

ANNA MARIA

Anna Maria Falconbridge's two voyages
to Sierra Leone (1791, 1792)

supplemented by

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LETTER I Anna Maria awaits boarding ship.

LETTER II She and her husband embark for Sierra Leone.

LETTER III They sail from Portsmouth, reach Sierra Leone, sail upsteam to Bunce Island, the principal slave factory. A few of the earlier settlers (freed blacks from England) come to meet them, in dreadful shape, and tell them what happened to the earlier settlement. Falconbridge drinks and quarrels with the factors on Bunce Island. The Falconbridges transfer from the slave ship that brought them from London to the small cutter sent ahead. Anna Maria finds it most uncomfortable. Falconbridge asks for a meeting with King Naimbana. Anna Maria describes the first African town she visits. They sail to Robana for an audience with the African king. Anna Maria describes everything she sees. Falconbridge negotiates for a new location to settle the freed blacks from England. The king serves dinner. They visit another area without permission and are driven away by angry Africans. A future meeting is arranged to bring other neighboring chiefs into the agreement.

LETTER IIIA They return to the king's town where Falconbridge negotiates with all the local chiefs gathered together. Not understanding why the Africans' shout at each other, Anna Maria faints, much to her husband's disgust. Falconbridge haggles over how much should be paid for a land grant. Further discussion is postponed until the next day. Anna Maria pleads fatigue and is allowed to stay on Bunce Island, where she flirts with the English factors. Falconbridge returns at night, angry with the Africans, who seem more interested in the rum he has brought him than in serious negotiations. He returns to Robana with the trade goods agreed upon, insisting that Anna Maria accompany him. King Niambana shows her his salt works. They return to Bunce Island and then go to look over the land granted for a settlement in the peninsula. The displaced settlers are gathered together and given the scanty supplies brought in the cutter. Falconbridge spends a month trying to organize the settlement, then instructs the settlers on how they should behave while he returns to England to seek more support from the Sierra Leone Company.

LETTER IV Anna Maria describes the island she has visited. She paints a portrait of the new settlement. She talks about African customs, including polygamy, their houses, their food, the animist religion, agriculture, medicine,

shamans, entertainment, languages, tribal organization, palavers, witchcraft. She enumerates neighboring tribes. She describes the weather, as the rainy season is just starting and will be a real hardship for the settlers. They visit a French slave factory on nearby Gambia Island, its swampy aspect making Anna Maria prefer Granville Town on the Sierra Leone peninsula. She looks forward to their return to England.

LETTER V After a three-month trip by way of the Caribbean, the Falconbridges return to England. Anna Maria is exhausted and rests for three weeks before she writes a lengthy description of their travails en route home. She then relates that Falconbridge has initiated meetings with the Sierra Leone Company and is trying to get much increased support for the fragile settlement in Sierra Leone. He introduces King Naimbana's son, whom he has brought to England for education. He is told of the project to move black loyalists, freed by the British during the Revolution, from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone. The company directors appoint Falconbridge the commercial agent of this new venture and urge Anna Maria to accompany him back to Sierra Leone.

LETTER VI The Sierra Leone Company directors are eager for Anna Maria to return to Africa and take gifts to King Naimbana. The Falconbridges spend a week in Bristol visiting family and friends.

LETTER VII The Falconbridges return to Sierra Leone. There they find that 85 English officers have arrived ahead of them, presumably to prepare the settlement for the arrival of hundreds of black settlers from Nova Scotia. Anna Maria describes the arrangements made for the governing of the settlement, which have led to much ill will and competition among the English officers. Falconbridge is informed that the instructions he received in England have been change by the Sierra Leone Company, and that the colony will be governed by Lieutenant John Clarkson, who has gone to Nova Scotia to arrange passage for the settlers. Two weeks later John Clarkson and the Nova Scotian settlers arrive. Nothing has been done to prepare for them, so Clarkson sets them to work putting up tents and huts to protect them from the heavy rain and storms. Anna Maria sympathizes with Clarkson, who can do nothing without the agreement of his eight-man council of Englishmen. He sends his cleric back to England to tell the directors that the council refuses to maintain order or get anything done.

LETTER VIII [Clifford brings the reader up to date on the ineptness of the English officials running Freetown.] Anna Maria describes a trip to the Banana Islands. She indicates that the rainy season climate and associated maladies are

killing many settlers. The doctors on site are useless. She criticizes the Sierra Leone Company directors for sending the settlers before Freetown was prepared for them. [Clifford fills in the background of the migration, naming the black leaders (which Anna Maria never does).] The Nova Scotians had been promised self-government. The most important of them, Thomas Peters, challenged Clarkson's authority. Peters' death in June really upsets the settlers. Isaac Dubois arrives from England. Anna Maria will later marry him, but she never names him in her letters. The vessels arriving from England do not bring the needed food supplies.

LETTER IX Anna Maria is deathly ill for three weeks, but survives. A shipload of potential settlers arrives from England, intending to settle on the opposite shore. They are attacked by Africans and driven back to their ship. They come to Freetown seeking refuge, but are not allowed to stay. Clarkson receives new instructions from England, making him the governor with an advisory council. The rainy season has ended, settlers are healthier, Africans bring food to sell. Anna Maria is disturbed by African drumming, part of rituals to celebrate the new growing season. New stores are sent from England. Gardens are prepared in Freetown. Anna Maria is critical of the large sums of money spent by the Sierra Leone Company to send incompetent officials to Freetown. Falconbridge is too ill to go seeking trade goods. Anna Maria defends him and blames the council for his shortcomings. No land has been distributed to the settlers except their town lots. The black congregations are getting restless. [Clifford fills in events recorded in John Clarkson's diary.] Anna Maria mentions seamen jumping slave ships and causing trouble in Freetown. Another palaver is held with neighboring chiefs to more precisely set the borders of Freetown, leading to a reduction of land available to settlers. Distrust is growing among the settlers. Clarkson has a dispute with an English sea captain. Clarkson takes a sea voyage to restore his health, leaving William Dawes in charge. The settlers are provoked by his arbitrary rule. A ship arrives with some cattle aboard, providing beef for the first time. More houses are erected, gardens planted. Clarkson plans to return to England, assuring the settlers that their land allotments will soon be ready.

LETTER X Falconbridge's replacement arrives from England. [Clifford fills in the events leading to his dismissal and Anna Maria's reaction to it.] Anna Maria furiously blames the Sierra Leone Company directors. She admits her disappointment with the marriage. Alexander Falconbridge has gone to live in an African hut and drinks himself to death. [Clifford fills in Clarkson's departure for England, including the signing of a marriage certificate before he leaves.] Acting Governor Dawes stops the surveying to have the settlers build a fort. [Clifford

inserts entries from Dubois diary, including his marriage to Anna Maria.] Dawes tells Dubois to stop building the storehouse and work on the fort. Anna Maria criticizes Dawes' arbitrary and parsimonious leadership. Boisterous celebrating in King Jemmy's town nearby has the settlers alarmed that they will be attacked. [Clifford fills in background on African secret societies.] King Naimbana is ill. A spark starts a fire in Anna Maria's roof. Anna Maria gives an elegant dinner party to celebrate her marriage, does not mention the reason. Dawes gets into arguments with the settlers over land titles, belittles Clarkson's reputation, but the settlers will have none of it. When they are told Clarkson is not returning, the settlers meet and appoint representatives to go to England to protest. King Naimbana dies just as his son arrives back from England.

LETTER XI Anna Maria admits obliquely that she has remarried.

LETTER XII Anna Maria again admits that she has remarried, without naming her new spouse. Settlers are angry with Governor Dawes. Anna Maria copies the petition they are sending to the Sierra Leone Company directors in London. [Clifford fills in the directors' anger at Clarkson's criticism. Two settlers arrive to outline their grievances; the directors refuse to see them and demand their complaints in writing.] Word reaches Freetown of England's war with France. Ships are sent to protect Freetown from French ships. Sailors from an English ship cause trouble in Freetown, which is handled by a black tribunal. Their captain abrogates their punishment. Dispatches from the directors say Clarkson has been dismissed and replaced by Dawes, greatly alarming the settlers. Anna Maria blames the whole mess on mismanagement by the directors. The rainy season begins again. Dubois quarrels with Dawes over his assignments and decides to leave Freetown. He writes a letter to John Clarkson just before he leaves.

LETTER XIII Anna Maria describes the voyage back to England by way of the Caribbean. [Clifford inserts the events in England that led to Dubois' dismissal by the directors. He met with the settler representatives and helped them refine their petition.]

LETTER XIV Anna Maria tries in vain to get the Board of Directors to pay money owed to her deceased husband Falconbridge. She calls on the chairman, who is hostile. Anna Maria blasts the chairman for penny-pinching when their inept management of the Freetown settlement has cost their investors hundreds of thousands of pounds. Anna Maria and Isaac meet with Clarkson, who is sympathetic, but also cognizant that adverse publicity will endanger the fragile Freetown colony. He has decided not to publicize his dismissal. Anna Maria

writes a final letter to Chairman Thornton saying that, unless she is adequately compensated, she will publish her *Narrative of Two Voyages to Sierra Leone*, including this damaging letter.

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INTRODUCTION

While living in Freetown, I became very interested in the dramatic story of the black loyalists who founded the city in 1793. I have told their story in my book entitled *From Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists after the American Revolution*. See the appropriate page on this web site.

Anna Maria Falconbridge's diary fascinated me as well. In many ways her journal is one of the first ethnographies of the Temne people of Sierra Leone. I decided to add the context of her story that she has left out, and to include appropriate segments from other sources—John Clarkson's diary (he was the first governor of Freetown), Isaac Dubois diary (whom Anna Maria eventually married)—and pull all the other loose ends together and present them here in lieu of publication.

Her diary is divided into letters written to a supposed friend in Bristol, England.

She sits at a small table in a cramped upper room overlooking the London waterfront. Her nose wrinkles in distaste at the quarreling voices in the kitchen below her and the rank smell of boiled cabbage, but if she opens the garret window, the breeze wafts in an equally loathsome perfume of tidal mud, caulking tar, and decaying garbage. Alexander Falconbridge is obviously not a wealthy man, for he does not indulge his young wife with lodging at a better class hostelry in a more residential part of London.¹

Anna Maria Falconbridge is writing the first entry in a journal of letters addressed to an unnamed friend in Bristol, her home town.

¹Anna Maria sat somewhere in London to write this letter, but she does not tell us where, nor will she ever tell us enough about herself in her text that we can know her. There are other sources, however, from which to add whole chapters to her narrative. Let's use them all, and, where there are only tantalizing blanks, paint feasible images that will clarify our sense of who she is.

LETTER I

LONDON, Jan. 5, 1791.

My dear Friend,

The time draws nigh when I must bid adieu to my native land, perhaps for ever! The thoughts of it damps my spirits more than you can imagine, but I am resolved to summon all the fortitude I can, being conscious of meriting the reproach of my friends and relations for having hastily married as I did, contrary to their wishes, and am determined rather than be an incumbrance on them, to accompany my husband even to the wilds of *Africa*, whither he is now bound, and meet such fate as awaits me, in preference to any possible comfort I could receive from them.

As Anna Maria writes her first paragraph, her lips curl in a sly grin. What she has written is true, but important information is withheld—information that she has no intention of sharing with the reader, for she is writing a travel book, not a memoir. Every author must capture the reader's attention, and a little exaggeration is an acceptable part of poetic license. Let the reader wonder what a young Englishwoman of good family is doing amid the noise and smells at dockside, waiting to board a slave ship bound for Africa.

No reader will question that she comes from a good family. She uses the vocabulary of an educated individual. She has been schooled far beyond the rudiments necessary to read her Bible and prayer book. Barely educated people do not write "the time draws nigh when I must bid adieu to my native land." The aristocrats, gentry, and rich merchants in the late 18th century were all literate, as were most well-to-do shopkeepers.² Anna Maria's family belongs in this prosperous strata of society. Her journal is articulate and grammatically acceptable. (She does love commas, dashes, colons, and semicolons in preference to periods in run-on sentences. She makes single sentences into paragraphs, but writers in 1791 didn't have a style manual to follow). Some of her spelling is quaint—*cloaths* for clothes; *flower* for flour; *least* for lest—but spelling rules have altered over the last two centuries. Her concepts are mature; the reader has no trouble understanding Anna Maria's prose.

But in this very first paragraph Anna Maria explodes a bomb to grab her readers' attention. She has married hastily, contrary to her family's wishes. Nice girls in

²By 1750 sixty percent of Englishmen were literate, forty percent of women. See J. H. Plumb, *The First Four Georges* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), p. 167.

those days didn't marry against their family's wishes.

Or did they?

She has grown up during the reign of King George III. She has been schooled in reading and writing, in playing soothing music on the harpsichord, in drawing pretty sketches with pen or water colors, in making charming conversation. In short, in the development of good taste.³ She has been taught that "keeping a journal is the most important means by which refinement might be cultivated."⁴ Her parents were probably among the first to take a subscription at Bristol's public library when it opened in 1773. Two of the finest circulating libraries in England are in Bristol, boasting 200 members and 5,000 titles.⁵

Her prosperous papa and stepmama doubtless pursued an active public life, attending concerts, plays, galleries, and museums. Bristol has handsome open squares, assembly rooms and theaters, and a Vauxhall Garden as fine as London's, where plays and concerts are given and people stroll and chat through the long summer evenings. As Anna Maria progressed through her teens, she would have become part of these outings. She was introduced to suitable young men. The time came when, properly vetted, a lad was allowed to escort her to a play or gallery or the pleasure garden, with a sister or an aunt discreetly in the distance.

