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AND THE CHILDREN'S TEETH ARE SET ON EDGE

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•CHAPTER 3•

The Intoxicated Swain

*Here joyless roam a wild amphibious race,
With sullen woe displayed in every face;
Who, far from civil arts and social fly,
And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye.
Here too the lawless merchant of the main
Draws from his plough th' intoxicated swain;
Want only claimed the labour of the day,
But vice now steals his nightly rest away.*

George Crabbe

The fact that a deeply religious evangelical like Adam Hodgson was committed to the abolition of slavery seems to require no explanation beyond a heartfelt repugnance toward its sheer inhumanity, and his stance, simply that of a new and modernizing generation. It is well enough known that the commitment to abolition of men like Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and Henry Thornton was motivated on strongly religious grounds. Many were associated with the Clapham Sect, an Evangelical Christian movement within the Anglican Church.^{1,2} Rationalist economic arguments founded upon the writings of Adam Smith³ and strongly promoted by Adam Hodgson and James Cropper of Liverpool⁴ were a later addition following the abolition of the slave-trade, the most obvious and brutal manifestation of slavery. His involvement in the cotton trade, tainted as it was by the brutality of the Dixie plantations, could be seen as hypocritical, but equally it could be seen as providing a powerful motive to campaign for the replacement of slave labour with free labour. However, for Adam Hodgson, the power of Christ, the redeemer of the sins of fallen man, may have been a requirement of a very personal nature.

His own publicly expressed motivation seems to have been to expunge the collective burden of guilt resulting from the earlier support and protection of the slave trade by the British Parliament and its continuing protection of the institution of slavery within the British Empire. For a more personal motivation behind his abhorrence of slavery there is no need to look further than the life and career of his own father, Thomas Hodgson.

In Foreign Climes

Thomas Hodgson, was born in 1737, the second son of a yeoman farmer, Isaac, and his wife Elizabeth of “The Hill” in Caton. He was two years younger than his elder brother John and there were two sisters, Mary and Elizabeth. His life and career is cryptically summarized in his epitaph in the North Isle of St Paul’s Church in Caton. The monument was undoubtedly erected shortly after his death by his children and was moved from Caton Chapel to a similar prominent position in the new church in 1865.

**AFTER PASSING THE EARLY PART OF HIS LIFE
IN FOREIGN CLIMES
HE WAS FOR MANY YEARS AN EMINENT MERCHANT
IN LIVERPOOL
AND FOUNDER OF THE COTTON AND SILK WORKS
IN THIS HIS NATIVE PLACE.
HE WAS A MAN OF REMARKABLE ENERGY
AND WARM AFFECTIONS,
GREAT GENEROSITY AND PUBLIC SPIRIT
AND ARDENTLY DESIROUS TO PROMOTE THE IMPROVEMENT
AND HAPPINESS OF ALL AROUND HIM**

The allusions to a Christian character may be purely conventional and a veil is drawn over the greater part of his life as having been passed “*in foreign climes*” and as “*an eminent merchant in Liverpool*.” Only his activities as a textile entrepreneur and cotton spinner are spelled out. It is not difficult to understand why, for, apart from his birth, the first appearance of Thomas Hodgson in the historical record finds him, in 1765, Master of the vessel *Pitt*, out of the Port of Lancaster.⁵ Little is known about the vessel, its owners, or the voyage on which it was engaged, but, at the age of about 28 years, Thomas Hodgson was the master of a small slave-ship of about 50 tons burthen probably bound for the Gambia River on the African Coast, to purchase a human cargo of slaves, 150 or more in number, to be sold to the developing, rice, indigo and cotton plantations of the British colonists in Carolina. His age was consistent with his having made several voyages to Africa already, as he worked his way up to ship’s master and gained experience in the details of trade on the African coast.

How the son of a Lancashire farmer was “*drawn from his plough*” is not known, perhaps the lure of wealth was enough. A strong belief in patrilineal inheritance held by the family, to prevent the rapid subdivision of property, may have been an important factor; he needed to make his way in the world. That the lure of wealth on the coast of Africa and the New World should be felt in Caton though is less surprising. The village lies just 4 miles from the Port of Lancaster, which, in those days, ranked in importance below only London, Liverpool and Bristol in the traffic to Africa and the Americas. When the abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson, set out to gather evidence on the slave-trade in 1787 he planned to visit only Liverpool, Bristol and Lancaster. However, by comparison with his momentous visits to Bristol and Liverpool, Lancaster did not begin to repay his efforts, being home “*only to a few superannuated slave captains*.”¹

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Clarkson found that those Lancaster slave-merchants still in business put together their voyages out of Liverpool as the more convenient port. Lancaster was falling behind; there was no wet dock, and vessels had to take the ground. Equally important was the efficiency of Liverpool's domestic trade connections and general economic development. With hundreds more ships and dozens more slave-ships outfitting every year, Liverpool certainly offered greater convenience to the merchant. Liverpool's inland connections, by canal and road, to the developing industrial areas of Manchester and the Midlands offered better access to markets for imported and exported goods. In the period from 1757 to 1776 – the beginning of the American Revolutionary War - some 1540 slave-vessels are known to have cleared from Liverpool, 691 from London, 457 from Bristol, and 86 from Lancaster. By comparison Whitehaven, the English port next in importance, had 46 clearances.⁶

Lancaster's involvement in the Slave Trade began later than Bristol or Liverpool, as did that of the other small ports on the North West coast such as Workington, Preston, and Poulton. On the other hand adventurers from Whitehaven seem to have pursued African voyages in the early 18th century. A couple of voyages from Lancaster are known from the late 1730's but the trade seems to have begun in earnest in the 1740's. The traders financing voyages in the early period include groups of owners such as; Dodgson Foster, John Heathcote and Richard Millerson, John & Robert Thompson, William Butterfield, and Messrs. Satterthwaite and Inman. From the 1750's onward new merchants entering the trade included Thomas Hinde, Miles Barber, Robert Dodson, William and John Watson and Richard Millerson. By the 1780's, as Clarkson found, the trade was in decline, but some slaving voyages continued to be fitted out, in particular by consortia organized by James Sawrey & Co.⁵

Hodgson's vessel *Pitt* was almost certainly owned by Miles Barber of Lancaster, for two years later in January 1767 Hodgson was Captain of the 95 ton *Marquis of Granby*, a Miles Barber vessel, bound for the Isles de Loss off the coast of Africa north of Sierra Leone. The ultimate destination is unknown but Miles Barber's voyages at that time were bound principally for the southern colonies of America with some to the West Indies. However, too soon for the *Marquis of Granby* to have completed a triangular voyage, Thomas Hodgson was registered as captain of Miles Barber's vessel *Gambia*, an 80 ton, four gun brigantine, which cleared Liverpool in May 1767 for The Gambia and Georgia. The *Marquis of Granby* had been lost, outward bound, on the coast near Workington and by the time Hodgson sailed in the *Gambia* its cargo had been salvaged and offered for sale as a "compleat assortment for the Isles de Los". Different mixes of trade goods were needed to suit the tastes and trade requirements on different regions of the African coast.^{5,6,7} Why the *Marquis of Granby* was working its way northwards, so as to run aground off Workington, is unclear. It may have been driven by the weather, on the other hand it may have been bound for the Isle of Man. The island may have offered advantages to the merchant through the evasion of customs duties on either trade items or rum being re-exported to Africa, or on items imported from the America's.

The connection between Thomas Hodgson and Miles Barber coincided with Barber transferring his business activities from Lancaster to Liverpool where he appeared in Gore's Directory for 1766. Miles Barber became a freeman of the port

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of Liverpool in 1765 and a freeman of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa in 1769. The reasons for the entry of Miles Barber into the Lancaster slave trade, the origin of his connections and the capital required, are perhaps even more mysterious than those of Thomas Hodgson; a matter that is not helped by two branches of the Barber family using the Christian name Miles from generation to generation.^{5,7}

Miles Barber (Sr.) is considered to have been born the son of a yeoman and innkeeper of Skerton, also called Miles Barber, who died in 1753 leaving his estate to his eldest son. His father may have been mayor of Lancaster in 1749 and Miles himself in 1758, mayors of those names are recorded. Miles Barber's father's will stipulated that his son should not come into his inheritance until he was 25 years old, which historians have placed about 1758, and he was thus encouraged to pursue his own fortune.⁷

"It is my will and desire that my son Myles go into the world to imploy and improve himself till he attain the age of twenty five years and that the above £10 shall be given to him at his first going of – and that my Trustees receive the rents of my said Estate till he is of that age."

