

Coins as trinkets – Cook & Flinders

Life of Captain Matthew Flinders

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Chapter 12 THE INVESTIGATOR

In addition to plentiful supplies and special provision for a large store of water, the Investigator carried an interesting assortment of "gauds, nick-nacks, trifles," to serve as presents to native peoples with whom it was desired to cultivate friendly relations. The list included useful articles as well as glittering toys, and is a curious document as illustrating a means by which civilisation sought to tickle the barbarian into complaisance. Flinders carried for this purpose 500 pocket-knives, 500 looking-glasses, 100 combs, 200 strings of blue, red, white and yellow beads, 100 pairs of ear-rings, 200 finger rings, 1000 yards of blue and red gartering, 100 red caps, 100 small blankets, 100 yards of thin red baize, 100 yards of coloured linen, 1000 needles, five pounds of red thread, 200 files, 100 shoemakers' knives, 300 pairs of scissors, 100 hammers, 50 axes, 300 hatchets, a quantity of other samples of ironmongery, a number of medals with King George's head imprinted upon them, and some new copper coins.

It is a curious assortment, but it may be observed that the materials, as well as the method of ingratiating, were very much the same with the earlier as with the later navigators. An early instance occurs in Rene Laudonniere's account of his relations with the natives of Florida in 1565: (* Hakluyt's Voyages edition of 1904 Volume 9 pages 31 and 49.) "I gave them certaine small trifles, which were little knives or tablets of glasse, wherein the image of King Charles the Ninth was drawn very lively...I recompensed them with certaine hatchets, knives, beades of glasse, combes and looking-glasses."

Cook's secret orders.

You are likewise to observe the Genius, Temper, Disposition and Number of the Natives, if there be any and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance with them, making them presents of such Trifles as they may Value inviting them to Traffick, and Shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard; taking Care however not to suffer yourself to be surprized by them, but to be always upon your guard against any Accidents.

You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take Possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain: Or: if you find the Country uninhabited take Possession for his Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors.