

Sir Ernest Scott



*The Life
of Matthew
Flinders*

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CHAPTER 1. BIRTH AND ORIGINS.

Matthew Flinders was the third of the triad of great English sailors by whom the principal part of Australia was revealed. A poet of our own time, in a line of singular felicity, has described it as the "last sea-thing dredged by sailor Time from Space; "* (* Bernard O'Dowd, *Dawnward*, 1903.) and the piecemeal, partly mysterious, largely accidental dragging from the depths of the unknown of a land so immense and bountiful makes a romantic chapter in geographical history. All the great seafaring peoples contributed something towards the result. The Dutch especially evinced their enterprise in the pursuit of precise information about the southern Terra Incognita, and the nineteenth century was well within its second quarter before the name New Holland, which for over a hundred years had borne testimony to their adventurous pioneering, gave place in general and geographical literature to the more convenient and euphonious designation suggested by Flinders himself, Australia.* (* Not universally, however, even in official documents. In the Report of the Committee of the Privy Council, dated May 1, 1849, "New Holland" is used to designate the continent, but "Australia" is employed as including both the continent and Tasmania. See Grey's *Colonial Policy* 1 424 and 439.)

But, important as was the work of the Dutch, and though the contributions made by French navigators (possibly also by Spanish) are of much consequence, it remains true that the broad outlines of the continent were laid down by Dampier, Cook and Flinders. These are the principal names

in the story. A map of Australia which left out the parts discovered by other sailors would be seriously defective in particular features; but a map which left out the parts discovered by these three Englishmen would gape out of all resemblance to the reality.

Dampier died about the year 1712; nobody knows precisely when. Matthew Flinders came into the world in time to hear, as he may well have done as a boy, of the murder of his illustrious predecessor in 1779. The news of Cook's fate did not reach England till 1781. The lad was then seven years of age, having been born on March 16th, 1774.

His father, also named Matthew, was a surgeon practising his profession at Donington, Lincolnshire, where the boy was born. The Flinders family had been settled in the same town for several generations. Three in succession had been surgeons. The patronymic indicates a Flemish origin, and the work on English surnames* that bids the reader looking for information under "Flinders" to "see Flanders," sends him on a reasonable quest, if to no great resulting advantage. (* Barker, Family Surnames 1903 page 143.)

The English middle-eastern counties received frequent large migrations of Flemings during several centuries. Sometimes calamities due to the harshness of nature, sometimes persecutions and wars, sometimes adverse economic conditions, impelled companies of people from the Low Countries to cross the North Sea and try to make homes for themselves in a land which, despite intervals of distraction, offered greater security and a better reward than did the place whence they came. England derived

much advantage from the infusion of this industrious, solid and dependable Flemish stock; though the temporary difficulty of absorption gave rise to local protests on more than one occasion.

As early as 1108, a great part of Flanders "being drowned by an exudation or breaking in of the sea, a great number of Flemings came into the country, beseeching the King to have some void place assigned them, wherein they might inhabit."* (* Holinshed's Chronicle edition of 1807 2 58.) Again in the reign of Edward I we find Flemish merchants carrying on a very large and important trade in Boston, and representatives of houses from Ypres and Ostend acquired property in the town.* (* Pishey Thompson Collections for a Topographical and Historical Account of Boston and the Hundred of Skirbeck 1820 page 31.) In the middle of the sixteenth century, when Flanders was boiling on the fire of the Reformation, Lincolnshire and Norfolk provided an asylum for crowds of harassed refugees. In 1569 two persons were deputed to ride from Boston to Norwich to ascertain what means that city adopted to find employment for them; and in the same year Mr. William Derby was directed to move Mr. Secretary Cecil, Queen Elizabeth's great minister, to "know his pleasure whether certain strangers may be allowed to dwell within the borough without damage of the Queen's laws."* (*Boston Corporation manuscripts quoted in Thompson, History and Antiquities of Boston 1856.)

During one of these peaceful and useful Flemish invasions the ancestors of Matthew Flinders entered Lincolnshire. In the later years of his life he devoted some

attention to the history of his family, and found record of a Flinders as early as the tenth century. He believed, also, that his people had some connection with two men named Flinders or Flanders, who fled from Holland during the religious persecutions, and settled, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, in Nottinghamshire as silk stocking weavers. It would be very interesting if it were clear that there was a link between the family and the origins of the great Nottingham hosiery trade. A Flinders may in that case have woven silk stockings for the Royal termagant, and Lord Coke's pair, which were darned so often that none of the original fabric remained, may have come from their loom.