However, this version of events is belied by the notice of his death that appeared in the press in 1795 giving his age as 72 years old.⁸ Miles Barber (Jr.) was his second cousin, also the son of yet another Miles Barber. Miles (Jr.) became Tonnage officer for the Port of Lancaster in the 1750's. However, as ever confusion reigns, because Miles Barber (Sr.) had either a son or a nephew, who was actively involved in the trade until the 1790's and who, with customary originality, was also called Miles Barber. This Miles Barber is unrecorded in published family trees which record only sons named Robert and Thomas. Miles Barber's cousin, Miles Barber (Jr.), who was also a Member of the Liverpool Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, died in the early 1770's.⁷

The first voyage Miles Barber (Sr.) is known to have invested in was the *Cato*, a 100-ton Snow, mounting 11 guns, jointly owned by a consortium of investors including Thomas Hinde, another former mayor of Lancaster. Another vessel owned by Hinde and Barber was *Juba* - the names *Cato* and *Juba* perhaps suggesting a certain republican spirit amongst the owners.⁵ *Cato* and *Juba* are the protagonists in an 18th century play by John Addison, first performed in 1713, – an intensely political tragedy which tells the story of *Cato*, a roman senator in a far flung province, defending the liberty and freedom of Rome against the onslaught of Caesar's armies and dictatorship. *Juba* is a Numidian (African) chief who fights alongside *Cato* and whose father Caesar had defeated. No doubt Barber and Hinde admired the tragic death of *Cato* in defense of Liberty but I wonder if they marked the speech by the traitor Syphax as he tries to turn *Juba* against *Cato*.⁹

*The boasted ancestors of these great men,
Whose virtues you admire, were all such ruffians.
This dread of nations, this almighty Rome,
That comprehends in her wide empire's bounds
All under heaven was founded on a rape.*

Curiously *Cato* was registered in Bristol, and sailed for Africa in January of 1758, bound for Sierra Leone. 288 slaves, out of 336 embarked, were later landed in South Carolina.⁶ Thus the investment occurs when he is believed to have inherited

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his father's estate. However another account suggests that, Miles Barber bought one of the islands comprising the Isles de Los from an African chieftain in 1754.¹⁰ More probably he negotiated its use with the African Chief, who acted as the landlord. He is then supposed to have established a factory, in 1755, on Factory Island (Isle Kassa), in the Isles de Loss, for the supply of slaves, and for servicing slaving vessels arriving on the coast. In 1755 he was elected a freeman of the town of Lancaster and mayor in 1758. All of this is not so easy to square with a young man, yet to come into his inheritance, and who has, apparently, not yet invested in any voyages to Africa. There are missing pieces to the jigsaw, whether his obituary notice of 1795 which stated that he died "*in the 72nd year of his age*" is in error or no. Miles Barber, as well as owning one of the Isles de Loss, is reputed to have had another eleven factories on the African Coast, including at least one in the River Gambia. Thomas Hinde, of Lancaster, is also said to have established factories in Africa and it may be through him that Miles Barber began his career in the slave trade.^{7,10}

Thus the "*early years in foreign climes*" of Thomas Hodgson's epitaph is become Africa. Evidence submitted to the Board of Trade during the 1788 parliamentary enquiry into the slave trade revealed that Hodgson had been an agent for Miles Barber in The Gambia.¹¹ Hodgson's presence in Liverpool, to begin with as a ship's captain, and later, from about 1769 onwards, as a merchant in his own right, suggests that his time as Miles Barber's agent on the coast dates from before the American Revolutionary War (1775-83),¹² perhaps soon after the end of the Seven Years War with France (1757-65). Miles Barber's voyages at this time indicate strong trading relationships on the African coast and in the new world. Sierra Leone, Gambia and the Isles de Loss featured heavily as African destinations for the purchase of slaves and Charleston, Carolina, Virginia and West Indian destinations such as Kingston, Jamaica, feature heavily as ports of disembarkation.⁶ The centre of Miles Barber's operations in The Gambia was well inland on the River Gambia. Nevertheless traders took advantage of the Royal African Company's establishment at James Fort, in the mouth of the River Gambia now owned by the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and maintained at the public expense. The surprising extent of the James Fort facility and associated settlements are revealed in the company accounts for 1709/10 as presented before parliament in defense of their interests against those of the private traders.¹³

"James Fort, and Island, in the River Gambia; the island walled round; Out-works, great Guns, small Arms, and Stores; formerly mounted with 90 great Guns; with several Warehouses, Rooms for Factors and Officers; Work-houses for Smiths, and other Artificers; by means whereof, together with the Agreements with the several Kings of that Country, the Company have heretofore enjoyed the Trade of that River upwards of 300 Leagues, with Settlements and Factories at the Places following; viz. Barracunda, Alunjugar, Jamassar, Geregia, Tankerwall, Jovy, Sangrigo, Vintan, Gellifree, Barrafatt, Furbrow, Cumbo, and Benyoun, all within that River; and the Factories of Portodella, Joallee, Felan, and Bassally, without the said River; and by Sloops and Vessels, trading from the said James Island to Rio Pungo, Rio Nunez, Bissow, and Catchow, Places adjacent to the said Island; by all which in the time of settled Trade they did receive a very considerable Income out of the Profit of that Trade, amounting to near 10,000 l. per Annum, clear of all

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Charges. It is acknowledged, that the said Fort, having been several times taken, and plundered, by the French, is not now in the same good Condition, as formerly; and therefore what might justifiably be valued at 60,000 l, is now valued only at 20,000 l."

For the 14 establishments for which accounts were given, varying in value from £2000 to £20,000 and among which James Fort was one of the most considerable, the RAC reported considerable additional 'property.'¹³ There were 100 Black Canoe men employed in support of the factories; valued at £4000, 100 Blacks employed as Mechanicks, including Smiths, Carpenters, Bricklayers, Sawyers, Linguisters and Messengers; valued at £10,000, and 600 Gromettoes or Castle Slaves valued at £24,000. Trade goods in hand came to £52,000, but there were also debts owed by the African Chiefs and traders amounting to £18,000 and owing from the plantations over £171,000.

The total value of their coastal establishments amounted to £238,194 and the value of their other property and debts to £279,555. Amazingly debts owed by the planters amounted to one third of the company's value – a position which would continue throughout the existence of the trade – with planters paying for their 'goods', on long dated bills. That is, bills that were not redeemable until a certain time, often twelve months or longer, after the date they bore. The bills themselves were negotiable in the mean time, and could be passed on, by endorsement, for cash, goods, or services, but at a discount, depending on the length of time remaining until the due date. This was a risky way of doing business, but especially risky in uncertain times.

Establishment of factories on the coast served a number of purposes. They almost all had barracons, where slaves could be held captive until vessels arrived. In the absence of this, floating factories, in the form of ships or hulks, could be used to provide storage for trade goods and a reasonably secure defensive refuge.¹⁴ These facilities provided supplies, store-houses, and repair facilities complete with a wide range of craftsmen. In addition to charging for their use, and for vital supplies, the factors on the coast took commission on the supply of slaves. For those traders who owned a factory, or made prior arrangements with the owners, they may have ameliorated the worst effects of the intense competition for slaves that could arise between traders and threaten profits as indicated in a report from James Fort to the RAC in 1761.¹⁵

The Galam trade was more considerable this year than was ever known, and the shipping would have made good voyages had there not been too many, and those of large ships that fitted out for nigh 300 slaves each, which is a wrong notion in owners, 100 and 50 to 70 slaves being a sufficient number for Gambia and generally successful, The struggle for slaves was so great that Captain Watts of Pool acknowledged he gave £15 per head and Captain Dodson of Lancaster £14 which is very dear if we consider their cargoes laid in nigh thirty per cent cheaper than those from London and Bristol.