Anna Maria was thankful that young women were no longer obliged to accept without question husbands chosen by their fathers. They could express their preferences in whom they would marry. Even her parents' generation generally agreed that some mutual affection should exist before a marriage was contracted, "if only as a precaution against immediate adultery."⁶ What mattered to Anna Maria's father was that she marry in the correct social class, her husband display the requisite gentility.

Anna Maria does not tell the reader that her mother, Grace Roberts Horwood, died when Anna Maria was four years old. And her father, Charles Horwood, who presumably would be greatly concerned with her choice of a husband, is also

³Ibid., p. 59, 180.

⁴Ibid., p. 108.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Christopher Hibbert, *The English: A Social History 1066-1945* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987).

dead, having succumbed to apoplexy in 1787.⁷ Anna Maria probably went to live with one of her older married sisters after his death, not caring to stay with her stepmother, and in the following year, at the age of nineteen, she married Alexander Falconbridge.

Where did Anna Maria meet her suitor? Bristol was the most important seaport in England after London. Ships loaded with food supplies and trade goods in both London and Bristol to begin the long triangular voyage that would take them to the coast of West Africa, where they exchanged trade goods for a cargo of slaves to transport to the Caribbean and America, filling their holds there with kegs of rum or bales of tobacco to satisfy the markets in England. Anna Maria and her family were certainly aware of the slave trade. Indeed, her brother, Charles Horwood, captains a slave ship.⁸

In 1788 Alexander Falconbridge was practicing medicine at the village of Lodway, not far from the Horwood family home in Bristol.⁹ His tales of four voyages to Africa on slave ships may have been what first caught Anna Maria's attention. Her imagination was captivated by what seemed like high adventure. It didn't matter that he was some years older than she, nor that he was a mere surgeon with only a year of medical training at the Bristol Infirmary. A surgeon in those days was much lower on the totem pole than he is today. Surgeons ranked below doctors, but above barbers in the hierarchy of the time. Nor did it matter that Anna Maria's older sisters Anne and Christian Jane and perhaps her brother as well thought him an unsuitable match for the daughter of a prosperous watchmaker and goldsmith in All Saints Lane. In their minds, Alexander Falconbridge turned Anna Maria's pretty head with his tales of adventure in exotic tropical harbors and planted a seed of excitement among her girlish aspirations.

She loves travel books and is well aware how popular they are in England. Books about travel and geography account for almost half of all the borrowings from the Bristol library between 1773 and 1784.¹⁰ Anna Maria feels considerable trepidation about the adventure ahead of her, but think what a unique travel book could be written by a woman voyaging to West Africa in 1791. It would be the first

⁷Christopher Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge* (Liverpool University Press, 2000) p. 1.

⁸Mr. Horwood, Anna Maria's brother, is mentioned in a letter from Isaac DuBois to John Clarkson, first governor of Freetown, on 1 May 1793. See Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 188.

⁹*Ibid.* p. 2, 193-194.

¹⁰Plumb, p. 181, based on Paul Kaufman, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library, 1773-1784: A Unique Record of Reading Vogues* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1960).

of its kind..

In the Preface to Anna Maria's book (published in 1794 and 1802¹¹), doubtless written after the text, she admits her intentions:

The Authoress will not imitate a threadbare prevailing custom, viz. assure the Public [that] the following letters were written without any design or intention of sending them into the world.¹² On the contrary, she candidly confesses having some idea of the kind when writing them, tho' her mind was not fully made up on the business 'till towards the beginning of April, ~~may~~, for some time before then (from a consciousness of the inability of her pen) she had actually relinquished all thoughts of publishing them, which determination she certainly would have adhered to, if her will had not been overruled by the importunities of her friends.

When she returns from Sierra Leone after the first voyage and reads some of her jottings to her friends, they exclaim, "Oh, my dear Anna Maria, this is fascinating. You must publish it!" And so she polished her prose and hunted up a printer.

* * *

Anna Maria's first entry continues:

Mr. Falconbridge is employed by the St. George's Bay Company¹³ to carry

¹¹In 1967 Frank Cass & Co. of London printed a facsimile edition of the 1802 publication.

In 1999 Leicester University Press, London and New York, included Falconbridge's narrative in *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies*, edited by Deirdre Coleman.

In 2000 Liverpool University Press published a volume, edited by Christopher Fyfe, containing Anna Maria Falconbridge's *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone*, the *Journal of Isaac DuBois*, and Alexander Falconbridge's *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*.

¹²In choosing a letter form for her travel book, Anna Maria may have been copying Lieutenant John Matthews. In his *A Voyage to the River Sierra Leone* (facsimile of the 1788 edition, London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966), he also wrote in letter form, and Anna Maria has certainly read his book.

¹³St. George's Bay Company was the name of the trading company Granville Sharp set up in 1790 to aid the first blacks to return to Africa. Sharp's city friends who contributed to its establishment petitioned for incorporation by Act of Parliament as the Sierra Leone

out some relief for a number of unfortunate people (blacks and whites) whom Government sent to the river Sierra Leone¹⁴ a few years since, and who in consequence of some dispute with the natives are scattered through the country, and are just now, as I have been told, in the most deplorable condition. He [Mr. Falconbridge] is likewise to make some arrangements for collecting those poor creatures again and forming a settlement which the company have in contemplation to establish, not only to serve them, but to be generally useful to the natives.

Mr. Falconbridge, his brother Mr. W. Falconbridge and myself are to embark on board the Duke of Bucleugh¹⁵, Captain McLean, a ship belonging to Messrs. John and Alexander Anderson of Philpot Lane. These gentlemen, I understand, have a considerable factory¹⁶ at a place called Bance¹⁷ Island, some distance up the river Sierra Leone, to which island the ship is bound.

The company have either sent, or are to send out a small cutter¹⁸ called the

Company. (The comma placed after "St. George's Bay Company" in this sentence and dozens more to follow have been deleted. Other punctuation is adjusted to improve readability.)

¹⁴Sierra Leone in the 18th century included only the peninsula on which Freetown was established in 1792. The country now called Sierra Leone, which includes the peninsula and a much larger area of hinterland, was not created until 1896, when Great Britain established a protectorate over the interior.

¹⁵Anna Maria does not italicize the names of ships, but they are italicized here for clarity. She always follows ship names with the name of their captain, a convention of the time.

¹⁶A slave factory, where slaves sold by up-country tribes are held until a European ship can load them for transport to the West Indies or the southern states in America.

¹⁷Anna Maria's spelling for Bunce Island. It was also spelled Bence and Bense.

¹⁸A single-masted, fore-and-aft-rigged sailing vessel with a running bowsprit, a mainsail, and two or more headsails which are usually set flying.

Lapwing to meet Mr. — [Falconbridge]¹⁹ on the coast. She carries the stores for relieving the people, &c.

This is all the information I can give you at present respecting my intended voyage, but as it is an unusual enterprize [sic] for an English woman to visit the coast of Africa, and as I have ever flattered myself with possessing your friendship, you will no doubt like to hear from me; and I therefore intend giving you a full and circumstantial account of every thing that does not escape my notice 'till I return to this bless'd land, if it pleases Him who determines all things, that shall be the case again.

I have this instant learnt that we set off to-morrow for Gravesend, where the ship is laying ready to sail. Should we put into any port in the channel, I may probably write you if I am able, but must now bid you adieu.

¹⁹Anna Maria rarely spells out the names of the men she mentions. They are spelled out here to assist the reader in following her story.

LETTER II.

SPITHEAD, Jan. 12, 1791.

My dear Friend,²⁰

Contrary winds prevented us from proceeding [*sic*] directly out of the channel, and made it necessary to put into this place. We have been here two days, but I am told there is an appearance of the wind changing and that it is probable we shall make the attempt to get away some time this day; therefore I think it best not to defer performing my promise of writing to you, least [*sic*] we sail and I am disappointed.

We embarked at Gravesend between eleven and twelve o'clock the night after I wrote you. Every thing seemed in dreadful confusion; but this I understand is commonly the case on board ships when on the eve of sailing. Besides, the captain had several friends who came from London to bid him farewell.

You may guess my mind, in spite of all the resolution a young girl [Anna Maria's first reference to her age; she is 21] is capable of mustering, could not be undisturbed; but I would not give way to any melancholy reflections and endeavoured to smother them as often as they intruded; although I must confess they sometimes caught me off my guard, and my heart for the moment was ready to burst with the thoughts of what I had to encounter, which was pictured to me by almost everyone in the worst of colours.

However, I went to bed, and being much fatigued, was in hopes every care would be buried for the night in delightful sleep; but in this I was disappointed, for although my eyes were closed as soon as I got my head on the pillow, yet it was not of long continuance. I had slept perhaps two hours when the shocking cries of murder awoke me! I did not at the instant recollect where I was, but the first thoughts which occurred upon remembering myself on ship-board were that a gang of pirates had attacked the ship and would put us all to death.

²⁰Anna Maria never discloses who "her dear Friend" is or whether such a person actually exists.

How Anna Maria must have smiled as she composed this fantasy. She knows that the reader expects drama and suspense in a travel book.

All the cabin was by this time alarmed, the cries of murder still continuing while the captain and others were loudly calling for lights; and so great was the confusion that it was a long while before any could be procured. At length the light came, when I found myself somewhat collected and had courage enough to ask what was the matter.

My fears were removed by being informed it was a Mr. B---, a passenger whose intellects were a little deranged. He continued his disagreeable hideous cries the whole night and prevented everyone from sleeping. For my part I scarcely closed my eyes again.

At breakfast Mr. B----- apologized by telling us that his wife had murdered his only child, for which reason he had left her. "And," said he, "the horrid act! has made such an impression on my mind that I frequently think I see her all besmeared with blood with a dagger in her hand, determined to take away my life also. It preys upon my spirits, for I want strength of mind to conquer the weakness." (I am inclined to think this was only the imagination of a frantic brain for we were not able to learn any thing more of the story.)

Mr. Alexander Anderson [who owns the *Duke of Bucleugh*] came on board and dined. He politely enquired if I was comfortable; assured me that every thing had been put on board to render us as much so as possible. In the evening he returned to town, and we got under weigh.

Nothing occurred on our passage here except such frequent returns of Mr. B's delirium as has induced Captain McLean to put him on shore, from the opinion of his being an unfit subject to go to the coast of Africa.

I did not experience any of those fears peculiar to my sex upon the water; and the only inconvenience I found was a little sea sickness, which I had a right to expect, for you know this is my first voyage.

There is one circumstance which I forbode [*sic*] will make the remainder of our voyage unpleasant. The gentlemen whom Mr. Falconbridge is employed by are for abolishing the slave trade. The owners of this vessel are of that trade, and

consequently the captain and Mr. Falconbridge must be very opposite in their sentiments.

They are always arguing and both are warm in their tempers, which makes me uneasy, and induces me to form this conjecture; but perhaps that may not be the case.

What care Anna Maria takes in choosing the words to record this observation—the first hint she gives of her husband's character. Mr. Falconbridge is *warm in his temper*. Any overt criticism will be very discretely phrased. Nor will she write down anything about their life together before January 5th. After all, this is a travel book.

She knows that what Alexander Falconbridge observed on slave ships turned his stomach, for in 1788 he wrote a searing indictment of the slave trade.²¹ He actually sought out Granville Sharp and other abolitionists in London in his determination to fight what he sees as a nefarious practice. The Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor printed 3,000 copies of his account to circulate as propaganda.²² And now, because Falconbridge is an ardent abolitionist, they have hired him to make another voyage to West Africa. Anna Maria fears that their sailing on a slave ship may lead to dissension, but no other suitable ship was available. The *Lapwing* is making the voyage, carrying supplies, but she is a small cutter with a single cabin for the captain. The crew sleeps on deck under the stars or in the rain—hardly suitable for the St. George's Bay Company's emissary to the African King Naimbana.

I have not been on shore at Portsmouth; indeed it is not a desirable place to visit. I was once there, and few people have a desire to see it a second time. The only thing that has attracted my notice in the harbour is the fleet with convicts for Botany Bay, which are wind bound as well as ourselves.

Imagine Anna Maria and Alexander standing by the rail of the *Duke of Bucleugh*, observing the other ships loading nearby. She strives to be an interesting companion. She submits silently to his probing and thrusting in the dark, cramped bunk of their cabin and knows when he is sated, but she is still too shy to call him by his first name, even in the privacy of their cabin. And how little she understands his strident convictions. She offers her own observations in the hope that he will reveal himself as well. "Men in chains are being escorted onto that ship. The first

²¹Published in Christopher Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, pp. 196-230.

²²Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 2.

mate says that they are convicts from England's overcrowded jails."

"Yes, they are bound for Australia."

"What a long way to send them."

"Better than Sierra Leone," he snorts. "That was to be the destination until the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor lobbied against offloading them there. We'll have enough problems implanting a free black settlement in the middle of the slave trade without having to deal with murderers and rapists as well."

She studies her husband's stern profile and glimpses a future of more somber hue than the rosy visions painted by the abolitionists in London who have dispatched them on this mission. She tries to imagine how hardened convicts will behave in an unknown and barbarous land on the other side of the globe. She shakes her head in dismay.

The destiny of such numbers of my fellow creatures has made what I expect to encounter set lighter upon my mind than it ever did before. Nay, nothing could have operated a reconciliation so effectually. For as the human heart is more susceptible of distress conveyed by the eye than when represented by language, however ingenuously pictured with misery, so the sight of those unfortunate beings and the thoughts of what they are to endure have worked more forcibly on my feelings than all the accounts I ever read or heard of wretchedness before.

