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**The Life of
Captain Matthew**

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Minden jog fenntartva!

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 Obray 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 scorseth 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 lay tenderly upon the plumes of the palms, and a light wind filled the sails of the ship as she glided out of harbour. As the lazy lapping wash of the waters against the low outer fringe of coral was lost to the ear, the *Bounty* breasted the deep ocean; and as the distinguishable features of green tree, white sand, brown earth, and grey rock faded out of vision, wrapped in a haze of blue, till at last the only pronounced characteristic of the island standing up against the sky and sea was the cap of Point Venus at the northern extremity—the departure must have seemed to some like that of Tannhauser from the enchanted mountain, except that the legendary hero was glad to make his return to the normal world, whereas all of Bligh's company were not. For them, westward, whither they were bound,

"There gaped the gate Whereby lost souls back to the cold earth went."

The discipline of ship's life, and the stormings and objurgations of the commanding officer, chafed like an iron collar. At length a storm burst.

On April 28 the *Bounty* was sailing towards Tofoa, another of the Society Islands. Just before sunrise on the following morning Bligh was aroused from sleep, seized and bound in his cabin by a band of mutineers, led out by the master's mate, Fletcher Christian, and, with eighteen companions, dropped into a launch and bidden to depart. The followers of Christian were three midshipmen and twenty-five petty officers and sailors. They turned the head of the *Bounty* back towards their island paradise; and as they sailed away, the mariners in the tossing little boat heard them calling "Hurrah for Tahiti!"

The frail craft in which the nineteen loyalists were compelled to attempt to traverse thousands of miles of ocean, where the navigation is perhaps the most intricate in the world, was but 23 feet long by 6 feet 9 inches broad and 2 feet 9 inches deep. Their provisions consisted of 150 pounds of bread, 16 pieces of pork, each about two pounds in weight, six quarts of rum, six bottles of wine, and 28 gallons of water. With this scanty stock of nourishment, in so small a boat, Bligh and his companions covered 3618 miles, crossing the western Pacific, sailing through Torres Strait, and ultimately reaching Timor.

That Bligh was somewhat deficient in tact and sympathy in handling men, cross-grained, harsh, and obstinate, is probably true. His language was often lurid, he lavished foul epithets upon his crew, and he was not reluctant to follow terms of abuse by vigorous chastisement. He called Christian a "damned hound," some of the men "scoundrels, thieves and rascals," and he met a respectful remonstrance with the retort: "You damned infernal scoundrels, I'll make you eat grass or anything you can catch before I have done with you." Naval officers of the period were not addicted to addressing their men in the manner of a lady with a pet canary. Had Bligh's language been the head and front of his offending, he would hardly have shocked an eighteenth century fo'c'sle. But his disposition does not seem to have bound men to him. He generated dislike. Nevertheless it is credible that the explanation which he gave goes far to explain the mutiny. He held that the real cause was a species of sensuous intoxication which had corrupted his crew.

"The women of Tahiti," Bligh wrote, "are handsome, mild and cheerful in their manners and conversation, possessed of great sensibility, and have sufficient delicacy to make them admired and loved. The chiefs were so much attached to our people that they rather encouraged their stay among them than otherwise, and even made them promises of large possessions. Under these and other attendant circumstances equally desirable, it is perhaps not so much to be wondered at, though scarcely possible to have been foreseen, that a set of sailors, many of them void of connections, should be led away; especially when in addition to such powerful inducements they imagined it in their power to fix themselves in the midst of plenty on one of the finest islands in the world, where they need not labour, and where the allurements of dissipation are beyond anything that can be conceived...Had their mutiny been occasioned by any grievance, either real or imaginary, I must have discovered symptoms of their discontent, which would have put me on my guard; but the case was far otherwise. Christian in particular I was on the most friendly terms with; that very day he was engaged to have dined with me; and the preceding night he excused himself from supping with me on pretence of being unwell, for which I felt concerned, having no suspicions of his integrity and honour."