Captain Dodson was master of the 95-ton *Marquis of Granby*, owned by Miles Barber, which, despite the difficulties, delivered 200 slaves to Carolina.^{5,6} Just after Christmas in the same year Captain Sandys, in the *Mary* of Lancaster, was cut off on the coast close to James Fort following a slave insurrection on board.¹³

The ship Mary of Lancaster commanded by Captain Sandys was cut off by the slaves and most of the people murdered. The obstinacy of the mate who succeeded

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on Captain Sandys' death in the command greatly contributed to it; for notwithstanding our repeated messages to come under the protection of the Fort's guns, he kept close to the continent out of their reach - a situation always dangerous to slave vessels so that it rendered us incapable of being of any assistance. We had before prevented an insurrection on board her, when she lay nigher the Fort. The King of Barrati we prevailed on to deliver up the hull, which indeed is in a manner useless, as all her sails and rigging were destroyed and nothing left in her but her masts. We have hired her out for the proprietor's benefit till they send some orders about her.

The Mary seems to have been an unlucky vessel on an unlucky voyage for in June 1761 an extract of a letter from Captain Edwards of *HMS Wager* to the Lords of the Admiralty appeared in the press.¹⁵ Edwards claimed that an Algerine Cruiser had plundered the Mary near Cape Finisterre in late January or early February. A result of his representations to the Dey he had recovered 570 German crowns, two pieces of silver, some clothes of little worth and a few fire arms.

The ownership of the vessel is not known but it was likely a Miles Barber or Thomas Hinde venture, the premier Lancaster slave traders of the period. The dangers on the coast were not confined to the slave vessels for in January 1764 a report appeared stating that Richard Evans, a private trader, had kidnapped a King's son who subsequently jumped overboard and drowned. Evans was attacked by the Africans but managed to escape to James Fort where he arrived "*almost naked.*"

A letter to the Gazetteer in March 1765 critical of the operations of the African Committee incidentally describes the navigation of the Gambia River and the some of the slave factories it contained.¹⁶

"the river Gambia is navigable for vessels from 80 to 120 tons to Fantenda, which is situated about 600 miles to the eastward, inland, from the sea, and sloops that draw from seven to eight feet of water, can go 118 miles above that place, where the river is 170 yards wide, the banks 20 feet high, and the tide rises eight inches. Baracunda is 100 miles higher up the river than Fantenda; at the last place the late Company had a factory, and 12 others settled along the banks of the Gambia; and those of small rivers running into it, by means thereof, their factors kept up a constant intercourse and friendship with the inland natives; but those factories are neglected by the Committee for the present Company"

During the Parliamentary Enquiry into the slave trade in 1789 Thomas Clarkson interviewed numerous sailors and surgeons and others formerly connected with the trade.¹⁷ One of those deposed was a Mr. Ellison who had been 10 voyages to Africa between 1759 and 1770. Although it is not clear how Ellison served on these voyages, he probably began as an ordinary seaman, and later rose to become a second mate or a boatswain. Some of his testimony described slaving operations on this region of the coast. He was unable to say how slaves were obtained but gave the opinion that, "*from the few instances that came within his knowledge upon the coast, he should say first, that they were obtained by the natives by means of treachery or force.*" He described an African factor at Benin was obtaining slaves by "*panyaring*" or kidnap. Of more immediate interest he described practices in the River Gambia where he voyaged three times aboard the *Upton*, a Liverpool vessel owned by James Gildart & Co that traded there in 1759 and 1762.⁶

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*“At Yanamaroo, a town up the river Gambia, a black trader, who had many wives, charged one of them with adultery, and accordingly sold her to the vessel. Up the same river also some canoe boys were sold to the **Upton** who, speaking all of them good English, told Mr. Ellison and others, that they had been sold for theft. They were sold by their own masters. Mr. Ellison believes that no trial takes place, but that in such cases they are instantly upon detection brought on board.”*

However, it is clear from his account that a many slaves in this region arrived in coffles of 3 or 400 from the African interior. Women and boys were allowed to walk freely but men were confined, some with their hands tied behind, some tied together in groups of two or three with leather thongs or ropes of grass around their necks, others yoked in pairs to wooden crutches around their necks. Almost all carried their own water, others carried wax and ivory. The traders who led them down rode on horseback and the slaves were sold to the Europeans by black brokers who spoke European languages as well as the languages of the interior.

The medium of exchange in The Gambia and the Windward Coast was the bar, at Calabar it was the copper, both estimated to be worth about 5 shillings. Sometimes goods were lent to the black traders who left their sons or other relatives as “*pawns*” or security but it was not unusual for the English Captains to sail away with them which Ellison claimed had occurred when he was on the **Briton**. Ellison said the slaves were quite dejected when brought on board where they were put in chains in pairs with irons fastened to their legs or wrists or if they were refractory to their necks. Because the chains chafed their limbs they were generally removed about ten or twelve days sail from their destination in the Americas.

Ellison described the treatment of the slaves during the notorious Middle Passage, and what is often forgotten, during what could be a long wait on the coast for many victims, lasting sometimes many months before slaving was complete and the vessel got under way. The slaves were brought on deck from nine in the morning until sunset and fed twice a day on rice, yams and horse beans (fava beans or broad beans). They received about two pint pannekins of water per day but often not half that when water ran short. They were also compelled to dance to preserve their health.

“Some of them however appear unwilling to do it. All such are compelled to it by a cat of nine tails, which is invariably used on such occasions.”

Ellison said the slaves complained of the heat and he had seen them panting and almost dying for want of water. Although there were frequent rains in the middle passage the gratings were never covered and the slaves would sometimes have to be immediately got on deck to prevent them dying. All the ships on which he sailed had platforms to increase the area for the stowage of slaves as illustrated in the famous picture prepared by Clarkson of the **Brookes** of Liverpool. Only the **Liberty** and the **Friendship** were fitted with windsails to increase the ventilation between decks. These **Liberty** were both Liverpool vessels; the former probably belonging to Gregson and Co, -another family with Lancaster connections - and the latter to Miles Barber and Robert Mackmillan of Lancaster, although neither voyage can be specifically identified.⁶

Ellison recalled the full horrors of the worst slave ships from his time aboard the **Briton** of Liverpool belonging to John Welch and Edward Parr.⁶ Ellison said the slaves are “*used well in some, and as badly in others. The latter mode of treatment*

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is in general productive of bad consequences.” When Captain Bagshaw died and was replaced by the chief mate, Mr Nelson, he ordered a cat to be made with the tails inlaid with wire. So much was flogging then feared by the slaves that, “*Six women instantly jumped overboard. Five of them were drowned. The sixth having been taken up, and saved, was afterwards by the Captain’s orders hoisted up to the yard-arm, and from thence let down into the water, and this was repeated so often that she had nearly shared the fate of the other five.*” Ellison also reported the use of thumb screws by this captain to the extent that the “*thumbs of some of them mortified and rotted off, and they died.*”

Regarding mortality among the slaves Ellison said that on one voyage of the *Nightingale* of Bristol they purchased 370 slaves and buried 200, but contemporary records show that it was aboard the *Briton* that mortality reached these appalling levels. Either Clarkson or Ellison was mistaken, or the record is wrong.⁶ Ellison also recalled the treatment of the sailors in the trade, a subject that would obsess and even get the better of Clarkson during his investigations of the slave trade. Ellison said that in ten voyages he was obliged to take half his wages in island currency rather than sterling and that he had had no shelter on any voyage during the middle-passage. There was often great shortage of provisions and “*they were obliged to get their water from a gun barrel, to be fetched from the mast head.*” Ellison told of a sailor on the *Nightingale* who was too sickly to climb the rigging to get the gun barrel, and, as no-one was allowed to assist him, died as a result. If the tales of returning sailors are to be believed, the practice of placing a gun barrel up in the rigging for the sailors to fetch before they could get water seems to have been a common torture aboard the slave ships. Its purpose, beyond obvious malevolence, and perhaps, remotely and incomprehensibly, for the purposes of rationing, is hard to understand. Some alleged that slave-ship Captains were deliberately cruel once on the middle passage, in order to induce men to desert in the West Indies and save on their wages on the return leg. Since they would not necessarily be engaged for the return trip from the West Indies back to Blighty in any event, and their wages were so low, and usually paid at Island rates, i.e. at a discount to sterling, it is hard to see how this could make the difference between a profitable and a losing voyage. Much of what is reported about the behaviour of slave-ship captains toward their crews and their ‘cargoes’ stands at complete variance with what would rationally be thought necessary for a successful and profitable voyage. One way to rationalize it – if that be the right word – is to reflect on the huge amount of alcohol consumed, both in English society in general, amongst seamen, and in particular in the African trade where Rum and Brandy were important trade goods in themselves and an important way of negotiating deals with the coast traders, forming so-called “*dashes*” or presents.

