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AND THE CHILDREN'S TEETH ARE SET ON EDGE

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•CHAPTER 8•

The Isles of the Idols

From Niger's banks resounds the shriek of woe.
There, inly pining, mourns the hapless slave;
Fraud proudly braves the light with shameless brow,
And dens of misery plough the restless wave.
Behold! in desolate array
The captives wind their silent way:
Amid their ranks does pity find
A pair in fond affection join 'd
Fell Rapine, reckless of their pain,
Blasts Misery's final hope - denies a common chain.

William Shepherd

Some few years before *HMS Pomona* and *Adventure* were dispatched to Africa to deliver the new Slave Trade Transportation Regulations, John and Thomas Hodgson acquired interests on the African coast; an arrangement that increased the efficiency of their operations and provided additional revenue. The likely time for their acquisition of a slave factory on the Isles de Loss was Miles Barber's business difficulties leading up to his third bankruptcy in 1787. After this the Hodgsons' voyages were persistently targeted to the Isles de Loss and they employed their fast cutter, *Fly*, on runs to and fro between Africa and the Americas.¹ A number of contemporary accounts give a glimpse of slaving operations on this region of the African coast. Until about 1750, when its monopoly was ended, the Royal African Company had maintained large numbers of forts up and down the coast of Africa. Many were still maintained at government expense with appointed governors, but others were established and operated by private traders.²

One such factory was Bence Island – also known as Bance or Bunce, named after a Squire Bence of the 17th Century – in the estuary of the Sierra Leone River. It was acquired in 1748 by a syndicate comprising Richard Oswald, Alexander Grant, and father and son Augustus and John Boyd. Acquired did not imply ownership. The local chieftains on the African Coast were referred to by the slave traders as their 'landlords'. The property relationship, so far as it could be equated with European forms, resembled leasehold property. Regular payments and renegotiation of arrangements on the death of the chief were required and this demanded a good

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level of understanding of local customs, although the traders were quite capable of applying a high degree of force when the situation demanded.²

The forts were operated by clerks and other employees, and gave casual employment to free native Africans, known as grumettas or grumettos. Other forts close to Bance included the Banana Islands to the south, at one time run by James Cleveland, and the Isles de Loss to the North, operated at one time by Miles Barber, and later by John and Thomas Hodgson. Curiously to the south of the Isles de Loss lived Betsy Heard, the daughter of a Liverpool factor and an African who had been educated in England. It was common practice to educate numbers of influential Africans back home in England, indeed in Liverpool, to increase the traders influence on the coast.²

The Isles de Loss lie on the Windward Coast of Africa a few miles off Conkary Point. One of them, known variously as Factory Island, Isle Kassa or Barber's Kassa, formed a convenient watering place close to the mainland, with facilities to make ship repairs, a storehouse for trade goods and supplies, and a barracoon.³ Thomas Hodgson, at one time Miles Barber's agent in The Gambia, no doubt drew on his relationship with Miles Barber during his bankruptcy to acquire control of the islands. Miles Barber entered his second bankruptcy in 1777. By late 1780 the estates of Barber, Sandys and White and Barber and White were declaring a dividend to their creditors. Samuel Sandys' property was sold by auction in London in 1781; the same year that Edward Bate, Ironmonger and Sandys' partner obtained his certificate. By late 1782 Barber, Sandys and White obtained their certificates but were still declaring a dividend in late 1783. At about this time Miles Barber used his connection with Samuel Hartley to fulfil his agreements with the French to supply slaves to their West Indian colonies. Miles Barber again extricated himself from bankruptcy around 1785 but the destinations of subsequent voyages suggest he was no longer in control of the Isles de Loss. The Hodgsons seem to have had two principal agents at the Isles de Loss, Messrs. Jackson and Horrocks. At about this time there was a William Jackson who was a master of vessels owned by Lancaster merchant's Thomas Hinde senior and junior, then operating out of Liverpool. They may or may not be the same person. Horrocks' history seems to be unknown.

Robert Norris, during the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1788, estimated of the numbers of slaves carried off from different places on the coast each year: Gambia 700, Isles de Los 1500, from Sierra Leone to Cape Mount 2000, from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas 3000, from Cape Palmas to Cape Appolonia 1000, the Gold Coast 10,000, from Quittah to Popo 1000, Whydah 500, Porta Nova and Bidagry 3500, Lagos and Benin 3500, Bonny and New Calabar 14,500, Old Calabar and the Kamaruns 7000, Gabon and Cape Lopez 500, Loango, Malimba, and Cabenda 13,500, Mayumba, Ambris, and Missoula 1000, Loando, St. Pauls, and Benguella 7000 - a total of 74,200 per year. He thought the English purchased 33,000, the French 20,000 the Dutch 4,000, the Danes 2,000, the Portuguese 10,000, and the Americans a few.⁴

Account of Meinard Xavier Golbery 1785/6.

During the American Revolutionary War many of these factories were attacked, Bance Island, and its luxurious building "*with a cool and convenient*

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gallery”, was reduced to “a heap of ruins,” and in 1779 the Isles de Loss were sacked, apparently by Bostonians.⁵ Many of these ‘factories’ were restored to British ownership following the Treaty of Paris.² The French, however, recovered Senegambia, which they had lost in 1763 following the 7 Years War. Thus in 1785 a new French Governor was despatched to Senegambia to restore French influence. He was accompanied by an aide de camp, Meinard Xavier Golbery, who described the operation of what he referred to as the Liverpool Company, in the region.⁶

Golbery’s description of the factory at Sierra Leone implied that it consisted of “magazines, warehouses, and docks” and that “nothing was forgotten that could render this factory as wholesome as it was commodious and agreeable...” The director of the factory resided at Sierra Leone and had an income of 800 guineas per year derived from a 2% allowance on every slave delivered healthy to the colonies and with “the other advantages that were attached to his place, were sufficient to ensure him in a few years a very respectable fortune.” He had an agent at the Isles de Loss who received 400 guineas per year from a premium on slaves and “the other principal persons employed also received very good appointments, and had a proportionate interest in the affairs of this society.”

Clearly, Thomas Hodgson’s “early years in foreign climes” were lucrative enough to provide the capital, experience and contacts, to begin his own slave trading operation. The factories had large numbers of boats and light vessels and at Sierra Leone there was a vessel of 800 tons, mounting 24 guns, anchored at the mouth of the creek holding stores and ammunition. Here the chief factor slept but it was also used as a hospital benefitting from the sea air. The factory received 10 vessels a year and stored trade goods valued at 2 million livres. During his visit there were in the anchorage, “five English vessels, and a French ship of three masts, commanded by Captain Rousseau, which had been dispatched to execute a treaty concluded in January 1785, between the Liverpool society and a society from Havre.”

The contract stipulated the delivery to Rousseau of 3,000 slaves each year, of both sexes and all ages at a cost of 600 francs per head paid, half in cash on delivery, and half in bills at ten months’ sight. During Golbery’s visit, between September 25th 1785 and May 1st 1786 Rousseau shipped off some 2000 slaves.¹ Rousseau was in command of the *Lion* out of Le Havre, owned by Messieurs Beziers, Carmichael and Donovan. A number of vessels from Le Havre and Honfleur traded in Sierra Leone at this time carrying off large numbers of slaves for Port au Prince in St Domingue. This then looks like the deal set up by Miles Barber who had now recovered from his bankruptcy and was organizing voyages from London.

Golbery recognized the advantages to the sugar islands of this supply of slaves but was unimpressed by the loss of the benefit of exchanging French goods directly. He also discussed the “society of Bence”, which sold nearly 2,000 slaves per annum and shipped off ivory and “other valuable articles.” He described it as a “well organized maritime establishment”, which was “almost entirely manned by blacks.” Using light boats they traded for slaves between Sierra Leone and Cape Palmas. During 1785 and the first 5 months of 1786 they delivered to the Danes 3000 slaves and to the English colonies nearly 4000. In his opinion the factory, “produced a much larger sum” than the factory at Sierra Leone.

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The Account of Lt. John Matthews

Lt. John Matthews, who appeared before the Privy Council in 1788 to give evidence on behalf of the Liverpool Delegation, left another account of the slave trade in the area. Matthews was described as a former agent of a London Merchant – presumably Miles Barber – who was resident in Sierra Leone during 1785/6. Matthews published an account of his visit saying that he served as a Lieutenant in the navy ‘*during the whole of the late war in the West Indies*’ and ‘*that an additional inducement to connect myself with Gentlemen who trade to the coast of Africa, because, having before engaged in that commerce, I thought myself more competent to undertake a similar appointment*’.⁷

Matthews appears to have been a man of some education, and in the context of Africa, well read, mentioning Smeathman’s account of his African travels, and the works of Voltaire and the Abbé Reynal. He gave an interesting contemporary view of the natural history and the manners and customs of the various peoples inhabiting the area. Matthews sailed from Liverpool for Sierra Leone and the Isles de Loss on March 22nd 1785 and returned sometime in 1787. Thus his dispatch to Sierra Leone approximately coincides with the treaty mentioned by Golbery concluded in January 1785. In evidence to the Privy Council Matthews claimed that in 1784 the French had adopted a bounty system of 40s per ton and £8 per slave.¹⁰ This had increased competition on the coast but moreover the French and Spanish were actively encouraging English merchants to enter their service. Matthews believed regulation would induce English merchants to move to countries still practicing the trade and that abolition would not affect the status of slavery in Africa.

Matthews went out to re-establish a factory in the Sierra Leone River, which had been destroyed some 14 years before (i.e. about 1771). The agent had been murdered, and the inhabitants of the area had taken and killed the crews of several vessels and plundered their cargoes, since when “*no white man has dared set his foot on shore.*” After repurchasing the land he established a factory consisting of stores and workmen’s houses in Whiteman’s Bay close to Ya Ma Cooba’s town where he, or the principle agent, resided. Queen Ya Ma Cooba was a local cheftainess who, along with King Tom, were rulers in the region under the overall authority of the Naimbana who lived at Rogana Island in the Sierra Leone River.