Matthew Flinders himself wrote the note: "Ruddington near Nottingham (it is four miles south of the town) is the place whence the Flinders came;" and he ascertained that an ancestor was Robert Flinders, a Nottingham stocking-weaver.

A family tradition relates that the Lincolnshire Flinders were amongst the people taken over to England by Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, a Dutch engineer of celebrity in his day, who undertook in 1621 to drain 360,000 acres of fen in Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. He was financed by English and Dutch capitalists, and took his reward in large grants of land which he made fit for habitation and cultivation. Vermuyden and his Flemings were not allowed to accomplish their work of reclamation without incurring the enmity of the natives. In a petition to the King in 1637 he stated that he had spent 150,000 pounds, but that 60,000 pounds of damage had been done "by reason of the opposition of the commoners," who cut the banks of his

channels in the night and during floods. The peasantry, indeed, resisted the improvements that have proved so beneficent to that part of England, because the draining and cultivation of so many miles of swamp would deprive them of fishing and fowling privileges enjoyed from time immemorial. Hardly any reform or improvement can be effected without some disruption of existing interests; and a people deeply sunk in poverty and toil could hardly be expected to contemplate with philosophical calm projects which, however advantageous to fortunate individuals and to posterity, were calculated to diminish their own means of living and their pleasant diversions. The dislike of the "commoners" to the work of the "participants" led to frequent riots, and many of Vermuyden's Flemings were maltreated. He endeavoured to allay discontent by employing local labour at high wages; and was courageous enough to pursue his task despite loss of money, wanton destruction, and many other discouragements.* (* See Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, for 1619, 1623, 1625, 1638, 1639 et seq; and White's Lincolnshire page 542.) Ebullitions of discontent on the part of fractious Fenlanders did not cease till the beginning of the eighteenth century.

A very simple calculation shows that the great-grandfather of the first Matthew Flinders would probably have been contemporary with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's reclamation works. He may have been one of the "participants" who benefited from them. The fact is significant as bearing upon this conjecture, that no person named Flinders made a will in Lincolnshire before 1600.* (*

See C.W. Foster, Calendar of Lincoln Wills 1320 to 1600, 1902.)

It is, too, an interesting circumstance that there was a Flinders among the early settlers in New England, Richard Flinders of Salem, born 1637.* (* Savage, Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England, Boston U.S.A. 1860.) He may have been of the same family as the navigator, for the Lincolnshire element among the fathers of New England was pronounced.

The name Flinders survived at Donington certainly for thirty years after the death of the sailor who gave lustre to it; for in a directory published in 1842 occur the names of "Flinders, Mrs. Eliz., Market Place," and "Flinders, Mrs. Mary, Church Street."* (* William White, History, Gazetteer and Directory of the City and Diocese of Lincoln, 1842 page 193.)

The Flinders papers, mentioned in the preface, contain material which enables the family and connections of the navigator to be traced with certainty for seven generations. The genealogy is shown by the following table:--

John Flinders, born 1682, died 1741, settled at Donington as a farmer, married Mary O Bray or Aubrey in 1702 and had at least 1 child:

John Flinders, surgeon at Spalding, born 1737, still living in 1810, had at least two children:

1. John Flinders, Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, born 1766, died 1793.

2. Matthew Flinders, surgeon at Donington, born 1750, died 1802, married Susannah Ward, 1752 to 1783, in 1773 and had at least two children:

2. Samuel Ward Flinders, born 1782, died 1842, Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, married and left several children.

1. Matthew Flinders the Navigator, born March 16, 1774, died July 19, 1814, married Ann Chappell, born 1770, died 1852, in 1801 and had one daughter:

Ann Flinders, born 1812, died 1892, married William Petrie, born 1821, died 1908, in 1851 and had one son:

Professor W.M. Flinders Petrie, eminent scholar and Egyptian archaeologist, born 1853, married Hilda Urlin in 1897 and had at least two children:

1. John Flinders Petrie.
2. Ann Flinders Petrie.

There is also an interesting connection between Flinders and the Tennysons, through the Franklin family. The present Lord Tennyson, when Governor of South Australia, in the course of his official duties, in March, 1902, unveiled a memorial to his kinsman on Mount Lofty, and in April of the same year a second one in Encounter Bay. The following table illustrates the relationship between him who wrote of "the long wash of Australasian seas" and him who knew them as discoverer:

Matthew Flinders (father of Matthew Flinders the navigator) married as his second wife Elizabeth Weekes, whose sister, Hannah Weekes, married Willingham Franklin of Spilsby and had at least two children:

1. Sir John Franklin, born 1786, midshipman of the Investigator, Arctic explorer, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) 1837 to 1844, died 1847.