Support is given to Bligh's explanation by a statement alleged to have been made by Fletcher Christian a few years later, the genuineness of which, however, is open to serious question. If it could be accepted, Christian acquitted his commander of having contributed to the mutiny by harsh conduct. He ascribed the occurrence "to the strong predilection we had contracted for living in Tahiti, where, exclusive of the happy disposition of the inhabitants, the mildness of the climate, and

the fertility of the soil, we had formed certain tender connections which banished the remembrance of old England from our breasts." The weight of evidence justifies the belief that Bligh, though a sailor of unequivocal skill and dauntless courage, was an unlikeable man, and that aversion to service under him was a factor contributing to the mutiny which cannot be explained away.

Bligh is the connecting link between Cook and Flinders. Bligh learned under Cook to experience the thrilling pleasure of discovery and to pursue opportunities in that direction in a scientific spirit. Flinders learnt the same lesson under Bligh, and bettered the instruction. Cook is the first great scientific navigator whose name is associated with the construction of the map of Australia; so much can be said without disparagement of the adventurous Dutchmen who pieced together the outline of the western and northern coasts. Flinders was the second; and Bligh, pupil of the one and teacher of the other, deserves a better fate than to be remembered chiefly as a sinister figure in two historic mutinies, that of the *Bounty*, and that which ended his governorship of New South Wales in 1808. Much worse men have done much worse things than he, have less that is brave, honourable, enterprising and original to their credit, and yet are remembered without ignominy. It is said by Hooker: "as oftentimes the vices of wicked men do cause other their commendable virtues to be abhorred, so the honour of great men's virtues is easily a cloak to their errors." Bligh fell short of being a great man, but neither was he a bad man; and the merit of his achievements, both as a navigator and amid the shock of battle (especially at Copenhagen in 1801, under Nelson), must not be overlooked, even though stern history will not permit his errors to be cloaked.

Notwithstanding the failure of the *Bounty* expedition, Sir Joseph Banks pressed upon the Government the desirableness of transplanting breadfruit trees to the West Indies. He also proved a staunch friend to Bligh. The result was that the Admiralty resolved to equip a second enterprise for the same purpose, and to entrust the command of it to the same officer.

We may now follow the fortunes of Matthew Flinders under the tutelage of this energetic captain.

CHAPTER 3. A VOYAGE UNDER BLIGH.

Bligh's second expedition was authorised by the admiralty in March, 1791, and the commander was consulted as to "what sort of vessel may be best adapted to the object in view." The *Providence*, a 28-gun ship, was chosen, with the brig *Assistant* as a tender. The latter was placed in charge of Lieutenant Nathaniel Portlock. Flinders, eager for sea experience, joined the *Providence* as a midshipman on May 8th, and thus had the advantage of being under the immediate direction of her captain.

He took this step with Pasley's concurrence, if not actually upon his advice. The captain wrote him an encouraging letter asking him to send from time to time observations on places visited during the voyage; and his protegee complied with the injunction. It is to this fact that we owe some entertaining passages from young Flinders' pen concerning the voyage. The letters despatched to Pasley are lost; but Flinders, with the love of neatness which was ever characteristic of him, sent only fair copies, and some of his original drafts remain in manuscript. Pasley's letter was as follows: (*Flinders' Papers.)

Bellerophon, Spithead, June 3rd, 1791.

Dear Flinders,

I am favoured with your letter on your return from visiting your friends at the country, and I am pleased to hear that you are so well satisfied with your situation on board the *Providence*. I have little doubt of your gaining the good opinion of Capt. Bligh, if you are equally attentive to your duty

there as you were in the Bellerophon. All that I have to request in return for the good offices I have done you is that you never fail writing me by all possible opportunities during your voyage; and that in your letters you will be very particular and circumstantial in regard to every thing and place you may chance to see or visit, with your own observations thereon. Do this, my young friend, and you may rest assured that my good offices will not be wanting some future day for your advancement. All on board are well. Present my kind remembrances to Captain and Mrs. Bligh, and believe me, yours very sincerely,

THOMAS PASLEY.

The Providence and Assistant left England on August 2nd. From Santa Cruz in Teneriffe Flinders sent his first letter to Captain Pasley. It is worth while to quote a few passages: (* Flinders' Papers.)