Ellison’s testimony gives a flavour of the trade on the region of the African coast in which Thomas Hodgson and Miles Barber were engaged. Thomas Hodgson certainly knew the situation on the African coast at first hand, having served as Miles Barber’s agent in Gambia, and as an experienced master of slaving vessels, he also knew the situation shipboard at first hand. There is no evidence that Barber ever served aboard a slave vessel. There is no evidence either that he was ever in Africa, but his ownership of numerous factories on the Coast of Africa is hard to credit without he had direct experience.

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During the Seven Years War (1754-63) with France, the French and Indian War to Americans, these settlements on the coast came under pressure from the French. They were attacked by French forces based in Goree to the north.¹⁸ Following the Treaty of Paris the French were confined to Goree but there were persistent reports of them expanding their operations and impeding British trade. In 1764 reports suggested that artillery and ordnance officers were being shipped out for their defence.¹⁹ The French also built a fort, Albreda, opposite James Fort in the mouth of the River Gambia, from which they established settlements in the river for trade. By early 1765 Albreda was reported to contain six companies of soldiers and 39 cannon.²⁰ In February 1765 Commodore Graves was sent out to destroy these settlements.²¹ In March a report stated that the African traders had commissioned a large quantity of hand grenades to be used to arm small vessels in the rivers Senegal and Gambia.²² In April 1765 there were reports that four French ships with three companies of foot on board had sailed for Africa from Brest to wait for the *Shannon* and her consorts dispatched to destroy the fort at Albreda.²³ Yet on April 30th, in contrast to all this saber rattling, a traveler who had been 55 leagues up the River Gambia reported having neither seen nor heard of any French ships or any fort upon the river.²⁴ In November, a letter by written from the African Coffee House in Birchin Lane, London, commented on an article which had stated that, though the French were confined to their small settlement on the Isle of Goree, they had sent off as many slaves from Senegal as the English from all their forts on the coast. The writer complained of the large number of French vessels, which were free to trade anywhere along the coast despite the widespread belief they were confined to Goree.²⁵

In January 1767 a letter in the press reported growing discontent and friction in the River Gambia region between the African Committee in London and the various independent traders;

“What then will my countrymen think when they are told, that a monopoly of an extensive and most valuable branch of commerce in Africa, comprehending the rivers Senegal and Gambia, and extending to the southward of Sierra Leon, is now soliciting by a few individuals, and that this monopoly is patronized upon the principle of state necessity.

*It is not yet two years since the most considerable part of this district was taken from the African Committee, and invested in the Crown, for the purpose of laying open a free trade; and what can have occasioned the idea of so sudden and material an alteration in this system is a matter of surprise.”*²⁶

From an account by an officer at James Fort written, in June of 1768, to his cousin in London it seems that open war had broken out with the Africans in this region of the coast.²⁷

“On my arrival at Senegal, his Excellency Governor O’Hara ordered me with a detachment to relieve this garrison, which I found in the greatest distress, as they had been three days without water, and at war with the King of Barra, from whose country they were supplied with necessaries for the support of this island. The King had seized on their vessels, white people, English traders, the castle slaves belonging to the garrison, and in short, every thing they could lay hold of...

On the 23rd of April last I was ordered on an expedition against a principal town belonging to the enemy.

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I landed the troops before break of day, and surrounded the town; a smart fire ensued, and in a short time I was master of the place; we took a number of prisoners, reduced the town to ashes, and embarked without any loss.

The 26th instant I was ordered with the troops and some sailors to attack Layman, another town belonging to the enemy. I landed early in the morning within half a mile of it. The enemy was under arms and ready to receive us. We no sooner disembarked, than they marched to give us battle on a plain near where we landed. After some smart fire on both sides, they were obliged to return to the garrison. As there were two principal towns within a few miles of Layman, I had some reason to suspect the enemy might be reinforced, by which we would have been clapped between two fires, therefore thought it most prudent to make a good retreat, which the enemy perceiving, pursued us, and came up very close with our rear, when I ordered the troops to give them a heavy fire, which killed and wounded many of them, they still continued to pursue us, but not so close as before: we at last embarked, under cover of a ship that kept a smart fire on the enemy till we were safe aboard, and by this time their reinforcement appeared.”

Thomas Hodgson became involved in this conflict probably in consequence of a petition presented to Parliament on February 26th 1767 on behalf of Miles Barber for leave to carry out a contract to ship slaves aboard French vessels from the Gambia River.²⁸ When Hodgson voyaged to Gambia aboard Miles Barber’s brigantine *Gambia* (4 guns, 80 tons burthen), in May 1767, and later in his snow, *Yannemarew* (120 tons burthen), in early 1769, it was probably in connection with these negotiations and each visit involved a stay on the African coast.⁶ The names of the vessels give a significant indication of the location of Miles Barber’s business interests. Yannemaru was almost certainly the location of his slave factory in the River Gambia.

Hodgson left Liverpool aboard the *Gambia* in May 1767 and arrived on the coast in June, however, passage of the vessel from Africa to its destination in Georgia was under Captain Keast.⁶ Thus Hodgson remained on the coast to bring some order to Miles Barbers affairs following the disruption of the Seven Years War and the outbreak of trouble with the Barrack people, possibly fomented by the French, and to make arrangements to supply the French with slaves. An account of part of his residence on the coast of Africa appeared in December 1768.^{29,30} The letters were from Richard Evans, the private trader who had fled naked to James Fort after the death of an African chief’s son.

“The commotions here have risen to a great pitch with the people of the kingdom of Barrack, and the other adjacent nations have made great havock with our properties; very lately they have taken a schooner well manned and armed, with a considerable property on board, and butchered all the people on board, except two, who escaped by swimming. They likewise attacked the Fort, which they were near carrying, but were beat off, with the loss of three men only.”

Evans complained that the Fort exacted duties on the shipping when they also had to pay duties to the Africans and what was worse instead of the Fort offering them protection the Governor had applied to the private traders for assistance.

*“This garrison has neither men, ammunition, or provisions for the few poor wretches it contains. Capt. Thomas Hodgson, Capt Marshall, and myself, have now fitted out the Brig *Lively*, of Liverpool, in order to seek restitution for the sundry*

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robberies the Barrack people have committed against us. I have had two schooners and their cargoes taken by them; Capt. Hodgson two boats with their goods; and Capt. Marshall the schooner I above gave you the account of. We likewise took a Snow with us, which has been slaved better than five weeks, but dares not move, as sundry war canoes have been waiting for her."

Evans accused the French at Albreda, within the Barrack Kingdom, of stirring up the Africans and warned that the trade would fall into their hands if something was not done by the government as no one could carry on trade without a vessel of force which few had. When they arrived at the Fort they found the Ensign in command had detained one of Miles Barber's charter vessels from London for three weeks

"An offer was made to him by Capt. Marshall, Capt. Hodgson, and myself, to discharge the vessel he had detained, with a very considerable cargo, and Mr. Hodgson and myself would leave our guns and people on board the brig for the protection of the garrison, there not being more than eighteen men on the island, and the better half of them not being able to help themselves. This he refused, so that now there is no other step to be taken than for Captain Hodgson and self to keep the brig to protect this place on our own accounts; but we cannot think government will let us labour under the expenses."

James Fort had clearly fallen on hard times compared to the extensive establishment that the RAC had maintained. Hodgson arrived on the African coast aboard *Gambia* in the summer of 1767 and stayed until the late summer of 1768. His return from Africa is unrecorded but he returned to Africa aboard the *Yannemaru* in early 1769, where he remained for another season returning on the next voyage of the *Yannemaru* in the late summer of 1770. The vessel arrived in Barbados from Africa, with 225 slaves, on August 11th 1769 and arrived back in its homeport on the 13th of October under master George Seton. The *Yannemaru* returned to Gambia from Liverpool on February 8th 1770 captained by Thomas Atkinson. The vessel loaded 280 slaves of which apparently 240 remained to be sold in the Upper James River in Virginia in September. The vessel then returned to London on February 4th 1771 captained by Thomas Hodgson.⁶ It appears that Hodgson spent about 18 months in Gambia, but that is not to say this was his first nor longest visit.