2. Sarah Franklin, married Henry Sellwood, solicitor, of Horncastle, in 1812 and had at least two children:

2. Louisa Sellwood married Charles Tennyson-Turner, poet, brother of Alfred Tennyson.

1. Emily Sarah Sellwood, born 1813, died 1896, married Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate, born 1809, died 1892, in 1850 and had at least one son:

Hallam, Lord Tennyson, born 1852; Governor of South Australia 1899 to 1902; Governor-General of Australia, 1902 to 1904.

The Flinders papers also contain a note suggesting a distant connection between Matthew Flinders and the man who above all others was his choice friend, George Bass, the companion of his earliest explorations. Positive proof is lacking, but Flinders' daughter, Mrs. Petrie, wrote "we have reason to think that Bass was a connection of the family," and the point is too interesting to be left unstated. The following table shows the possible kinship:

John Flinders of Donington, born 1682, died 1741 (great-grandfather of the navigator) had:

Mary Flinders, third and youngest daughter, born 1734, married as her third husband, Bass, and had:

George Bass, who had three daughters, and is believed to have been an uncle or cousin of George Bass, Matthew Flinders' companion in exploration.

It is clear from the particulars stated above that the tree of which Matthew Flinders was the fruit had its roots deep down in the soil of the little Lincolnshire market town where he was born; and Matthew himself would have continued the family tradition, inheriting the practice built up by his

father and grandfather (as it was hoped he would do), had there not been within him an irresistible longing for the sea, and a bent of scientific curiosity directed to maritime exploration, which led him on a path of discovery to achievements that won him honourable rank in the noble roll of British naval pioneers.

His father earned an excellent reputation, both professional and personal. The career of a country practitioner rarely affords an opportunity for distinction. It was even less so then than today, when at all events careful records of interesting cases are printed in a score or more of professional publications. But once we find the elder Matthew Flinders in print. The *Memoirs of the Medical Society of London** (* 1779 Volume 4 page 330.) contain a paper read before that body on October 30th, 1797: "Case of a child born with variolar pustules, by Matthew Flinders, surgeon, Donington, Lincolnshire." The essay occupies three pages, and is a clear, succinct record of symptoms, treatment and results, for medical readers. The child died; whereupon the surgeon expresses his regret, not on account of infant or parents, but, with true scientific zest, because it deprived him of the opportunity of watching the development of an uncommon case.

Donington is a small town in the heart of the fen country, lying ten miles south-west of Boston, and about the same distance, as the crow flies, from the black, muddy, western fringe of the Wash. It is a very old town. Formerly it was an important Lincolnshire centre, enjoying its weekly Saturday market, and its four annual fairs for the sale of horses, cattle, flax and hemp. During Flinders' youth and early

manhood the district grew large quantities of hemp, principally for the Royal Navy. In the days of its prosperity Donington drew to itself the business of an agricultural neighbourhood which was so far cultivable as it rose above the level of desolate and foggy swamps. But the drainage of the fens and the making of good roads over what had once been an area of amphibious uncertainty, neither wholly land nor wholly water, had the effect of largely diverting business to Boston. Trade that came to Donington when it stood over its own tract of fen, like the elderly and respectable capital of some small island, now went to the thriving and historic port on the Witham. Donington stopped growing, stagnated, declined. On the map of Lincolnshire included in Camden's Britannia (1637) it is marked "Dunington," in letters as large as those given to Boston, Spalding and Lincoln. On modern maps the name is printed in small letters; on some in the smallest, or not at all. That fact is fairly indicative of its change of fortunes. Figures tell the tale with precision. In 1801 it contained 1321 inhabitants; in 1821, 1638; in 1841 it reached its maximum, 2026; by 1891 it had gone down to 1547; in 1901 to 1484; at the census of 1911 it had struggled up to 1564.* (* Allen, History of Lincolnshire, 1833 Volume 1 342; Victoria History of Lincolnshire Volume 2 359; Census Returns for 1911.)

