

CAPTAIN COOK

CAN you come with me in make-believe, for a visit to Merrie England of two hundred years ago? I would like to tell you a tale of a boy named James Cook. His home was a very humble one, in fact a clay biggin on the Yorkshire moors. At this time (1728) his parents were very poor and both James and his brother had few enough of the good things so many of us enjoy to-day. But when James was eight years old his father secured a better position on a farm near the village of Ayton. There the young lad attended the village school, where he worked diligently and soon stood near the head of his class.

But school days were over all too soon, and James must needs help his father and older brother with the farm work until he had grown to be a sturdy lad of seventeen.

Now it was the custom in those days to apprentice a likely boy to some tradesman, so that he could learn to do useful work and fend for himself. Accordingly we now find James walking over the moors to Staithes, a picturesque little fishing village, "nestling in a narrow cleft in cliffs," and about ten miles north of Whitby. There he entered as clerk in a general store.



His duties were many, and young Cook worked with a will to please his new master. But what he enjoyed most was to listen to the grizzled old seamen who frequently sailed into the cove which lay just below the store itself.

The sailormen went their way but the memories of their yarns remained. How dull the store seemed some days! Then came a misunderstanding with the owner of the store, Mr. Sanderson. So James decided to leave the little, sleepy fishing village of Staithes and go to Whitby, which was then a town and the centre of the North Sea shipping.

He now entered the employ of John Walker, who was engaged in the coal trade. On board a collier young James learned the many wonderful things that sailors of those days must know. How to splice a rope, clew up the sails, read the compass, and heave the lead were but a few of the many things he must learn.