The brig *Lively* belonging to John Tomlinson and John Knight left Liverpool under Captain Thomas Marshall in May of 1768 and returned via Grenada, delivering 120 slaves, on March 31st 1769. There is no record of Miles Barber's London chartered vessel. It is a weakness of the historical record that the owners of vessels, who may not themselves be involved in the slave trade as merchants, are recorded whereas the charterers of vessels, the slave-merchants, go unrecorded. The *Francis* owned by Barber and Mackmillan is known to have left from London for Senegal in October of 1771. This is the only voyage for which there is a record of Barber operating from London at this time; there appear to be other voyages which are unrecorded.⁶

A number of slaves from Hodgson's voyage are known to have become runaways from advertisements placed by one owner, a James Buchanan, in the Virginia Gazette in December 1770.³¹ Three of Buchanan's slaves, aged in their late twenties, ran, dressed "*in the common dress of field slaves; osnabrug shirts, cotton jackets and breeches, plaid hose, and Virginia made shoes, with a dual blanket each.*" They were believed to be hiding in the skirts of the Chicahominy swamp and

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a reward of 50s was offered. Another runaway was advertised in the same newspaper in February 1771.³⁴ A slave named Charles aged about 18 ran away from Mr. John Jacobs wearing “*a Negro cotton Jacket with buttons (both top and bottom) of brass, a pair of cotton breeches, very long, with flat metal buttons to the waistband, cotton boots, and a coarse linen cap.*”

Mr. Jacobs may well have recovered his property since in August an advertisement was placed by the goaler of Alexandria in Fairfax County for;³⁵ “*a likely young Negro man, about 20 years of age, 5 feet 3 inches high or thereabouts, speaks bad English; has a small scald on his left side, and a mark near his left armpit, supposed to be cut with a knife, calls himself Charles, says he belongs to John Jacobs, but the place unknown.*”

It was not until the early part of 1769 that things began to settle down on the coast of Senegambia. However the continued presence of the French, and the privileged position of Miles Barber with his lucrative contract to supply them with slaves from Yannemaru, was a source of considerable disquiet for the other private traders as shown by a letter to the press in July 1769.³⁴

“...his Excellency Governor O'Hara arrived at the Fort about the 5th instant, and has ever since been wholly ...employed in settling a peace with our black neighbours, which he has, thank God, effected, though with great difficulty, on as permanent a foundation as can reasonably be expected so long as the French are permitted to remain at Albreda, who leave no stone unturned to ruin our trade, and distress the King's garrison....

What has been predicted these three years, that the French, by their settlement at Albreda, would certainly ruin the British trade, is now fully verified, and the unprecedented and very partial indulgence granted to M---- B-----, has effectually completed the most sanguine wishes of our enemies.

The French ships which, in consequence of that indulgence, were suffered to pass up to Yannemerew, have settled a correspondence, ... with many of the chiefs of the villagers inhabiting the banks of this river on both sides. These people the French now supply with their goods, by the black people's canoes, and they return to Albreda with slaves, gold and ivory, by which means, though the French are seemingly confined to Albreda, they push their trade above 300 leagues up, nay quite to the source of the river.

The coffils of slaves that used formerly to be purchased by the English vessels at Yannemerew, and other trading places in this river, now pass them, and carry their slaves to the French at Albreda.

There is no doubt who is being referred to cryptically as M---- B----- and that his successful petition to supply the French with slaves is being put into practice at Yannemaru. The strange and variously spelt name of Yanimarew or Yannemarais is, as mentioned in Ellison's account, the name of an African village some distance up the Gambia River. It may be the island of JanJanmaru, formerly McCarthy Island, in the river Gambia some 150 miles inland which would have been advantageous for intercepting slave coffles from the interior. The river was navigable by large ships up to this point but above only by smaller vessels. The slaves supplied by Barber's factory would have been delivered directly to French ships and thus he only earned a bounty on each slave and not the full profit on their sale in the Americas. On the other hand his costs were minimal and his risks

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reduced. The increased competition for slaves that this caused was a matter of great annoyance to the other traders. In May of 1769 the *Gazetteer* fulminated that the French the previous year had been carrying on a clandestine trade resulting in them carrying off 2000 slaves.³²

Both voyages of the *Yanimarew* which Hodgson commanded were financed by the two Miles Barbers, junior and senior, and cleared from Liverpool to which port Miles Barber had by now transferred his operations.⁶ Between 1758 and 1770 Miles Barber was a highly active merchant in the slave trade of both Liverpool and Lancaster⁷ being involved in over 50 voyages, the majority to the Windward Coast and the Gambia and Sierra Leone regions. Most terminated in the West Indies and Carolinas. At least 20,000 slaves were taken from the African coast to the Americas. There is no reason to suppose that these would not have been paying voyages; though there were some notable disasters, with at least one vessel, *Thetis*, captured by the French in the Seven Years War, and the *Marton* and the *Mary* victims of insurrection. Despite Barber's obvious success in the trade one cloud might have appeared on his horizon for a press notice³⁶ in August 1764 showed that Miles Barber jr, and William Mason were appointed assignees of the estate of Robert Mackmillan and Edmund Ford of Lancaster in the matter of their Commission of Bankruptcy. Creditors were asked to send in their accounts so that a dividend could be paid as soon as possible. Mackmillan became a freeman of the City of Lancaster in 1749/50.⁵ Barber was in partnership with Mackmillan in the slaving voyage of the *Friendship* in 1769 and in that year both men became freemen of Liverpool.⁵ Mackmillan later joined Andrew White, Samuel Sandys and James Kendall in several slaving voyages between 1770 and 1772.⁶ These men also operated voyages with Barber. The line of business that Ford and Mackmillan carried on that led to their Bankruptcy is not known. Whether Miles Barber realised it or not it was a sign of things to come.

The appearance of Thomas Hodgson in Liverpool in 1769 as a slave ship captain in command of a vessel belonging to Miles Barber coincides with the first reference to Thomas Hodgson (Jr.) in the Liverpool records; an attempt by the port officials to distinguish two Hodgsons of the same name.¹²

In the same way that Miles Barber's early history is confounded by multiple people of the same name, so Thomas Hodgson's activities in Liverpool are also bedeviled by the existence of another Thomas Hodgson in the town over the same period. It is possible to distinguish them, in most cases, by the company they keep. The other Thomas Hodgson, there was no family relationship, hailed from Doddlespool in Cheshire, and was associated in maritime trade with the Earle family, including part ownership of vessels involved in numerous slaving voyages. Papers in the Earle collection specifically mention business agreements with Thomas Earle (1719-1781) and Thomas and Robert Hodgson in sugar refining interests (1763) and in the slaving vessel *Calypso* (1766) along with other business associates including Peter Holme and John Copeland.³⁷ Seemingly, the keepers of the Plantation Register, and later the Liverpool Register of Merchant Shipping, attempted to distinguish these two by the description of one of them as Thomas Hodgson junior. The description, however, is inconsistent, being applied to both men at different times and is not always appended to describe either Thomas Hodgson. For example the vessel *Dispatch* was registered in Liverpool in 1767, to a consortium consisting of William Earle, Peter Holme, Thomas Hodgson (Jr),

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William Boats, John Copeland, Ralph Earle, and Thomas Earle. This must be Thomas Hodgson of Doddlespool.

This is the first occurrence of the distinction 'junior' in the context of a Thomas Hodgson in the Liverpool registry – perhaps indicating the first time it was needed. This usage continues consistently until the voyage of the *Richard* in 1770 when it is dropped until resurrected again in 1783 for the vessel *Eliza*, registered under the names of John Hodgson, Thomas Hodgson (Jr), Isaac Capstick, Richard Capstick, and William Neilson. This is Thomas Hodgson of Caton as the Capsticks were his nephews. After about 1786, Thomas Hodgson of Doddlespool, can be distinguished by his association with his son, Ellis Leckonby Hodgson.¹² In some records, for example of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, the absence of other clues makes it even more difficult to decide which Thomas Hodgson is being referred to. If both occur, it matters little who was being referred to as 'junior' but if only one name occurs, it matters not whether he is referred to as 'junior' or no, it is impossible to be certain who was intended. In almost all cases of vessel ownership, the association with other owners can be used to separate them. Nevertheless there are occasional instances where a 'Thomas Hodgson' is a registered owner of a vessel, there is no mention of John Hodgson, Thomas Hodgson's brother, and the other owners form an unusual group from which no further clue can be gleaned then we are simply left guessing. Under those circumstances I have assumed it is not Thomas Hodgson of Caton. Occasional errors must be assumed but should not detract from the big picture and be relatively infrequent. The first real evidence of Thomas Hodgson's physical presence in Liverpool is the entry in a Liverpool Trade directory for 1774 recording John & Thomas Hodgson as having a Counting House at No. 25, North Side, Old Dock.³⁸ It is not clear, for the above reasons, where he is living at this time, it may be 37 Water Street, his brother John, however is living at No 9 Temple Street. Three years later Thomas seems to be at No 7 Drury Lane.

