful in their efforts. By their complicated calculations, the men who study the stars can tell the exact day, hour, and minute when certain events will happen, such as an eclipse of the sun or of the moon.

Now, about the year 1768 the attention of the scientific world was eagerly turned to an event which was to take place in the following year. This was the passage of the planet Venus across the face of the sun. Astronomers term this the *Transit of Venus*. It happens very seldom: it occurred in 1769, but not again till 1874, and 1882. By observing this passage—this transit—of Venus across the sun from different parts of our earth, it was hoped that such information could be obtained as would enable us to measure not only the distance of the sun from the earth with greater accuracy than heretofore, but also the extent of the whole host of stars that move with our earth around the sun and form what is called our Solar System.

An opportunity occurring so seldom was not to be lost. Learned men were sent to all parts of the world to observe the event. Among others, Captain Cook was sent to the south seas—there, among the far-off coral isles, to note the passage of a little star across the sun's face—an apparently trifling, though in reality important, event in the history of science.

So much for the object of Cook's first voyage. Let us now turn to the details thereof.

The vessel chosen by him for his long and dangerous voyage to unknown seas was a small one of only 370 tons burden. It was named the *Endeavour*. The crew consisted of forty-one seamen, twelve marines, and nine servants—these, with the officers and the scientific men of the expedition, made up a body of eighty-five persons.

The scientific men above mentioned were, Mr Green, an astronomer; Mr Banks, a naturalist, who afterwards became Sir Joseph Banks and a celebrated man; Doctor Solander, who was also a naturalist; and two draughtsmen, one of whom was skilled in drawing objects of natural history, the other in taking views of scenery.

The *Endeavour* was victualled for a cruise of eighteen months. She was a three-masted vessel of the barque rig, and carried twenty-two large guns, besides a store of small arms,—for the region of the world to which they were bound was inhabited by savages, against whom they might find it necessary to defend themselves.

When all was ready, Captain Cook hoisted his flag, and spread his sails, and, on the 26th of August 1768, the voyage began—England soon dropped out of sight astern, and ere long the blue sky above and the blue sea below were all that remained for the eyes of the navigators to rest upon.

It is a wonderful thought, when we come to consider it, the idea of *going to sea*! To sailors who are used to it, the thought, indeed, may be very commonplace, and to lazy minds that are not much given to think deeply upon any subject, the thought may not appear very wonderful; but it is



so, nevertheless, to us, men of the land, when we calmly sit down and ponder the idea of making to ourselves a house of planks and beams of wood, launching it upon the sea, loading it with food and merchandise, setting up tall poles above its roof, spreading great sheets thereon, and then rushing out upon the troubled waters of the great deep, there, for days and nights, for weeks and months, and even years, to brave the fury of the winds and waves, with nothing between us and death except a wooden plank, some two or three inches thick!

It seems a bold thing for man to act in this fashion, even when he is accustomed to it, and when he knows all about the sea which he sails over; but when, like Cook, he knows very little about the far-off ocean to which he is bound, his boldness seems and really is, much greater. It is this very uncertainty, however, that charms the minds of enterprising men, and gives interest to such voyages.

The Bible says, "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep." Navigators in all ages have borne testimony to the truth of this. The very first pages in Cook's journal mention some of these wonders. He says that, while they were off the coast of Spain, Mr Banks and Dr Solander, the naturalists, had an opportunity of observing some very curious marine animals, some of which were like jelly, and so colourless that it was difficult to see them in the water except at night, when they became luminous, and glowed like pale liquid fire. One, that was carefully examined, was about three inches long, and an inch thick, with a hollow passing quite through it, and a brown spot at one end, which was supposed to be its stomach. Four of these, when first taken up out of the sea in a bucket, were found to be adhering together, and were supposed to be one animal; but on being put into a glass of water they separated and swam briskly about. Many of them resembled precious stones, and shone in the water with bright and beautiful colours. One little animal of this kind lived several hours in a glass of salt water, swimming about with great agility, and at every motion displaying a change of colours.

These *Medusae*, as they are called, have been spoken of by many travellers, who tell us that in some parts of the sea they are so numerous that the whole ocean is covered with them, and seems to be composed of liquid fire, usually of a pale blue or green colour. The appearance is described as being of great splendour. Even in the seas on our own coasts this beautiful light is often seen. It is called phosphoric light. Something of the same kind may be seen in the carcass of a decaying fish if taken into a dark room.