The fame conferred by a distinguished son is hardly a recompense for faded prosperity, but certain it is that Donington commands a wider interest as the birthplace of Flinders than it ever did in any other respect during its long, uneventful history. The parish church, a fine Gothic building with a lofty, graceful spire, contains a monument to the

memory of the navigator, with an inscription in praise of his character and life, and recording that he "twice circumnavigated the globe." Many men have encircled the earth, but few have been so distinguished as discoverers of important portions of it. Apart from this monument, the church contains marble ovals to the memory of Matthew Flinders' father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. They were provided from a sum of 100 pounds left by the navigator, in his will, for the purpose.

It is interesting to notice that three of the early Australian explorers came from Lincolnshire, and were all born at places visible in clear weather from the tower of St. Botolph's Church at Boston. While Flinders sprang from Donington, George Bass, who co-operated with him in his first discoveries, was born at Aswarby, near Sleaford, and Sir John Franklin, who sailed with him in the Investigator, and was subsequently to become an Australian Governor and to achieve a pathetic immortality in another field of exploration, entered the world at Spilsby. Sir Joseph Banks, the botanist of Cook's first voyage, Flinders' steadfast friend, and the earliest potent advocate of Australian colonisation, though not actually born in Lincolnshire, was the son of a squire who at the time of his birth owned Revesby Abbey, which is within a short ride of each of the places just named.

CHAPTER 2. AT SCHOOL AND AT SEA.

Young Flinders received his preparatory education at the Donington free school. This was an institution founded and endowed in 1718 by Thomas Cowley, who bequeathed property producing nowadays about 1200 pounds a year for the maintenance of a school and almshouses. It was to be open to the children of all the residents of Donington parish free of expense, and in addition there was a fund for paying premiums on the apprenticeship of boys.

At the age of twelve the lad was sent to the Horbling Grammar School, not many miles from his own home. It was under the direction of the Reverend John Shinglar. Here he remained three years. He was introduced to the Latin and Greek classics, and received the grounding of that mathematical knowledge which subsequently enabled him to master the science of navigation without a tutor. If to Mr. Shinglar's instruction was likewise due his ability to write good, sound, clear English, we who read his letters and published writings have cause to speak his schoolmaster's name with respect.

During his school days another book besides those prescribed in the curriculum came into his hands. He read Robinson Crusoe. It was to Defoe's undying tale of the stranded mariner that he attributed the awaking in his own mind of a passionate desire to sail in uncharted seas. This anecdote happens to be better authenticated than are many of those quoted to illustrate the youth of men of mark. Towards the end of Flinders' life the editor of the Naval Chronicle sent to him a series of questions, intending to

found upon the answers a biographical sketch. One question was: "Juvenile or miscellaneous anecdotes illustrative of individual character?" The reply was: "Induced to go to sea against the wishes of friends from reading Robinson Crusoe."

The case, interesting as it is, has an exact parallel in the life of a famous French traveller, Rene Caille, who in 1828, after years of extraordinary effort and endurance, crossed Senegal, penetrated Central Africa, and was the first European to visit Timbuctoo. He also had read Defoe's masterpiece as a lad, and attributed to it the awaking in his breast of a yearning for adventure and discovery. "The reading of Robinson Crusoe," says a French historian, "made upon him a profound impression." "I burned to have adventures of my own," he wrote later; "I felt as I read that there was born within my heart the ambition to distinguish myself by some important discovery."* (* Gaffarel, *La Politique coloniale en France*, 1908 page 34.)

Here were astonishing results to follow from the vivid fiction of a gouty pamphleteer who wrote to catch the market and was hoisted into immortal fame by the effort: that his book should, like a spark falling on straw, fire the brains of a French shoemaker's apprentice and a Lincolnshire schoolboy, impelling each to a career crowded with adventure, and crowned with memorable achievements. There could hardly be better examples of the vitalising efficacy of fine literature.

A love of Robinson Crusoe remained with Flinders to the end. Only a fortnight before his death he wrote a note subscribing for a copy of a new edition of the book, with

notes, then announced for publication. It must have been one of the last letters from his hand. Though out of its chronological order, it may be appropriately quoted here to connect it with the other references to the book which so profoundly influenced his life:

"Captain Flinders presents his compliments to the Hydrographer of the Naval Chronicle, and will thank him to insert his name in the list of subscribers in his new edition of Robinson Crusoe; he wishes also that the volume on delivery should have a neat, common binding, and be lettered.--London Street, July 5, 1814."