"Not a large town; streets wide, ill-paved and irregular. The houses of the principal inhabitants large; have little furniture, but are airy and pleasant, suitable to the climate. Most of them have balconies, where the owners sit and enjoy the air. Those of the lower classes ill-built, dirty, and almost without furniture. In the square where the market is held, near the pier, is a tolerably elegant marble obelisk in honour of our Lady of Candelaria, the tutelar goddess of the place. The Spaniards erected this statue, calling it Our Lady, keeping up some semblance of the ancient worship that they might better keep the Tenerifeans in subjection. At the top of the obelisk is placed the statue, and at its base are four well executed figures, representing the ancient kings or princes of Teneriffe, each of which has the shin-bone of a man's leg in his hand. This image is held in great honour by the lower classes of people, who tell many absurd stories of its first appearance in the island, the many miracles she has wrought, etc.

"We visited a nunnery of the order of St. Dominic. In the chapel was a fine statue of the Virgin Mary, with four wax candles burning before her. Peeping through the bars, we perceived several fine young women at prayers. A middle-aged woman opened the door halfway, but would by no means suffer us to enter this sanctified spot. None of the nuns would be prevailed upon to come near us. However, they did not seem at all displeased at our visit, but presented us with a sweet candy they call Dulce, and some artificial flowers, in return for which Mr. Smith* (* The botanist.) gave them a dollar. In general these people appear to be a merry, good-natured people, and are courteous to and appear happy to see strangers. We found this always the case, although they said we were no Christians: but they generally took care to make us pay well for what we had. They live principally upon fruits and roots, are fond of singing and dancing, and upon the whole they live as lazily, as contentedly, and in as much poverty as any French peasant would wish to do."

The Cape of Good Hope was reached in October, and Flinders told Captain Pasley what he thought of the Dutch colonists:

"The Dutch, from having great quantities of animal food, are rather corpulent. Nevertheless they keep up their national characteristic for carefulness. Neither are they very polite. A stranger will be treated with a great deal of ceremony, but when you come to the solid part of a compliment their generosity is at a stand. Of all the people I ever saw these are the most ceremonious. Every man is a soldier and wears his square-rigged hat, sword, epaulets, and military uniform. They never pass each other without a formal bow, which even descends to the lowest ranks, and it is even seen in the slaves."

On April 10th, 1792, Bligh's ships anchored at Tahiti, where they remained till July 19th. There was no disturbance this time, and the relations between Bligh and his crew were not embarrassed by the indulgent kindness of the islanders. Their hospitality was not deficient, but a wary vigilance was exercised.

At Tahiti Bligh found the major part of the crew of a whaler, the *Matilda*, which had been wrecked about six days' sail from the island. Some of the men accepted passages on the *Providence* and the *Assistant*; some preferred to remain with the natives; one or two had already departed in one of the lost ship's boats to make their way to Sydney.* (* This incident is reported in the *Star*, a London newspaper, March 2nd, 1793.) Two male Tahitians were persuaded to accompany the expedition, with a view to their exhibition before the Royal Society, in England, when at length, laden with 600 breadfruit trees, it sailed for the West Indies.

The route followed from the Friendly Islands to the Caribbean Sea was not via Cape Horn (since that cold and stormy passage would have destroyed every plant), but back across the Pacific, through Torres Strait to Timor, thence across the Indian Ocean and round the Cape of Good Hope. St. Helena was reached on December 17, and Bligh brought his ships safely to Kingston, St. Vincent's, on January 13th 1793. Three hundred breadfruit trees were landed at that island, and a like number taken to Jamaica. The plants were in excellent condition, some of them eleven feet high, with leaves 36 inches long. The gardener in charge reported to Sir Joseph Banks that the success of the transplantations "exceeded the most sanguine expectation." The sugar planters were delighted, and voted Bligh 500 pounds for his services.* (* Southey, *History of the West Indies*, 1827 3 61.) To accentuate the contrast between the successful second expedition and the lamentable voyage of the *Bounty*, it is notable that only one case of sickness occurred on the way, and that from Kingston it was reported that "the healthy appearance of every person belonging to the expedition is remarkable."* (* *Annual Register* 1793 page 6.)