Not long after this, they saw flying-fish. Cook says that when seen from the cabin windows they were beautiful beyond imagination, their sides having the colour and brightness of burnished silver. When seen from the deck they did not look so beautiful, because their backs were of a dark colour. It must not be supposed that these fish could fly about in the air like birds. They can only fly a few yards at a time. They usually rise suddenly from the waves, fly as if in a great hurry, not more than a yard or two above the surface, and then drop as suddenly back into the sea as they rose out of it. The two fins near the shoulders of the fish are very long, so that they can be used as wings for these short flights. When chased by their enemy, the dolphin, flying-fish usually take a flight in order to escape. They do not, however, appear to be able to use their eyes when out of the water, for they have been seen to fly against ships at sea, get entangled in the rigging, and fall helpless on the deck. They are not quite so large as a herring, and are considered very good eating.

On drawing near to Cape Horn, on the extreme south of South America, the voyagers began to prepare for bad weather, for this Cape is notorious for its storms. Few mariners approach the Horn without some preparation, for many a good ship has gone to the bottom in the gales that blow there.

It was here that they first fell in with savages. The ship having approached close to that part of the land named Tierra del Fuego, natives were observed on shore. As Mr Banks and Dr Solander were anxious to visit them, a boat was lowered and sent ashore. They landed near a bay in the lee of some rocks where the water was smooth. Thirty or forty of the Indians soon made their appearance at the end of a sandy beach on the other side of the bay, but seeing that there were twelve Europeans in the boat they were afraid, and retreated. Mr Banks and Dr Solander then advanced about one hundred



yards, on which two of the Indians returned, and, having advanced some paces, sat down. As soon as the gentlemen came up the savages rose and each threw away a small stick which he had carried in his hand. This was intended for a sign of peace. They then walked briskly towards their companions, who had halted about fifty yards behind them, and beckoned the gentlemen to follow, which they did. They were received with many uncouth signs of friendship, and, in return, gave the savages some beads and ribbons, which greatly delighted them.

A feeling of good-will having been thus established, the two parties joined and tried to hold converse by means of signs. Three of the Indians agreed to accompany them back to the ship, and when they got on board one of the wild visitors began to go through some extraordinary antics. When he was taken to any new part of the ship, or when he was shown any new thing, he shouted with all his force for some minutes, without directing his voice either to the people of the ship or to his companions.

Some beef and bread being given to them, they ate it, but did not seem to relish it much. Nevertheless, such of it as they did not eat they took away with them. But they would not swallow a drop either of wine or spirits. They put the glass to their lips, but, having tasted the liquor, they returned it with looks of disgust.

Cook says he was much surprised at the want of curiosity in these savages of the Cape, and seems to have formed a very low opinion of them. They were conducted all over the ship, yet, although they saw a vast number of beautiful and curious things that must have been quite new to them, they did not give vent to any expression of wonder or pleasure—for the howling above spoken of did not seem to be either,—and when they returned to land they did not seem anxious to tell what they had seen, neither did their comrades appear desirous of hearing anything about their visit to the ship. Altogether, they seemed a much lower race of people than the inhabitants of the South-Sea Islands whom Cook afterwards visited.

## **Chapter Three.**

### **Describes an Adventure in the Mountains, and tells of Tierra Del Fuego**

One of the main objects that Mr Banks and Dr Solander had in view in going with Captain Cook on this voyage was to collect specimens of plants and insects in the new countries they were about to visit. The country near Cape Horn was at that time almost unknown: indeed, it is not much known even at the present day. The two naturalists of the expedition were therefore anxious to land and explore the shore.

Accordingly, early one fine morning a party went ashore to ascend one of the mountains. It consisted of Mr Banks and Dr Solander with their servants, two of whom were negroes; Mr Buchan, the draughtsman; Mr Monkhouse, the surgeon of the ship; and Mr Green, the astronomer. These set off to push as far as they could into the country, intending to return before night. They were accompanied by two seamen, who carried their baggage.