It seems clear that Flinders had promised himself the pleasure of re-reading in maturity the tale that had so delighted his youth. Had he lived to do so, he might well have underlined, as applicable to himself, a pair of those sententious observations with which Defoe essayed to give a sober purpose to his narrative. The first is his counsel of "invincible patience under the worst of misery, indefatigable application, and undaunted resolution under the greatest and most discouraging circumstances." The second is his wise remark that "the height of human wisdom is to bring our tempers down to our circumstances, and to make a great calm within under the weight of the greatest storm without." They were words which Flinders during strenuous years had good cause to translate into conduct.

The edition of the book to which he thus subscribed was undertaken largely on account of his acknowledgment of its effect upon his life. The author of the Naval Chronicle sketch of his career* (* 1814 Volume 32.) wrote in a footnote: "The biographer, also happening to understand that to the same

cause the Navy is indebted for another of its ornaments, Admiral Sir Sydney Smythe, was in a great measure thereby led to give another studious reading to that charming story, and hence to adopt a plan for its republication, now almost at maturity;" and he commended the new issue especially "to all those engaged in the tuition of youth."

One other anecdote of Flinders' boyhood has been preserved as a family tradition. It is that, while still a child, he was one day lost for some hours. He was ultimately found in the middle of one of the sea marshes, his pockets stuffed with pebbles, tracing the runlets of water, so that by following them up he might find out whence they came. Many boys might have done the same; but this particular boy, in that act of enquiry concerning geographical phenomena on a small scale, showed himself father to the man.

"Against the wish of friends," Flinders wrote, was his selection of a naval career. His father steadily but kindly opposed his desire, hoping that his son would adopt the medical profession. But young Matthew was not easily thwarted. The call of the sea was strong within him, and persistency was always a fibrous element in his character.

The surgeon's house at Donington stood in the market square. It remained in existence till 1908, when it was demolished to give place to what is described as "a hideous new villa." It was a plain, square, one-story building with a small, low surgery built on to one side of it. Behind the door of the surgery hung a slate, upon which the elder Flinders was accustomed to write memoranda concerning appointments and cases. The lad, wishing to let his father

know how keen was his desire to enter the Navy, and dreading a conversation on the subject--with probable reproaches, admonitions, warnings, and a general outburst of parental displeasure--made use of the surgeon's slate. He wrote upon it what he wanted his father to know, hung it on the nail, and left it there to tell its quiet story.

He got his way in the end, but not without discouragement from other quarters also. He had an uncle in the Navy, John Flinders, to whom he wrote asking for counsel. John's experience had not made him enamoured of his profession, and his reply was chilling. He pointed out that there was little chance of success without powerful interest. Promotion was slow and favouritism was rampant. He himself had served eleven years, and had not yet attained the rank of lieutenant, nor were his hopes of rising better than slender.

From the strictly professional point of view it was not unreasonable advice for the uncle to give. A student of the naval history of the period finds much to justify a discouraging attitude. Even the dazzling career of Nelson might have been frustrated by a long protracted minority had he not had a powerful hand to help him up the lower rungs of the ladder--the "interest" of Captain Suckling, his uncle, who in 1775 became Comptroller of the Navy, "a civil position, but one that carried with it power and consequently influence." Nelson became lieutenant after seven years' service, in 1777; but he owed his promotion to Suckling, who "was able to exert his influence in behalf of his relative by promptly securing for him not only his promotion to lieutenant, which many waited for long, but

with it his commission, dated April 10, to the Lowestofte, a frigate of thirty-two guns."* (* Mahan, Life of Nelson edition of 1899 pages 13 and 14.)

That even conduct of singular merit, performed in the crisis of action, was not sufficient to secure advancement, is illustrated by a striking fact in the life of Sir John Hindmarsh, the first Governor of South Australia (1836). At the battle of the Nile, Hindmarsh, a midshipman of fourteen, was left in charge of the Bellerophon, all the other officers being killed or wounded. (It was upon this same vessel, as we shall see later, that Flinders had a taste of sea fighting). When the French line-of-battle ship L'Orient took fire she endangered the Bellerophon. The boy, with wonderful presence of mind, called up some hands, cut the cables, and was running the ship out of danger under a sprit sail, when Captain Darby came on deck from having his wounds dressed. Nelson, hearing of the incident, thanked young Hindmarsh before the ship's company, and afterwards gave him his commission in front of all hands, relating the story to them. "The sequel," writes Admiral Sir T.S. Pasley, who relates the facts in his Journal, "does not sound so well. Lord Nelson died in 1805, and Hindmarsh is a commander still, in 1830, not having been made one till June, 1814." A man with such a record certainly had to wait long before the sun of official favour shone upon him; and his later success was won, not in the navy, but as a colonial governor.

