

Penguin Popular Classics

THE CORAL ISLAND

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

The yearning to travel was in Ralph's blood. As a child he had heard travellers talk about the South Seas and, at fifteen, he could not wait to see them with his own eyes.

Ralph sets sail on the *Arrow*, but as it approaches Coral Island in the Pacific a fearful storm wrecks the ship. Only Ralph and his two friends Jack and Peterkin escape and are washed ashore with nothing more than a telescope and a broken penknife between them. At first their survival skills serve them well: they build a shelter, hunt and fish, and gather the plentiful fruits from the trees. Then into their Paradise arrives a party of cannibals that tests their courage to the full, and after their departure there follows a pirate ship whose captain is Bloody Bill, the biggest cut-throat of them all ...

Ballantyne's enduringly popular story of adventure on distant lands and seas was based to a large extent on his own experience, for he was a great traveller and researched his books thoroughly. Written during a time when society was at its most restrictive the freedom from social constraints that the characters enjoy gives the book much of its general appeal.

The cover shows a detail from *Two Boys in a Rowing Boat* by Henry Scott Tuke from the Hamilton Gallery, London (photo: Bridgeman Art Library)