But though nothing in the nature of a mutiny marred the voyage, Flinders' journal shows that Bligh's harshness occasioned discontent. There was a shortness of water on the run from the Pacific to the West Indies, and as the breadfruit plants had to be watered, and their safe carriage was the main object of the voyage, the men had to suffer. Flinders and others used to lick the drops that fell from the cans to appease their thirst, and it was considered a great favour to get a sip. The crew thought they were unfairly treated, and somebody mischievously watered some plants with sea-water. When Bligh discovered the offence, he flew into a rage and "longed to flog the whole company." But the offender could not be discovered, and the irate captain had to let his passion fret itself out.

Bligh published no narrative of this expedition; but Flinders was already accustoming himself to keep careful notes of his observations. Twenty years later, when preparing the historical introduction to his *Voyage to Terra Australis*, he wrote out from his journal (and with Bligh's sanction published) an account of the passage of the *Providence* and *Assistant* through Torres Strait, as a contribution to the history of navigation and discovery in that portion of Australasia. From the Pacific to the Indian Ocean the passage was accomplished in nineteen days. "Perhaps," commented Flinders, "no space of 3 1/2 degrees in length presents more dangers than Torres Strait, but with caution and perseverance the captains, Bligh and Portlock, proved them to be surmountable, and within a reasonable time." Bligh's Entrance and Portlock Reef, marked on modern charts, are reminders of a feat of navigation which even nowadays, with the dangers accurately described, and the well-equipped Torres Strait pilot service to aid them, mariners recognise as pregnant with serious risks. On this occasion it was also attended with incidents which make it worth while to utilise Flinders' notes, since they are of some biographical importance.

The high lands of the south-eastern extremity of Papua (New Guinea), were passed on August 30th, and at dusk on the following day breakers "thundering on the reef" were sighted ahead. On September 1st the vessels edged round the north end of Portlock Reef. Thence the monotonous record of soundings, shoals, reefs seen and charted, passages tried and abandoned, in the prolonged attempt to negotiate a clear course through the baffling coral barrier, is relieved by the story of one

or two sharp brushes with armed Papuans in their long, deftly-handled canoes. On September 5th, while boats were out investigating a supposed passage near Darnley Island, several large canoes shot into view. One of these, in which were fifteen "Indians," black and quite naked, approached the English cutter, and made signs which were interpreted to be amicable. The officer in charge, however, suspecting treacherous intentions, did not think it prudent to go near enough to accept a green cocoanut held up to him, and kept his men rowing for the ship. Thereupon a native sitting on the shed erected in the centre of the canoe, called a direction to the Papuans below him, who commenced to string their bows. The officer ordered his men to fire in self-defence, and six muskets were discharged.

"The Indians fell flat into the bottom of the canoe, all except the man on the shed. The seventh musket was fired at him, and he fell also. During this time the canoe dropped astern; and, the three others having joined her, they all gave chase to the cutter, trying to cut her off from the ship; in which they would probably have succeeded, had not the pinnace arrived at that juncture to her assistance. The Indians then hoisted their sails and steered for Darnley Island." Flinders had watched the encounter from the deck of the Providence, and his seaman's word of admiration for the skill of the savages in the management of their canoes, is notable. "No boats could have been manoeuvred better in working to windward, than were these canoes of the naked savages. Had the four been able to reach the cutter, it is difficult to say whether the superiority of our arms would have been equal to the great difference of numbers, considering the ferocity of these people and the skill with which they seemed to manage their weapons."