The hills, when viewed from a distance, seemed to be partly wooded; above the wood there was a plain, and beyond that bare rocks. Mr Banks hoped to get through the woods, and made no doubt that beyond it he would find new sorts of plants which no botanists had ever yet heard of. They entered the wood full of hope, and with much of the excitement that men cannot but feel when exploring a country that has never been trodden by the foot of a civilised man since the world began.

It took them, however, much longer to get through the pathless wood than they had expected. It was afternoon before they reached what they had taken for a plain, but which, to their great disappointment, they found to be a swamp covered with low bushes, which were so stubborn that they could not break through them, and were therefore compelled to step over them, while at every step they sank up to the ankles in mud—a mode of progress so fatiguing that they were all very soon exhausted. To make matters worse, the weather became gloomy and cold, with sudden blasts of piercing wind accompanied by snow.

They pushed on vigorously notwithstanding, and had well-nigh crossed the swamp when Mr Buchan was suddenly seized with a fit. This compelled a halt. As he could not go further, a fire was kindled, and those who were most fatigued were left behind to take care of him, while the rest continued to advance. At last they reached the summit of the mountain, and were rewarded for their toil by the botanical specimens discovered there. It was late in the day by that time, and as it was impossible to get back to the ship that night, they were obliged to make up their minds to bivouac on the mountain, a necessity which caused them no little uneasiness, for it had now become bitterly cold. Sharp blasts of wind became so frequent, however, that they could not remain on the exposed mountain-side, and were obliged to make for the shelter of the woods in the nearest valley.

Mr Buchan having recovered, and the whole party having reassembled, they set out to recross the swamp, intending, when they should get into the woods, to build a hut of leaves and branches, kindle a fire, and pass the night there as well as they could. But an overpowering torpor had now begun to seize hold upon some of the party, and it was with the greatest difficulty the others could prevent the drowsy ones from lying down to sleep in the snow. This almost irresistible tendency to sleep is common in cold countries. It is one of the effects of extreme cold upon exhausted men, and is a very dangerous condition, because those who fall into it cannot resist giving way to it, even though they know that if they do so they will certainly die.

Dr Solander, who had formerly travelled on the snow-topped mountains of Norway, was aware of the danger of giving way to this feeling, and strove to prevent his companions from falling into the fatal rest. “Whoever sits down,” said he, “will sleep, and whoever sleeps will awake no more.”

Strange to say, Dr Solander was the first to disregard his own warning. While they were still pushing across the naked side of the mountain, the cold became suddenly so intense that it increased the effect they dreaded so much. The doctor found the desire to rest so irresistible that he insisted on being suffered to lie down. Mr Banks tried to prevent him, but in vain. Down he lay upon the ground, covered though it was with snow, and all that his friends could do was to keep shaking him, and so prevent him from falling into the fatal sleep. At the same time one of the negro servants became affected in a similar manner. Mr Banks, therefore, sent forward five of the company with orders to get a fire ready at the first convenient place they could find, while himself with four others remained with the doctor and the negro, whom partly by entreaty and partly by force, they roused up and brought on for some little distance. But when they had got through the greatest part of the swamp they both declared they could go no further. Again Mr Banks tried to reason with the two unfortunate men, pointing out their extreme danger, and beseeching them to make an effort to advance. But all he could say had no effect.

When the negro was told that if he would not go on he must, in a short time, be frozen to death, he answered that he desired nothing but to be allowed to lie down and die. Dr Solander, on being told the same thing, replied that he was willing to go on but that he must "*first take some sleep,*" forgetting apparently that he had before told his comrades that to sleep was to perish.

As Mr Banks and his companions could not carry them, there was no help for it—they were suffered to sit down, being partly supported by the bushes. In a few minutes they were both sound asleep. Providentially, just at that time, some of the people who had been sent forward returned with the welcome news that a fire had been lighted not more than a quarter of a mile off. Renewed attempts were therefore made to rouse the sleepers. But the negro was past help. Every effort failed to awaken him. With Dr Solander they were more successful, yet, though he had not slept five minutes he had almost lost the use of his limbs, and the muscles were so shrunken that the shoes fell off his feet. Staggering and stumbling among the slush and snow, more dead than alive, he was half carried, half dragged by his comrades to the fire.