I must close this which is the last, in all probability, you will receive from me 'till my arrival in Africa; when, if an opportunity offers, I shall make a point of writing to you. Pray do not let distance or absence blot out the recollection of her, who is truly yours.

LETTER III.

BANCE ISLAND,²³ Feb. 10, 1791

My dear Friend,

We sailed the very day I wrote you from Portsmouth, and our passage was unusually quick, being only eighteen days from thence to this place.²⁴ The novelty of a ship ploughing the trackless ocean in a few days became quite familiar to me; there was such a sameness in every thing (for some birds were all we saw the whole way) that I found the voyage tiresome, notwithstanding the shortness of it.

You will readily believe my heart was gladdened at the sight of the mountains of Sierra Leone, which was the land we first made. Those mountains appear to rise gradually from the sea to a stupendous [*sic*] height, richly wooded and beautifully ornamented by the hand of nature, with a variety of delightful prospects.

Like those before her and everyone who has approached since by sea, Anna Maria waxes poetic over the sight of this landfall as it rises emerald-green from the Atlantic surf. The Sierra Leone peninsula is a mountainous ridge some 2,000 feet high that juts up out of the ocean, its highest altitudes at the northern edge beside the broad estuary of the Rokel River. Once over the ridge the rolling hills slope gradually to the south shore—all of it upholstered in a thick green blanket of airless tropical forest fringed here and there by blazing white sand. The entire peninsula is effectively cut off from the mainland by wide stretches of mangrove swamp, making boats the only means of traveling upcountry.

I was vastly pleased while sailing up the river, for the rapidity of the ship through the water afforded a course of new scenery almost every moment, till

²³"Bence Island, as it was first named, had been leased from the neighboring African rulers in the 1670s by the Royal African Company. Substantial fortified premises were built, and it became the main trading centre in the river. After various vicissitudes the lease of what was then known as Bence Island was taken over in 1758 by the Andersons [Messrs John and Alexander Anderson of Philpot Lane, a London firm]." Christopher Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 16.

²⁴The journey in sailing ships from Europe down the West Coast of Africa benefits from following winds.

we cast anchor here. Now and then I saw the glimpse of a native town, but from the distance, and new objects hastily catching my eye, was not able to form a judgment or idea of any of them; but this will be no loss as I may have frequent opportunities of visiting some of them hereafter.

As soon as our anchor was dropped, Captain McLean saluted Bunce Island with seven guns, which not being returned, I enquired the cause, and was told [that] the last time the Duke of Buccleugh came out, she as is customary saluted, and on the fort returning the compliment, a wad was drove by the force of the sea breeze upon the roof of one of the houses (which was then of thatch), set fire to the building, and consumed not only the house but goods to a large amount.

When the ceremony of saluting was over, Captain McLean and Mr. W. Falconbridge²⁵ went on shore, but being late in the evening, I continued on board 'till next day.

Here we met the cutter. She sailed some time before us from Europe, and had been arrived two or three weeks. The master of her and several of the people to whose assistance Mr. Falconbridge is come, and who had taken refuge here, came to visit us.

Anna Maria does not know quite what to make of the ragtag stream of blacks who climb over the side. They look so derelict—hair untrimmed, their minimal clothing in tatters, their feet unshod—that it's hard to believe that they could be respectable people. She knows that a private Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor, made up of bankers, merchants, and politicians in England had collected funds and provided charity where they could for the impoverished free blacks who roamed the streets of London after the American Revolution. The British had promised freedom to any blacks belonging to American colonists who escaped to the British lines and supported them against the rebellious Americans. The loss of the War for Independence brought thousands of these freed blacks to England. When the Committee for their relief could not find adequate funds to support them in England, they lobbied Parliament and won a government commitment to pay £14 each to

²⁵Anna Maria does not tell us until LETTER IV that this is William Falconbridge, Alexander's brother, who, after a quarrel between the two, joined the slave factors on Bunce Island.

transport any who wished to become part of a settlement in West Africa.²⁶

Alexander must have had many questions for their visitors, learning very quickly that their English is hard to understand.

“How many are you all-told?”

“Jus’ us few here, but they’s lots more in Pa Boson’s town.” A vague wave in a southerly direction.

“How many?”

A shrug. “Mebbe 30, 40.”

“But 459 people came in the three transport ships with a naval sloop for protection—344 blacks and 115 whites.”

Another shrug. Falconbridge looks around at the master of the *Lapwing*, who stands nearby. He steps forward. “I’ve been making some inquiries while we’ve waited for you to arrive.”

“Do you know what’s happened to the artisans and the clergyman and the doctor who came out with them?”

The master nodded. “Most of them are dead or have found work somewhere else.”

²⁶About the time Anna Maria was born, a Quaker doctor in England, John Fothergill sent a botanist named Henry Smeathman to Sierra Leone to survey the possibility of establishing plantations there using free black labor from England. He brought back glowing accounts of the potential for export crops such as sugar in Sierra Leone.

Dr. Fothergill was one of a group of influential men in London who were trying to end slavery and provide charity to the free black poor there. They were only a trickle in the 1770s, generally brought by plantation owners from America and the Caribbean to be household servants. Some were seamen or army drummers. No man felt more strongly about their plight than Granville Sharp, who had rescued a mistreated slave in 1765 and successfully fought a case in court in 1772 to prevent the master of an escaped slave from Virginia from forcing him to board ship for sale in Jamaica. See Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1976) and W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists* (New York: Dalhousie University Press, 1976).

Elliott Griffith is in Robana and is King Naimbana's scribe now."

"Griffith? Black or white?"

"One of the free blacks. He was apparently taken up by Mr. Granville Sharp and given some education in London."

Falconbridge nodded. "It's the kind of thing Sharp would do—he's England's leading abolitionist and a founding member of the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor."

"Well, they named their town after him—Granville Town in the Province of Freedom. He apparently made very rash promises to them—farms for everyone. Their own government—every ten families to elect a tithingman—to keep the peace and settle disputes. Every hundred families to elect a hundredor. The hundredors would make the laws. They were to have no outside overseers or police, but to govern themselves exactly as they saw fit."

"So what happened?"

"Well, Sir, things don't work the same in Africa as they do back home. Capt'n Thompson²⁷—the naval officer who brought them here—palavered with King Tom down by the harbor. He paid him £60-worth of muskets, powder and ball, lead and iron bars,²⁸ laced hats, rum, tobacco, cloth, and beads as rent for the Province of Freedom—a 20-square-mile piece of land bordering the harbor. But Capt'n

²⁷ Captain Thomas Boulden Thompson of HMS Nautilus was put in charge because he knew the West Coast of Africa; he had been employed by the British Government in the 1780s to seek a suitable site there for Britain's surplus convicts. He carried supplies to last eight months and instructions to purchase land from the Temne tribe living on the Sierra Leone peninsula, supervise the new settlement through the harvest of their first crop, and then leave the settlers on their own.

²⁸ Bars were a form of national currency devised by Africans, who had no use for the paper or metal currencies current in Europe. Each commodity had its value in 'bars' which fluctuated with supply and demand. The price paid for slaves was similarly calculated in bars. Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 35.

Thompson should have palavered with King Naimbana.²⁹ He's the big chief. King Tom's just a small chief down there by the harbor."

"Well, we'll talk with King Naimbana now."

The master talked on as though Falconbridge had not interrupted him. "They arrived here at the wrong time of year. They was supposed to come in the fall—that's the beginning of the growing season here—but were delayed for weeks. They didn't leave until February, got here in May. That ain't the right time for planting because the big rains begin then.³⁰ They couldn't plant gardens. They had no adequate shelter to keep them dry. Capt'n Thompson give them old canvas, but the rain and wind flattened all the tents they made. What food they had molded and rotted in the heat. A lot of them got sick and died."³¹

"Bad show."

"Yes, Sir. And you know, Sir, the slave traders didn't much like them being there, watching their ships sailing by. They spread all kinds of rumors among the Africans.

²⁹The paramount chief of the Temne, King Naimbana, lived upstream at Robana and ruled a territory stretching northward along the Rokel River for a hundred miles. (Although the Europeans called him "king," Naimbana was in fact regent of the Koye Temne from 1775 until his death in 1793.) Without realizing that he needed King Naimbana's approval, Captain Thompson negotiated with a minor chief on the peninsula, King Tombo, who controlled the fresh-water spring on the north bank of the harbor. King Tom, as the English called him, happily dealt with Captain Thompson. The boundaries of the grant were vague, and King Tom couldn't read the agreement. Neither he nor his interpreters had any idea that Thompson assumed he was buying permanent title to the land, for no land was owned individually in black Africa. Its occupants had only the right to use the land as decided by their chiefs.

³⁰The annual torrential rains drop almost 150 inches of water between May and November.

³¹Dysentery and tuberculosis were endemic, as was malaria. By September 122 of the settlers had been buried. Only six of the white artisans survived, and they soon drifted away from Granville Town to better employment prospects in the slave factories upstream. In September Captain Thompson set sail for England, leaving some 200 settlers on their own.

The slave agent at Bunce Island offered arms to the local chiefs to oppose the settlement. A showdown came after five Granville Town settlers robbed the store of the slave factory³² on Bunce Island. They was arrested and turned over to the Bunce Island factor to stand trial. Their sentence was banishment, and the factor promptly sold them to a French slaver leavin' for the West Indies."

Falconbridge shook his head in dismay.

"And then King Tom died," the master continued. "King Jemmy—his village is a little further along the shore—was already mad at English ship captains—claimed they stole things from him.³³ Now he could get even. He announced that King Tombo's treaty with the English was no longer valid. He send a messenger to Granville Town. 'You got three days to remove yourselves to safety.' Then his warboys attacked Granville Town, what little there was left of it. The settlers fled up the river."

Word of the gradual disintegration of Granville Town traveled slowly back to England. Granville Sharp abandoned his naive dream of a peaceful, pastoral settlement and in 1790 sought venture capital from prosperous English merchants and gentlemen, who formed the St. George's Bay Company³⁴ to trade in West Africa. The directors in turn dispatched Alexander Falconbridge to rally the scattered settlers. In normal circumstances, his wife would have been left behind in England. Anna Maria had no intention of staying behind, and now she has met the remnants of the Granville Town settlers.

They represented their sufferings to have been very great; that they had been treacherously dealt with by one King Jemmy, who had drove them away from

³²A factory was a trading station, supervised by a licensed European agent (called a factor) who bought slaves from the Africans. Slaves were generally captives from inter-tribal warfare. The victorious African chiefs sent them down the rivers and sold them to the factories on the coast. The factors in turn sold them to merchant vessels calling there. The Anderson brothers had owned Bunce Island since 1785.

³³The Temne people of Sierra Leone were very accustomed to European merchant ships calling in the huge estuary of the river to take on fresh water and to trade in camwood, ivory, and slaves. Sierra Leone had the only really protected anchorage on the entire coast.

³⁴St. George's Bay is one of several coves on the north side of the peninsula along the south shore of the Rokel River estuary.

the ground they occupied, burnt their houses, and otherwise devested [sic] them of every comfort and necessary of life. They also threw out some reflections against the Agent of this island—said he had sold several of their fellow sufferers to a Frenchman, who had taken them to the West Indies.

Mr. Falconbridge, however, was not the least inclined to give entire confidence to what they told us; but prudently suspended his opinion until he had made further enquiries.

Those visitors being gone, we retired to bed—cannot say to rest; the heat was so excessive that I scarcely slept at all.

It's March in Sierra Leone—the end of the long dry season. No rain has fallen since November, so that every leaf and blade of grass is brown with dust. The tropical sun beats down relentlessly. The temperature barely drops at night. The sleeping cabins on the *Duke of Buccleugh* have only tiny portholes, providing little ventilation. The nightly coupling in the Falconbridge cabin is a sweaty, slippery exercise that leaves Anna Maria longing for a bath, but the pail of salt water pulled over the side the next morning for her to wash in leaves her skin still sticky.

She thinks back to her stepmother, overseeing her father's house in Bristol. Opinionated on many subjects, she had been broad-minded on the subject of baths, regarding them as a privilege rather than an indulgence or an aberration. She pooh-poohed the idea that a bath in winter was deleterious to the health.

On the *Duke of Buccleugh* Anna Maria has no lady's maid. Does she wash her sundries in salt water and hang them in the rigging? Does she scrub the blood out of the linen used during her menses? Who empties her chamber pot over the side each morning? The cabin boy?

The following day we received a polite invitation to dine on shore, which I did not object to, although harassed for want of sleep the night before.

Keep in mind that the *Duke of Buccleugh* is owned by the Anderson brothers of Philpot Lane in London, who also own the slave factory on Bunce Island.

At dinner the conversation turned upon the slave trade. Mr. Falconbridge, zealous for the cause in which he is engaged, strenuously opposed every argument his

opponents advanced in favour of the *abominable* trade.³⁵ The glass went briskly round, and the gentlemen growing warm, I retired immediately as the cloath [*sic*] was removed.

When the gentlemen have drunk too heavily and begin arguing too heatedly, Anna Maria retreats to her cabin aboard the *Duke of Bucleugh* and calms her annoyance by writing in her journal. She remembers how charming Falconbridge was when she first met him, but the charm is erased now behind his angry mouth and flashing eyes. She would like to chastise him, suggest that he refuse another and another and another glass of wine, but she reminds herself that this is a travel book. Her own emotions are not appropriate here. She chooses very carefully the terms in which she voices her dismay. She has been very circumspect up to this point, but her patience is wearing thin, and she records that small fact.