The entrance to the Sierra Leone River was two leagues wide with a deep channel suitable for ships of any burthen providing year round anchorage. The estuary extended inland six or seven miles where it divided into two branches, one containing Bance island, and two trading posts “*for slaves and camwood, called Rokelle and Port Logo.*” The other branch, Bunch river, contained Gambia island, on which was a French factory. The north shore of the river, where the native Bullams cultivated large amounts of rice and made salt, was low and level. The south shore rose in hills “*to form lofty mountains crowned with perpetual verdure.*” Points of land projected into the sea, “*forming excellent bays for shipping and craft, and convenient places for hauling the seine. The vallies near the sea are inhabited, but few or any of the natives reside in the interior part of the mountainous country, which, if properly cleared and cultivated, would, in my opinion, be equal in salubrity, and superior in productions, to any of the West Indies.*”

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Matthews said that on Isles de Loss lay *“our town and factory,”* implying that the whoever had employed him to re-establish the factory at Whiteman’s bay also operated Isle Kassa on the Isles de Loss. The islands lay 3 miles west of Tomba and consisted of seven islands, only 3 of which were inhabited, the remainder being *“little more than rocks.”* The islands were *“extremely pleasant, and in general healthy.”* The eastern most island stretched north and south with a *“high wood-crowned hill at each end,”* making it appear at first sight like two islands. *“The anchorage was on the east side and was safe in the dry season but in the tornado and rainy season there is no security except in the goodness of your anchors and cables.”* The natives called the islands Forotima, meaning White Man’s Land, and they were formerly uninhabited *“but are now overstocked with a mixture of Bagoes, run away Suzee and Mandingo slaves.”*

Matthews summarized the climate of the region; *“The distinction of seasons here is between the rains and dries, and I think the most natural division of them compared with our own is as follows: December, January, February, March, April, May, the spring and summer, or dry season: June, July, August, September, October, November, the winter and autumn, or rains and tornado season. The tornados generally begin early in June, and continue till the middle or latter end of July: they commence again about the middle or beginning of October, and continue till the latter end of November.”*

According to Matthews the desirable mix of goods for the region consisted of fire arms, powder, shot, a variety of beads, silver ware and cloth. Value was calculated differently on different parts of the coast. From Senegal to Cape Mount nominal value was estimated in bars, from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas in pieces, from the Gold Coast to Wydah in Ackkeys, from thence to Benin in pawns, from there to Bonny and Calabar in coppers. Trade goods were combined in such a way as to make up the denominated value. At Sierra Leone a suitable cargo consisted of; *“European and Indian cotton and linen goods, silk handkerchiefs, taffitie’s, coarse blue and red woollen cloths, scarlet cloth in grain, coarse and fine, hats, worsted caps, guns, powder, shot, sabres, lead bars, iron bars, pewter basons, copper kettles and pans, iron pots, hardware of various kinds, earthen and glass ware, hair and gilt leather trunks, beads of various kinds, silver and gold rings and ornaments, paper, coarse and fine check, and linen ruffled shirts and caps, British and foreign spirits and tobacco.”*

Boats were dispatched into the rivers to trade where application was made to the head man requesting his protection. He became their landlord, or appointed someone else, who acted as security for the *“person and goods of the stranger, and also for the recovery of all money lent, provided it is done with his knowledge and approbation.”* These negotiations required presents to be made and afterwards they either lent goods to be taken into the country or they waited for trade to be brought to them; of which Matthews said; *“The former is the most expeditious way, when they fall into good hands; but the latter is always the safest.”*

He then described the process of barter. *“When a slave is brought to be sold he is first carefully examined, to see that there is no blemish or defect in him; if approved, you then agree upon the price at so many bars, and give the dealer so many flints or stones to count with; the goods are then delivered to him piece by piece, for which he returns so many stones for each, agreeably to its denominated*

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value; and they always take care to begin with those articles which they judge most essentially necessary."

Transient ships purchased from white traders resident on the coast, or from the factories who took the whole cargo and delivered slaves, camwood, ivory, and other products. Matthews thought the number of slaves brought off amounted to 3000 annually and was mystified how so many could be taken without depopulating the country. Many were prisoners of war, brought down in coffles of fifty or a hundred, by black slave merchants. Many he thought were sold for "*witchcraft, and other real, or imputed, crimes.*" He noted that one valuable trade item was salt, which was an important part of the merchandise for trade to the interior. It was "*so eagerly sought after, by the natives that they will part with their wives and children, and every thing dear to them, to obtain it, when they have not slaves to dispose of.*" However the inhabitants of the coast would not permit its import "*because it would interfere with the only article of their own manufacture, which they have for inland trade.*"

Finally Matthews mentioned that the 'Black Poor' were settled in the area, but gave no details probably because their arrival in May 1787 occurred after he had left for England.

The Settlement of the Black Poor 1787.

The Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor was established in London by a group of philanthropists, including Jonas Hanway. Raising money by subscription, it distributed food in Paddington and Mile End to Black Loyalists and other destitute Blacks and Lascars.¹¹ The amateur botanist and entomologist, 'The Flycatcher', Henry Smeathman had visited the Banana Islands in 1771 and proposed taking the Black Poor to establish a settlement in Sierra Leone, to be backed by London Merchants. His enthusiasm and persuasiveness convinced the Black Poor of the suitability of the place for settlement. On Smeathman's death leadership devolved upon Jonas Hanway and Granville Sharp. With Government assistance three transport ships were engaged in October of 1787; ***Atlantic, Belisarius and Vernon*** under the overall command of Captain T. Boulden Thompson. There were months of delays and by January 1787 only two ships had been loaded. By this time mistrust had arisen among the Black Poor, with many fearing they were being sent to a penal colony, perhaps because, at the same time, the Botany Bay expedition was fitting out for just this purpose. Ironically the original destination of what became the Botany Bay expedition had been West Africa but Edmund Burke denounced this as effectively condemning the convicts to certain death and so, thanks to Sir Joseph Banks, Botany Bay was hit upon. There were further delays and quarrels before the expedition set out from Plymouth on April 8th 1787. Of the 456 passengers who boarded in London, 50 died on board, probably of Typhus, 24 were landed in Plymouth following an organisational dispute involving Gustavus Vassa, and a further 23 absconded. With the addition of a few extra settlers eventually 411 free blacks plus a few Europeans left Plymouth for Africa, led by the ***Nautilus*** sloop-of-war under Captain Thompson.

After a passage of just over 4 weeks, and the loss of 14 more lives, they anchored in Frenchman's Bay off Sierra Leone on May 10. The delays meant this was the worst possible time for arrival, being the beginning of the rainy season.

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Prolonged negotiations began for the purchase of land with the local headmen under the Naimbana, who had made the latest agreement with the French for the use of Gambia Island. Agreement was finally reached and signed by King Tom, Pa Bongee, and Queen Yamacouba on June 11th for £59 12s 5d worth of trade goods including 130 gallons of rum, 25 iron bars, 2 dozen lace hats, muskets, powder, shot, cotton goods, tobacco and beads. The settlers cut their way into the bush, renamed the bay St George's bay, and the hill St George's hill, raised the British Flag, and named the site Granville town.

The rains fell and the settlers began to die. After three months a third of them were dead. Unable to grow food they began to barter away their provisions, even down to the very clothes they wore, and many of the educated and skilled settlers – particularly the Europeans - began to leave the colony to work for the slave factors. Hostility from the slave factors had, of course, been anticipated but hardly in this form, with former slaves joining the very people who had enslaved them. Even the pastor the Reverend Fraser retreated to Bance Island and in March 1788 he left for England to report that there were only 130 settlers left.

Sharp decided to resupply the colony and the brig *Myro*, Captain John Taylor, was despatched on June 7 1788, with 39 new settlers including some Europeans – only twenty would remain for any length of time the remainder either dying or defecting in one way or another. Even before the re-supply vessel arrived, relationships with the African 'landlords' and the slave traders began to deteriorate. In early 1788 King Tom, after a dispute, sold two settlers to a French slave captain.

The settlers blamed the slave traders for stirring the Africans against them saying they were "*endeavouring to aggravate us, as much as possible, to break the piece with them, and leaving us under constant apprehensions of all being massacred.*" When Taylor and the *Myro* arrived matters had reached crisis point. King Tom had died and, according to custom, a new lease had to be negotiated with his successor, King Jimmy, and another £85 1s 7d was paid over in trade goods. Relationships between settlers and traders continued downhill, with disputes over anchorage dues, and other matters. Josiah Smith, one of the Andersons' agents at Bance, reported that ships' masters were being stopped and ransomed by the settlers. In one case some settlers had chased a ship's captain as far as the Isles de Loss to arrest him, according to Smith – "*the most rascally action they have been guilty of.*"

Insult to ship's masters and threats to Captain Bowie, one of the Andersons' agents on Bance Island, were apparently continual. In June 1788 five settlers were accused of theft from the Bance Island store. The thieves were handed over, after threats from Captain Bowie that he would 'catch' any settlers who came near the island. Bowie convened a trial jury consisting of seven traders, including John Ormond, a slave factor from the Rio Pongas, three ships' masters, and a factory clerk. The five settlers were sentenced to banishment, a sentence put into effect by selling them to a French slaver for despatch to St. Domingue. Anderson was later questioned about it at the slave trade enquiry of 1789. When asked whether five free men could be sold under British law he pleaded necessity. It was embarrassing. He was asked whether he supposed that under the law of necessity a free Englishman residing in Bance Island could be sold as a slave. He supposed not, but he supposed

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that a black man, a native of Africa, could. In 1789 Captain Bowie reported to the Andersons that Jimmy and the settlers were continually quarrelling.

Granville Sharp was forced to write to the settlers to warn them of their limited jurisdiction in hopes of improving relations, but it was all too late. On the 17th of November *HMS Pomona* arrived off Sierra Leone to deliver copies of the Slave Transportation Regulations Act and to wood and water in Frenchman's bay, where there was a spring close to shore giving safe access to sweet water. On arrival Captain Savage of the *Pomona* found himself appealed to by the settlers, including the Governor, Abraham Ashmore, to intervene in their disputes with Bowie. Savage interviewed Bowie, who in turn blamed the settlers for any trouble; "*their conduct was very irregular and without any form of Government*". On the other hand, both settlers and traders complained of King Jimmy. Bowie recounted the seizure of a boat from an American ship with a cargo of rum, and the murder of three of the four men on board. King Jimmy's view was that this was perfectly legitimate since four of his people had previously been kidnapped by another American crew. It was quite usual for the Africans to revenge any serious affront by meeting out justice to any vessel from the same port as the transgressor. There are numerous examples involving vessels from both Liverpool and Lancaster.