Meanwhile the other negro and a seaman were left in charge of the unfortunate black servant, with directions to stay by him and do what they could for him until help should be sent. The moment Dr Solander was got to the fire, two of the strongest of the party who had been refreshed were sent back to bring in the negro. In half an hour, however, they had the mortification to see these two men return alone. They had been unable to find their comrades. This at first seemed unaccountable, but when it was discovered that the only bottle of rum belonging to the party was amissing, Mr Banks thought it probable that it had been in the knapsack of one of the absent men, that by means of it the sleeping negro had been revived, that they had then tried to reach the fire without waiting for assistance, and so had lost themselves.

It was by this time quite dark, another heavy fall of snow had come on, and continued for two hours, so that all hope of seeing them again alive was given up, for it must be remembered that the men remaining by the fire were so thoroughly knocked up that had they gone out to try to save their comrades they would in all probability have lost their own lives. Towards midnight, however, a shout was heard at some distance. Mr Banks, with four others, went out immediately, and found the seaman who had been left with the two negroes, staggering along with just strength enough to keep on his legs. He was quickly brought to the fire, and, having described where the other two were, Mr Banks proceeded in search of them. They were soon found. The first negro, who had sunk down at the same time with Dr Solander, was found standing on his legs, but unable to move. The other negro was lying on the snow as insensible as a stone.

All hands were now called from the fire, and an attempt was made to carry them to it, but every man was so weak from cold, hunger, and fatigue that the united strength of the whole party was not sufficient for this. The night was extremely dark, the snow was very deep, and although they were

but a short distance from the fire, it was as much as each man could do to make his way back to it, stumbling and falling as he went through bogs and bushes.

Thus the poor negroes were left to their sad fate, and some of the others were so near sharing that fate with them that they began to lose their sense of feeling. One of Mr Banks's servants became so ill, that it was feared he would die before he could be got to the fire.

At the fire, however, they did eventually arrive, and beside it passed a dreadful night of anxiety, grief, and suffering. Of the twelve who had set out on this unfortunate expedition in health and good spirits two were dead; a third was so ill that it was doubtful whether he would be able to go forward in the morning; and a fourth, Mr Buchan, was in danger of a return of his fits. They were distant from the ship a long day's journey, while snow lay deep on the ground and still continued to fall. Moreover, as they had not expected to be out so long, they had no provisions left, except a vulture which chanced to be shot, and which was not large enough to afford each of them quarter of a meal.

When morning dawned nothing was to be seen, as far as the eye could reach, but snow, which seemed to lie as thick upon the trees as on the ground, and the wind came down in such sudden violent blasts, that they did not dare to resume their journey. How long this might last they knew not. Despair crept slowly over them, and they began gloomily to believe that they were doomed to perish of hunger and cold in that dreary waste. But the Almighty, who often affords help to man when his case seems most hopeless and desperate, sent deliverance in a way most agreeable and unexpected. He caused a soft, mild breeze to blow, under the influence of which the clouds began to clear away, the intense cold moderated, and the gladdening sun broke forth, so that with revived spirits and frames the wanderers were enabled to start on the return journey to the coast.

Before doing so, they cooked and ate the vulture, and it is probable that they devoured that meal with fully as much eagerness and satisfaction as the ravenous bird itself ever devoured its prey. It was but a light breakfast, however. After being skinned, the bird was divided into ten portions, and every man cooked his own as he thought fit, but each did not receive above three mouthfuls. Nevertheless it strengthened them enough to enable them to return to the ship, where they were received by their anxious friends with much joy and thankfulness.

The month of December is the middle of summer in the land at the extreme south of South America.

That land occupies much about the same position on the southern half of this world that we occupy on the northern half; so that, when it is winter with us, it is summer there. The climate is rigorous and stormy in the extreme, and the description given of the natives shows that they are a wretched and forlorn race of human beings. Captain Cook visited one of their villages before leaving the coast. It contained about a dozen dwellings of the poorest description. They were mere hovels; nothing more than a few poles set up in a circle and meeting together at the top, each forming a kind of cone. On the weather side each cone was covered with a few boughs and a little grass. The other side was left open to let the light in and the smoke out. Furniture they had none. A little grass on the floor served for chairs, tables, and beds. The only articles of manufacture to be seen among the people were a few rude baskets, and a sort of sack in which they carried the shell-fish which formed part of their food. They had also bows and arrows, which were rather neatly made—the arrows with flint heads cleverly fitted on.