The people on the island crowded to see me; they gazed with apparent astonishment—I suppose at my dress, for white women could not be a novelty to them as there were several among the unhappy people sent out here by government, one of whom is now upon the island.

Among the first settlers of Granville town were a number of women, whom the African women were certainly acquainted with. They were, however, of the English working class (or worse, as Anna Maria will relate later) and certainly would not have been dressed in any elegance. Anna Maria, prizing her husband's status, wears her most stylish gown with gloves and parasol to this first meeting on Bunce Island. The factors may be slave traders, but they are also ruddy-faced young Englishmen—and the only white men on a hundred miles of tropical coast.

Seeing so many of my own sex, though of different complexions from myself, attired in their native garbs, was a scene equally new to me, and my delicacy, I confess, was not a little hurt at times. Many among them appeared of superior rank, at least I concluded so from the preferable way in which they were clad; nor was I wrong in my conjecture, for upon enquiring who they were, was

³⁵The second governor wrote in his journal that Falconbridge's "conduct & professions gave the slave traders great reason to believe that nothing less was intended than to ruin them if possible by the most unfair means, as by enticing away their seamen, inveigling their slaves, encouraging the natives to cut off slave ships etc." *Abolition and Emancipation*, Part 1, Reel 6, Zachary Macaulay's Journal, 1793.

informed one was the woman or mistress of Mr.—, another of Mr. B—, ³⁶and so on. I then understood that every gentleman on the island had his lady.

How oblique Anna Maria is in introducing the African women. They have “different complexions” from hers. Nor does she elaborate on “native garbs.” Even today the country women in Sierra Leone wear only wrap-arounds fastened at the waist, with strings of beads festooning their bare breasts. Those African women Anna Maria saw “of superior rank” were probably wearing silk or taffeta wrap-arounds, rather than plain cotton, with perhaps a shawl of some sort, but they too would have been bare-breasted. How daintily Anna Maria indicates that she is shocked: her “delicacy” is “hurt.”

For European women, the first sight of bare breasts takes a few days of getting used to, although eventually one barely notices, except for recognizing how quickly each woman’s breasts are flattened after childbirth by the practice of carrying babies slung on their backs, held by a length of cloth tied over the breasts. Indeed, many young women deliberately bind their breasts before they have children in an attempt to appear fertile.

Anna Maria is fascinated by every detail of the Africans’ adornment or lack thereof. Her observations are, of course, totally ethnocentric. How could it be otherwise, considering the era in which she lived? It is easy to picture her garbed from neck to toe in the decorous European gowns of the time, arms covered to the wrists, skirts sweeping the dirt, bonnet or parasol shading her pale complexion from the fierce tropical sun. She is shocked at the nudity of the African women, mistaking their casual comfort for a lack of modesty, and firmly convinced that their health suffers from such wholesale exposure to the fetid tropical air. She will never know that the flannel stomach wrappings and woolen underclothing cherished by the Europeans as protection against African maladies were no more a barrier to malaria and dysentery than the malodorous palm oil with which the Africans daily rubbed their bodies.

While I was thus entertaining myself with my new acquaintances, two or three of the gentlemen left their wine and joined me. Among them was Mr. Ballingall the Agent,³⁷ who, in a very friendly manner, begged I would take a bed on shore. [How stimulated these white hermits must have been by the company of a well dressed, ripe young European female!] I thanked him, and said, if agreeable to Mr. Falconbridge, I would have no objection; however,

³⁶An English factor named Ballingall. Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 18.

³⁷Ballingall was not named in the 1802 edition.

Falconbridge objected, and gave me for reason that he had been unhandsomely treated and was determined to go on board the *Lapwing*, for he would not subject himself to any obligation to men possessing such diabolical sentiments.

Captain McLean offloads his trade goods for the factor's use and takes on his cargo of 358 slaves³⁸ as quickly as possible and sets sail for America. The Falconbridges have vacated their cabin aboard the *Duke of Buccleugh*. Anna Maria chews the nib of her pen and considers the irony of having traveled from England to Sierra Leone in the relative comfort of a slave ship, but now that Falconbridge has quarreled over dinner with his hosts on Bunce Island, he is not going to permit his wife to sleep in a comfortable bed in the factory on shore. There is no point in arguing with him when he is in his cups, but she records her feelings about his intransigence and about the shortcomings of the Sierra Leone Company cutter *Lapwing*. After all, they did not choose to endure the *Lapwing's* cramped quarters on the outward voyage. Why must she endure them now?

Anna Maria will tell her husband off when he is sober again. In the meantime, she hides her journal in her trunk under her clothes to prevent Falconbridge from finding it and reading of her outrage.

It was not proper for me to contradict him at that moment as the heat of argument and the influence of an over portion of wine had quickened and disconcerted his temper. I therefore submitted without making any objection to come on board this tub of a vessel, which in point of size and cleanliness comes nigher a hog-trough than any thing else you can imagine.³⁹ Though I resolved to remonstrate the first seasonable opportunity and to point out the likelihood of endangering my health should he persist to keep me in so confined a place.

This remonstrance I made the next morning after passing a night of torment, but to no purpose. The only consolation I got was as soon as the settlers could

³⁸House of Lords Record Office, L5/JII/2, "Return of Ships employed in the Slave Trade from 1791 to 1797."

³⁹The *Lapwing*, seized by the British Government for smuggling, was purchased by the Sierra Leone Company out of the condemned hold; see Prince Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp* (London: Henry Colburn, 1820), p. 349.

be collected, he would have a house built on shore where they were to be fixed.

I honestly own [that] my original resolution of firmness was now warped at what I foresaw I was doomed to suffer by being imprisoned, God knows how long, in a place so disgusting as this was in my opinion at that time. Conceive yourself pent up in a floating cage, without room to walk about, stand erect, or even to lay at length; exposed to the inclemency of the weather, having your eyes and ears momentarily [sic] offended by acts of indecency and language too horrible to relate—add to this a complication of filth, the stench from which was continually assailing your nose, and then you will have a faint notion of the Lapwing Cutter.

However, upon collecting myself and recollecting [that] there was no remedy but to make the best of my situation, I begged the master (who slept upon deck in consequence of my coming on board) to have his cabin thoroughly cleaned and washed with vinegar; intreated Falconbridge to let me go on shore while it was doing—hinted at the indecencies I saw and heard, and was promised they would be prevented in future.

First mate: Mrs. Bloody Falconbridge'll be sleepin' on board hereafter.

Second mate: 'ell. They ain't room on board the *Lapwing* for Mrs. Bloody Falconbridge. Ain't but the one cabin.

First mate: Capt'n'll sleep on deck w'the rest of us.

Second mate: 'ell.

First mate: Mrs. Bloody Falconbridge wants the whole bloody ship t'smell as sweet as her own fuckin' boodwar.

Second mate: She ain't gonna make us all take baths, is she?

First mate: Prob'ly. Tell the tars t'watch their bloody language when she's on board.

Second mate: 'ell.

First mate: And no pissin' over the side when she's on deck.

Second mate: Bloody fuckin' 'ell.

With this assurance I went on shore, not a little elated at the reprieve I was to enjoy for a few hours. The gentlemen received me with every mark of attention and civility; indeed, I must be wanting in sensibility if my heart did not warm with gratitude to Messrs. Ballingall and Tilly for their kindnesses to me. The latter gentleman, I am informed, will succeed to the agency of the

island; he is a genteel young man and I am told very deservedly a favourite with his employers.

Does Anna Maria flirt a little with these Englishmen? She is 21 years old, and must certainly have been fit, supple, and comely. How could it be otherwise?

She blossoms when the factors make a fuss over her. It never occurs to her to see them as interlopers, gamblers building their forts on those placid rivers, rolling dice for human bodies to fill the holds of English cargo ships. Alexander Falconbridge may have grown accustomed to her attractions, and he is emerging from between the lines as the heavy in this tale—angry, opinionated, and lacking in romantic sensibilities. In contrast, the open admiration and generous compliments expressed by Mr. Tilly and Mr. Ballingall seem to Anna Maria the height of cultivated refinement.

Mr. Falconbridge this day sent a message to Eliotte Griffiths,⁴⁰ the secretary of Naimbana, who is the King of Sierra Leone, acquainting him with the purport of his mission, and begging to know when he may be honoured with an audience of his Majesty.

In the evening he received an answer, of which the following is a copy:

ROBANA TOWN

King Naimbana's compliments to Mr. Falconbridge, and will be glad to see him to tomorrow.

(Signed) A.E. GRIFFITHS, Sec.

Such an immediate answer from a King, I considered a favorable omen and a mark of condescension in his Majesty, but the result you shall hear by and by. In the meanwhile, I must tell you what passed the remainder of the day at Bance Island, and give as far as my ideas allow me a description of this factory. We sat down to dinner with the same party as the first day, consisting of about fifteen in number. This necessary ceremony ended, and towards the cool of the afternoon, I proposed walking for a while. Mr. Tilly and a Mr. Barber offered to accompany and show me the island, which not being

⁴⁰Eliott Griffith, who had been a valet in London, was one of the original Granville Town settlers. He eventually married Naimbana's daughter Clara.

objected to, we set out.

Adam's Town was the first place they took me to. It is so called from a native of that name who has the management of all the gramattos, or free black servants, but under the controul of the Agent. The whole town consists of a street with about twenty-five houses on each side:—on the right of all is Adam's house. This building does not differ from the rest except in size, being much more spacious than any other and being barracaded with a mud wall. All of them are composed of thatch, wood, and clay, something resembling our poor cottages in many parts of England.

I went into several of them—saw nothing that did not discover the occupiers to be very clean and neat; in some was a block or two of wood, which served for chairs, a few wooden bowls or trenchers, and perhaps a pewter bason and an iron pot completed [sic] the whole of their furniture.

In every house I was accosted by whoever we found at home, in the Timmany [Temne] language, Currea Yaa which signifies How do you do mother?—the most respectful way they can address any person.

Leaving the town, we proceeded first to the burying ground for Europeans, and then to that for blacks;—the only distinction between them was a few orange trees that shaded two gravestones at the former, —one in memory of a Mr. Knight, who had died here after residing fifteen years as Agent;—the other was on the supposed grave of a Captain Tittle, who was murdered by one Signor Domingo,⁴¹ a native chief, for (as Domingo asserts) being the cause of his son's death.

The circumstance leading to the murder, as well as the murder itself, has been represented to me nearly in the following words: "One day while the son of

⁴¹Domingo was of Afro-Portuguese descent and claimed to be a Roman Catholic. He ruled from Royema, a town on the south shore of the estuary. Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 44.

Domingo was employed by Captain Tittle as a gramatto, or pull-away boy,⁴² Tittle's hat by accident blew overboard, and he insisted that the boy should jump into the water and swim after it, as the only means of saving his hat.

"The boy obstinately refused, saying he could not swim, and he should either be drowned or the sharks would catch him; upon which Tittle pushed him into the water, and the poor boy was lost; but whether devoured by sharks, or suffocated by water, is immaterial, he was never heard of, or seen after.

"The father, though sorely grieved for his son's death, was willing to consider it accidental, and requested Tittle would supply him with a small quantity of rum to make a cry⁴³ or lamentation in their country custom.

"The Captain, by promise, acquiesced to the demand and sent him a cask; but instead of spirits filled with emptyings from the tubs of his slaves.

"As soon as Domingo discovered this insult and imposition, he informed Tittle he must either submit to the decision of a Palaver,⁴⁴ or he would put him to death if ever an opportunity offered; but Tittle laughed at these threats and disregarding them, vauntingly threw himself into the way of Domingo while the trick played upon him and the loss of his son were fresh in his memory.

"The African, however, instead of being daunted at the sight of this headstrong man, soon convinced him he was serious. He had Tittle seized, and after confining him some time in irons without food, ordered him to be broken to death, which was executed under the inspection of the injured father and to the great joy and satisfaction of a multitude of spectators."

⁴²African term for an oar-man.

⁴³Cry: like a wake, often accompanied by puncheons of rum and great quantities of tobacco.

⁴⁴From the French word, palabre-to talk. All issues in West Africa are settled by the men of a village, clan, or tribe meeting together and reaching some agreement by consensus.

Not a sentence or hint of the affair is mentioned on the tombstone; the reason assigned for the omission was a wish to obliterate the melancholy catastrophe and a fear least the record might be the means of kindling animosities at a future day.

Now, although I cannot without horror contemplate on the untimely end of this man, yet he assuredly in some degree merited it if the account I have heard and just now related to you be true, which I have no reason to question. For he who unprovoked can wantonly rob a fellow creature of his life, deserves not life himself!⁴⁵

An incident like this gives the handful of Englishmen on the West Coast of Africa pause. When she is feeling anxious, Anna Maria thinks how few are their numbers, these aggressive European men defending their flimsy outposts against both their African neighbors and unidentified ships flying other flags. Other European merchants are driven by greed to poach slave cargoes wherever they can.

Anna Maria counts the battery of 50 cannon lined up in front of the stone fortress on the south shore of Bunce Island, pointing down the river.⁴⁶ How many men does it take to fire 50 cannon? There are certainly not enough white officials at the moment on Bunce Island. Are the cannon all functional? Who knows how to fire them? She assumes that adequate ammunition is stored nearby, but any attacker would be foolish to come up the river and try a frontal assault. What good would the cannon do if a concerted attack came from the rear?