On November 20th Savage summoned King Jimmy to try to settle the dispute but Jimmy would not respond, no doubt fearful some skulduggery was afoot. Lt. Wood, with a party of 12 marines and 4 settlers, was sent ashore to find him. After a while shots were heard and soon the native village was in flames after a pistol was discharged into the thatch of a house. The search party then appeared on the shore and Lt. Duncan, with more armed men, went off in a boat to meet them. As the marines tried to board there was gunfire from the bush. Duncan, a sergeant of marines, and a settler were killed and several others wounded. For the next few days the villagers tried to prevent the *Pomona's* watering operations and Savage discharged cannon into the bush to allow them to continue.

Savage appealed to the Naimbana to try to persuade him to intervene in the dispute and by November 27th the Naimbana had ordered Jimmy to desist. On December 3rd *Pomona* sailed on the understanding that the Naimbana would arrange a palaver to settle matters. At the palaver which included the settlers and the Bance Island agents Bowie and Tilley, Jimmy was in no mood to be mollified and simply gave the settlers three days to leave. Bowie and Tilley evacuated the surviving 87 settlers by boat to a small island called Bob's in the Sierra Leone River, and Jimmy burned Granville Town. A considerable irony then that the Free Black settlers should have to be rescued from the native Africans by the slave traders, rather unwillingly no doubt, for as Tilley put it – "*they are a set of people we do not like.*"

The Slaving Voyages of J & T Hodgson 1788 – 1791.

In the period in which the Settlement of the Black Poor at Sierra Leone was taking place, introducing a new and, to the slave-traders, disturbing factor to life on the Windward Coast, John and Thomas Hodgson continued to invest in slaving voyages from Liverpool and to fit out their own voyages.

In **May 1788** the Hodgsons invested in the 76-ton *Snow, Ann*, in a consortium consisting of Ralph Fisher, Martin Ayton, James Kewley, Thomas Dickinson,

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Joseph Cazneau, John Hewan and Patrick Kewley. The vessel was apparently lost on the coast of Africa at an unknown date.¹

As mentioned there was a brief hiatus in African voyages clearing Liverpool in the early months of 1788 in nervous anticipation of the result of the parliamentary debate over the slave trade bill. Once it became clear that parliament would not move abolition that year the trade quickly resumed and May, June and July were busy months for the Hodgsons. On May 14th the Brig *James*, now owned by Joseph Story but previously a Hodgson vessel with Story as a co-owner, cleared Liverpool for the Isles de Loss under Master William Gibson again. After leaving Africa the vessel delivered 132 slaves to Dominica in March 1789 arriving back in Liverpool under Master James Giles at the end of June 1789.¹

On May 25th the 186-ton ship *Fisher*, was fitted out by Ralph Fisher and James Kewley. It had substantially the same investors as on its previous voyage, including John Hewan, John Dickinson and Patrick Kewley. However previous owners Cazneau and Martin had sold their one-eighth share to John Hewan who was also the master of the vessel. It was dispatched to trade in New Calabar and delivered 254 slaves to Jamaica in December 1788 returning to Liverpool at the end of February 1789.¹

On May 30th James Penny and Peter Rigby's vessel *Madam Pookata* sailed again for Angola and delivered 176 slaves to Dominica at the end of January 1789 returning to Liverpool in April. The other investors were unchanged.¹ A curiosity at this time was the clearance of the vessel *Hawthorn* on the 15th of June from Savannah, where the vessel was registered in the names of John and Thomas Hodgson, for the Isles de Loss – the location of their slave factory. It apparently cleared again in March of 1789. Little more is known. How was it done and how were the arrangements made? The master of the first voyage, John Phillips, appears to have brought home the *Tartar*, in which the Hodgsons had an interest, leaving the Americas in September 1788 and arriving in Liverpool in January 1789.¹

In early July 1788 James Millbank the master of the *Chance*, which appears to have been condemned on the coast of Africa, was re-engaged as master of the 367-ton, twin deck, ship rigged, *Sally*. This was another venture with Richard Capstick and Samuel Hartley. It was condemned as unfit for service and its papers given up St George's Grenada at an unknown date. According to the records this was a disastrous voyage with 168 slaves embarked in Bilbay, Bight of Biafra, and only 40 slaves arriving to be sold in February 1790 in Grenada after a middle passage lasting apparently 191 days.¹ However, these facts and figures have simply been copied onto the voyage of this vessel from a case heard in the Court of King's Bench in 1796 known as Tatham vs Hodgson.¹⁰ This is incorrect and so is the preceding description of the voyage, raising some searching questions. What can be truthfully be said is that on November 4th 1788 the *Sally*, Millbank, was reported at Africa¹¹ and on December 7th 1788 the *Sally*, Giles, was reported to have put into Lisbon from Gambia and the Isles de Loss bound for Liverpool.¹² A strange itinerary, which might be explained if the vessel was being used to supply the needs of the slave factory on the Isles de Loss. Perhaps it was supplying trade goods for the fast shuttle *Fly*. However the change of master raises other possibilities.

In mid July 1788 the Hodgsons invested in the 246-ton, ship-rigged, two deck *Tom*, whose owners were John Backhouse, William Rutson, Garstang Bradstock,

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Henry Gardner and John Kilvington. The master was William Horsley and the vessel was subsequently sold to John Hurry, possibly a Liverpool ship-broker in August 1789 and so seems to have been employed for just one voyage. Built in Liverpool in 1771 the vessel had already made three trips to Africa in 1781, 1783 and 1786, the last, under the same master, but owned by John Backhouse, William Rutson and Garstang Bradstock who were then apparently joined for this one voyage by the Hodgson brothers.¹

In January 1789 the 190-ton ship *Tartar* returned to Liverpool under Master John Phillips. It had previously voyaged to Benin in 1785 and 1787, the former under Archibald Dalziel and the Hodgson's had joined John Backhouse and others, as investors in the latter voyage. The other investors were John Kilvington, John Hughes, William Rutson, Henry Gardner, Charles Pole, and Henry Butler. All were described as merchants of Liverpool except John Hughes, who was described as a mariner and who had been the master of the vessel until replaced by Phillips at Bridgetown, Barbadoes. Henry Butler was described as a merchant of Baltimore and who carried on trade in partnership with Henry Gardner and Charles Pole. *Tartar* was back in Liverpool to be registered again in April 1790 and disposed to Michael Humble, John Montgomery and Malcolm McNiell probably for use in the Irish trade. In the meantime it had almost certainly made another voyage quite likely to the same destinations of Benin and Dominica.¹

The Hodgsons' vessel *Eliza* returned to Liverpool at the end of February 1789. It was sold to Gregson & Co. in February 1790 and thus there was ample time for another voyage perhaps to the Windward coast and Dominica.¹

The Hodgsons' fast cutter *Fly* must have arrived back in Liverpool sometime in 1789; it was re-registered on the 16th April 1789 to reflect the death of Richard Capstick, (his share being registered to his executors – his beloved mother, Elizabeth, his brother Isaac, and his honoured uncles John and Thomas Hodgson), and the appointment of a new master John Edson. The vessel seems to have been rebuilt and its rig changed to a barque with the result that its dimensions changed slightly becoming a few inches narrower (20' 2") and a few feet longer (57' 3"). It cleared Liverpool in May 1789 for the Isles de Loss and Dominica and delivered 154 slaves toward the end of February returning direct to Africa on the 22nd of March 1790.¹

On the 6th January 1790 the vessel *Tom*, which had been sold to John Hurry was re-registered to John Hurry, Michael Humble and the Hodgsons. Nothing seems to be known of any voyages following this change of ownership but there were three changes of master during the period, John Smith in January 1790, John Swallow in April 1793, and John Parr in May 1796 before it was apparently taken by the French in 1797.¹³ It was reported at Elsinore, Denmark, in June of 1796.¹⁴ On June 30th 1797 the vessel was taken by a Dutch privateer the *Sea Dog* and taken into Marstrand on its way from Riga to Liverpool.¹⁵ This seems to show the Hodgsons investing in trades other than that in slaves at this time. It is not known what the trade the *Tom* was engaged in, major imports to Britain from Riga were wood and hemp and salt was a major import into Riga.

On 19th January 1790 the *Fisher* operated by Ralph Fisher and James Kewley with the Hodgsons as investors cleared Liverpool.¹ It sailed on the 19th but its African destination appears to be unknown, nevertheless 263 slaves were delivered to Jamaica in June of 1790 and it was back in Liverpool in September 1790. A rapid

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voyage, which might imply factory based trading from the Isles de Loss. On 22nd of March 1790 the *Fly* under John Edson returned direct to Africa from Dominica – its destination in Africa unknown but its previous voyage was to the Isles de Loss and the majority of the Hodgsons vessels from this time are targeted to their slave factory. The vessel arrived back in Dominica with 68 slaves at the end of July 1790. This is little more than a third its usual compliment but it is not known why. By mid-September 1790 *Fly* was back in Liverpool. It remained under the ownership of the Hodgsons, Hartley and the executors of Richard Capstick.¹

On its return to Liverpool *Fly* was again dispatched to Africa under John Edson on October 20th 1790 bound for the Isles de Loss and Dominica where 170 slaves were delivered on the last day of 1790. It was bound back to Africa on the 8th of January 1791. This is rapid traveling! The Hodgson's must have had some method to supply their factory with trade goods in order to support the rapid voyages made by *Fly*. The interests of Samuel Hartley and Richard Capstick's executors in this vessel were transferred to the Hodgsons on October 12th 1790.¹³ This marks the end of Samuel Hartley's involvement in the slave trade. It is not known why. He was, however, entangled in Miles Barber's bankrupt estate and making claims upon it. In 1797 he subscribed to an engraving of a portrait in crayon of Charles James Fox, which seems consonant with his politics.¹⁶

At the end of November 1790 the *Fisher* again cleared for Africa, apparently to Bonny, arriving at the beginning of March 1791 and leaving at the end of May, delivering 212 slaves to Jamaica in mid August, with a loss of almost 80 on the middle passage. *Fisher*, Hewan, was reported in the press 2nd September 1791 to be at Dominica. It left the West Indies in mid September and arrived home at the end of November 1791. The owners were unchanged from the previous voyage.¹

Fly returned to Africa from Dominica under John Edson on 8th January 1791 bound for the Isles de Loss but delivered 157 slaves to Grenada rather than Dominica in August 1791. On March 8 1791 it was reported at Dominica from Africa¹⁷ and on March 11 at Jamaica.¹⁸ On April 29 *Fly*, Edson, was reported at Africa from the West Indies.¹⁹ On October 7 *Fly*, Edson, was reported at Grenada. This vessel and her masters seem to have been skilled in making fast voyages and made numerous voyages to and fro across the Atlantic which did not follow the classic triangular voyage. It is supposed to have been shipwrecked after delivering the slaves in Grenada,¹ however on June 1 1792, *Fly*, Fell, arrived in Liverpool from Africa and the vessel's registration documents show the vessel to be supposed foundered in 1792 or 1793.¹³ It was at this time solely owned by the Hodgsons.