There was, then, much to make John Flinders believe that influence was a surer way to advancement than assiduous application or natural capacity. His own naval career did not turn out happily. A very few years afterwards he received his

long-delayed promotion, served as lieutenant in the *Cygnet*, on the West Indies station, under Admiral Affleck, and died of yellow fever on board his ship in 1793.

John Flinders' letter, however, concluded with a piece of practical advice, in case his nephew should be undeterred by his opinion. He recommended the study of three works as a preparation for entering the Navy: Euclid, John Robertson's *Elements of Navigation* (first edition published in 1754) and Hamilton Moore's book on Navigation. Matthew disregarded the warning and took the practical advice. The books were procured and the young student plunged into their problems eagerly. The year devoted to their study in that quiet little fen town made him master of rather more than the elements of a science which enabled him to become one of the foremost discoverers and cartographers of a continent. He probably also practised map-making with assiduity, for his charts are not only excellent as charts, but also singularly beautiful examples of scientific drawing.

After a year of book-work Flinders felt capable of acquitting himself creditably at sea, if he could secure an opportunity. In those days entrance to the Royal Navy was generally secured by the nomination of a senior officer. There was no indispensable examination; no naval college course was necessary. The captain of a ship could take a youth on board to oblige his relatives, "or in return for the cancelling of a tradesman's bill."* (* Masefield's *Sea Life in Nelson's Time* 1905 gives a good account of the practice.) It so happened that a cousin of Flinders occupied the position of governess in the family of Captain Pasley (afterwards Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley) who at that time commanded

H.M.S. Scipio. One of her pupils, Maria Pasley, developed into a young lady of decidedly vigorous character, as the following incident sufficiently shows. While her father was commander-in-chief at Plymouth, she was one day out in the Channel, beyond the Eddystone, in the Admiral's cutter. As the country was at war, she was courting danger; and in fact, the cutter was sighted by a French cruiser, which gave chase. But Miss Pasley declined to run away. She "popped at the Frenchman with the cutter's two brass guns." It was like blowing peas at an elephant; and she would undoubtedly have been captured, had not an English frigate seen the danger and put out to the rescue.

Flinders' cousin had interested herself in his studies and ambitions, and gave him some encouragement. She also spoke about him to Captain Pasley, who seems to have listened sympathetically. It interested him to hear of this boy studying navigation without a tutor up among the fens. "Send for him," said Pasley, "I should like to see what stuff he is made of, and whether he is worth making into a sailor."

Young Matthew, then in his fifteenth year, was accordingly invited to visit the Pasleys. In the later part of his life he used to relate with merriment, how he went, was asked to dine, and then pressed to stay till next day under the captain's roof. He had brought no night attire with him, not having expected to sleep at the house. When he was shown into his bedroom, his needs had apparently been anticipated; for there, folded up neatly upon the pillow, was a sleeping garment ready for use. He appreciated the consideration; but having attired himself for bed, he found himself enveloped in a frothy abundance of frills and fal-lals,

lace at the wrists, lace round the neck, with flutters of ribbon here and there. When, at the breakfast table in the morning, he related how he had been rigged, there was a shriek of laughter from the young ladies; the simple explanation being that one of them had vacated her room to accommodate the visitor, and had forgotten to remove her nightdress.

The visit had more important consequences. Captain Pasley very soon saw that he had an exceptional lad before him, and at once put him on the Alert. He was entered as "lieutenant's servant" on October 23rd, 1789. He remained there for rather more than seven months, learning the practical part of a sailor's business. On May 17th, 1790, he was able to present himself to Captain Pasley on the Scipio at Chatham, as an aspirant of more than ordinary efficiency; and remained under his command until the next year, following him as a midshipman when he left the Scipio for the Bellerophon in July, 1790.