Five days later, between Dungeness and Warrior Islands, there was a livelier encounter. A squadron of canoes attacked both ships in a daring and vigorous fashion. The Assistant was pressed with especial severity, so that Portlock had to signal for help. A volley of musketry had little effect upon the Papuans; and when one wing of the attacking squadron, numbering eight canoes, headed for the Providence, and a musket was fired at the foremost, the natives responded with a great shout and paddled forward in a body." Bligh had one of the great guns of the ship loaded with round and grape shot, and fired fair into the first of the long Papuan war canoes, which were full of savage assailants. The round shot raked the whole length of the craft, and struck the high stern. Men from other canoes, with splendid bravery, leaped into the water, and swam to the assistance of their comrades, "plunging constantly to avoid the musket balls which showered thickly about them." So hard was the attack pressed, that three of the Assistant's crew were wounded, one afterwards dying; and "the depth to which the arrows penetrated into the decks and sides of the brig was reported to be truly astonishing." But bows and arrows, on this as on many another occasion, were no match for gunnery; so that, after a hot peppering, the Papuans gave up the fight, paddling back to a safe distance as fast as they could, without exposing themselves to fire. They rallied beyond reach of musket balls, as though for a second onslaught, but a shot fired over their heads from the Providence served to convince them of the hopelessness of their endeavour, and they abandoned it.

An incident not without heroic pathos is recorded by Flinders. One native was left sitting alone in the canoe which the gun-shot of the Providence had raked and splintered. The men in the canoes which had made good their flight observed their solitary companion, and some of them returned to him; whereafter "with glasses, signals were perceived to be made by the Indians to their friends on Dungeness Island, expressive, as was thought, of grief and consternation." Whether the lone warrior was too severely wounded to be moved, or whether he was some Papuan Casabianca clinging to his shattered craft "whence all but he had fled" or been killed, or hurled into the sea, we are not told. But that canoe had been foremost in attack, perhaps the flagship of the squadron; and the memory of that solitary warrior still sitting upon the floating wreck while his defeated companions returned to him, and then left him, to explain his case with gestures of grief to those on the island, clings to the memory of the reader, as it did to that of the young observer and historian of the encounter.

No more natives were seen during the passage through Torres Strait, nor were there other incidents to enliven the narrative, unless we include the formal "taking possession of all the islands seen in the Strait for His Britannic Majesty George III, with the ceremonies used on such occasions" (September 16). The name bestowed upon the whole group of islands was Clarence's Archipelago.

Flinders described the natives whom he saw carefully and accurately; and his account of their boats, weapons, and mode of warfare is concise and good. Some friendly Darnley Islanders were described as stoutly made, with bushy hair; the cartilage between the nostrils cut away; the lobes of the ears split, and stretched "to a good length." "They had no kind of clothing, but wore necklaces of cowrie shells fastened to a braid of fibres; and some of their companions had pearl-oyster shells hung round their necks. In speaking to each other, their words seemed to be distinctly pronounced. Their arms were bows, arrows, and clubs, which they bartered for every kind of iron work with eagerness, but appeared to set little value on anything else. The bows are made of split bamboo, and so strong that no man in the ship could bend one of them. The string is a broad slip of cane fixed to one end of the bow; and fitted with a noose to go over the other end when strung. The arrow is a cane of about four feet long, into which a pointed piece of the hard, heavy, casuarina wood is firmly and neatly fitted; and some of them were barbed. Their clubs are made of casuarina, and are powerful weapons. The hand part is indented, and has a small knob, by which the firmness of the grasp is much assisted; and the heavy end is usually carved with some device. One had the form of a parrot's head, with a ruff round the neck, and was not ill done.

"Their canoes are about fifty feet in length, and appear to have been hollowed out of a single tree; and the pieces which form the gunwales are planks sewed on with fibres of the cocoanut and secured with pegs. These vessels are low forward, but rise abaft; and, being narrow, are fitted with an outrigger on each side to keep them steady. A raft, of greater breadth than the canoe, extends over about half the length, and upon this is fixed a shed or hut, thatched with palm leaves. These people, in short, appeared to be dexterous sailors and formidable warriors, and to be as much at ease in the water as in their canoes."

On September 19th the two ships, with caution and perseverance, had threaded their dangerous way through the intricate maze of reefs and shoals of Torres Strait, and found open sea to the westward. In latitude 10 degrees 8 1/2 minutes "no land was in sight, nor did anything more obstruct Captain Bligh and his associates in their route to the island Timor."

