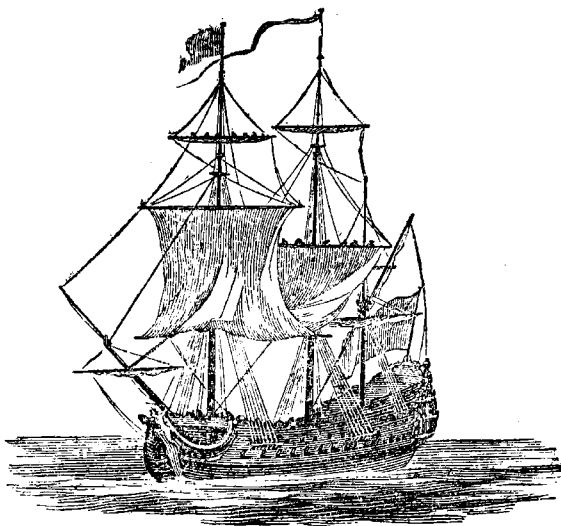


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Excerpt

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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF
THE LATE CAPTAIN JAMES COOK, F. R. S.

Great Cook ! immortal wreaths are thine !
 While Albion's grateful toil shall raise
 The marble tomb, the trophied bust,
 For ages faithful to its trust ;
 While, eager to record thy praise,
 She bids the Muse of History twine
 The chaplet of undying fame,
 And tell each polish'd land thy worth ;
 The ruder natives of the earth
 Shall oft repeat thy honour'd name ;
 While infants catch the frequent sound,
 And learn to lisp the oral tale,
 Whose fond remembrance shall prevail
 Till Time has reach'd his destin'd bound.

THOUGH distinguished at present beyond all other nations for the extent of her naval power, a variety of causes conspired to make Britain arrive at naval eminence somewhat later than the inferior kingdoms of Spain and Portugal. Our Edwards and Henrys, instead of attending to the proper means of increasing the strength and opulence of their dominions, wasted their forces in fruitless expeditions against France, or in domestic broils, and it was not until

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Columbus had discovered a new world, and Vasco di Gama had reached the East Indies by a new route, that a spirit of naval enterprise was excited among the northern nations of Europe. The two great events here alluded to, in their consequences produced the most remarkable effects. A spirit of enterprise, when once roused and put in motion, is always progressive. The wealth which flowed in a copious stream into Spain and Portugal, in consequence of their discoveries, was gradually diffused over Europe, and awakened a general spirit of industry and activity. It must, however, be remarked, that the merit of the early voyages of discovery, was tarnished by the principles on which they were undertaken. The navigators of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries undertook their perilous voyages, more from immediate views of avarice, than from any noble-minded ambition to increase the stock of human knowledge. Wherever their fortunes led them, they afflicted with the miseries of war the countries which they visited, and whether they sailed to the barbarous regions of the west, or to the more civilized continent of the East, destruction invariably accompanied them. It is a curious historical fact, which must somewhat damp our admiration of the early navigators, that of the vast group of islands which compose the West Indies, and which at the time of their discovery were peopled by millions of human beings, but one island * contains aboriginal natives, and they are few in number, and confined to the barren and least profitable parts of the island. The honour remained for our own times to undertake voyages of discovery, with the enlightened design of promoting human happiness, of enlarging the bounds of science, and to ascertain or to confute philosophic conjecture.

Among the navigators of modern times, the illustrious character of whom we are about to treat, holds the most distinguished place. Captain James Cook was born at a village called Marton, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, on the

* St. Vincents.

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27th of October 1728; his parents were persons in indigent circumstances, but noted in their neighbourhood for their honesty, sobriety, and industry. The first rudiments of young Cook's education were received by him at Marton, where he was taught to read by the schoolmistress of the village. When he was eight years of age, his father, in consequence of his good character, was appointed to superintend a farm belonging to Thomas Scottowe, Esq. near Great Ayton, and at that gentleman's expence he was put under the tuition of a schoolmaster, who instructed him in writing, and in a few of the first rules of arithmetic. At this period of his life, he is said to have shown a strong genius for figures, and to have made himself remarkable for the reservedness of his disposition, and the inflexibility of his temper. Of his early acquirements, it is scarcely possible at this distance of time to collect any information that can be relied on: Sylla perceived in Cæsar, when a boy, many Marius's; and few men have arrived at great eminence in life, whose biographers have not had something wonderful to relate of their early studies and attainments.