This famous ship, which carried 74 guns, and was launched in 1786, is chiefly known to history as the vessel upon which Napoleon surrendered to Captain Maitland on July 15th, 1815, after the Waterloo debacle. She took a prominent part in Nelson's great battles at the Nile and Trafalgar. But her end was pitifully ignoble. After a glorious and proud career, she was converted into a convict hulk and re-named the Captivity. A great prose master has reminded us, in words that glow upon his impassioned page, of the slight thought given by the practical English to the fate of another line-of-battle ship that had flown their colours in the stress of war. "Those sails that strained so full bent into the

battle, that broad bow that struck the surf aside, enlarging silently in steadfast haste full front to the shot, those triple ports whose choirs of flame rang forth in their courses, into the fierce avenging monotone, which, when it died away, left no answering voice to rise any more upon the sea against the strength of England, those sides that were wet with the long runlets of English life-blood, like press-planks at vintage, gleaming goodly crimson down to the cast and clash of the washing foam, those pale masts that stayed themselves up against the war-ruin, shaking out their ensigns through the thunder, till sail and ensign drooped, steeped in the death-stilled pause of Andalusian air, burning with its witness clouds of human souls at rest--surely for these some sacred care might have been left in our thoughts, some quiet resting place amidst the lapse of English waters? Nay, not so, we have stern keepers to trust her glory to, the fire and the worm. Never more shall sunset lay golden robe on her, nor starlight tremble on the waves that part at her gliding. Perhaps, where the gate opens to some cottage garden, the tired traveller may ask, idly, why the moss grows so green on its rugged wood; and even the sailor's child may not answer nor know, that the night-dew lies deep in the war-rents of the wood of the old Temeraire."

But even the decline of might and dignity into decrepitude and oblivion described in that luminous passage is less pathetic than the conversion of the glorious Bellerophon, with her untarnished traditions of historic victories, into a hulk for the punishment of rascals, and the changing of her unsullied name to an alias significant only of shame.

During this preliminary period Flinders learnt the way about a ship and acquired instruction in the mechanism of seamanship, but there was as yet no opportunity to obtain deep-water experience. He was transferred to the Dictator for a brief period, but as he neither mentions the captain nor alludes to any other circumstance connected therewith, it was probably a mere temporary turnover or guardship rating not to lose any time of service.* (* Naval Chronicle 1814.)

His first chance of learning something about the width of the world and the wonder of its remote places came in 1791, when he went to sea under the command of a very remarkable man. William Bligh had sailed with James Cook on his third and fatal voyage of discovery, 1776 to 1780. He was twenty-three years of age when he was selected by that sagacious leader as one of those young officers who "under my direction could be usefully employed in constructing charts, in taking views of the coasts and headlands near which we should pass, and in drawing plans of the bays and harbours in which we should anchor;" for Cook recognised that constant attention to these duties was "wholly requisite if he would render our discoveries profitable to future navigators."* (* Cook's Voyages edition of 1821 5 page 92.)

Bligh's name appears frequently in Cook's Journal, and is also mentioned in King's excellent narrative of the conclusion of the voyage after Cook's murder. He was master of the Resolution, and was on several occasions entrusted with tasks of some consequence: as for instance on first reaching Hawaii, when Cook sent him ashore to look for fresh water, and again at Kealakeakura Bay (January 16,

1779) when he reported that he had found good anchorage and fresh water "in a situation admirable to come at." It was a fatal discovery, for on the white sands of that bay, a month later (February 14), the great British seaman fell, speared by the savages.

On each of Cook's voyages a call had been made at Tahiti in the Society group. Bligh no doubt heard much about the charms of the place before he first saw it himself. He was destined to have his own name associated with it in a highly romantic and adventurous manner. The idyllic beauty of the life of the Tahitians, their amiable and seductive characteristics, the warm suavity of the climate, the profusion of food and drink to be enjoyed on the island with the smallest conceivable amount of exertion, made the place stand out in all the narratives of Cook's expeditions like a green-and-golden gem set in a turquoise sea, a lotus-land "in which it seemed always afternoon," a paradise where love and plenty reigned and care and toil were not. George Forster, the German naturalist who accompanied Cook on his second voyage, wrote of the men as "models of masculine beauty," whose perfect proportions would have satisfied the eye of Phidias or Praxiteles; of the women as beings whose "unaffected smiles and a wish to please ensure them mutual esteem and love;" and of the life they led as being diversified between bathing in cool streams, reposing under tufted trees, feeding on luscious fruits, telling tales, and playing the flute. In fact, Forster declared, they "resembled the happy, indolent people whom Ulysses found in Phaeacia, and could apply the poet's lines to themselves with peculiar propriety:

'To dress, to dance, to sing our sole delight, The feast or bath by day, and love by night.'