From the catacombs which lay at the south-east end, we walked to the opposite point of the island. It is no great distance, for the whole island is very little more than a fourth of a mile in length, and scarcely a mile and a half in

⁴⁵Another son of this local chief appears to have gone to England for his education. In 1797 Anthony Domingo wrote to Sharp expressing gratitude to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company for his education (see P. Edwards and J. Walvin, 'Africans in Britain, 1500-1800', in *The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays*, eds. M. Kilson and R. Rotberg (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 191).

⁴⁶ "Despite its fortifications, it never resisted an enemy successfully, having been taken by French warships in 1704, by pirates in 1719 and 1720, by the armed retainers of a neighboring Afro-Portuguese in 1728, and by the French again in 1779." Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 23.

circumference. Several rocks lay at a small distance from the shore at this end; they are by the natives called the Devil's Rocks, from the superstitious opinion that the old Gentleman resides either there or in the neighbourhood.

Sammo, King of the Bulloms, comes to this place once a year to make a sacrifice and peace-offering to his infernal Majesty. From this King [the] Messrs. Anderson's [sic] hold all their possessions here, and I understand they pay him an annual tribute but to what amount I cannot say.⁴⁷

The King comes in person to receive his dues, which are paid him in his canoe, for he never ventures to put his foot on shore, as his Gree Greemen or fortune-tellers⁴⁸ have persuaded him the island will sink under him, if ever he lands. I am told at one time he suffered himself to be dragged up to the Factory House in his boat, but no argument was strong enough to seduce him to disembark, for he did not consider he incurred the penalty his prophets denounced while he continued in his canoe; though he could not avoid shewing [sic] evident tokens of uneasiness till he was safe afloat again.

If Anna Maria had lived two centuries later, she would have matriculated at Bristol University and become an anthropologist. Her journal makes it clear that she is gifted with keen powers of observation and no compulsion to mince words in relating what she sees. Even in 1792, many of the observations in her journal come close to being ethnography—the second ethnography, after John Matthews' A

⁴⁷"Present possession is the only tenure they [the natives] allow of in the occupying of lands. If a man quits his situation, another may immediately take possession, provided he is a native; for they are extremely tenacious of their rights, and will not suffer any strangers to settle among them without their consent and approbation." See John Matthews, RN, *A Voyage to the River Sierra Leone containing an account of the trade and productions of the country and of the civil and religious customs and manner of the people*, by John Matthews during his residence in that country in the years 1789, 1786, and 1787 (London: Frand Cass, 1966), pp. 787-79.

⁴⁸Today called a shaman or a medicine man.

*Voyage to the River Sierra Leone, of the Temne people of West Africa.*⁴⁹

We now returned to the Factory, or as it is otherwise called Bance Island House. This building at a distance has a respectable and formidable appearance; nor is it much less so upon a nearer investigation. I suppose it is about one hundred feet in length, and thirty in breadth, and contains nine rooms, all on one floor, under which are commodious large cellars and store rooms; to the right is the kitchen, forge, &c. and to the left other necessary buildings, all of country stone, and surrounded with a prodigious thick lofty wall.

There was formerly a fortification in front of those 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.

Delicacy, perhaps, prevented the gentlemen from taking me to see them; but the room where we dined looks directly into the yard. Involuntarily I strolled [sic] to one of the windows a little before dinner, without the smallest suspicion of what I was to see; judge then what my astonishment and feelings were at the sight of between two and three hundred wretched victims, chained and parcelled out in circles, just satisfying the cravings of nature from a trough of rice placed in the centre of each circle.

A well-bred lady would quickly avert her eyes from such a barbaric scene and pretend that she had not glimpsed it at all. Anna Maria knows this and apologizes for her fascination.

Offended modesty rebuked me with a blush for not hurrying my eyes from such disgusting scenes; but whether fascinated by female curiosity, or whatever else, I could not withdraw myself for several minutes while I remarked some whose hair was withering with age, reluctantly tasting their food—and others thoughtless from youth, greedily devouring all before them.

⁴⁹The first was by Lieutenant John Matthews, mentioned in footnote 39, which Anna Maria recommends to her readers as supplying a background on Sierra Leone that she does not wish to repeat.

Be assured I avoided the prospects from this side of the house ever after.

Having prolonged the time 'till nine at night, we returned to our floating prison, and what with the assiduity of the master in removing many inconveniencies, my mind being more at ease, want of rest for two nights, and somewhat fatigued with the exercise of the day, I, thank God, slept charmingly, and the next morning we set sail for Robana, where we arrived about ten o'clock. I think it is called nine miles from Bance Island.

We went on shore, and rather caught his Majesty by surprize, for he was quite in dishabillé and at our approach retired in great haste. I observed a person pass me in a loose white frock and trowsers [sic], whom I would not have suspected for a King! if he had not been pointed out to me.

Mr. Eliotte and the Queen met us; and after introducing her Majesty and himself, we were then conducted to her house. She behaved with much indifference, ~~t~~old me in broken English that the King would come presently ~~he~~ was gone to peginninee woman house to dress himself.

Anna Maria doesn't know the meaning of this term, but it looks very much like "pickaninny"—a colloquialism derived from the Portuguese *pequinola*, meaning "small."⁵⁰ Here the term probably refers to a young wife who has a babe in arms. (Babies in Freetown today are still called "pickins.") Anna Maria also introduces polygamy here, but she is still loathe to make direct reference to this custom so widely practiced in Africa.

After setting nigh half an hour, Naimbana made his appearance and received us with seeming good will. He was dressed in a purple embroidered coat, white sattin [sic] waistcoat and breeches, thread stockings, and his left side emblazoned with a flaming star; his legs to be sure were harliquinied by a number of holes in the stockings, through which his black skin appeared.⁵¹

⁵⁰Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 24.

⁵¹Of the native men on the coast, Winterbottom wrote: "Those who can afford it are fond of indulging their vanity in imitating the European mode of dress, and of displaying all the finery they can procure. They love to deck themselves in tawdry embroidered silk clothes, with a profusion of gold

"Harliquin'd by holes." Is there any doubt that Anna Maria is a born writer?

Compliments ended, Mr. Falconbridge acquainted him with his errand by a repetition of what he wrote the day before, and complained much of King Jemmy's injustice in driving the [Granville Town] settlers away and burning their town.

The King answered through Eliotte (for he speaks but little English) that Jemmy was partly right—the people had brought it on themselves. They had taken part with some Americans with whom Jemmy had a dispute, and through that means drew the ill will of this man upon them, who had behaved, considering their conduct, as well as they merited. For he gave them three days notice before he burned their town that they might remove themselves and all their effects away; that he (Naimbana) could not prudently re-establish them, except by consent of all the Chiefs—for which purpose he must call a court or palaver; but it would be seven or eight days before they could be collected. However he would send a summons to the different parties directly and give Falconbridge timely advice when they were to meet.

Falconbridge perceived clearly nothing was to be effected without a palaver, and unless the King's interest was secured, his views would be frustrated and his endeavours ineffectual; but how this was to be done, or what expedient to adopt, he was at a loss for. He considered it impolitic to purchase his patronage by heavy presents lest the other great men might expect the same; and he had it not in his power to purchase them all in the same way, as the scanty cargo of the Lapwing would not admit of it.

At length, trusting that the praise-worthy purposes he was aiming at insured him the assistance of the King of Kings, he resolved to try what good words would do. Having prefaced his arguments with a small donation of some rum,

and silver tinsel, which often gives to the wearers a very ludicrous appearance." See Thomas Winterbottom, *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighborhood of Sierra Leone to which is Added an Account of the Present State of Medicine Among Them* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1969; first published in 1803), vol. 1, p.98; cf. Also Matthews, *Voyage*, pp. 4-5.

wine, a cheese, and a gold laced hat, which Naimbana seemed much pleased with, Falconbridge began by explaining what advantages would accrue to his Majesty and all the inhabitants round about by such an establishment as the St. George's Bay Company were desirous of making; ~~the good they wished to do~~ their disinterestedness in point of obtaining wealth, and concluded by expostulating on the injustice and imposition of dispossessing the late settlers of the grounds and houses they occupied, which had been honestly and honorably purchased by Captain Thompson of the Navy, in the name of our gracious Sovereign, his Britannic Majesty.

That it was unusual for Englishmen to forego fulfilling any engagements they made; and they held in detestation every person so disposed. He then entreated the King would use all his might to prevent any unfavourable prejudices which a refusal to reinstate the Settlers or to confirm the bargain made with Captain Thompson, might operate against him in the minds of his good friends the King of England and the St. George's Bay Company.

The King said he liked the English in preference to all white men, tho' he considered every white man as a rogue, and consequently saw them with a jealous eye. Yet he believed the English were by far the honestest, and for that reason, notwithstanding he had received more favors from the French than the English, he liked the latter much best.⁵²

He was decidedly of opinion that all contracts or agreements between man and man, however disadvantageous to either party, should be binding; but observed [that] he was hastily drawn in to dispose of land to Captain Thompson, which in fact he had not a right to sell, because says he, "this is a great country, and belongs to many people—where I live belongs to myself and I can live where I like; nay, can appropriate any unhabited land within my dominions to what use I please; but it is necessary for me to obtain the consent of my people, or rather the head man of every town, before I sell any land to a white man, or allow strangers to come and live among us."

⁵²European traders were generally considered depraved dogs by the natives. See e.g. Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 1, pp. 209-210, and Matthews, *Voyage*, p. 96.

"I should have done this you will say at first—Granted—but as I disobliged my subjects by suffering your people to take possession of the land without their approbation, from which cause I was not able to protect them unless I hazarded civil commotions in my country; and as they have been turned away—it is best now they should be replaced by the unanimous voice of all interested. I am bound from what I have heretofore done, to give my utmost support; and if my people do not acquiesce, it shall not be my fault."

Here Falconbridge, interrupting the King, said, "The King of the English will not blame your people, but load yourself with the stigma; it is King Naimbana who is ostensible to King George—and I hope King, you will not fall out with your good friend."

This being explained by Mr. Secretary Eliotte, his Majesty was some moments silent—when clasping Falconbridge in his arms, told him, "I believe you and King George are my good friends—do not fear, have a good heart, I will do as much as I can for you."

They then shook hands heartily, and Naimbana retired, I suppose to his Peginee woman's house, but presently returned dressed in a suit of black velvet, except the stockings, which were the same as before.

I often had an inclination to offer my services to close [mend] the holes, but was fearful lest my needle might blunder into his Majesty's leg and start the blood, for drawing the blood of an African King I am informed, whether occasioned by accident or otherwise, is punished with death. The dread of this only prevented me.

Anna Maria sits patiently through this long exchange, studying King Naimbana's torn stockings, amused by her impulse to mend them. The idea that she might do so while he was still wearing them is, of course, ridiculous, but won't it entertain her readers.

We were now invited to walk and see the town while dinner was preparing. It consists of about twenty houses irregularly placed, built of the same materials, but in a superior way to those of Adam's town. The whole of them are either occupied by the King's wives and servants or appropriated as warehouses.

I saw several of his wives, but his Pegininee [spelled *peginninee* earlier] woman is a most beautiful young girl of about fourteen. None of them are titled with the appellation of Queen but the oldest, who I was introduced to, and by whom the King has several children. One of the daughter's [sic], named Clara, is wife to Eliotte, and a son named Bartholomew is now in France for his education.

King Naimbana hedges his bets by sending one son to France and another to England for education. This matters because England and France were at war during the 1790s, and Freetown would be savaged by French ships after Anna Maria's departure.

In different parts of the town I observed some rags stuck on poles; at the foot of each were placed—perhaps a rusty cutlass, some pieces of broken glass and a pewter bason containing a liquid of some sort. These are called Gree Grees and considered as antidotes against the Devil's vengeance. I was thoughtlessly offering to examine one of them when Mr. Eliotte requested me to desist or I should give offence, they being held in a very sacred point of view.⁵³

Anna Maria sees in 1792 what every traveler in Africa still sees today—the leather bracelet around the naked child's waist and forearm, the small pouch containing protective charms suspended on a thong around the neck, the wisps of cloth or paper stuck on bamboo poles or tacked to roofbeams, the nameless twists of evil-looking string and bones hung in the rafters. The facial scars which evoke spirit diets. The trays of strange barks and herbs and roots and broken bones and horn and salves for sale in every African market.

She is scornful of the medicine men, not understanding that they predicted fate, supplied the countless charms, and led the rituals that must be followed to avoid angering the evil spirits. She can only pity a people who are more concerned with the devil than with their gods.

She does not realize that these "Gree Greemen" are both priests and medicine men, skilled in making herbal compounds, and among the most revered members of their society. She would hardly believe that they spend a lifetime learning their

⁵³Also spelt *grisgris*, *grigris*, or *gregory*, a European term of African origin meaning fetish (from *feiticaria*, witchcraft). These were amulets to ward off the effects of witchcraft or the malice of evil spirits. See Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 1, p. 99. Matthews wrote: "To remove one of them, even unknowingly, is a great offence, and subjects the aggressor to a palaver, or action in their courts of law." See Matthews, *Voyage*, p. 67.

profession, the histories of their tribe, and the complicated genealogy of their ancestors who are the privileged inhabitants of the spirit world. It would be beyond credulity to her that only a special few among each tribe ever display the mystical attributes regarded as essential in the animist priesthood, and that those who do qualify need almost supernatural talents for swaying crowds, holding complete attention, hypnotism, and convincing their peers of their wisdom.

No one explains to her that the Africans are not actually worshiping fetishes, but are only using symbolic figures to represent the spirits to whom they appeal for mercy or fertility or bounteous harvests.