Before he was thirteen years of age, our navigator was bound an apprentice to one Sanderson, a shopkeeper at Staiths, a considerable fishing town about ten miles north of Whitby. This situation, however, was unsuitable to Cook's disposition, and after a year and a half's servitude, having contracted a strong inclination for a seafaring life, he obtained his discharge from his master, and soon after indentured himself for seven years to Messrs. John and Henry Walker, of Whitby, owners of the ship *Freelove*, a vessel constantly employed in the coal trade, on board which our navigator spent the greatest part of his apprenticeship. After he was out of his time, he continued to serve in the coal and other branches of trade (though chiefly in the former) in the capacity of a common sailor, till, at length, he was raised to be master of one of Mr. John Walker's ships.

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In the spring of the year 1755, when hostilities broke out between England and France, and there was a hot press for seamen, Mr. Cook happened to be in the river Thames with the ship to which he belonged. At first he concealed himself, to avoid being pressed, but considering that it might be impracticable to avoid discovery, he resolved to enter voluntarily into his Majesty's service, and to take his future fortune in the Navy. The author of Captain Cook's life, the late Dr. Kippis, to whom literature is under unbounded obligations, imagines that our navigator was induced to enter into the Navy, from some presage in his mind of his future elevation. This, however, is a question which admits of no solution. If he had such a presentiment it was fully accomplished; and if he had not, his determination, to estimate it by its consequences, was the wisest which he could have formed. Mr. Cook entered on board the *Eagle*, of 60 guns, at that time commanded by Captain Hamer, and soon after by Captain, afterwards Sir Hugh, Palliser. This judicious Officer soon perceived the merit of our illustrious seaman, and gave him every encouragement that lay in his power.

In the course of some time the friends of Mr. Cook exerted themselves to procure him promotion, to which Captain Palliser lent his most cordial assistance, and on the 10th of May 1759, he obtained a Master's warrant for the *Grampus* sloop. This appointment, however, did not take place, as the proper Master of the *Grampus* unexpectedly returned to her, and four days after he was made Master of the *Garland*; but, upon inquiry, it was found that he could not join her, as that vessel had already sailed. The next day he was appointed to the *Mercury*, and soon after sailed in her to North America, where she joined the fleet under Sir Charles Saunders, in the memorable expedition against Quebec.

On this occasion it was that his talents were first brought into notice. During the siege, a difficult and dangerous

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service was necessary to be performed. This was to take the soundings of the river St. Lawrence, between the Isle of Orleans and the north shore, directly in the front of the French fortified camp at Montmorency and Beauport, in order to enable the Admiral to place ships against the enemy's batteries, and to cover the army on a general attack, which the gallant Wolfe intended to make on the camp. Captain Palliser, in consequence of his acquaintance with Mr. Cook's sagacity and resolution, recommended him to the service; and he performed it in the most complete manner. In this business he was employed during the night time, for several nights together. At length he was discovered by the enemy, who collected a great number of Indians and canoes, in a wood near the water side, which were launched in the night for the purpose of surrounding him and cutting him off. On this occasion he had a very narrow escape. He was obliged to run for it, and pushed on shore on the island of Orleans, near the guard of the English hospital. Some of the Indians entered at the stern of the boat as Mr. Cook leaped out at the bow; and the boat, which was a barge belonging to one of the ships of war, was carried away in triumph. However, he furnished the Admiral with as correct and complete a draught of the channel and soundings as could have been made, after the English were in possession of Quebec.

Mr. Cook was afterwards employed to survey those parts of the river St. Lawrence, below Quebec, which navigators had experienced to be attended with peculiar difficulty and danger; and he executed the business with the same diligence and skill of which he had already afforded so happy a specimen. When he had finished the undertaking, his chart of the river St. Lawrence was published, with soundings, and directions for sailing in that river. Of the accuracy and utility of this chart it is sufficient to say, that it has never since been found necessary to publish any other.