In Tahiti grew an abundance of breadfruit. It was in connection with this nutritious food, one of nature's richest gifts to the Pacific, that Bligh undertook a mission which involved him in a mutiny, launched him upon one of the most dangerous and difficult voyages in the annals of British seamanship, and provided a theme for a long poem by one of the greatest of English authors. Byron it was who, writing as though the trees sprouted quartern loaves ready baked, said of it (*The Island* 2 11):

"The bread-tree, which without the ploughshare yields
The unreaped harvest of unfurrowed fields, And bakes its
unadulterated loaves Without a furnace in unpurchased
groves, And flings off famine from its fertile breast, A
priceless market for the gathering guest."

Breadfruit had been tasted and described by Dampier in the seventeenth century. His description of it has all the terse directness peculiar to the writing of the inquisitive buccaneer, with a touch of quaintness that makes the passage desirable to quote: (* Dampier's *Voyages* edition of 1729 1 page 294.)

"The breadfruit, as we call it, grows on a large tree as big and as tall as our largest apple trees. It hath a spreading head full of branches and dark leaves. The fruit grows on the boughs like apples; it is as big as a penny loaf when wheat is at five shillings the bushel. The natives of this island (Suam) use it for bread. They gather it when full-grown; then they bake it in an oven, which scorcheth the rind and makes it black; but they scrape off the outside

black crust and there remains a tender thin crust and the inside is soft, tender and white, like the crumb of a penny loaf. There is neither seed nor stone in the inside, but all is of a pure substance like bread; it must be eaten new, for if it is kept above twenty-four hours it becomes dry and eats harsh and chokey; but 'tis very pleasant before it is too stale."

By Dampier, who in the course of his astonishing career had consumed many strange things--who found shark's flesh "good entertainment," and roast opossum "sweet wholesome meat"--toleration in the matter of things edible was carried to the point of latitudinarianism. We never find Dampier squeamish about anything which anybody else could eat with relish. To him, naturally, the first taste of breadfruit was pleasing. But Cook was more critical. "The natives seldom make a meal without it," he said, "though to us the taste was as disagreeable as that of a pickled olive generally is the first time it is eaten." That opinion, perhaps, accords with the common experience of neophytes in tropical gastronomy. But new sensations in the matter of food are not always to be depended on. Sir Joseph Banks disliked bananas when he first tasted them.

The immense popularity of Cook's voyages spread afar the fame of breadfruit as an article of food. Certain West Indian planters were of opinion that it would be advantageous to establish the trees on their islands and to encourage the consumption of the fruit by their slaves. Not only was it considered that the use of breadfruit would cheapen the cost of the slaves' living, but--a consideration that weighed both with the planters and the British

Government in view of existing relations with the United States--it was also believed that it would "lessen the dependence of the sugar islands on North America for food and necessaries."* (* Bryan Edwards History of the British West Indies 1819 1 40.)

The planters petitioned the Government to fit out an expedition to transplant trees from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Sir Joseph Banks strongly supported them, and Lord Hood, then First Lord of the Admiralty, was sympathetic. In August, 1787, Lieutenant Bligh was appointed to the command of the *Bounty*, was directed to sail to the Society Islands, to take on board "as many trees and plants as may be thought necessary," and to transplant them to British possessions in the West Indies.

The vessel sailed, with two skilled gardeners on board to superintend the selection and treatment of the plants. Tahiti was duly reached, and the business of the expedition was taken in hand. One thousand and fifteen fine trees were chosen and carefully stowed. But the comfortable indolence, the luxuriant abundance, the genial climate, the happy hospitality of the handsome islanders, and their easy freedom from compunction in reference to restraints imposed by law and custom in Europe, had a demoralising effect upon the crew of the *Bounty*. A stay of twenty-three weeks at the island sufficed to subvert discipline and to persuade some of Bligh's sailors that life in Tahiti was far preferable to service in the King's Navy under the rule of a severe and exacting commander.

When the *Bounty* left Tahiti on April 14, 1787, reluctance plucked at the heart of many of the crew. The morning light