It is easy to imagine the delight with which these experiences thrilled the young midshipman on the Providence. His eighteenth birthday was spent in the Pacific, in the early Autumn of a hemisphere where the sea was not yet cloven by innumerable keels, and where beauty, enchantment and mystery lay upon life and nature like a spell. A few years previously he had been a schoolboy in the flattest, most monotonous of English shires. Broad fields, dykes and fen had composed the landscape most familiar to his eye. In these surroundings he had dreamed, as a boy will, of palm-fanned islands in distant climes, of adventures with savage peoples, of strange seas where great fishes are, and where romance touches all that is with its purple light. Far horizons steeped in marvels had bounded the vision of his imagining eye. His passion was to see and do in realms at the back of the sunrise. He wanted to sail and explore in parts represented by blank spaces on the map.

These dreams of the boy, basking with Robinson Crusoe under remote skies, were suddenly translated into a reality as dazzling-bright and wonderful as anything pictured in pages often and fondly conned. This was his first voyage, and he was serving under a commander who had lived the romance that other men wrote and read about, who was himself a living part of an adventure whose story will be told and re-told to the centuries, and who had served under as great and noble a captain as ever trod an English deck.

The very nature of the voyage was bound to stimulate that "passion for exploring new countries," to use Flinders' own phrase, the hope for which was a strong factor in prompting him to choose the sea as a career. It was a voyage whose primary object involved a stay in two of the loveliest regions on the earth, the paradise of the Pacific and the gem-like Antilles. The pride and pleasure of participation in discovery were his forthwith. A new passage through an intricate and dangerous Strait was found and charted; a whole archipelago was delineated, named, and taken possession of for the British nation. The world's knowledge was increased. There was something put down on the map which was not there before. The contact with the islanders in the Strait gave a brisk element of adventure to the expedition; and certainly Papuan warriors are foes as wild and weird as any adventurer can desire to meet. The rescuing of wrecked mariners at Tahiti added a spice of adventure of another sort. From beginning to end, indeed, this voyage must have been as full of charm as of utility.

The effect it had upon the future life of Matthew Flinders was very striking. The whole of the salient features of his later career follow from it. He made the most of his opportunities. Captain Bligh found him a clever assistant in the preparation of charts and in making astronomical observations. Indeed, says an expert writer, although Flinders was as yet "but a juvenile navigator, the latter branch of scientific service and the care of the timekeepers were principally entrusted to him."* (* Naval Chronicle Volume 32 180.) These facts indicate that he was applying himself seriously to the scientific side of his profession, and that he had won the confidence of a captain who was certainly no over-indulgent critic of subordinates.

The Providence and the Assistant returned to England in the latter part of 1793. Before Flinders once more sighted the Australian coastline he was to experience the sensations of battle, and to take a small part in the first of the series of naval engagements connected with the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era.

CHAPTER 4. THE BATTLE OFF BREST.

When Bligh's expedition returned, Europe was staggering under the shock of the French Revolution. The head of Louis XVI was severed in January; the knife of Charlotte Corday was plunged into the heart of Marat in July; Marie Antoinette, the grey discrowned Queen of thirty-eight, mounted the scaffold in October. The guillotine was very busy, and France was frantic amid internal disruption and the menace of a ring of foes.

The English governing classes had been clamouring for war. It seemed to many political observers that it was positively needful to launch the country into an international struggle to divert attention from demands for domestic reform. "Democratic ambition was awakened; the desire of power, under the name of reform, was rapidly gaining ground among the middling ranks; the only mode of checking the evil was by engaging in a foreign contest, by drawing off the ardent spirits into active service and, in lieu of the modern desire for innovation, rousing the ancient gallantry of the British people."* (* Alison, History of Europe, 1839 2 128.) French military operations in the Netherlands, running counter to traditional British policy, were provocative, and the feeling aroused by the execution of Louis immediately led Pitt's ministry to order the French Ambassador, Chauvelin, to leave London within eight days. He left at once. On February 1st, acting on Chauvelin's report of the disposition and preparations of Great Britain, France formally declared war.