After the reduction of Quebec, Mr. Cook was appointed, on the 22d of September 1759, by a warrant from Lord

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Colvill, Master of the Northumberland, in which ship his Lordship staid the following winter, as Commodore, at Halifax. During the leisure which the winter season afforded him, he employed his time in the acquisition of such knowledge as eminently qualified him for his future appointments. It was at Halifax that he first read Euclid, the father of mathematics, and applied himself to the study of astronomy and other branches of science. The assistance which he derived from books was but scanty; but his industry enabled him to supply many defects, and to make a progress far superior to what could have been expected from the advantages he enjoyed.

While Mr. Cook was Master of the Northumberland under Lord Colvill, that ship came to Newfoundland, in September 1762, to assist in the recapture of the island from the French. On the recovery of the island, the English fleet staid some days at Placentia, and Mr. Cook manifested so great a diligence in surveying the harbour, as attracted the notice of the late Lord Graves, then Commander of the Antelope, and Governor of Newfoundland. An acquaintance thus commenced, soon ripened into a closer intimacy, and Admiral Graves continued the steady friend and patron of Mr. Cook during his life.

Early in the year 1763, after the peace with France and Spain was concluded, Mr. Cook was appointed Marine Surveyor of Newfoundland, at the recommendation of Captain Graves, who went out again as Governor. This place he continued to fill, under successive Governors, till the close of the year 1767. How worthy he was of the post which he occupied, is well known to every person acquainted with navigation. The charts which he published of the different surveys he had made, reflected great credit on his abilities and character, and the utility of them was universally acknowledged. It must not be omitted, that while he continued in this office, he had an opportunity of exhibiting to the Royal Society a proof of his progress in the study of astronomy. A short paper was written by him, and inserted

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in the fifty-seventh volume of the Philosophical Transactions, entitled "An Observation of an Eclipse of the Sun at the Island of Newfoundland, August 5, 1766, with the Longitude of the Place of Observation deduced from it." This paper obtained our navigator the reputation of being an able mathematician.

We now come to that period of Mr. Cook's life, when he was about to be known to the world as one of the most illustrious navigators, that any age or nation has produced. It having been calculated by astronomers, that a transit of Venus over the sun's disk would happen in 1769, and that the best place for observing it would be in some part of the South Sea, the Royal Society judging this a matter of great consequence in astronomy, addressed a memorial to his Majesty on the subject, entreating that a vessel might be ordered at the expence of Government, for the conveyance of suitable persons to observe the transit. To this memorial a favourable answer was returned, and the Endeavour bark, a vessel of three hundred and seventy tons, was purchased into the service for the voyage. Some difficulties occurred in the appointment of a Commander. Mr. Dalrymple, an eminent member of the Royal Society, had been fixed upon by that learned body, to take the direction of the expedition, but he made it a condition of his going, that he should have a *brevet commission* as Captain of the vessel, in the same manner as such a commission had been granted to Dr. Halley in his voyage of discovery. To this demand Sir Edward Hawke, who was then at the head of the Admiralty, absolutely refused to accede, and as Mr. Dalrymple was equally inflexible, no method remained but that of finding out another person equally capable of the service. While the business was in this state, Mr. Stephens, the Secretary to the Admiralty, mentioned Mr. Cook as a person whom he judged to be fully qualified for the direction of the voyage, and at the same time recommended it to the Board to take the opinion of Sir Hugh Palliser, who had lately been Governor of Newfoundland, and was intimately acquainted

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with Cook's character. Sir Hugh rejoiced in the opportunity of serving his friend. He strengthened Mr. Stephens's recommendation to the utmost of his power; and added many things in Mr. Cook's favour, arising from the particular knowledge which he had of his abilities and merit. Accordingly, Mr. Cook was appointed to the command of the expedition by the Lords of the Admiralty; and on this occasion he was promoted to the rank of a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, his commission bearing date on the 25th of May 1768.

The voyages of Captain Cook must be so familiar to the generality of our readers, that a very slight account of them may suffice, and indeed it would be inconsistent with the nature of this work to enter into a detail which must exceed all moderate limits.