The Account of Anna Maria Falconbridge.

It was not until April 1790 that news reached England of the demise of the settlement at Sierra Leone. Granville Sharp was forced to form a new company, the St George's Bay Company, to support the venture. This later became the Sierra Leone Company by act of parliament which came into force on June 6th 1791. The company ultimately came to be controlled by Henry Thornton, banker, friend of William Wilberforce and prominent member of the Clapham Sect. Other investors and members of the company included Thomas Clarkson and Thomas Gisborne as

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well as John Yates and William Rathbone. Towards the end of 1790, even before company was properly constituted, Sharp had sent out the *Lapwing*, a small second hand cutter, to relieve the colony.⁹

Following the destruction of the Sierra Leone settlement by King Jimmy the company now had no one to represent them in Africa and take charge of the settlement, nor anyone to renegotiate their agreements with the Africans. Thomas Clarkson recruited Alexander Falconbridge, the former ship's surgeon whom he met in Bristol in 1787 during his investigation of the slave trade. His qualifications for this important task rested on his having made 4 slaving voyages as a ship's surgeon from Bristol to Africa between 1780 and 1787 but he would have had little or no experience of negotiating with the Africans.²¹ John Barton, a member of the Abolition Committee, seems to have early perceived some deficiencies in his character when Clarkson enlisted his services in Bristol.²⁰

Falconbridge had set himself up in a medical practice in Lodway, near Bristol, perhaps with the proceeds of the publication of his account of the slave trade. On October 16th 1788, he married Anna Maria Horwood, it has been said hastily, and contrary to the wishes of her friends and relations. Anna Maria Horwood was born in 1769 in Bristol and her brother-in-law Matthew Morley was an experienced Slave Ship Captain who served in the trade from 1784 to 1799. Anna Maria Falconbridge left an account of her voyages to Sierra Leone accompanying her husband as he tried to re-establish the Sierra Leone settlement.²⁰ Historians have tended to look askance at her account because of its bias in favour of the slave traders but it was a view she arrived at as a result of the contrast between her experiences in the colony with those among the slave traders. Perhaps she was never as violently opposed to the trade as her husband; nevertheless the debacle of the Sierra Leone settlement could not help but contrast very unfavourably with the relative comfort of the lives of the slave factors.

The Falconbridges sailed on January 24 1791 aboard the slave ship *Duke of Buccleuch*, Captain McLean, owned by John and Alexander Anderson of London, the owners of the Bance Island slave factory. Thus the company was not only in some measure reliant on the slave traders but also received a degree of co-operation from them, despite evident friction on the coast. The *Duke of Buccleuch* eventually took 358 slaves from Sierra Leone to Jamaica.¹ Embarking at Gravesend, Anna Maria, like the free blacks before her, noted the presence of convict ships bound for Botany Bay.²¹

They arrived at Bance on February 10th 1791 after an 18 day passage, and almost immediately Falconbridge quarreled with the slave traders. As a result he refused to allow Anna to sleep on shore at the factory. "*It was not proper for me to contradict him at this moment, as the heat of argument and an over portion of wine had quickened and disconcerted his temper*". This first sign of his intemperance meant Anna Maria had to sleep in the confined quarters of the "*stinking*" Lapwing.²¹

The next day Falconbridge's brother William left the colony in disgust after a dispute with Falconbridge to join the Andersons factory on York Island 20 leagues distant. Here he fell ill and he died four days after his return to Bance. The Agents on Bance were Mr. Ballinall and Mr. Tilly – whom she found to be "*a genteel young man*". The next day they dined on shore and she took a walk with Tilly and Mr. Barber to visit Adam's town on the Island, which consisted of 25 houses on

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each side of the street. Mr. Barber must be Miles Barber's son or nephew. Quite what he is doing there is unclear, it has been said he was collecting debts for his father, but perhaps he was making arrangements to fulfill the French contract.²¹ Together they walked around the island, which was a quarter of a mile long and little more than a mile and a half in circumference. She visited the Black & White graveyards at the southeast end where were buried Mr. Knight, at one time agent on Bance for 15 years, and Capt Tittle. Tittle had been executed by Signior Domingo, an African chief, for causing the death by drowning of his son. Tittle was Master of the *Mary* of Liverpool, whose last voyage to the African coast was in 1772. It seems these events occurred when Miles Barber's vessels the *Mary* and the *Molly* of Lancaster were on the coast at his factory.²² They were undoubtedly the graves of the factor and ships captain, mentioned in Captain John Matthews' account, that had been executed 14 years before.

Mrs. Falconbridge described the factory on Bance, "*This building, at a distance, has a respectable and formidable appearance, nor has it much less upon a nearer investigation.*" The building was 100 ft long and thirty feet broad and contained nine rooms on one floor, beneath which were cellars and storerooms. On each side of the main building were smaller buildings with, to one side a forge and kitchen. They are built of "*country stone*" and surrounded by a "*prodigious thick lofty wall*". "*There was formerly a fortification in front of these houses, which was destroyed by a French frigate during the last war; at present several pieces of cannon are planted in the same place but without embrasures or breastwork; behind the great house is the slave yard, and houses for accommodating the slaves.*" The island was taken by the French in 1779 and would be again in 1794 when the buildings were destroyed – these were again rebuilt and apparently the ruins may still be discerned today.² Anna Maria was shocked to see the slaves from an upstairs window in the barracoon on the island, "*2 or 3 hundred victims chained and parceled out in circles, just satisfying the cravings of nature from a tub of rice placed in the centre of each circle*"

On February 12th the Falconbridges sailed on the *Lapwing* cutter to Robana Island 9 miles across the river from Bance for a Palaver with the chiefs to recover the lands of the settlement. On a visit the following day, due to the strangeness of the customs, and the seemingly threatening nature of the meeting Anna Maria was overcome and fainted, which did not please Falconbridge at all. However, next day she feigned illness and visited Bance again where she met "*one Rennieu (a Frenchman) there; he has a factory at a small Island called Gambia, up another branch of this river*" – Renneau would later become a very dangerous presence.

Falconbridge spent five days negotiating with the Africans until finally Anna accompanied Falconbridge to Robana to deliver the trade goods for repurchasing the land; tobacco, rum, iron bars and gold-laced hats to the value of £30. However, once again Falconbridge and the settlers had misunderstood the nature of the payment. Falconbridge believed the land was purchased rather than merely leased in the traditional African manner. Whilst at Robana, Anna visited some native salt 'mines'. According to Mathews the Africans forbade slave ships from engaging in the salt trade and yet slave-ships visiting the Isles de Loss were using salt as a medium of exchange because of the high price it could command relative to its cost

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in Europe. Perhaps those who claimed that the rise of Liverpool was a result of the rise in the salt trade and not the slave trade were practicing some elision.

The negotiations over, they returned to Granville Town but found it overgrown with thorns. However, nearby in Fora Bay (Whiteman's Bay) they selected an abandoned African village which was reassuringly further from King Jimmy's town as the site for a new Granville town. The surviving 46 settlers were brought up river but they were in very poor shape, practically naked, destitute, ulcerated and hungry. She could hardly recognize the Europeans among them as such. Some half dozen of the women claimed they were London prostitutes who, clearly unhappy at the turn of events, said that far from having come out to Africa as willing settlers they had been kidnapped. Some dismiss the notion implying that Mrs. Falconbridge is making it all up to blacken the reputation of the Sierra Leone venture and its backers and that there is nothing in the official records to support it.²¹ Quite how kidnapped London prostitutes would be recorded in an "official record" then or now defies the imagination. Perhaps their reduction to a state worse than beggary had an effect on how these women viewed what had happened to them.

Anna Maria was developing very decided views about the nature of the company and its chaotic organization. The goods landed from the *Lapwing* were described as being unsuitable ironmongery, blacksmiths and plantation tools, and children's half-penny knives and some few dozen scissors of the same sort. In a clear hint at corruption she suggested that Granville Sharp's sister-in-law's ironmongery business might not be unconnected with the shoddy goods they received. Falconbridge had orders to construct a fort for the protection of the settlement but the 6 cannon lacked carriages and were useless. He was also supposed to collect samples of country productions but none of the settlers would accept less than half a guinea per day for the service, which he was forced to pay.

Soon after this Captain Kennedy, master of the *Lapwing*, fell sick and the Falconbridges took him to Gambia Island, to see the French factor, Renneau, who "*not only received us with the politeness of a Frenchmen, but with kindness and friendship*". Practically on sight Renneau declared there was no hope for Alexander Kennedy, and sure enough he was soon dead. Mrs. Falconbridge was unimpressed with the French settlement which was "*small and low, not two miles in circumference, situated in the midst of swamps and marshes, from whence a continual stench comes sufficient to choke a carrion crow – 'tis wonderful how any human beings could pitch upon such a place to live in.*"

The Europeans had sickly complexions, "*as if they were fed on madder and saffron*". She described them as indolent, a result of the unhealthiness of the site. The miserable buildings were described as "*a pile of grass and sticks clumsily put together.*" There was a factory ship off shore to hold the trade goods and they once had a company of French soldiers for protection, "*but the vast and rapid mortality deterred their government from sending fresh supplies.*" Renneau was more impressive, "*as he preserves a kind of consequence, and keeps his neighbours in awe by a number of legerdemain tricks some of which he shows whenever he has visitors.*"

By now the rainy season was upon them and Falconbridge wanted to return to England – the loss of Kennedy, the want of provisions sufficient for the passage home and the sickness of the new master of the *Lapwing* all threatened their survival. So, on June 16th they visited the Naimbana in the *Lapwing* and took on

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board his son, Prince John Frederic, plus a couple of goats and a dozen fowls. The Naimbana's son was going to receive an English education, to inculcate the objectives of the company, and enable better relations with the Africans, just as practiced by the slave traders. Clarkson later claimed that this so disturbed the slave traders that they fired on the vessel as it left but Mrs Falconbridge does not mention it. Renneau gave Anna a goat and half a dozen fowls and they set sail with a stock of 3 goats, 4 dozen fowls, a barrel of flour, half a barrel of pork and a barrel of beef. A week into a miserable and terrifying voyage all the livestock were washed overboard. It should have taken just a few days to reach the Cape Verde Islands but they did not arrive until July 25th, on very short rations, and with the loss of the carpenter. They depart Porto Praya on July 30th and made Fayal in the Azores on August 18th, where, after repairing the cutter, they set sail on August 25th arriving in Penzance on September 2nd 1791.