Probably Thomas Hodgson's brother John entered the trade with Thomas as a result of experiences in the West Indian Trade. He may have been a ship's captain for the firm of Abram Rawlinson, operating out of Lancaster and Liverpool. A bill of lading exists for the vessel *Content*, of Lancaster, master John Hodgson, to ship 2 barrels of pork and 25 firkins of butter from Cork to Kingston Jamaica.³⁹ His experience and the contacts made in the West India and American trades with Abram Rawlinson would have been a valuable addition to the firm.

The first vessel which can firmly be established as belonging to John and Thomas Hodgson of Caton was the appropriately named, 70-ton ship rigged vessel, *Two Brothers*, mounting four guns, with a crew of 25. The ship was a small, rather old vessel built in Chester in 1758.⁶ It sailed on March 9th 1771 for The Gambia, just one month after Hodgson returned from Africa aboard the *Yannemaru*. Its small size would have been advantageous in trading up the River Gambia as well as limiting their financial exposure and limiting the time it took to get slaved. Despite its small size some 200 slaves were delivered to South Carolina in September 1771. The Hodgsons began by exploiting Thomas's experience gained from his time as ship's master and African agent for Miles Barber. Close connections are known between Henry Laurens, plantation owner of Charleston, Richard Oswald, London merchant and Thomas Houseman of Lancaster for the delivery of slaves to America.¹⁰ Laurens was a major slave trader who later became president of the

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American Continental Congress and a negotiator at the peace negotiations between Britain and America after the American Revolutionary war. Undoubtedly Miles Barber had trading connections in the area and Thomas Hodgson had the opportunity to establish his own from his voyages with Barber.

The *Two Brothers* was apparently lost following the visit to Carolina.⁶ Despite this the voyage may still have been profitable for the brothers quickly replaced the vessel with a more recently built (Liverpool 1767) and larger, 120-ton, ship rigged vessel of the same name, mounting 6 guns.⁶ In this they were joined by another investor, Samuel Sandys. Samuel Sandys was probably a London banker but may have been related, through descent from the Sandys of Furness, to Samuel Sandys, Captain of the *Mary*, who was cut off at James Fort, Gambia and executed.⁴⁰ The captain for both voyages was Hugh Glenn who departed Liverpool on Feb 1st 1772 with the same itinerary and arriving in Charleston on June 11th 1772. He did not depart until the 27th December and arrived back in Liverpool on February 19th 1773.⁶

However, at the beginning of the 1770's strong dissatisfaction with the factory arrangements on the coast was developing among the independent African Merchants. This led to petitions to the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations from the Liverpool and London Merchants.⁴¹ The Liverpool petition contained several letters written by Richard Brew to various merchants involved in the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa in Liverpool, including letters to Miles Barber, detailing the way in which the African Committee's control of the forts and factories on the coast was leading to corrupt monopolies, and to private trading by the local agents who controlled the coast forts and factories.¹³ This came after ten years of steady growth in trade following the French and Indian War and the trade was perhaps close to a sustainable maximum. There was fierce competition among the traders and it became more difficult for vessels to slave efficiently leading to long delays on the coast and an increase in all manner of difficulties including mortality among slaves and crew and insurrection.

Richard Brew, who had been dismissed as the Governor of the African Company's Cape Coast Castle for private dealing some years before, and had set up a private factory at Anomobu, named Castle Brew, wrote to the Liverpool Company in August of 1771.¹³ In the letter he accused the London merchants Oswald, Sargeant and Mill of commandeering the trade for themselves and shipping so many slaves that the voyages of private traders were jeopardized. The issue of corruption centered on the African Committee, which since the demise of the RAC regulated the coastal facilities. One accusation was that people not trading to Africa were being entered on the books to inflate the membership and influence elections to the Committee to allow the abuses to continue. He accused the late Captain Stevens of taking slaves off the coast in a clandestine manner in the *Africa* owned by John Mill and Richard Oswald and described its effect on the trade.

"The trade for many months past has been so very bad, and the opposition from Cape Coast Castle and Annamaboe Fort has been so very great, that the shipping and private traders have suffered inconceivably; the ship Ingram, Capt. James Paisley, has been here now seven months, and has not purchased half her cargo of slaves, though her complement is but three hundred and twenty."

The *Ingram*, belonging to Arthur & Benjamin Heywood and Francis Ingram, departed Liverpool in October 1770 and returned in September 1772 – double the anticipated duration of a voyage.⁶ Arthur Heywood was a member of the Liverpool

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Company along with Miles Barber and some of Richard Brew's letters were probably written to him.¹³ Brew listed numerous vessels which were struggling to get slaved; the ***Corsican Hero***, late Smith, (owned by the Powells which left Liverpool for Anomobu, February 1771 and returned at the end of May 1772⁶) "*...has been here upwards of four months, and has not purchased sixty slaves; the **Africa**, Capt. Smith of Bristol, has been here four months and has not purchased twenty; and the **Greenwich**, Capt. Harwood of Bristol, has been here upwards of three months, and has not purchased one slave from the natives; Capt. Brown, of the **Kitty**, of Liverpool (another Ingram vessel), and Capt. Fleetwood, of the **Swallow**, (August 3 1770 for Anomobu returning January 1772, belonging to John Dobson, Hugh Pringle, Richard Savage and James Lowe) from same port, have been each nine months at Annamaboe, and one for three hundred and thirty five, the other for two hundred and fifty slaves; indeed the trade is now so totally ruined, that we have been obliged to barter away two Gold Coast cargoes, amounting to eight hundred and fifty slaves, for Leeward goods, and to send the ships **Albany** and **Pembroke** (London vessels) down there, as we saw no prospect of getting them slaved off in any reasonable time at this place; yet the **Peggy**, Capt. Mill, was here and at Cape Coast no longer than four months, and carried off from between three hundred and fifty and four hundred slaves; and the **Richmond**, Capt. Rogers of London, a ship of three hundred tons, chartered and sent out by Mess. Ross and Mill, has been at Cape Coast little more than three months, and sails this day with four hundred slaves; this ship was sent out here with a cargoe of goods for Mess. Mill and Bell, another cargoe for the general of Elmina, a fourth for the fiscal of Elmina, a fifth for the chiefs of Cormantyne and a sixth for the Dutch chief at Accra."*

Brew was convinced that the only hope for the private traders was for parliament to do away with the Committee of African Merchants altogether. He wrote to the Liverpool Company again in October¹³ and accused Mill and Bell of selling slaves in exchange for Portuguese tobacco to the general of Elmina, a Dutch Fort. Not only were they supplying the Dutch but with the tobacco they could commandeer the remaining trade. Brew also said that merchants on the Gold Coast were purchasing slaves with gold, a practice he viewed as pernicious.

Formerly owners of ships used to send out double cargoes of goods, one for slaves, the other for gold; if slaves happened to be dearer than usual, the cargoe for gold was thrown into the slave cargoe in order to fill the ship; on the other hand, if slaves were reasonable the gold cargoe was disposed of for gold and ivory, at a profit of thirty, forty, or fifty per cent. which went a great way towards paying the portledge bill in the West Indies; as I have frequently known from five to fifteen hundred pounds sterling in gold and ivory carried off from this coast, over and above a compleat cargoe of slaves. How strangely things are reversed now... we scarce see a ship go off with her complement of slaves, notwithstanding her cargoe is laid in from eighteen to twenty pounds sterling per head on an average, ... a great part of which they are obliged to sell where they can for gold, greatly under prime cost, or lie here till their provisions are all expended, and their bottoms eat out with the worms.