Two days after our navigator received his Lieutenant's commission, he took charge of the *Endeavour*, and on the 30th of July sailed down the river. Mr. Green, a gentleman who had long been assistant to Dr. Bradley, at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, was united with Lieutenant Cook in conducting the astronomical part of the voyage, and he was also accompanied by the present excellent President of the Royal Society*, and Dr. Solander, a Swedish gentleman, who had made much proficiency in every branch of Natural History, under the instructions of the celebrated Linnæus.

On the 26th of August, our navigators sailed from Plymouth Sound; and on the 13th of November arrived at Rio de Janeiro. Here our Lieutenant was engaged in some disagreeable disputes with the Viceroy, a man little attached to science, and who could not be made to comprehend the objects of the voyage. Mr. Cook behaved, during the whole of the contest, with equal spirit and discretion. After quitting Rio de Janeiro, the *Endeavour* touched at Port Maurice in the Straits Le Maire, and, on the 13th of

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April 1769, anchored in *Matavai* Bay in the island of Otaheite. On the 3d of June, the transit of the planet Venus over the Sun's disk, was observed with great advantage. A particular account of this great astronomical event, the providing for the accurate observation of which reflects so much honour on his Majesty's munificent patronage of science, may be seen in the sixty-first volume of the *Philosophical Transactions*.

Lieutenant Cook remained at Otaheite until the 13th of July, after which he went in search of several islands which he discovered. He then proceeded to the inhospitable coasts of New Zealand, and on the 10th of October 1770, arrived at Batavia, with a vessel almost worn out, and a crew much fatigued and very sickly. The repairs of the ship obliged him to continue at this unhealthy place until the 27th of December, in which time he lost many of his seamen and passengers, and more on the passage to the Cape of Good Hope, which place he reached on the 15th of March 1771. From the Cape our navigator sailed to St. Helena, where he arrived on the 1st of May, and staid till the 4th, to refresh. On the 12th of June he came to anchor in the Downs, after having been absent almost three years, and in that time had experienced every danger to which a voyage of such length is incident, displaying on all occasions a mind that was equal to every perilous enterprise, and to the boldest and most successful efforts of navigation and discovery.

The manner in which Lieutenant Cook had performed his circumnavigation of the globe, justly entitled him to the protection of Government, and the favour of his Sovereign. Accordingly, he was promoted to be a Commander in his Majesty's Navy, by commission bearing date the 29th of August 1771. Mr. Cook, on this occasion, from a certain consciousness of his own merit, wished to have been appointed a Post Captain, but the Earl of Sandwich, then First Lord of the Admiralty, though he had the highest regard for

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our navigator, could not concede to his request, because a compliance with it would have been inconsistent with the order of the naval service. The President and Council of the Royal Society were highly satisfied with the manner in which the transit of Venus had been observed; and Captain Cook communicated to that learned body, "An Account of the flowing of the Tides in the South Sea, as observed on board his Majesty's bark, the Endeavour."

Soon after Captain Cook's return to England, it was resolved to equip two ships to complete the discovery of the southern hemisphere. It had long been a prevailing idea, that the unexplored part contained another continent, and many plausible philosophical arguments had been urged in its support. To ascertain this point was the important object of Captain Cook's second voyage. That nothing might be omitted which could tend to facilitate the enterprise, two ships were provided, equipped with uncommon care, and furnished with every necessary that could contribute to the safety, health, and comfort of the navigators. The first of these ships, commanded by Capt. Cook, was called the Resolution, a vessel of four hundred and sixty-two tons burthen; the other, the Adventure, of three hundred and thirty-six tons burthen, was commanded by Capt. Tobias Furneaux. Both of them sailed from Deptford on the 9th of April 1772, and arrived at the Cape of Good Hope on the 30th of October. They departed from thence on the 22d of November, and from that time until the 17th of January 1773, continued endeavouring to discover the continent, when they were obliged to relinquish the design, observing the whole sea covered with ice, from the direction of S. E. round by the south to west. Captain Cook at this time was in the latitude of 67. 15 S. They then proceeded to the South Seas, and made many other discoveries, and returned to the Cape of Good Hope on the 22d of March 1775, and from thence to England on the 30th of July, having, during three years and eighteen days (in which time the voyage was performed)