We were now led to the garden, which was only furnished with African plants such as pines [pineapples], melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, &c. &c. The King cut two beautiful pines and presented to me. He then shewed us a large new house, at present building for him, which is after the same form and of the same materials with the rest of his town, but much larger.

In our walk we saw many of the King's slaves employed in preparing the palm-nut to make oil from them. [This palm oil is far superior for cooking to anything among the ships' stale provisions.] It may not be amiss here to give you some description of the tree which produce these nuts. It is remarkable strait [sic] and of a gigantic height; the trunk is quite naked, having neither limb or bark, for the only branches grow immediately from the top, and incline their points somewhat towards the ground. This is a valuable tree: the nut not only produces a quantity of oil, but is esteemed excellent food by the natives, who also extract a liquor from the tree, which they call palm wine.⁵⁴ This, I am told, is done by means of an incision in the upper part of the trunk, in which a pipe is entered to convey the liquor into bottles placed beneath. [A few days' fermentation are all that is needed to produce a potent brew, thoroughly intoxicating and very wasteful of both man's labor and the injured palm tree.]

I have tasted some of this wine, and do not think it unpleasant when fresh made; it has a sweetish taste, and much the look of whey, but foments in a few days, and grows sour—however, I really think this liquor distilled would make a decent kind of spirit.

⁵⁴Palm produce was to become an important export commodity during the nineteenth century.

Having seen all the raree-shows⁵⁵ of Robana town, we returned to the Queen's house to dinner, which was shortly after put on a table covered with a plain calico cloth, and consisted of boiled and broiled fowls, rice, and some greens resembling our spinach [sic]. But I should tell you, before dinner Naimbana again changed his dress for a scarlet robe embroidered with gold.

Naimbana, Eliotte, Falconbridge, and myself only set down; the Queen stood behind the King eating an onion I gave her, a bite of which she now and then indulged her Royal Consort with. Silver forks were placed on the King's plate, and mine, but no where else.⁵⁶

The King is rather above common height, but meagre withal; the features of his face resemble a European more than any black I have seen; his teeth are mostly decayed, and his hair, or rather wool, bespeaks old age, which I judge to be about eighty; he was seldom without a smile on his countenance, but I think his smiles were suspicious.

He gave great attention while Falconbridge was speaking, for though he does not speak our language, he understands a good deal of it; his answers were slow, and on the whole tolerably reasonable. The Queen is of a middle stature, plump and jolly; her temper seems placid and accommodating; her teeth are bad, but I dare say she has otherwise been a good looking woman in her youthful days. I suppose her now to be about forty-five or six, at which age women are considered old here.

She sat on the King's right hand, while he and Falconbridge were in conversation, and now and then would clap her hands, and cry out Ya hoo,

⁵⁵Raree-show: originally, a show contained or carried about in a box; a peep-show, or spectacle.

⁵⁶John Clarkson, first governor of Freetown, wrote of a meal with King Naimbana on July 25, 1792: "When we sat down to dinner, the queen and her daughters and other attendants sat down on the ground outside the tent." E. G. Ingham, *Sierra Leone after a Hundred Years* (London; Frank Cass, 1968), p. 27. Ingham contains a condensed and sanitized version of the diary of John Clarkson.

which signifies, that's well or proper. She was dressed in the country manner, but in a dignified stile [sic], having several yards of striped taffety [sic] wrapped round her waist, which served as a petticoat; another piece of the same was carelessly thrown over her shoulders in form of a scarf; her head was decorated with two silk handkerchiefs, her ears with rich gold ear-rings, and her neck with gaudy necklaces; but she had neither shoes nor stockings on.

The italics are Anna Maria's, telling us how strong are her feelings of propriety, yet the Queen's bare breasts are unmentionable.

Clara was dressed much after the same way, but her apparel was not quite of such good materials as the Queen's. Mr. Eliotte apologized after dinner that for want of sugar they could not offer tea or coffee.

The tide serving and approaching night obliged us to re-embark and return to this place. On the whole I was much pleased with the occurrences of the day. Indeed, methinks I hear you saying, "Why the week [sic] mind of this giddy girl will be quite intoxicated with the courtesy and attention paid her by such great folks." But believe me, to whatever height of self-consequence I may have been lifted by aerial fancies, overpowering sleep prevailed, and clouding all my greatness—awoke next morning without the slightest remains of fancied importance.

The news of our arrival having by this time circulated through different parts of the country, we found several who either excited by curiosity or some other cause, had come here to pay their obeisance, or as the Africans term it, make service to us. But there was none of note or quality worth naming among those visitors, except an elderly man called Pa, or Father Boson,⁵⁷ who is the head man of a considerable town about fifty miles up the river, and who, guided by the impulse of a good heart, invited the wretched exiles [that is, the scattered settlers of Granville town] in the hour of distress to refuge at his place, which was excepted [accepted] by the greater part, who have been fostered and protected ever since by the almsdeeds of this good old man. He was habited in

⁵⁷'After a certain age the title of pa, or father, is prefixed to the names of men, as a token of respect.' See Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 1, p. 211.

a white linen surplice and a cap of the same, and made, I assure you, a reverential appearance. I am told this is the dress of a nation in the interior country, called Mundingoes; but Pa Boson is not a Mundingo himself.

What Anna Maria calls a surplice is in West Africa called a *boubou*—an ankle-length robe of white or pastel cotton, generally embroidered around the yoke, with long sleeves. The cotton is cool in the hot climate and keeps away insects by covering almost all exposed flesh. The cotton cap, also embroidered, is round, about four inches high, with a flat top. This is still the country costume of the Muslim population today. And the Mandingo tribe still follows the teachings of Islam.

He respectfully accosted me in broken English, and bending his knee, offered me his right hand supported under the elbow by his left. I held out my hand which he slightly touched, and then repeated the same to Falconbridge. He was now invited to be seated under the awning we had erected over the Lapwing's deck—when he detailed a most pitiable account of sufferings and hardships which the unfortunate people [the displaced settlers of Granville Town] had undergone. But he said there were many bad people among them, who had abused his kindness by ingratitude.

Falconbridge and myself endeavoured what we could to convince him we were highly pleased with his behaviour; but as words are not sufficient to convey thankful acknowledgments in this country, Falconbridge confirmed the assurances we made by a present of a quantity of rum and some hardware, and a promise to represent his conduct to the St. George's Bay Company in a proper light, which he was certain would induce them to make a more ample recompence at a future time.

Well pleased with his reception and somewhat inebriated with the effects of repeated glasses of spirits he had taken, Pa Boson left us; but first promising faithfully he would befriend us all in his power at the Palaver.

He travelled with much seeming consequence. His canoe was longer than our cutter and manned with fourteen people, viz. ten oarsmen, a cockswain, two poignard bearers, and another who beat time on a flat sounding drum to a song given out by the cockswain and re-echoed by the oarsmen. The song, I am told, was expressive of praises to their Chief and of their satisfaction for the treatment they had received from us.

The following day we visited a small island named Tasso, opposite to Bance island, at about one mile and a half distance. This is a well wooded island and I should suppose if cultivated would be a fruitful one.⁵⁸ (A small part of this island is now planted with cotton, coffee and sugar cane, for account of Messrs. Andersons.) It supplies Bance Island with water, which is remarkable fine, and the present holders of the latter claim a right to this also, but upon what grounds I cannot say.

Fresh water is of vital importance. The estuary of the Rokel River is, of course, tidal and therefore salty or brackish a good distance inland.

Approaching the shore I saw many monkies [sic] playing on the beach and catching small fish at the edge of the water, but they all ran away as we drew near. Being informed there was no danger to be apprehended from wild beasts of prey, we penetrated some distance into the woods.

In our walk we saw many pineapples and lime trees, the spontaneous production of the country, and a variety of birds beautifully plumed, but none that sung. We were also treated with the perfumes of fragrant aromatic plants, and indeed were vastly delighted and entertained, though I felt fatigued with our perambulation.

The next day we went up the river about twelve miles to see a secret or reserved factory belonging to Bance Island at a place called Marre Bump,⁵⁹ but our curiosity had nearly led us into a serious scrape. Falconbridge neglected to obtain permission, and consequently had no sanction from the proprietors. After landing we walked at least half a mile on a narrow path, through amazing thick woods before we reached the houses. As soon as the inhabitants perceived us, the women took to their heels and ran to the woods, the men

⁵⁸Larger than Bance Island, Tasso possessed a rich and well-drained soil. The Company had tried to 'purchase' it, but the slave-traders on Gambia Island out-bid them; see Elen Gibson Wilson, *John Clarkson and the African Adventure* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 88.

⁵⁹An island, Marabump (or Marrabump) was called Mabenka Island on nineteenth-century Admiralty charts.

flew to arms, and in a moment we were met by more than twenty huge fellows armed with guns, pistols and cutlasses. We were four in number, viz. Falconbridge, the master of the cutter, a black man and myself. Our black spoke to them in their own language they would not listen to him; but said if we did not return immediately the way we came, they would put us all to death.

It is easier for you to imagine what horrors those threats occasioned than for me to point them out. Finding argument fruitless, we put to the right about and hastened to our boat. They, following, flanked us on each side of the road, watchfully observing our motions till they saw us clear off, when, as a mark of exultation, they discharged their muskets over our heads and made the woods ring with peals of triumphant clamours.

Recovering from my fright a little, I could not help, you may suppose, exulting (though in a different way) as well as the savages. My heart overflow'd with gratitude to the Author of its animation for our providential escape.

Anna Maria never uses the term God, but she invokes his image frequently to account for any inexplicable event.

Returning down the river, we observed numbers of orange trees. A cluster of them, overloaded with fruit, invited us on shore, and after gathering what we chose, made the best of our way and arrived here before night.

Three days are now elapsed since our expedition to Marre Bump, during which time I have confined myself mostly on board, occupied in writing this letter. It has been really a fatiguing job, being obliged to sit in bed with a book placed on my knee, which serves for a writing desk. But I was determined, whatever the inconveniencies might be, not to let slip an opportunity, as I find they but seldom offer. I lament the Palaver is not over, that I might give you my account of an African Court, but my next will remedy this loss.

Mr. Eliotte has informed us the Chiefs will be at Robana the day after tomorrow, when Falconbridge is desired to attend. I shall accompany him, and long to know the result.

Adieu, Heaven bless you, &c. &c.

LETTER IIIA. This should be letter IV, an error that was not corrected in the 1802 edition.]

GRANVILLE TOWN, SIERRA LEONE May 13, 1791.

My dear Friend,

Occasional visits to Bance island, unattended by any important Occurrence worth troubling you with, and a continual concourse of strangers making their African compliments, engrossed two days interval between the date of my last letter and our second expedition to Robana; when we set out in a boat and four hands, taking with us plenty of spirits for the common people and a little wine for the King and his associates.

When we came in sight of the Town, Multitudes of people thronged to the Beach. Mr. Elliotte met us at the boat, and the croud [*sic*] formed an avenue through which he conducted us to the Queen's house amidst such thundering acclamations that it was almost impossible to hear one or other speak.

The King and Queen met us at the door and seemed to give us a hearty welcome. We were then ushered in and introduced in general terms to the company, consisting of the parties who were to compose the Court (and a multiplicity of women), their wives, daughters, and attendants, having seated ourselves, and wasted almost an hour in receiving the civilities of shaking hands with every individual in the room.

The members of the Court then took their seats round the large table we dined off when first there, which was now covered with a green cloth. The King sat at the head of the table in an old arm chair. On his right was his secretary, and on his left his Palavar man, or, as the office is termed in England, his Attorney general [actually, "orator" would be a more precise term]. The other Chiefs appeared to seat themselves by seniority; the oldest next to the Throne, if I may so term the old chair.

The throne is probably an much-used occasional chair acquired from some European ship.

The King wore his hat, which was the gold-laced one Falconbridge gave him. On the table was placed wine and rum, of which every one helped himself plentifully. I was astonished to see not only the men, but women, drink rum in

half pints at a time, as deliberately as I would water.

After amusing themselves some time in this way, Mr. Palaver Man got up, bending his right knee, presented his Majesty with some Cola [a small nut which the Africans chew as a stimulant and offer to guests as a token of hospitality; constant use turns the teeth a dark reddish-brown]⁶⁰ from the crown of his hat, then retired to the opposite end of the table, when he opened the business of the day by a speech of at least an hour and an half long. It being in their own language, I of course did not understand a word, but during the time he spoke, there was the greatest silence and attention observed.

The next spokesman was King Jemmy, who previously went through the same ceremony his predecessor had done. Whether this man's language was eloquent or not, I cannot be a judge, but his vociferation [sic] was enough to deafen one; though I had reason to think what he said gave great satisfaction to the by-standers, who frequently interrupted him by clapping of hands and shouts of Ya Hoo! Ya Hoo! Ya Hoo! and other tokens of applause.⁶¹

My heart quivered with fear lest they might be forming some treacherous contrivance; I could not conceal the uneasiness I felt. My countenance betrayed me, a shower of tears burst from my eyes, and I swooned into

⁶⁰Matthews and Winterbottom expanded on its symbolic significance. Cola, writes Matthews, "is presented to guests at their arrival and departure—sent in complimentary presents to chiefs—is a considerable article of inland trade . . . and frequently made the token of peace or war." Matthews, *Voyage*, p. 60. "Kola is always presented to guests, in visits of ceremony or of friendship, and is looked upon as a mark of great politeness . . . at public meetings, or palavers between different nations, it is a substitute for the olive branch." Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 1, p. 77. Kola also formed an important part of the red water ordeal. See A.P. Kup, ed., *Adam Afzelius, Sierra Leone Journals, 1795-96* (Uppsala, 1967), p. 25.