In another letter written to Miles Barber in Liverpool Brew describes the vast numbers of ships currently on the coast trying to buy slaves.¹³

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“Goods wanted by vessels in this road at present: the *Ingram* wants one hundred and twenty slaves, the *Corsican Hero* fifty or sixty, the *Nancy*, Cazneau, forty or fifty, the *Greenwich* one hundred and thirty, the *Africa* taken up. The *Dispatch*, Ritchie; the *Barbara*, Culshaw; the *Venus*, Goodwin; the *Friendship*, Cummings; the *Hannah*, Hughes; the *Charlotte*, Blundell; all new comers; and the *John*, Bold; the *Union*, Pole; the *Justin*, Wilcox, and Captain Price, soon expected, besides rum vessels; (these were vessels trading out of New England principally carrying rum for trade¹⁰) I therefore leave you to judge of the shocking state of the trade here, and what reason you have to expect any alteration for the better; had the eight hundred slaves, that were sent off in the *Peggy*, Captain Mill, and the *Richmond*, chartered ship, circulated amongst the shipping, the *Ingram*, *Corsican Hero*, *Nancy*, *Greenwich* and *Africa*, would have been off the Coast, and would have left a fine opening for these new comers; besides, the price would have continued at nine and seven ounces.

Indeed the disadvantages trade labours under just now are incredible, and I am much mistaken if any ship this year will get interest for her money, except the prices are very high in the West-Indies, and little or no mortality amongst the slaves.”

In March of 1771 Brew continued in the same vein. In the three months since the *Ingram* had sailed not three hundred slaves had been sold amongst the shipping with seldom less than 12 or 18 topsail vessels in Annamoboe Road and prices were rising.

“They have at last got the price of the slaves up to eleven ounces for men, and nine ounces for women, therefore, I would not have you, by any means, be concerned to Annamoboe for some time. There is no buying slaves now without you give two ounces of gold on each; to procure which, you must sell your goods 20 per cent. under prime cost, and you may think yourself happy to get it even at that rate.in short, the nature of the trade is so much altered, that a man who was here but two years ago would be at his wit's end to make a purchase.”

Brew also maintained that Mr. Mill, governor of Cape Coast, and Mr Bell, governor of Annamoboe, were returning home and the forts would be purchasing slaves for them and the shipping would get none, “...and, I dare say, will carry off between them at least one thousand slaves: I therefore leave you to judge what prospect a ship can have, till those two gentlemen are gone...”

Though Richard Brew painted a picture of unfair competition and corrupt practice upon the coast, a picture the Liverpool merchants would appreciate, there is more than a hint that the increased demand for human cargo was outstripping supply and that competition for cargoes was growing intense. Large numbers of vessels from many different ports were arriving and spending extended amounts of time waiting to complete their cargoes. Inevitably this would have driven up prices and threatened the profitability of the voyages.

Perhaps as a result and despite Miles Barber's privileged trading position on the Windward coast, with a factory at Yannemaru and several other places, as well as a lucrative contract to supply slaves for the French West India colonies, all was not well. In April 1772 notices appeared in the press declaring Miles Barber a bankrupt who would surrender to his creditors in early May at the sign of the Bull's Head in Manchester.⁴² A later notice dated the actual act of commission of bankruptcy to April 1769 and the fact that it took so long to come to light illustrates

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the difficulties arising from sales on long dated bills.⁴³ In November one of his assignees, William Davenport, withdrew. Davenport was a prominent Liverpool merchant involved in the slave trade, but also in a wide range of other shipping trades, who was associated with the Earle family, and also with some other gentlemen whom we shall meet later, including Ambrose Lace and Edward Chaffers. It is not clear why Davenport withdrew but it was not through death, it could have been illness or a conflict of interest. Davenport, trading between Leghorn and Liverpool, was a major supplier of Venetian glass, particularly beads, that formed a substantial African trade item.³⁷ Barber's debts to Davenport may have concerned goods such as these.

There is no evidence that Miles Barber suffered any particularly disastrous voyages that could account for his bankruptcy, however he was heavily invested on his own account with few additional investors sharing the risk. From the preceding picture of the position on the African coast perhaps voyage profits were under pressure. Intense competition may have led to rising prices in Africa and falling prices in the Americas. It may also explain his concern at the engrossing of trade by some of the London Merchants. In June 1772 the Public Advertiser carried an open letter and petition, signed by, among many others, Miles Barber.⁴¹ The petition complained of the packing of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa with unqualified persons and an attempt to subvert the electoral process to guarantee the election of a select group of London merchants; James Johnson, James Bogle French, Gilbert Ross, James Mill and Samuel Bean. Mr Bean was to stand down in favour of Mr Samuel Smith as soon as the latter had satisfied his creditors and so even those accused of engrossing the trade were not immune from its vicissitudes. Ross and Mill had featured in the complaints of Richard Brew.

The first dividend of five shillings in the pound was paid to Miles Barber's creditors in September at the Bull's Head in Manchester.⁴⁵ There were also London creditors, despite there being record of only a single voyage with Robert Mackmillan at this time outfitting from London, but as we have seen he was also chartering vessels out of London and their owners may have been among his London creditors. By February 1773 Miles Barber had received his certificate and all those indebted on the 12th April 1769 who had not yet received their dividend of 5 shillings in the pound were asked to submit their accounts and all those who had sold goods to Miles Barber's estate under the guarantee of his Inspectors were asked to send their accounts for discharge to Thomas Sanderson of French Ordinary Court, Crutched-Friars.⁴³⁻⁴⁵ Nevertheless, throughout this period Miles Barber's vessels continued to trade on the Windward coast, under the control of his assignees, making over a dozen voyages in the period from his commission of bankruptcy to the granting of his certificate.

Following the discharge of his bankruptcy Miles Barber began trading in partnership with Samuel Sandys, Andrew White, and James Kendall from 1773 to 1776 with voyages almost exclusively concentrating on the Isles de Loss on the Windward Coast of Africa.⁶ Meanwhile John and Thomas Hodgson's modest entry into the business in 1771 with the *Two Brothers* continued with another voyage under master Hugh Glenn, who had formerly been employed by Barber. Interestingly, this voyage also attracted investment from one of Miles Barber's partners, Samuel Sandys. The Hodgsons continued in this partnership and made at

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least seven more voyages in the period to 1776.⁶ All were targeted on the River Gambia for slaving, – perhaps as a result of Barber’s bankruptcy the Hodgsons had acquired the Yennemaru factory. The first voyage of the *Two Brothers*, with Sandys as co-investor, was in February 1772 and the returning vessel was turned round in just over a month and sailed again at the end of March 1773, once again bound for The Gambia and Charlestown, making a rapid 8 month voyage,⁶ which, in itself, suggests the efficiency of a factory based operation. In the same year they acquired a 150-ton vessel, built in Liverpool in 1761, mounting 6 guns, to which they gave the homely name of *Caton*. The *Caton* sailed in August 1773 to return from the Gambia, Carolina triangular voyage a year later. Of a crew of 31, 18 apparently died or did not return. *Two Brothers* returned to Liverpool in November and in just a few weeks sailed once more for The Gambia and South Carolina with a large crew of 44. Did they anticipate a sickly voyage at this time of year? Previous voyages leaving earlier in the year had much smaller crews of 25 to 30, if so they were correct; 20 are reported to have died and sailing under John Moore, the master changed, first to Captain Jones and then to John Wilson.⁶ The brothers were increasing their investments rapidly at this time; from 70 tons committed to the trade in 1772 this increased to 270 tons in 1773.

The following year (1774) the Hodgsons invested in the *Myers* a 170-ton ship of 6 guns again slaving in the Gambia but the final destination was now Dominica, perhaps the deteriorating situation in the American colonies had influenced the choice of final destination. It was a long voyage, and a sickly one, of a crew of 44, 21 died or did not return; the voyage began in February 1774, but did not leave the West Indies until July of 1775, and it was August 1775 before it was back in Liverpool. In the meantime *Caton* returned to Liverpool in August of 1774, and took a couple of months to turn round before sailing again for Gambia in November. Another long voyage; it was December 1775 before it delivered 280 slaves, this time to Jamaica, again suggesting that the situation in America, with the approaching conflict made trade there difficult and the risk unacceptable. The vessel was lost after disembarking the slaves in the West Indies. *Two Brothers* returned to Liverpool in April of 1775, but did not sail again for Africa until the end of October 1775.⁶ The trading situation was now fraught with uncertainty with the outbreak of trouble in the American colonies. In October 1774 the First Continental Congress resolved to enforce a trade embargo with Britain.⁴⁶ Thus when *Myers* returned in August 1775 it was immediately laid up until the following summer.⁶

A notice in the Chester Chronicle in August of 1775 shows the goods imported into Liverpool for the period 18th to the 25th of August. The consignment of African goods returned by the *Myers* shows that the Hodgsons’ African trade, in common with most other slave merchants, was not confined to slaves. It also gives an interesting glimpse of the activities of some other men active in the Africa, West India and Baltic trades.⁴⁷

“Rawlinsons and Chorley 592 Hogsheads 5 Tierces Sugar, 149 Bags Cotton, 40 tons fustick; David Kenyon 10 bags cotton. In the Isaac, Thomas Cragg from Tortola.