Flinders was with Bligh, peacefully landing breadfruit trees in the West Indies, when this momentous opening of a twenty-two years' conflict occurred. When the expedition reached England, every port and dockyard on the south coast was humming with preparations for a great naval struggle. The Channel Fleet, under Lord Howe's command, was cruising in search of the enemy's

ships of war. Flinders' patron, Pasley, who had hoisted his broad pennant as commodore on the *Bellerophon*, was actively engaged in this service. In October, 1793, he was detached by Howe to look for five French vessels that had some time before chased the British frigate *Circe* into Falmouth. Howe himself, with a fleet of 22 sail, put to sea later in the same month. On November 18 his squadron sighted six French ships of the line and some frigates, and gave chase. But they were seen late in the day, and soon darkness prevented an engagement. On the following morning the enemy was again sighted by the chasing squadron under Pasley; but the *Latona* signalled that the French were in superior strength, and the British detachment retired.* (* James, *Naval History*, 1837 1 60.) Howe's cruise was barren of results, and the British fleet returned to Torbay. Naval operations were suspended for several months.

Flinders naturally took advantage of the earliest opportunity to report himself to the friend who had first helped him into the King's Navy. Pasley, who was promoted on April 12th, 1794, to the rank of Rear-Admiral of the White, again welcomed him on board the *Bellerophon* and, hearing from Captain Bligh excellent accounts of his diligence and usefulness, appointed him one of his aides-de-camp. It was in this capacity that he took part in the great battle off Brest on June 1st, 1794, signalised in British naval history as "the glorious First of June."

Lord Howe, with the Channel Fleet (thirty-four ships of the line and fifteen frigates) put to sea on May 2nd with two purposes: first, to convoy to a safe distance from the probable field of hostilities a squadron of 148 British merchantmen bound for various ports; second, to intercept and destroy a French fleet which was known to be convoying a large company of provision-ships from America. War, bad harvests, the disorganization of industry, and revolutionary upheavals, had produced an acute scarcity of food in France, and the arrival of these vessels was awaited with intense anxiety. To prevent their arrival, or to destroy the French squadron, would be to strike a serious blow at the enemy. Howe had under him a fleet eager for fight; against him, a foe keenly aware how vitally necessary to their country was the arrival of the food-ships.

The French fleet (twenty-six ships of the line) under the command of Villaret-Joyeuse, put to sea from Brest on May 16. Some foggy days intervened. On the 28th Howe sighted them. The French admiral formed his ships in a close line. Howe's plan was first to get his fleet to windward of the enemy, then to sail down, pierce his line, and engage his vessels to leeward.

The *Bellerophon* was in action shortly after coming within striking distance, on the 28th May. Pasley, at six o'clock in the evening, attacked the French rear, his immediate antagonist being the *Revolutionnaire*, 110 guns. A hot duel, maintained with splendid intrepidity by the British rear-admiral, continued for over an hour and a quarter, for the other ships of the British fleet were unable to get up to support the fast-sailing *Bellerophon*. She was severely handled by her large antagonist, and was hampered in her ability to manoeuvre by a shot which injured her mainmast. Pasley therefore, on a signal from the Admiral, bore up. The *Revolutionnaire* was now attacked from a distance by the *Russell*, the *Marlborough* and the *Thunderer*, and endeavoured to make off, but was blocked by the *Leviathan*. The *Audacious* (74) took up the work which the *Bellerophon* had commenced, and, laying herself on the lee quarter of the *Revolutionnaire*, poured a rain of shot into her. The fight was continued in a rough sea far into the twilight of that early summer evening; until, about 10 o'clock, the *Revolutionnaire* was a mere floating hulk. Her flag had either been lowered or shot down, but she was not captured, and was towed into Rochefort on the following day. The *Audacious* was so badly knocked about that she was of no use for later engagements, and was sent home.

This was Matthew Flinders' first taste of war.