⁶¹Here is the forerunner of the enthusiastic responses characteristic of African-American church congregations today.

hystericks.⁶²

The room is not large. Adobe houses with thatch roofs cannot be very large. The temperature rises as the day progresses. The air is dusty from months without rain and closely packed with warm, sweating bodies. Anna Maria is seated in the vortex of the noise and smells. She has listened to several hours of vigorous oratory, punctuated with much noise for emphasis and waving of arms to stress important points—all in a language she does not understand and in claustrophobic setting. Are these shouting men threatening their English visitors? She has no way of knowing, but if they are, then she is trapped with no avenue of escape. She cannot get enough air into her lungs and feels as though she might suffocate. Her heart begins to thump in dismay, her ears ring, her stomach churns. She has never heard of a panic attack, but her nerves are frayed with her growing anxiety. She faints.

Recovering in a short time, I observed every one around treating me with the utmost kindness and endeavouring to convince me that neither insult or injury would be offered us. But my fears were not to be removed or even checked hastily, for I had scarcely got the better of my fright at Marre Bump; however I struggled to awaken my resolution, and collected enough after awhile to affect composure; but believe me, it was mere affectation. Night was drawing nigh, and I solicited Falconbridge to return as soon as possible. He argued [that] the Court had been impeded by the awkward situation my fears had thrown me into, but he would set out time enough to reach Bance Island before dark.

Their hasty conversation is whispered with bent heads close together in an effort to prevent others from hearing them. Falconbridge has no sympathy for her fears, is furious that she has interrupted the proceedings, and makes no bones about telling her so. Anna Maria pleads with him to let her out of that room and into the fresh air, but she can see in the way he grits his teeth and spits out his words that she will have to gather herself together and cope until this ordeal is over. She breathes as deeply as she can, closes her eyes, and turns her mind resolutely away from her immediate surroundings. She tries to picture a winter snowfall in Bristol while the loud voices drone on, but it is so difficult to blot out the tumult around her.

The Assembly now resumed their business. One or two members offered Cola to the King, which he refused. A grey-headed old man then made the offer, and it being accepted, he took the foot of the table, and a few words

⁶²Among native African women, hysteria, “and the whole train of nervous diseases are totally unknown.” Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 2, p. 205.

compleating [sic] what he had to say. Mr. Eliotte intimated that King Naimbana intended to give his sentiments; upon which every member rose up, and the King continuing in his chair, covered, delivered his speech in a concise, clear, and respectable manner.

After this Mr. Eliotte acquainted Falconbridge [that] the Court could not come to one mind that night, but it was generally understood [that] if he would give fifteen hundred Bars (A Bar is the nominal price of a certain quantity of goods, which the natives formerly considered of equal value with a bar of iron; but at present they do not appear to have any criterion: two pounds of tobacco is a bar, and two yards of fine India cotton, or a yard of rich silk is no more), they would confirm King Naimbana's engagement with Captain Thompson, and re-establish his people.

Falconbridge, whom you know is naturally of an irritable disposition, quickened at Eliotte's information; but had prudence enough only to say [that] he should consider such a demand very extravagant, and his small cargo, which he was desired to appropriate another way, would not permit him to pay so much, [even] if he had the inclination.

Enough of being discreet. Alexander Falconbridge's temper is always close to the surface, and Anna Maria is tired of pretending otherwise.

We then made our congees⁶⁴ and took leave of those African *gentry*. Indeed it was high time, for the liquor they had drank began to operate powerfully. Mr. Eliotte and several others accompanied us to the boat. In our walk thither, he much admired a handsome fowling piece of Mr. Falconbridge's, which Falconbridge without hesitation requested he would accept, thinking such an immediate shew [sic] of generosity might have a favourable tendency. Both of us promised to be down again the following day, when it was expected the Palavar would be finished; but I must be honest and tell you, I was resolved not to visit Robana again while this mock judicatory lasted.

About seven o'clock we reached the Cutter. I was almost famished with want of food, for I had not eat [sic] a morsel the whole day. There was not a thing on board

⁶⁴Made a retiring bow.

but salt beef, so hard we were obliged to chop it with an axe, and some mouldy, rotten biscuits; however, so great was my hunger, that I could not help satisfying it with some of this beef and bread, uncouth as it was.

In the morning I feigned sickness and begged to be excused from attending Falconbridge; he therefore set out, reluctantly leaving me behind. When he was gone, I went on shore and spent the day in comfort and pleasantries under the hospitable roof of Bance Island house, where I related the adventures of the preceding day, which afforded much mirth and glee to the company.

I met one Rennieu (a Frenchman) there. He has a factory at a small Island called Gambia, up another branch of this River, named Bunch River, whither he politely invited me, and made a tender of any thing in his power to serve us.⁶⁵

Before Falconbridge returned, which was not till between eight and nine o'clock at night, I had not only got on board, but in bed, and as he did not ask how I had spent the day, I did not inform him. He was vexed and out of humour, said he thought the wretches were only *bamboozling* him; he believed they would do nothing but drink the liquor while he had a drop to carry them, for he was no forwarder than the day before.

In this manner he was obliged to repeat his visits for five successive days before he got their final decision, which however, was at last tolerably favorable on our side. They consented to re-establish the people and to grant to the St. George's Bay Company all the land King Naimbana had formerly sold Captain Thompson, for a paltry consideration of about thirty pounds; and for the good faith and true performance of the contract, the King said he would pledge his second son John Frederic [also known as John Henry], whom Falconbridge might take with him to England. In answer to this offer, Falconbridge told Naimbana he would be very glad to take his son to England, where he was sure the Company would have him educated and treated kindly without considering him as a hostage. This

⁶⁵The French had been on this island since 1785, when Naimbana granted it to them. Renaud ('Rennieu'), the Agent in Falconbridge's time, was on good terms with the colony. In 1796, Despite being at war with all British shipping in the area, the Frenchman was reluctant to attack the settlement. Afzelius, *Jurnal*, pp. 135, 83.

pleased the old man vastly, and it was agreed John Frederic [Henry] shall accompany us when we leave Africa.⁶⁶

The following or sixth day, Falconbridge had engaged to carry down to Robana the stipulated goods for repurchasing [sic] the land, and by his importunities I was prevailed on to accompany him. We arrived early in the morning, and having soon made a delivery of the goods, which was all the business for the day, I was just about expressing a desire to see some salt works I learned were upon the Island, when the King, as though he had anticipated my wishes, enquired if we liked to see them? If so, he would walk their [sic] with us.⁶⁷ We accordingly went, passing in our way a hamlet or two, inhabited by Kings slaves.

These works lay near a mile from the town, and are a parcel of small holes or basons [sic] formed in a low, muddy place; they are supplied with sea water, which the burning sun quickly exhales, leaving the saline particles, and by frequent repetition, a quantity of salt is thus accumulated, which the King conveys into, and disposes of in the interior country, for slaves. Making this salt is attended with a very trifling expence, for none but old, refuse, female slaves, are employed in the work, and the profit is considerable.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Also known as John Henry Naimbana, or the 'Black Prince' (1767-1793). Zachary Macaulay published an account of his life in 1796, entitled *The African Prince*, reproduced in full in P. Edwards and J. Walvin, ed., *Black Personalities of the Era of the Slave Trade* (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 204-210.

⁶⁷"... the natives of the sea-coast will not permit the import of [salt] in European vessels, because it would interfere with the only article of their own manufacture which they have for inland trade." Matthews, *A Voyage*, p. 146.

⁶⁸Salt, "is an article so highly valued, and so eagerly sought after, by the natives, that they will part with their wives and children, and everything dear to them, to obtain it, when they have not slaves to dispose of; and it always makes a part of the merchandize for the purchase of slaves in the interior country." Matthews, *Voyage*, p. 146. 'Refuse slaves' was a slave-

Early in the afternoon we returned to Bance Island, taking Clara, the wife of Eliotte, with us. She remained with me several days, during which I had opportunities (for I made a point of it) to try her disposition. I found it impetuous, litigious, and implacable. I endeavoured to persuade her to dress in the European way, but to no purpose. She would tear the clothes off her back immediately after I put them on. Finding no credit could be gained by trying to new fashion this Ethiopian Princess, I got rid of her as soon as possible.

Anna Maria obviously enjoys consorting with royalty, but Princess Clara annoys her by thwarting Anna Maria's desire to improve her appearance. Can't the woman see how much her better she would look in European clothes?

Falconbridge now had effected the grand object. He was next to collect and settle the miserable refugees. No time was to be lost in accomplishing this. The month of February was nearly spent. Only three months of dry weather remained for them to clear their land, build their houses, and prepare their ground for a crop to support them the ensuing year. He therefore dispatched a Greek,⁶⁹ who came out in the *Lapwing* with some of the blacks, up to Pa Boson's to gather and bring down the people while we went in the Cutter, taking a few who were at Bance Island, to locate an eligible place, for the settlement.

The spot they were driven from was to be preferred to any other part; but by treaty it was agreed they should not settle there. There were other situations nearly as good, and better considerably than the one fixed on; but immediate convenience was a powerful inducement.

Here was a small village with seventeen pretty good huts which the natives had evacuated from a persuasion they were infested by some evil spirits; but as they made no objection to our occupying them, we gladly took possession, considering it

trader's term for the physically worthless. One of Thomas Clarkson's queries to his brother John was, "whether having old slaves to sell they [the Africans] put them to Death when they cannot find a Purchaser, or put them into their Plantations to work." British Library, Clarkson Papers, Additional Manuscripts 4126A, vol. 1.

⁶⁹Falconbridge's servant, Theodore Kalingee. Fyfe, A History, p. 30.

a fortunate circumstance to have such temporary shelter for the whole of our people.

Falconbridge collected 64⁷⁰ of the original settlers and took them back to Fourah Bay. He knew their number was too small for safety. He distributed tools and arms and sent frantic letters to London begging for an armed ship to protect them.

When those from Pa Bosons had joined us, Falconbridge called them all together, making forty-six, including men and women; and after representing the charitable intentions of his coming to Africa, and issuing to them such cloathing [sic] as were sent out in the *Lapwing*; he exhorted in the most pathetic language that they might merit by their industry and good behaviour the notice now taken of them, endeavour to remove the unfavourable prejudices that had gone abroad, and thereby deserve further favours from their friends in England; who, besides the cloaths they had already received, had sent them tools of all kinds for cultivating their land, also arms and ammunition to defend themselves, if necessary; that these articles would be brought on shore when they got a storehouse built; where they would be lodged for their common good and occasional use. He then concluded this harangue by saying he now named the place GRANVILLE TOWN,⁷¹ after their friend and benefactor, GRANVILLE SHARP, Esq., at whose instance they were provided with the relief now afforded them.

I never did, and God grant I never may again, witness so much misery as I was forced to be a spectator of here. Among the outcasts were seven of our country women, decrepid [*sic*] with disease and so disguised with filth and dirt that I should never have supposed they were born white. Add to this, almost naked from head to foot; in short, their appearance was such as I think would extort compassion from the most callous heart. But I declare they seemed insensible to shame or the wretchedness of their situation themselves. I begged they would get washed and gave them what cloaths I could conveniently spare. Falconbridge had a hut appropriated as a hospital, where they were kept separate from the other settlers, and by his attention and care, they recovered in a few weeks.

⁷⁰Anna Maria says 46, but reports indicate that 64 were actually assembled. Possible typo?

⁷¹Located on Fourah Bay, about three miles east of the original settlement.

I always supposed these people had been transported as convicts, but some conversation I lately had with one of the women has partly undeceived me. She said the women were mostly of that description of persons who walk the streets of London and support themselves by the earnings of prostitution; that men were employed to collect and conduct them to Wapping, where they were intoxicated with liquor, then inveigled on board of ship and married to *black men* whom they had never seen before; that the morning after she was married, she really did not remember a syllable of what had happened over night, and when informed, was obliged to inquire, *who was her husband?* After this to the time of their sailing, they were amused and buoyed up by a prodigality of fair promises and great expectations which awaited them in the country they were going to. "Thus," in her own words, "to the disgrace of my mother country, upwards of one hundred unfortunate women were seduced from England to practice their iniquities more brutishly in this horrid country."

Good heavens! how the relation of this tale made me shudder. I questioned its veracity and enquired of the other women, who exactly corroborated what I had heard. Nevertheless, I cannot altogether reconcile myself to believe it; for it is scarcely possible that the British Government at this advanced and enlightened age, envied and admired as it is by the universe, could be capable of exercising or countenancing such a Gothic infringement on human Liberty.⁷²

⁷²Falconbridge's account has been treated with great skepticism in some quarters. For some reasoned objections, see C. Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

Fyfe, in *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, elucidates: "The story of this 'Gothic infringement on human Liberty' has been repeated again and again. But the details are dubious. The very comprehensive official papers dealing with the embarkation of the 'Black Poor', and listing the white women passengers, give no hint of their having been abducted (PRO, series TI, in bundles 630-38, 641-43). More significantly, the London newspapers, most of which were extremely hostile to the scheme, and gave it a lot of adverse publicity, did not mention something that would have been ready-made to discredit it, if it had been authentic. Such 'marriages' were not valid under the then English law, and as several months elapsed between the period when the women embarked, and their final sailing for Sierra Leone, anyone who had wanted to, could have gone ashore. So even if brought on board in

Immediately after we had fixed on this Place for the settlement, I singled out one of the best huts for my own residence; where I remained nigh a month, though I did not sleep on shore the whole time. About a fortnight I continued to go on board the Cutter at night, when it was necessary to send her to Bance Island. I then had a kind of bedstead, not unlike an hospital cradle, erected in my hovel; but the want of a door was some inconvenience, and as no deal or other boards could be procured for the purpose, I made a country mat supply the place—for I now find 'tis necessary to accommodate myself to whatever I meet with, there being but few conveniencies or accommodating things to be met with in this part of Africa.