Here they heard that Thomas Clarkson's brother Lt. John Clarkson had left for Nova Scotia to collect a party of 'Loyal Blacks' to transport them to Sierra Leone. These were largely freed slaves and others who had fought on the loyalist side during the American Revolutionary war and who had been sent, most unsuitably, to Nova Scotia. 1190 eventually left for Sierra Leone in January 1792. By that time they had been in Nova Scotia for several years; their presence described in a letter to the press in February 1788.²⁴

"We have, among many other Loyal Refugees, a swarm of negroes amounting to 2 or 3000. Government allotted them lands, and gave them every encouragement to improve them to advantage, but they have neglected it. They have got liberty and independence, and now, like the Americans do not know what to do with it. They might before this, had they been possessed of foresight, industry, and prudence, have had a very respectable wealthy negro-town, but they are intoxicated with liberty, and looking about the city (Halifax) and other places for jobs, which, from their numbers, are scarcely sufficient to keep them from starving."

The Falconbridges met Thornton and the other directors but the nature of the company had changed, and become more commercial in its aims. Although a slave trade abolition motion had gone down to defeat in April 1791, the Sierra Leone Co. Bill passed in May, despite strong opposition from the West India Interest and the slave traders who wanted to limit the company's production of crops such as sugar and coffee and the manufacture of rum which would '*interfere with the vent of Rum and Spirits in Africa which at present solely arise from the sugar plantations of the West Indies.*' The directors appointed Falconbridge as their commercial agent and ordered him back to Africa. Anna Maria had grave doubts about the wisdom of this but conceded she would probably go "*with or against her will*". They were given £50 for presents to the Naimbana, a sum for her private stores, and a very handsome supply for the voyage. They little suspected any manipulation.

The Falconbridges returned to Sierra Leone, sailing from Falmouth on December 19 1792 and arriving at Freetown on February 16 aboard the *Amy*. There they found the *Harpy*, Capt. Wilson, who gave a very unfavourable account of the factionalism and pride of his passengers who consisted of several colonial officers, including the Superintendent and the Council appointed by the directors, a few soldiers, and some independent settlers. On the second day Falconbridge was acquainted with his new orders, of which he was unaware, subjecting him to the

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control of the Council and its Superintendent, who was to be John Clarkson. Two weeks later the Loyal Blacks arrived; of the 1190 embarked 67 died on the voyage and a further 38 succumbed in the first weeks on shore.

The new council was riven by faction; little got done and there were scant provisions. When the slave ship **James** of Bristol was found unfit to proceed on her voyage and was sold at Bance the settlers bought the horse beans and other victuals intended for the slaves. Anna Maria was scathing, no doubt sharing her husband's disappointment, "*Their absurd behavior make them the laughing stocks of the neighbouring factories and such masters of the slave ships as have witnessed their conduct, who must certainly be gratified with the anarchy and chagrin that prevails through the colony*". She was not alone in her views, John Clarkson declared, "*in short nothing but Pride Arrogance Self-sufficiency Meanness Drunkenness Atheism and Idleness were daily practiced by those who were sent out to assist me*"

Clarkson shared her views of the council but also complained that Falconbridge and Anna Maria's brother Charles Horwood were busy house building for themselves instead of pursuing their commercial objectives. Meanwhile, half a dozen settlers were dying every day. Three quarters of the European settlers died in the first year. By July 1792 of 1200 settlers in the colony, 700 were sick with burning fevers, 200 more were "*scarce able to crawl about*" and about the same number were wholly occupied tending them.

The **Sierra Leone Packet** and the **Trusty** brought more settlers. Aboard the **Sierra Leone Packet** were, council member John Wakerell, who quickly fell ill and went home to die, Adam Afzelius, the Swedish Botanist and sugar planter, who returned to the West Indies in disgust, and Isaac Dubois a British loyalist who had joined the Company. Aboard the **Trusty** came the storekeeper, his wife, mother in law, and large family along with the mineralogist Augustus Nordenskold and several clerks and tradesmen making a total of 23 new settlers. Of these, 6 returned to England, one joined the Bance slavers, and the remainder died within 4 months. The vessels brought few provisions, but goods for barter which were rotting on the beach, or in the hold, for want of organization. Falconbridge had been refused use of the packet to go in search of cattle to supply the colony because it was being used to "*give the Gentlemen an airing at sea.*"

Anna Maria became increasingly disaffected and estimated the wasted capital at £25,000; she was wide of the mark. Clarkson himself estimated it at £40,000. Nevertheless Anna insisted that Falconbridge was attempting to start his "*commercial career by which he intends to trade on the Gold Coast.*" However, he had fallen dangerously ill. Clarkson reported that he had taken to drink, "*Mr Falconbridge talks of going in the Ocean to fetch stock from the Sherbro country but it is all talk, he is very ill, and will never be better*".

A mere ten days after Falconbridge sailed Henry Thornton voiced his doubts to Thomas Clarkson admitting that at first they were pleased with him and appointed him commercial agent with a salary of £250 plus a gift of £100.

"*We discovered in him however by degrees a great constitutional warmth of temper which has rather alarmed and made us fear, lest with power in his hands he should be carried to any sudden act of violence – want of punctuality and of regular commercial habit has also made us think him as unfit for the leader in a commercial Factory, tho' notwithstanding both these points we are disposed to think favourably*

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of him and we are grateful to him as I am sure we ought to be for the services he has rendered the company”

Thomas wrote to John Clarkson in January 1792 informing him of Falconbridge’s salary and *“The Directors however do not approve of his conduct. They consider him hot, rash and impetuous; as likely to involve us in Wars; and as perhaps not overcareful how he offends those united with him in office”*

The directors had sent Falconbridge back to Africa for one reason only; he had befriended the Naimbana and was needed to ensure the survival of the settlement. Thomas Clarkson told John that he should attempt to supplant Falconbridge in the Naimbana’s affections. Neither was he to leave the colony without alerting the company so that his successor could be sent out before he left. If he failed to do this Falconbridge would have come *“directly into the Office of Governor, a thing which of all things the Company would be most afraid. All their hopes would be undone by such a measure”*.

Later in July of 1792 Thomas Clarkson again wrote to his brother in Sierra Leone telling him that Falconbridge was to be recalled because he had failed to account for the Lapwing’s cargo to have taken on board a settler at Falmouth without leave, to have disregarded his instructions and *“to have acted such a drunken scene at Tenneriffe as to be disgraceful to a company whose object is so amiable.”*

It may be superfluous to point out that this was the man Thomas Clarkson had taken to Liverpool to meet Roscoe, Currie and Rathbone. Even Wilberforce concurred in his removal and suggested that John Clarkson make an unofficial offer of pecuniary benefit if he went quietly *“of course no assurance of this kind should be given him, but perhaps it might not be amiss for you to throw out the idea as from yourself, and as what you would be willing to promote – All this is left to your discretion.”*

By September 1792 Thornton had elevated Falconbridge to the position of general scapegoat *“I think however that much of the evils that have happened are to be laid at his door”*. Absolving himself and the directors of any blame he said that Falconbridge was *“rather continued than appointed by us.”* But by September 19 1792 it was all up for Falconbridge; he had finally succeeded in killing himself with drink and Clarkson wrote that, *“He has been killing himself by slow degrees for the last three months, and for days past his bones have been through his skin in several parts of his body. He died this evening, at six o’clock, a very happy release both to himself and to those about him”*.

Relations with the slave-factors were not improving, but perhaps life in the colony itself was finally becoming more attractive since Anna Maria reported that they were continually being pestered with renegade seamen from ships involved in the slave trade. Clarkson was threatened with law suits by masters of ships unable to sail for want of crew and he had posted a notice forbidding sailors entering the colony and ordered the constables to arrest anyone who could not give a good account of himself.

The crew of the *Fisher*, Captain Clark, of Liverpool had apparently deserted in July and although slaved she was unable to leave the coast for want of seamen. This 205-ton, ship rigged vessel, in which the Hodgsons had an interest, arrived in the Isles de Loss at the end of June 1792 where it remained until mid March 1793; a

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long time for factory based trading, and consistent with Falconbridge's account. 356 slaves were purchased but the vessel left with 325 and delivered 315 to Grenada in early April 1793.¹

In early September 1792 the **York**, Captain Wallis, arrived at Sierra Leone bringing the Rev. Mr. Horne and Mr. Dawes, two new members of council sent out to assist Clarkson. Dawes, formerly an officer in the marines, had gone out with the first party of convicts to Botany Bay. Wallis was a bankrupt slave trader with 25 years in the trade. Thomas Clarkson wrote to his brother "he *has no objection to the trade at present*". He too was a drunk, and by September 7 1792 Clarkson wrote, "*I am persuaded when he gets from the Colony with the entire charge of his vessel and cargo and no check upon his conduct, he will continually be in such a state as to be unfit for active and profitable business,*"

Before long Clarkson had a row with Captain Wilson of the **Harpy**, after failing to observe the correct protocol when crewing one of the ship's boats, with the result that Wilson deserted, taking the **Harpy** with him. On December 2nd the **Felicity** arrived from England with a cargo consisting largely of garden watering cans. Clarkson wrote, "*The Felicity, Scarborough, does not appear to be well selected considering our wants; she has brought out an immense number of garden watering pots, which seem to occasion a smile from everyone*".