Howe's plan for the big battle that was imminent involved much manoeuvring, and, as Nelson

wrote in his celebrated "plan of attack" before Trafalgar, "a day is soon lost in that business." The British manoeuvred to get the weather gauge; Villaret-Joyeuse to keep it. On May 29th Howe in the Queen Charlotte pierced the French line with two other ships, the Bellerophon and the Leviathan, and there was some fighting. The Bellerophon got to windward of the enemy by passing in front of the French Terrible (110), and put in some excellent gunnery practice. She sailed so close to the French ship to starboard as almost to touch her, and brought down the enemy's topmast and lower yards with a broadside, whilst at the same time she raked the Terrible with her larboard guns.* (* There is an interesting engraving of the Bellerophon passing through the French line and firing both her broadsides in the Naval Chronicle Volume 1, and a plan of the manoeuvre, showing the course of the Bellerophon, in James's Naval History.)

May 30 and 31 were foggy days, and neither fleet could see the other. On June 1st there was a blue sky, a brilliant sun, a lively sea, and a wind that favoured the plans of the British Admiral. The signal for close action was flown from the masthead of the Queen Charlotte. Howe ordered his ships to sail on an oblique course down upon the French line, the two fleets having during the night lain in parallel lines stretching east and west. The intention was to break the French line near the centre, each British captain sailing round the stern of his antagonist, and fighting her to leeward, thus concentrating the attack on the enemy's rear, cutting it off from the van, and preventing flight.

The Bellerophon was the second ship in the British line, next after the Caesar. Flinders was upon the quarterdeck as she steered through her selected gap, which was on the weather quarter of the Eole; and an anecdote of his behaviour on that memorable occasion fortunately survives. The guns on the quarterdeck were loaded and primed ready for use, but Pasley did not intend to fire them until he had laid himself on the lee of his chosen adversary, and could pour a broadside into her with crushing effect. There was a moment when the gunners were aloft trimming sails. As the Bellerophon was passing close under the stern of the French three-decker—within musket-shot, James says—* (* Naval History 1 154.) Flinders seized a lighted match and rapidly fired as many of the quarterdeck guns as would plump shot fairly into her.* (* Naval Chronicle 32 180.) Pasley saw him and, shaking him by the collar, said, sternly: "How dare you do that, youngster, without my orders?" Flinders replied that he "thought it a fine chance to have a shot at 'em." So it was, though not in conformity with orders; and probably Pasley, as good a fighter as there was in the fleet, liked his young aide-de-camp rather the more for his impetuous action.

The guns of the Bellerophon were opened upon the Eole at 8.45, and battered her severely. The British vessel was subjected in turn, however, not only to the fire of her chosen victim, but also to that of the Trajan. At ten minutes to eleven o'clock a shot from the Eole took off Pasley's leg, and he was carried down to the cockpit, whereupon the command devolved upon Captain William Hope. It must have been a distressing moment for Flinders, despite the intense excitement of action, when his friend and commander fell; it was indeed, as will be seen, a crucial moment in his career. A doggerel bard of the time enshrined the event in a verse as badly in need of surgical aid as were the heroes whom it celebrates:

"Bravo, Bowyer, Pasley, Captain Hutt, Each lost a leg, being sorely hurt; Their lives they valued but as dirt, When that their country called them!"*

(* Naval Songs and Ballads, Publications of the Navy Record Society, Volume 33 270.)

The fight was continued with unflagging vigour, in the absence of the gallant rear-admiral, who, as another lyricist of the event informs us, smiled and said:

"Fight on my lads and try To make these rebel Frenchmen know That British courage still will flow To make them strike or die."

At a quarter before noon the Eole had received such a hammering that she endeavoured to wear round under shelter of her leader; but in doing so she lost mainmast and foretopmast. The Bellerophon, too, had by this time been sufficiently hard hit to cause Hope to signal to the Latona for assistance. Her foretopmast and maintopmast had gone, and her mainmast was so badly damaged as to be dangerous. Her rigging was cut to pieces, all her boats were smashed, and she was practically as crippled as was her brave commander, upon whom the surgeons had been operating down below, amid the blood of the cockpit and the thunder and smoke of the cannon.