The colour of those savages resembled iron-rust mixed with oil; their hair was long and black. The men were large but clumsy fellows, varying from five feet eight to five feet ten. The women were much smaller, few being above five feet. Their costume consisted of skins of wild animals. The women tied their fur cloaks about the waists with a thong of leather. One would imagine that among people so poor and miserably off there was not temptation to vain show, nevertheless they were fond of making themselves "look fine"! They painted their faces with various colours; white round the eyes, with stripes of red and black across the cheeks, but scarcely any two of them were painted alike. Both men and women wore bracelets of beads made of shells and bones, and, of course, they were

greatly delighted with the beads which their visitors presented to them. Their language was harsh in sound; they seemed to have no form of government, and no sort of religion. Altogether they appeared to be the most destitute, as well as the most stupid, of all human beings.

## Chapter Four.

### Explains how Coral Islands are made

Soon after this adventurous visit to the land of Tierra del Fuego, the *Endeavour* doubled Cape Horn—and entered the waters of the great Pacific Ocean; and now Cook began to traverse those unknown seas in which his fame as a discoverer was destined to be made. He sailed over this ocean for several weeks, however, before discovering any land. It was on Tuesday morning, the 10th of April, that he fell in with the first of the coral islands. Mr Banks's servant, Peter Briscoe, was the first to see it, bearing south, at the distance of about ten or twelve miles, and the ship was immediately run in that direction. It was found to be an island of an oval form, with a lake, or lagoon, in the middle of it. In fact, it was like an irregularly-formed ring of land, with the ocean outside and a lake inside. Coral islands vary a good deal in form and size, but the above description is true of many of them.

To this island the crew of the *Endeavour* now drew near with looks of eager interest, as may well be believed, for an unknown land necessarily excites feelings of lively curiosity in the breasts of those who discover it.

It was found to be very narrow in some places, and very low, almost on a level with the sea. Some parts were bare and rocky; others were covered with vegetation, while in several places there were clumps of trees—chiefly cocoa-nut palms. When the ship came within a mile of the breakers, the lead was hove, but no bottom was found with 130 fathoms of line! This was an extraordinary depth so near shore, but they afterwards found that most of the coral islands have great depth of water round them, close outside the breakers.

They now observed that the island was inhabited, and with the glass counted four-and-twenty natives walking on the beach. These all seemed to be quite naked. They were of a brown colour, and had long black hair. They carried spears of great length in their hands, also a smaller weapon, which appeared to be either a club or a paddle. The huts of these people were under the shade of some palm-trees, and Captain Cook says that to him and his men, who had seen nothing but water and sky for many long months, except the dreary shores of Tierra del Fuego, these groves appeared like paradise.

They called this Lagoon Island. As night came on soon after they reached it, however, they were compelled to sail away without attempting to land.

Not long afterwards another island was discovered. This one was in the shape of a bow, with the calm lake, or lagoon, lying between the cord and the bow. It was also inhabited, but Cook did not think it worth his while to land. The natives here had canoes, and the voyagers waited to give them an opportunity of putting off to the ship, but they seemed afraid to do so.

Now, good reader, you must know that these coral islands of the Pacific are not composed of ordinary rocks, like most other islands of the world, but are literally manufactured or built by millions of extremely small insects which merit particular notice. Let us examine this process of island-making which is carried on very extensively by the artisans of the great South-Sea Factory!

The coral insect is a small creature of the sea which has been gifted with the power of “secreting” or depositing a lime-like substance, with which it builds to itself a little cell or habitation. It fastens this house to a rock at the bottom of the sea. Like many other creatures the coral insect is sociable; it is fond of company, and is never found working except in connection with millions of its friends. Of all the creatures of earth it shows perhaps the best example of what mighty works can be accomplished by *union*. One man can do comparatively little, but hundreds of men, united in their work, can achieve wonders, as every one knows. They can erect palaces and cathedrals towering to the skies; they can cover hundred of miles of ground with cities, and connect continents with telegraphs, but, with all their union, all their wisdom, and all their power, men cannot build islands—yet this is done by the coral insect; a thing without hand or brain, a creature with little more than a body

and a stomach. It is not much bigger than a pin-head, yet hundreds of the lovely, fertile islands of the Pacific Ocean are formed by this busy animalcule. Many of those islands would never have been there but for the coral insect!



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