By this time Clarkson was due to return to England to report on progress and he left on December 27 leaving Dawes as acting Governor. Anna Maria's comment on this was, "*Let the directors shake off a parcel of hypocritical puritans they have about them, who, under the cloak of religion, are sucking out the very vitals of the company.*"

On January 9 1793 one of the Anderson's vessels the **Duke of Buccleuch** arrived in the bay from Bance Island bound for Jamaica "*with upward of 300 slaves*" followed by an American and a French Vessel. All of them had provisions on board "*which the colony is greatly in want of.*" However Dawes determined to purchase the supplies wholesale and retail them at a profit and so he purchased from the Frenchman, which would have nothing but slaves in return. Dawes gave him an order on Renneau which Anna Maria thought infringed the act of parliament establishing the company which forbade direct or indirect trafficking in slaves.

On the 15th a cutter arrived from the Isles de Loss carrying Macaulay, the new Governor and the Rev. Gilbert, who had presumably arrived aboard a slave ship. Macaulay, along with Dawes, would implement the new regime of firmness determined on by the directors. Anna's immediate impressions of Macaulay were unfavourable, "*I have not heard any thing of Mr. McAuley, except his lately being an overseer upon an estate in Jamaica: It is not to be questioned that the prejudices of such an education must impress him with sentiments favourable to the slave trade, and consequently I should not suppose him qualified for a Member of Administration in a Colony mostly formed of Blacks, founded on principles of freedom, and for the express purpose of abolishing the slave trade.*" The most recent editor of her account says she is wide of the mark in this assessment, but his grim self-righteousness did not endear him to many. However, few officials of the colony escaped Anna Maria's acerbic pen. Around the 20th the Rev. Gilbert and Mr. Horne went to a nearby village to preach a sermon to the natives and Anna Maria was utterly scathing; "*Is it possible a sensible man like, Mr Horne, can suppose it in*

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his power to imprint notions of Christianity, or any sort of instruction, upon the minds of people, through the bare medium of a language they do not understand”.

On January 21st the Bristol slaver *Nassau*, owned by James Jones, arrived from the Isles de Loss, carrying her brother, Captain Matthew Morley, to celebrate her nuptials following her recent marriage to Isaac Dubois. There was a celebratory dinner on board, with Renneau and some of gentlemen from the colony. By now the regime of firmness was being pursued with a will and the various promises of land for the settlers were being reneged upon. The colonists were told by a member of the council that Clarkson commonly made extraordinary promises which he was not authorized to make, “*merely to seduce them here; and he never had an idea of fulfilling of them, nay he had it not in his power, and more than probable he was drunk when he made them.*”

The Blacks decided to send a deputation to the directors “*to know from them what footing they are on*”. They elected two deputies to go to England to complain that none of Clarkson’s promises had been fulfilled, that the charges paid on company provisions were exorbitant, sometimes as much as 100% over prime cost, that the worst goods were supplied, and that the rum was being diluted with up to 30 gallons of water per puncheon. Dawes claimed this was done for religious and other motives fearing the colonists would not dilute it. Anna Maria indicated the potential for tyranny arising from their isolated situation. The only employment available was with the company and the only provisions they could obtain were from the company and “*at the whim of Mr. Dawes.... several have been discharged from service, and not permitted, even with their meager savings, to purchase provisions from the Company’s store-house the only one here*”

Although Clarkson had informed them they would only receive one fifth of the land promised, even that had not been surveyed when the rains began and they could not get them planted. A petition was raised and the settlers clubbed together to provide support for their delegates in England. Anna Maria concluded that she “*could fill up twenty pages was I to acquaint you with all the private quarrels.*”

However, another and much more serious threat was beginning to emerge. “*On the 25th of April we heard of the French king being massacred, and England had declared war against the blood thirsty banditti who have usurped the reins of government in France. This account came by the Swift Privateer Cutter of Bristol, to the Isles de Loss, where she destroyed a French factory and made some valuable reprisals*”

The *Swift* was later taken by the French and ransomed after being plundered of 33 slaves and 224 Elephants teeth. At the beginning of May the frigate *Orpheus*, Capt. Newcomb, the *Sea-flower* cutter Lt. Webber, and the *African Queen* chartered by the company arrived in the bay. The *Orpheus* had come by way of Senegal and Goree and captured six French ships of which four arrived to be condemned and sold at Bance, the other two were lost on the shoals off Grandee. They remained a few days and then sailed, the *Orpheus* to run down the coast and then proceed to the West Indies. A French Corsair was scouring the coast from Cape Mount and had captured eight ships. Some were retaken by the *Sea-flower* and the *Robust* (a privateer from Liverpool) which had now gone to Old Calabar to try to take a French Guineaman with 1200 slaves on board.

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One re-captured vessel was sent in to Sierra Leone and Anna Maria spoke to her master who said *“he never saw such a savage looking set in his life, as were on board the Frenchman. They all had on horseman’s caps (having a tin plate in front, with the emblem of Death’s head and marrow bones, and underneath inscribed, “Liberty or Death”), a leather belt round their waist, with a brace of pistols, and a sabre, and they looked so ferocious, that one would suppose them capable of eating every Englishman they met without salt or gravy”*. Meanwhile the **Orpheus** sprung her foremast, and returned to Sierra Leone” which obliged her to give up pursuing those Republican ragamuffins.

However, whilst the frigate was away the regime of firmness continued its sway. Three sailors from the **African Queen** came ashore whilst the master was at Bance. They apparently killed a duck belonging to one of the Settlers, were apprehended, taken before the Chief Magistrate, and committed to prison. They were tried as Anna Maria put it *“not by their Peers, but by judge McAuley, and a Jury of twelve blacks, who, without any evidence or defence from the prisoners, found them guilty of stealing and killing the duck.”* One was sentenced to receive thirty-nine lashes and the others were fined and confined in irons aboard the **York**, until these were paid. Anna Maria said, *“poor Jack was dreadfully mortified at being whipped by a black man.”* The others were kept in confinement for three weeks, until the **Orpheus** returned. The master of the **African Queen** made representations to Captain Newcomb of the **Orpheus**, who demanded of the governors by what authority they tried White Men, the subjects of Great Britain, by a Jury of Blacks. He was told by McCauley that it was by Act of Parliament incorporating the Company. However Newcomb found there was no mention of courts of any kind and he ordered the men released. Anna Maria thought, *“It is much to be wished, a ship of war was always stationed here; the very sight of her would restrain the exercise of similar abuses, or any extravagant stretches of undelegated power.”*

Further despondency settled on the colonists with the news brought by the **African Queen**. The first letter was from Clarkson announcing that he was coming out immediately; the second from the directors announcing his dismissal and replacement by Dawes. Anna Maria was disgusted and thought that the Directors must have been, *“listening to some malicious, and cowardly, representations, sent home by certain persons here, who are fully capable of assassinating the most immaculate character, if thereby they can acquire latitude for their boundless ambition, or, for a moment, quench their unconscionable thirst for power.”*

Although Thornton had written to John Clarkson in November of 1792 *“I think you have saved the colony”*, Clarkson’s mistake was that he had promised the colonists they would not pay quit-rents, not knowing the company intended to impose them. This led to continued friction between governors and governed and ended in open and armed rebellion in 1800. After the rebellion had been suppressed, Wilberforce characterized the colonists thus; *“They make the worst possible subjects, as thorough Jacobins as if they had been trained and educated in Paris”*.

By June, Anna Maria and her husband, Isaac Dubois, had decided to leave. Dubois arranged passage for them on board the **Amy** but *“the Discontents about to leave the Colony are so numerous that she will be greatly crowded”*. They left instead on the **Nassau**, commanded by her brother-in-law, which was bound for Jamaica on June 9th. This was, of course, a slave ship and the directors would hold it

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against them when they returned, it apparently being acceptable to arrive in Sierra Leone aboard a slave ship but quite unacceptable to leave the colony in like manner. During the voyage Maria Falconbridge painted an idealised picture of the slave trade during the middle passage, complete with the washing down of the slave quarters and so forth; whilst admitting that there was only three fourths of the normal compliment of slaves aboard. It was owned by James Jones whose vessels Thomas Clarkson had investigated for abuse of the seamen in Bristol. It has been suggested that this had been arranged by the captain as a publicity stunt. Perhaps Captain Morley was simply getting off the coast while the going was good as the political situation deteriorated. Perhaps he also paid due attention to the merchants' property as, under the Dolben Act, he had no small financial incentive to do.

Anna Maria wrote next from London in October 1793 having shipped aboard the *Alexander*, Captain Shaw, from Jamaica after a passage of 9 weeks and 4 days arriving in Dover on October 9th. She gave a glowing account of the treatment of the crew by the Captain who attended to an outbreak of fever on board the 22-gun ship with 50 to 60 men on board. She gave wholehearted support to the institution of slavery and the conditions of the slaves in Jamaica. No doubt her subsequent treatment by the Sierra Leone company increased her venom.

The remainder of Anna Maria Falconbridge's account told of the difficulties she had in seeing the directors and obtaining recompense for monies owed to Falconbridge prior to his death along with an account of the treatment of the black delegates from Sierra Leone by the directors of the company. Suffice to say she had little success in her dealings with Thornton and the directors, and her account of their dealings with the black delegates shows them to have been pretty shabbily treated, in her view at least. However a different account continues the story of life on the African coast in the neighbourhood of the Hodgsons' factory as conditions rapidly deteriorated with the onset of war with France.

War.

With the outbreak of war the situation for the slave traders became increasingly difficult. A French corsair had taken over eight ships. Some were retaken but the situation was fraught with danger. There was some protection in the form of two privateers, the *Robust* and the *Seaflower* from Liverpool and a naval patrol had been on the coast but armed vessels were thinly spread.²⁴ The *Liberty of Bordeaux*, cruising down the Windward Coast from Cape Mount, had come upon, engaged, and captured several slavers including; the *Little Joe*, Captain Owen Jones, the *Echo*, Captain John Kelly, owned by Thomas Staniforth & Co., the *Union*, Captain Farrington, and the *Mercury*, Captain Hewitt, both vessels owned by John Ratcliffe & Co., the *Hazard*, Captain Gilbert Rigby, William Begg & Co., the *Prosperity*, Captain Richard Kelsall, owned by Robert Ward and Thomas Pickop, all Liverpool vessels. It was the *Mercury* that was retaken by the *Seaflower*, Captain John Garnett, owned by Thomas Mather and Gill Slater of Liverpool, and *Robust*, Captain Archibald Forrest, owned by a large Liverpool consortium including William Begg and Ralph Fisher. The *Seaflower* was a Letter of Marque on a regular slaving voyage, as was the *Robust*. The effect of war on the operations

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of the slave traders was manifold, larger crews were required to fight the ships, insurance rates increased and investors and consignees withdrew.

