

The Cannibal Islands

R.M. Ballantyne

Table of Contents

<u>The Cannibal Islands</u>	1
<u>R.M. Ballantyne</u>	1
<u>Chapter One. A HERO WHO ROSE FROM THE RANKS</u>	1
<u>Chapter Two. SHOWS WHAT MEN WILL DO AND DARE IN THE CAUSE OF SCIENCE</u>	2
<u>Chapter Three. DESCRIBES AN ADVENTURE IN THE MOUNTAINS, AND TELLS OF TIERRA DEL FUEGO</u>	5

The Cannibal Islands

R.M. Ballantyne

This page copyright © 2003 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- Chapter One. A HERO WHO ROSE FROM THE RANKS.
- Chapter Two. SHOWS WHAT MEN WILL DO AND DARE IN THE CAUSE OF SCIENCE.
- Chapter Three. DESCRIBES AN ADVENTURE IN THE MOUNTAINS, AND TELLS OF TIERRA DEL FUEGO.
- Chapter Four. EXPLAINS HOW CORAL ISLANDS ARE MADE.
- Chapter Five. DISCOVERY BY CAPTAIN WALLIS OF OTAHEITE OR TAHITI.
- Chapter Six. CAPTAIN COOK'S VISIT TO TAHITI.
- Chapter Seven. SHOWS WHAT VANITY WILL INDUCE MEN AND WOMEN TO DO.
- Chapter Eight. TREATS OF SAVAGE WARFARE AND SOME OF ITS CONSEQUENCES.
- Chapter Nine. TOUCHES ON CANNIBALISM.
- Chapter Ten. VISIT TO NEW ZEALAND.
- Chapter Eleven. THE LAST VOYAGE AND SAD END OF THE GREAT DISCOVERER.

Etext from Athelstane.co.uk

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.

The Cannibal Islands

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 forecabin 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!

The Cannibal Islands

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!

The Cannibal Islands

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.

The Cannibal Islands

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