

The obstacles which hitherto have been said to bar access to the interior of this continent are fevers, impenetrable forests, and swarms of hostile cannibals; but experience has since contradicted more or less these discouraging reports. The fevers will be found restricted to certain localities; the cannibals may, by judicious treatment, not prove so bad as represented; and the difficulties of locomotion may be overcome by exploring the great rivers which are known to reach the coast from the interior. It was dark as we anchored, and at first the only signs of natives were the numerous lights, which formed a kind of illumination all round the shores of the bay. After a while some voices were heard and by the light of lanterns a canoe was seen alongside, manned by a few dark forms clad only in their ornaments, consisting of white cockatoo feathers stuck in their woolly hair, or wreaths of bright scarlet flowers.

The next morning at daylight showed that we were in a most interesting and beautiful bay. The ship was surrounded by about eighty canoes, each manned by half a dozen savages, armed with bows, arrows, spears, and stone hatchets. It was decided to shift our position for one farther up the bay; and as the screw made its first revolution, the astonished natives pointed their arrows at it, as if they expected some enemy to rise from the foaming waters. Slowly we steamed on our way, followed by all the canoes on starboard and port side doing their utmost to keep pace with us.

The canoes remained around us, and a lively trade soon sprang up between the ship's company and the savages. To one unfamiliar with the South Sea trade it was rather a surprising spectacle to see an armful of weapons, belts, necklaces, and earrings, the result of many days' patient labour, exchanged for a few pieces of rusty hoop-iron or a string of beads. In their bargaining they were generally very honest, passing up the articles selected on the end of their fishing-spear, receiving in exchange the pieces of hoop-iron, which seemed to be much prized by them; at the same time showing great eagerness to obtain the small hatchets and long knives, but seemingly attaching little value to calico or handkerchiefs, although a gaudy pattern or bright colour was sure to attract their attention.

On the first of our boats approaching the shore, it was closed upon by a number of savages in their canoes, and all that could