A further account of the Hodgsons' operation on the African coast, at this time of increasing tension, can be found in the log of the *Sandown* left by its master, Captain Samuel Gamble.²⁶ The *Sandown* was a 151-ton, 3 masted, ship rigged vessel with flush deck, approximately 82 feet long by 21 feet wide, with quarter badges but lacking a quarter gallery, having two decks with just 4 feet between the decks. The vessel was chartered by a group of London investors at the rate of £125 per month for 2 legs of the triangular voyage from Britain via Africa to the West Indies, the contract to terminate once the slaves were brought to market. The owners' agents were Joseph and Angus Kennedy who were in effective control of the voyage, with one of them traveling as supercargo and to whom the slaves, vessel and cargo were to be delivered up in the West Indies.

The *Sandown* left London in early April 1793 and in the early hours of the June 12th, in "dark and cloudy weather", Gamble arrived off Tamara Island in the Isles de Loss; just days after Anna Maria Falconbridge and Isaac Dubois left Sierra Leone for good. In his journal Gamble gave a short description of the factory on the Isles de Loss complete with a sketch from the harbour.

"The Islands are five in number. Tamara the Westernmost of them is the largest contains about 600 Inhabitants. The generality of which are not very good inclind their chief cultivation is rice. The next in Magnitude is Factory Island or Eastermost one its Inhabitants are about 200. The Produce very trifling, the head Men trusting to their Plantations which they all have upon the Mainland. The Distance being only 3 Miles over Fresh Water is rather difficult and tedious to be got at but it is Excellent. Fire wood is to be bought tollerable cheap from the Natives who are a mixture of Bagos, Susus & Mandingos (The Anchorage here is 15 Barrs.) The others are smaller and have little or no fresh water. Crawfords or middle most one has a French factory upon, but only a few Inhabitants."



"A SW View of Factory Point, belonging to Mess^{rs} J & T Hodgson Merchants in Liverpool at the Isles de Los situated in Latt 09°30'N and in Longitude 13°00' West from London." Drawn by Samuel Gamble of The Sandown. Copyright © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. Used by permission.

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In the morning they came to off Factory Island, in 6 fathoms of water, where two American brigs were already anchored. One was the *Pearl*, Captain Howard, out of New York, which would later be lost as the result of an insurrection. When Gamble went on shore he found everything in confusion as he had been taken for a French Warship. The *Sandown* was French built and its figurehead was “*an excellent piece of carved work being the figure of the unfortunate Louis 16 King of France.*” He heard that the *Liberty of Bordeaux* had captured four Liverpool Vessels at Cape Mount and he also learned of their appearance. *The Officers and crew belonging to him wearing Seaing Caps with a brass plate on the point with Liberty or Death Engraved upon it.* He too heard that the *Orpheus* frigate, 32 guns, had gone in pursuit of her.

Gamble delivered “*my letters from Messrs John & Thos Hodgson Merchts in Liverpool to Mr Richard Horricks there Agent here.*” The nature of the letters from the Hodgsons is unknown, they may have been instructions regarding the sale of slaves for the *Sandown*. Gamble’s description of them as “*my letters*” and his subsequent search for another point of sale certainly implies that. However, they could simply have been conveyed aboard the *Sandown* and concerned instructions to their agents in view of the rapidly changing situation or with plans for future trade, vessels expected to call and other such matters. If they had an interest in the fulfilment of Miles Barber’s contract with the French it is surely now in jeopardy. Horrocks and Jackson, Hodgsons’ agents must have been extremely stressed at the thought that a Frenchman might call, especially if they were involved in a contract to supply them – now they might call to destroy them. Voyages from France to the Isles de Loss were continuous from 1783 to 1791, the last arriving in June 1791 when they ceased, perhaps due to the convulsions of revolution, but the contract could simply have come to an end as slaving voyages from France declined year on year from 1790 to 1794 when they ceased. Thereafter vessels from Bristol and Liverpool continued to call at the Isles de Loss.¹

Kennedy and Gamble were desperately worried about the danger of attack and their vulnerability in the anchorage with its danger of tornadoes and so they fitted out a pinnacle to go in search of trade and safe anchorage elsewhere leaving the *Sandown* prepared for vessel of equal force.²⁶

They anchored off Dembia with a Ship and Sloop to Westward, which Gamble did not like the look of. A boat rowed out toward them and attempted to lay alongside but they neglected to get their arms ready. Gamble cocked his pistol and his men raised their blunderbusses whereupon the boats crew declared themselves to be English and begged Gamble not to fire. The boat was from the *General Ord*, Captain Duckett, out of Bristol, a Privateer of 14 Guns and 50 Men. The Sloop was a Prize taken off Senegal and they were proceeding to Sierra Leone to sell both vessel and cargo.

Zachary Macauley recorded in his journal that Duckett had, under American colours (France was not at war with America), taken a vessel belonging to Renaud, which was then sold to John Tilley at Bance. Macauley described Duckett as a disreputable rogue, although such description from Macauley of a slave trader is made in a somewhat devalued currency. The fitting out of a slave vessel as a privateer to cruise the coast before embarking slaves if no suitable prizes presented themselves and the flying of false colours was merely conventional opportunism.

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Whether his behaviour went beyond this is unclear but Gamble clearly had his own concerns about him.²⁶

Eventually they reached the bar at the entrance to the Rio Nunez where they awaited the flood tide to take them into the river to the factory of James Walker known as Walkeria. Walker traded with the Fula caravans bringing down slaves, gold and ivory. He had begun as a ship's surgeon some thirty years before, and worked at Bance, before setting up his own operation which had traded with other factors up and down the coast which by this time included trading in supplies for the Sierra Leone settlement. The next day they struck a bargain with James Walker for 280 slaves to be paid on December 1st for the whole of Gambles cargo, amounting to £5721/7/7. The following day they prepared Walker's sloop and set off back to the Isles de Loss to bring up the *Sandown*. Arriving on Sunday June 23rd, they found her with springs on her cables and all the men at quarters, as there was a French privateer, a cutter of 8 four pounders, 10 swivels, 10 blunderbusses and 45 men, commanded by Monsieur Renneau in the offing. The day before Renneau had visited the *Sandown* in friendly fashion, taking a couple of glasses of rum and water and enquiring after his "*worthy friend Captain Gamble,*" That evening he reappeared in the armed cutter. The crew sent the yawl off to see who it was whereupon Renneau poured small arms fire into the boat followed by a cannonade. By manoeuvring the more nimble yawl into his wake and peppering his quarterdeck they managed to get back to the *Sandown* with little damage beyond a few swivel balls through the yawl and one through the carpenter's hat.

Gamble went ashore to Horrock's factory on the island and found there Messrs Barber and Bolland. As noted by Mrs Falconbridge Miles Barber's son or nephew was present along with George Bolland and Horrocks, both agents for J. & T. Hodgson. Miles Barber was, according to John Clarkson, collecting debts owed to his father presumably on contracts with the French. The contract may be at an end, and Miles Barber Senior could be in the process of retiring from business.²⁷ In August Tilley, Kennedy and Horrocks wrote to Zachary Macauley to enlist the colony's support against the depredations of Renaud. Renaud, in the mean time was making overtures of neutrality toward the colonists at Sierra Leone.²⁶

Gamble was told that two French 40-gun ships and a 22-gun Brig had been spoken off Senegal and they were running down the coast. Gamble decided to run for the Rionunez and by Tuesday July 2nd he was safely 96 miles up the river at Walkeria, with the sand bar at its mouth between him and the enemy.

Gamble had arranged for a complete cargo of slaves at roughly £20 per head, to be received by December 1st. This meant a 6 month wait on the coast, which was desperately dangerous. By entering the river with his vessel and crew Gamble avoided the risk of attack and capture but magnified the risk of disease and insurrection.

Gamble later gave a detailed description of how the slaves he expected to purchase arrived at the coast.

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*"Representation of a lot of Fullows bringing their slaves for sale to the Europeans."
Drawn by Samuel Gamble of The Sandown. Copyright © National Maritime Museum,
Greenwich, London. Used by permission.*

The slave coffles generally arrived in December or January after the rains when the rivers had subsided. Gamble believed they came more than a Thousand miles from the interior. They were armed with bows and arrows and spears, one quiver of arrows was poisoned for defence and another not, for hunting. The Slaves were secured by a long stick around their necks which was fastened to the waist of the following slave so that one man could control up to 50 slaves. The women and children were not confined but had a guard over them. They also frequently brought horses for sale. Gamble maintained that they were not *"a Hardy race of Men"* and that they were subject to *"Fevers, Fluxes & Agues equally as bad has us Whites."* They came principally to *"Gambia, Rio Nunez & the Mandingo Country."* As many as 1500 slaves were brought in a season and traded principally for salt, tobacco and beads. The salt was taken back in loads exceeding 2 cwt by their *"domestics."*

By the middle of August Gamble's crew had fallen sick, only he and one other crew member were able to function and he relied on the assistance of grumettas. Yellow fever was spreading via the crowded ships along the coast and across the Atlantic.²⁶ There was a serious outbreak of fever on Anna Maria Falconbridge's return passage from the West Indies.²¹ Gamble began parcelling out goods for trade to the value of ten slaves which were sent to the Riopongas in Walker's sloop. He was desperately worried about the intentions of Renaud. A schooner from the Banana islands brought a letter from Kennedy with news of a Boston rum vessel under Captain Connolly being in *"great distress"* and of Renaud's intention to take the *Sandown*.