John and Thomas Hodgson 93 elephants teeth, a parcel of beeswax, 13 puncheons of Rum, Samuel Sandys and co, 100 puncheons rum, Benson and co, 10 puncheons of rum, Abraham Rawlinson and co, 30 Hogsheads of coffee, Edward

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*Steward and Sons 29 hogsheds of coffee, Henry Tindall and co 14 Hogsheds ditto, In the **Myers**, William Dawson, from Africa and Dominica.*

*William Rathbone 653 fir balks, 100 3 quarters 20 deals, 100 2 quarters battens, 600 2 quarters small spurs, 4 fathoms lathwood, In the **Industry**, John Harrison, from Riga."*

Henry and Abraham Rawlinson, who were at one time MP's for Liverpool and Lancaster respectively,⁴⁸ along with John Chorley and David Kenyon are importing Sugar and Cotton but were also involved in slaving ventures, occasionally in association with the Hodgsons. Abraham Rawlinson would later acquire property in Caton. William Rathbone, whose family became closely associated with the Hodgsons, is seen to be importing wood from Eastern Europe. The children of William Rathbone and Moses Benson would later be associated in the cotton trade and the shipping trade to America.⁴⁹

Unfortunately it is not known how successful the slaving voyage of the **Myers** was in terms of the numbers of slaves purchased and successfully sold in the West Indies. If it was successful these return freights would have considerably increased its profitability as indicated in Richard Brew's letter, suggesting for example a potential 50% return on the Ivory. The consignment also illustrates that the promoters of the voyage divided their interest in it; the Hodgson's investing more in the import of Ivory than rum and Samuel Sandys confining his interest to the import of rum. It is possible that some of the return on the slave consignment was remitted in this form. The Hodgson's were clearly also adept at acquiring freights in the West Indies on behalf of other merchants, thereby increasing the profitability of the homeward passage; among them Abraham Rawlinson, Moses Benson and the former Lancaster slave ship captain Henry Tindall.⁵⁰

Shortly before the opening of hostilities in the American Revolutionary War a report appeared in the press in the form of a letter from Barbados written to an unspecified Liverpool Merchant on July 20th 1773.⁵¹

*"The day before yesterday came in the sloop **Betsey**, Captain Aird, with about 90 slaves, from Sierra Leon, where she left, six weeks ago, sundry vessels of Mr Miles Barber's. Captain Tittle, in the **Snow Molly**, with about 80 slaves, and expected to be off very soon. The **Robert**, Capt. Grace, had 70 slaves, and would be off in two months; the **True Blue**, Captain Kendall of Lancaster, had 140, and expected to get away in six weeks with 250; the **Warham**, Captain Tomlinson, and the **Prince Tom**, Davis, of said place, were both there, the former with 20 slaves, the latter none.*

*Captain Aird advises, that the ship **Industry**, of London (late Windsor), being on her passage from Gambia to the West Indies, the slaves killed all the white people except two, and carried them into Sierra Leon, where they ran her ashore, and made their escape; a few of them were taken, but Capt. Aird cannot tell what number she left Gambia with. When the insurrection happened one Gogart had the command, Captain Windsor having died on the coast."*

Curiously Robert Barber, Miles Barber's son, captained the sloop **Betsey** on the outward leg to Africa. However, Captain Robert Aird took over on the coast, but it is not known why, perhaps Robert Barber stayed to manage their interests on the coast. It was owned by a J. Heird, the only slaving voyage he is known to have been involved with.⁶ Perhaps it was another of Barber's contract vessels. Of four voyages

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made by Captain Aird, the ownership of one seems to be unknown, one was owned by the Barber, Kendall, Sandys, White consortium the other by Samuels Sandys and Co. Thus when Captain Aird says he has left sundry vessels belonging to Miles Barber on the coast of Sierra Leone he would be expected to know.

Captain Tittle left Liverpool in the 90 ton ship *Mary* bound for Sierra Leone at the end of September 1772. The *Mary* apparently delivered slaves to Georgia sometime in 1774; the command having changed at least once from Tittle to Captain Jones. She did not return to Liverpool until the end of March 1775 under Captain Taylor. The vessel belonged to a consortium consisting of Samuel Sandys, Andrew White and James Kendall, but Miles Barber's ownership is not mentioned despite these being his business partners at the time. It likely was, or might easily be considered to be, as we shall see, a Miles Barber vessel. On the other hand the 70 ton snow, *Molly* under John Read, cleared out from Lancaster for Sierra Leone in July of 1772 delivering 100 slaves to South Carolina the following July. Its ownership is unknown, but Miles Barber may be a reasonable supposition. Did Captain Tittle change ships? There is no evidence in the records to suggest it but in any event he never left the African coast. We will meet him again, or to be more plain, his tombstone will be pointed out for us.

The ship *True Blue*, Captain Richard Kendall, cleared Liverpool, though Kendall was a Lancaster man, and the vessel was registered in Lancaster, bound for Sierra Leone in November 1772. It was owned by Richard and Edward Salisbury, Richard Beans, Edward Whiteside and Richard Kendall and delivered slaves to Jamaica in 1774, returning to Lancaster at the end of June 1774. It has been supposed that Kendall persuaded these Lancaster men, who were not for the most part regular slave traders, to invest in this voyage.⁵ It seems possible that Barber had an interest in the voyage, which is not revealed by considering only the formal ownership of a share in the vessel.

The 70-ton snow *Warren*, rather than the *Warham*, Captain William Tomlinson cleared Lancaster in February of 1773 and was owned by Richard Millerson and John Addison, Ulverston men operating vessels out of Lancaster. The 70-ton brig *Prince George*, (rather than the *Prince Tom*) Captain Thomas Davies, cleared Lancaster in September of 1772 for Sierra Leone and delivered 80 slaves in November 1773 to South Carolina. The owners were probably the Lancaster merchants Millerson, Dodson, Addison and Watson. The *Robert* was a Liverpool vessel not belonging to Miles Barber, but to Robert Kennedy, and it too seems to have suffered an insurrection. Its Captain was Ireland Grace, who was later appointed Captain of the Hodgsons' vessel *Myers*. It was trading to the Isles de Loss, to the north of the Sierra Leone estuary, where Miles Barber also had a slave factory. The *Industry* was out of London and had voyaged to Gambia and after delivering slaves to St Kitts sailed directly back to Gambia. It was destroyed as a result of a slave insurrection as mentioned in the letter. Thus although the letter seems confused in suggesting these were all "*sundry vessels*" belonging to Miles Barber. Perhaps the wording is simply loose and some vessels belonged to Barber and some did not. Perhaps there is more to it than that. The vessels were trading in the estuary of the Sierra Leone River, where the Oswalds had a factory on Bance Island and where Miles Barber also had a slave factory at this time in addition to his facility on the Isles de Loss to the north.

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However the thriving trade in slaves to the American colonies was about to suffer a severe blow with the outbreak of open hostilities in America as the simmering conflict with the colonists moved to open revolt. A blockade was imposed on American ports, and goods could not be landed or loaded in America. There was considerable support for the colonists in Britain, particularly amongst the merchants concerned at their loss of trade. In January of 1775 a meeting of the African Merchants in London at the King's Tavern resolved to petition for the repeal of all repressive acts against the colonists.⁵² The battles of Lexington and Concord took place in April of 1775. Suddenly, all vessels leaving British ports had to obtain clearance from the Admiralty for the loading and transporting of gunpowder and other materials of war.⁵³ For all of these merchants the world was about to be turned upside down.