On September 18th a boat came up the Riopongas with news that Renaud had taken an English Brig and two schooners and had been joined by a cutter from France and worse, that Renaud was determined to take the *Sandown* when it emerged from the river. All this time the weather continued wet, hot and sultry with thunder and lightning and the occasional tornado and his crew remained very sickly. On the 20th a schooner came up from the Isles de Loss bringing news that Horrocks was dead, having been sick for only two days, and that he had turned quite black immediately after death, a sure sign of poisoning. A message from Mr. Monroe warned again that Renaud had been reinforced and was determined to take him.²⁶

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Horrocks had become embroiled in a controversy with the Sierra Leone Company owing, at least in part, to the fact that some of his grumettas had joined the free blacks. Horrocks was planning to retire to Liverpool and trying to improve his prospects by selling his grumettas – who in reality were not of slave status. Horrocks and Jackson were demanding compensation from the Sierra Leone Company or the return of their grumettas.²⁶ Horrocks' death may not have been accidental.

By October Gamble's crew were still sickly but work was progressing on preparing the ship. The Barricado had been completed by the carpenters. It was constructed from spars and matting to close off an area of the deck amidships where the slaves could be brought up for exercise and feeding and allowed the crew to train weaponry on them in case of insurrection. He had heard from Sierra Leone that Renaud was offering 10 slaves for a pilot to take him up river as, having taken the *Adonis* schooner from Liverpool, 14 four pounders, and a cutter of 8 four pounders he now had the vessels.

By October 19th Gamble had at last begun to take in slaves; one man, one woman and one "womangirl," when he learned that Renaud had precipitately sold up to the free settlers and left the coast. The entry in his log read; "*arrive'd here from the Isles de Los, Bellthasar, Alias French Carpenter who says Monsieur Renou's gone to Goree having Sold his Island and property, exchanged great part of his prize goods taken in the Liverpool Schooner, with the Serraleone Company, who it appears wishes for Equality.*"

Gamble of course is amazed that the Sierra Leone Company, as British subjects, should all this time have observed neutrality with Renaud, refused to cooperate with the slave traders to take action against him, and finally rewarded him with the purchase of Gambia Island and, according to the account he has heard, been in receipt of stolen goods from the British vessel, *Adonis*. It amounts to treason in his eyes, hence his accusation that the Sierra Leone Company wishes for equality.

On November 5th news came up from the Isles de Loss of the arrival of the *Nancy*, 12 guns, 26 men, after a two months passage from Liverpool. On the way she buried Captain Moser, the Doctor, and a passenger, Mr. Roberts. Gamble expected to receive letters by this vessel which belonged to John & Thomas Hodgson and cleared Liverpool on August 8 1793, bound for the Isles de Loss. Her Captain was William Cutler Moore.^{26, 1} The error in his name may be orthographic. Gamble may, on arrival, have been expecting to deal with the Hodgsons' factors at the Isles de Loss and their inability to supply, perhaps caused by the activities of Renaud, led to a change in plans and the negotiation of a new contract with James Walker. Captain Gamble was perhaps hoping for further instructions. It is not clear who the supercargo Mr Roberts was, he may have been a Liverpool slave trader and captain who went bankrupt in 1783. He may also have been Horrocks' replacement because, although he left Liverpool before Horrocks' death, Horrocks was already planning to leave.

The next day brought news that an American vessel had arrived at the Isles de Loss along with the Sierra Leone Company's vessel the *Harpy*. Despite his long stay Gamble has still taken on board only three slaves. Inland a leadership dispute in one of the tribes had blocked the route from the interior. By the 26th of November he had only 22 slaves aboard when he received "*letters from home per Dr. Monroe.*"

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Monroe was an employee at the Isles de Loss and thus these must be the letters he was expecting to receive by the *Nancy*.²⁶

By January 6th he was still not slaved and he must have re-opened negotiation with the Hodgsons' agents for by then he had heard from Tilley that he could not let Walker have any slaves "owing to taking up the American which was to sail with 150." It is far from clear who the investors in the voyage of the *Sandown* were. It seems strange that Gamble should have taken out letters from John and Thomas Hodgson and expected further letters to come by one of their vessels if they were not also involved in the voyage of the *Sandown*. But then it is equally strange that, if they were concerned in the voyage Gamble should be refused slaves by the Hodgsons' agents at the Isles de Loss. Perhaps it was simply caused by confusion, they having been unexpectedly unable to supply when he arrived, when arrangements were made with Walker, and then later when the American vessel arrived they were unaware of the difficulties Walker was meeting before they disposed of their slaves to the American. Describing the arrangements as "taking the American up" it sounds as though there had been no prior arrangement.

Nevertheless Tilley kept him otherwise supplied and on January 7th he received; 2 puncheons of rum, 5 empty water puncheons, 10 pairs of leg irons, and 10 handcuffs. Gamble also brokered a deal with McCauley to supply 10 casks of beef and pork to the Sierra Leone settlement. He took these down personally and could give a description of the settlement.

There were 2500 settlers and the principal buildings were the Governor's House, the Courthouse and the Church. The Governors House was protected by 4 Nine Pounders and two 5½ Inch Howitzers. The Courthouse was still under construction and the Church was big enough to contain 100 people and had a Cupola with a bell. They seemed very religious attending services at 3 in the morning continuing until 11 at night four or five times a week. Other buildings housed the physicians, clerks, and the engineer, cashier and storekeeper. Gamble also mentioned that there was "only one white lady of consequence." This cannot be Mrs Falconbridge, unless Gamble was retailing old gossip, since she had left Sierra Leone in June. It is clear that Zachary McCauley, the Governor of the free black settlement was perfectly prepared to engage in trade with the slave-traders for provisions for the colony. Mrs Falconbridge might have had something to say. By the last week of February Gamble's cargo was almost complete and he was readying the vessel for sea and his log recorded the arrival of the *Zephyr*, Captain Salisbury, from Liverpool, with a cargo of salt for Mr. Walker.

On March 8 1794 Gamble was finally fully slaved and able to drop down the river before putting to sea. He had been forced to ship more seamen, to replace the eight who had died during the long and sickly stay on the coast. It seems surprising that crew were available in this way on the coast of Africa but Gamble had already paid a free black (10 bars) and a white carpenter (15 bars) for 14½ days work. There must have been sailors and craftsmen living hand to mouth in the factories and the colony until they chose to leave that met his needs.

By now the slaves were beginning to dye of flux and fever, the 251 embarked had become 234 by the time he dropped anchor at Bankfear, the sandbank at the river mouth. From boats entering the river Gamble learnt of a French snow of 20

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guns lying in wait and he decided to go up river again to leave in company with the *Zephyr*.

Whilst there the 10-gun schooner *Yamfamara* arrived with a prize; the *Venus* out of New York. The *Venus*, had been taken over by the slaves, Jollofs bought at Goree, and the *Yamfamara* had engaged them from daybreak to 11 at night when they swam on shore to be captured by the local Bagos. Meanwhile Gamble took on 5 extra hands to be able to fight the ship. The weather was now very hot in the day and unpleasantly cold at night. By March 26th he had dropped down the river again. On the way he met the *Bance Island Packet* and the *Thetis* from the Isles de Loss who were taking up slaves for the *Elizabeth Anderson* and the *Jimmy*. He also heard from an outbound vessel that Walker's factory had been burned to the ground, all except the "fire-proof store."²⁶

The *Elizabeth Anderson*, Captain James Bowie, who had been in dispute with the free blacks, belonged to John and Alexander Anderson, the owners of Bance. It cleared London in December 1793 and delivered 369 slaves to Kingston, Jamaica in May 1794 and thus supplied by the slave factory on Bance it was able to get off the coast very quickly.⁹ The *Jimmy*, Captain Richard Pearson, belonged to the Hodgsons and was also quickly away, landing 237 slaves in Kingston 2 days after the *Elizabeth Anderson*.¹ The *Thetis* was a name used by Miles Barber and Thomas Hinde for two of their vessels around 1760.²³ The name was used again by two descendents of Thomas Hinde around 1804 during the Napoleonic wars.²⁸ This *Thetis* appears to have been working as a tender based on the Isles de Loss.

Finally Gamble left the coast in mid March for the West Indies. On the Middle Passage, the death rate of the slaves increased alarmingly as water leaked from the poorly coopered barrels and the crew were put on rations. When Gamble put into Barbados for supplies sixteen of the crew ran. He was then threatened with the loss of his vessel by actions taken out at law by the unpaid seamen. With his crew reduced to six Gamble made his way to Jamaica to hand over the vessel and cargo of slaves to the Kennedys. Yellow fever was rife and the Captain himself was very sick. But even here disaster awaited him. The market was glutted with slaves waiting on board the ships for buyers.

Soon after he arrived the *Betsy*, Captain Gardner, of Liverpool, and the *Elizabeth Anderson* also came into Kingston harbour. On June 1st the *Jimmy* came in from the Isles de Loss with 237 slaves. They had suffered an insurrection on the passage and killed 4 slaves and wounded several more. Provisions were extremely expensive in Kingston because of an influx of French refugees particularly from Haiti where revolution had established a republican government. Kingston was full of slave ships unable to sell their cargoes to the planters who could not afford the high price of their provisions. Gamble's log conveyed the dismal picture.

"This place is entirely overrun with French Emigrants, both from old France and the Island of Hispaniola, Martinique, Guadalupe & S^t. Lucia &c which no doubt greatly contributed to the great dearth, and scarcity, of all sorts of Provisions."

By the 10th of June he recorded, *"This place continues very sickly especially amongst the Europeans just come out, having every Symptom of that dreadful Callamity at Philladelphia, likewise Provisions are very scarce and dear. Planters & others complain that they cannot purchase what Negroes they want having*

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nothing for them to subsist upon a great number of Guiney Men in this Harbour at Present not sold."

There were 17 vessels lying in the bay, 9 from Angola, 4 from Annamobou, and 1 each from Sierra Leone, Rio Nunez, the Bananas, Old Calabar and the Isles de Loss. They were holding 5,342 slaves with an average of 320 per vessel; the biggest the *Union* out of London had 530, the smallest, the *Express* out of Chester had 137. No-one was going to make vast profits that season.²⁶

In 1795 the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company reported that the slave trade had decreased greatly at Sierra Leone, prices had risen to £25 or £30 per head. Not more than 1/5 the usual number of slaves was being carried off. The French slave-factor, and another British slave-factor, had removed from the Sierra Leone River. The slave-factor on the Isles de Loss was being given up and the Bance Island factory they thought was paying increasing attention to the collection of produce.²⁹ For, in the meantime, the war with Revolutionary France had proved devastating to the Liverpool slave-traders.