Anna Maria learns very quickly that there is little privacy in Africa. A mat hanging in a doorway would be no impediment to curious neighbors, who would pop in unannounced because knocking is not part of their culture. Neither adobe nor mats can be knocked on.

The river abounds with fine fish, and we get abundance of them; which, with rice, wild deer, and some poultry, forms my common food since I came to Granville Town. In something less than four weeks we got a large store-house and several additional huts for the settlers built, and had the goods landed from the Lapwing—they consist chiefly of ironmongery, such as blacksmiths and plantation tools, a prodigious number of children's trifling halfpenny knives, and some few dozen scissars [sic] of the same description.⁷³

I am charitable enough to think the benevolent gentleman who purchased those goods had a double purpose in view, viz. to serve his sister,⁷⁴ from

a drunken state, they must have agreed to stay—indeed at least a dozen of them signed the agreement signed by the other settlers contracting themselves to be bound by the rules of the settlement . . . Nor were there “upwards of one hundred.” The sailing lists show sixty-three “White Women married to Black Men,” and another seven “White Women waiting to be married.” Public Record Office, T1/643.487.

⁷³The latter two items could be used as trade goods to barter food from the Africans.

⁷⁴Granville Sharp's brother James was a London ironmonger. When he died, Sharp managed the business for his widow. Fyfe, Anna Maria

whom he bought them—and the persons to whom they are sent; but certainly he was unacquainted with the quality of the latter articles, or he must have known they were very improper gifts of charity.

A part of the store-house being partitioned off for us, we took up our abode there whenever it was ready for our reception—it is rather larger, and consequently more cool, which is the only preference I can give it to the last habitation.

The men all do duty as militia, and we have a constant guard kept during the night;⁷⁵ but the natives seem to dread this spot so much that we see very few, and I really think have less to fear from them than our own people, who are extremely turbulent, and so unruly at times that 'tis with difficulty Falconbridge can assuage them, or preserve the least decorum.

He was desired by the Company to build a fort, and they sent out six pieces of cannon, which are now on board the Lapwing—but omitted to send carriages, and consequently the guns are useless; though if they were compleat, Falconbridge thinks it would not be prudent to trust them with the present settlers from a belief that they might apply them improperly.

He is also requested by his instructions to collect as many samples of country productions as he can, and he wished to employ some of the people in that way, but none would give their services for less than half a guinea per day, which price he has been forced to pay them. This is the greatest instance of ingratitude I ever met with.

We were alarmed a little while since by dreadful shouts in the vicinity of our town, and supposed the natives meant to attack us. Immediately Falconbridge armed his militia and marched out towards where the noise was heard,—they

Falconbridge, p. 41.

⁷⁵Under Sharp's eccentric constitution of 'Frankpledge', all householders were obliged to participate in 'watch and ward', i.e., serve as militiamen for the protection of the community.

had not gone far when they met three or four Panyarers,⁷⁶ or man thieves, just in the act of ironing a poor victim they had caught hunting, and the shouts we heard proved to be rejoicings of the banditti.

Falconbridge did not think it advisable to rescue the prisoner by force or to interfere further than what words would do; and as some of the Panyarers spoke English, he remonstrated against the devilish deed they were committing, but to little effect. They said somebody belonging to the prisoner's town had injured them, and it was the custom of their country to retaliate on any person living in the same place with an offender, if they could not get himself, which the present case was an example of.

They then carried him away, and in all probability this man will be deprived of his liberty while he lives by the barbarous customs of his country, for the imaginary offences of another.

I omitted mentioning in my last letter that the day after we arrived at Bance Island, Mr. William Falconbridge, in consequence of a trifling dispute with his brother, separated from us, and went into the service of Messrs. Anderson's [sic], but his constitution was not adapted for this unhospitable climate. He went down the coast to York Island, in the river Sherbro, about twenty leagues distance, where he was unavoidably exposed to the severity of the weather, from which he got a fever; and although he immediately returned to Bance Island and had every assistance administered, yet, I am sorry to say, the irresistible conqueror, Death, made all endeavours fruitless, and hurried him to eternity yesterday, after a short illness of four days.

The tornados, or thunder squalls, which set in at this season of the year preceding the continued rains, have commenced some time. The vivid intense lightning from dismal black clouds make them awfully beautiful. They are accompanied with violent winds and heavy rains, succeeded by an abominable stench from the earth and disagreeable hissings and noises from frogs, crickets, and many other insects which the rains draw out.

⁷⁶"Another word from Portuguese, *apanhar*, to catch." Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 41.

Musquettos [sic] also are growing so troublesome as to oblige us to keep continued smokes in and about the house. [Mosquito nets had not yet been invented.] I have not seen any serpents, but am told there are abundance, and some very venomous. Here are a vast variety of beautiful lizards constantly about the door catching flies: and I have often seen the changable camelion [sic].

Anna Maria has no way of knowing that the mosquitos carry malaria, endemic in the area, and the cause of many of the fevers she writes about. As for serpents, the peninsula has green mambas (deadly), kraits (also deadly), night adders (deadly), and spitting cobras (not deadly, but a real danger when spitting poison into human eyes). She does not mention spiders, some as big as saucers, which crawl out of their hiding places after dark.

We have not yet been troubled by any of the ferocious wild beasts which inhabit the mountains of Sierra Leone; but I understand there are numbers, both tygers [sic] and lions, besides divers other kinds.⁷⁷

I have now in spirits [in a bottle of alcohol] an uncommon insect, which was caught here a day or two ago, in the act of stinging a Lascar, (one of the settlers).⁷⁸ It is rather larger than a locust, covered with a tortoise coloured shell, has forceps like a lobster, and thin transparent wings like a fly; the bite has thrown the poor Lascar into a dreadful fever, which I fear will carry him off.

I have three monkees, one a very handsome Capuchin, with a sulphur coloured beard of great length. Nature seems to have been astonishingly sportive in taste and prodigality here, both of vegetable and animal productions, for I

⁷⁷"Lions are said to be on the heights of Sierra-Leone; but I never yet saw any myself, nor have any persons upon whose veracity I could depend; but they have leopards in abundance, equally fierce and rapacious as the lion." Matthews, *Voyage*, pp. 39-40.

⁷⁸Lascar: an East Indian sailor, 'a tent-pitcher', an inferior class of artilleryman, or in the Portuguese laschar, native police or soldier (OED). "The 'Black Poor' included a few Lascar seamen stranded in London." Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 43.

cannot stir out without admiring the beauties or deformities of her creation. Every thing I see is entirely new to me, and notwithstanding the eye quickly becomes familiarized and even satiated with views which we are daily accustomed to; yet there is such a variety here as to afford a continual zest to the sight.

To be frank, if I had a little agreeable society, a few comforts, and could insure the same good health I have hitherto enjoyed, I should not be against spending some years of my life in Africa; but wanting those sweeteners of life, I certainly wish to return to where they may be had.

This is the first time that Anna Maria admits in her journal that she is both lonesome and homesick. Falconbridge is not a happy camper, nor does he notice his young wife gritting her teeth at his obliviousness of her feelings.

When that will be is not in my power at present to tell; but if I have a chance of writing to you again, I then may be able. In the interim accept an honest farewel [sic] from

Your affectionate, &c.

LETTER IV. [actually LETTER V]

GRANVILLE TOWN, June 8, 1791.

My dear Madam,

Since my last I have been to the French Factory [on Gambia Island], visited several neighbouring towns, and made myself a little intimate with the history, manners, customs, &c. of the inhabitants of this part of Africa, which, it seems, was first discovered by the Portugueze [sic], who named it Serra de Leone, or Mountain of Lions.⁷⁹ The tract of country now called Serra Leone is a Peninsula one half the year, and an island the other—that is, during the rains the isthmus is overflowed. The river, which was formerly called Tagrin, now takes its name from the country. [The river is called the Rokel today.] At its entrance it is about ten miles from one Promontory to the other, but here, it is scarcely half that distance across, and a few miles higher up it becomes very narrow indeed. It is not navigable for large vessels any higher than Bance Island, but small craft may go a great distance up.

Besides the islands I have mentioned, there are several others, uninhabited, between this and Bance Island.

Granville Town is situated in a pretty deep bay on the south side of the river, about nine miles above Cape Sierra Leone (the Cape lies in 8.28. N. Lat. . . . 12.30. W. Lon.), fifteen below Bance Island, and six [sixteen?] from Robana. Half a mile below us is the town of one Pa Duffee; two miles lower down is King Jemmy's; and beyond him is Queen Yamacubba's, and two or three small places. A mile above us Signor Domingo lives, and a little higher one Pa Will. I have been at all these places, and find a great similitude in the appearance of the people, their behaviour, mode of living, building, amusements, &c.

The men are tall and stout, and was it not that their legs are generally small in

⁷⁹A number of explanations are offered for the name. The most logical is that the thunder storms that break over the hills in the rainy season sounds like lions roaring.

proportion to their bodies, and somewhat crooked, I should call them well limbed. The mode of treating infants 'till they are able to walk accounts for their being bandy legged. A few days after a woman is delivered, she takes her child on her back to wherever her vocation leads her with both its legs buckled round her waist and the calves pressed to her sides, by which means the tender bones are forced from their natural shape, and get a curve that never after grows out; and thus, the infant is exposed either to the scorching sun, or any change of weather that happens.

The women are not nigh so well shaped as the men, being employed in all hard labour makes them robust and clumsy. They are very prolific, and keep their breasts always suspended, which, after bearing a child or two, stretches out to an enormous length; disgusting to Europeans, though considered beautiful and ornamental here. They are not only obliged to till the ground and do all laborious work, but are kept at a great distance by the men, who seldom suffer a woman to sit down or eat with them. The day I dined at King Naimbana's, he told me I was the first woman that ever eat [sic] at the same table with him.

Great respect and reverence is shewn to old age, by all ranks of people.

Polygamy likewise is considered honorable, and creates consequence. When an African speaks of a great man, he or she will say, "Oh! he be fine man, rich too much, he got too much woman."

Anna Maria is reluctant to expound further on polygamy. The idea should shock a well-brought-up young Englishwoman. She sees the circle of huts arranged around the man who is the linchpin of the family, and wonders what the various wives occupying these huts think of each other. What must it be like to share openly a man's sexual appetites with another woman? Sometimes, when Alexander Falconbridge gives her no peace at night, she thinks it might be a relief to send him to another bed.

Is an older wife jealous when her husband takes a younger, more attractive wife? Do they compete for their children's places in the hierarchy? As she surveys the village scene, she sees the wives grinding flour in their deep wooden mortars with pestles tall as they are, gossiping happily together while the men sprawl comfortably apart under a nearby shade tree, their ease mirroring the significance of their discussions.

Anna Maria generally has definite opinions on most subjects. She has very strong opinions about the dalliances of Englishmen and believes fervently that they should pay for their indiscretions. The idea of a man moving from bed to bed at his convenience and with society's sanction elevates her blood pressure. Better to say nothing than to reveal her inability to take this subject in her stride.

The higher class of people hereabout mostly speak broken English, which they have acquired from frequent intercourse with vessels that come to purchase slaves. They seem desirous to give education to their children, or in their own way of expressing it, "Read book, and learn to be *rogue so* well as white man;" for they say, if white men could not read, or wanted education, they would be no better rogues than *black gentlemen*.

I was treated with the utmost hospitality at every town I visited. Their common food is rice, pepper pot, or palaver sauce,⁸⁰ palm nuts, and palm oil; with the latter both sexes anoint their bodies and limbs daily, tho' it does not prevent them from smelling vastly strong.⁸¹ Wherever I went, there was commonly a fowl boiled or broiled for me. I liked the pepper pot; it is a kind of soup made with a mixture of vegetables highly seasoned with salt and red pepper.⁸²

Their houses are much like those I have heretofore described, but very low; they are irregularly placed and built either in a square or circular form; and as this part of the country is thinly inhabited, each town contains a very few houses.

⁸⁰Palaver sauce was the name given by whites to the boiled leaf of a plant somewhat resembling spinach. Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 1, p. 64.

⁸¹Winterbottom believed that the women used palm oil "to preserve the velvet smoothness and softness of their skins." Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 1, p. 102.

⁸²red pepper: *capsicum frutescens*, or bird pepper, which Winterbottom considered very 'wholesome' in preventing gout and 'intermittents' (i.e. ague). It is so highly esteemed by the natives, he wrote, that "it is used not only as seasoning to their food, but enters largely into the composition of their medicines." Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 2, pp. 44-45.

The inhabitants are chiefly Pagans, though they believe [in] the existence of a God, but consider him so good that he cannot do them an injury. They therefore pay homage to the *Devil*, from a belief that he is the only supernatural being they have to fear; and I am informed they have consecrated places, in different parts of the woods, where they make annual sacrifices to him.

Cleanliness is universally observed. Their simple furniture, consisting generally of a few mats, wooden trenchers and spoons made by themselves, are always tidy and their homely habitations constantly clean swept and free from filth of any kind. Nor do I think nature has been so unkind to endow those people with capacities less susceptible of improvement and cultivation than any other part of the human race. I am led to form this conjecture from the quickness with which even those who cannot understand English comprehend my meaning by gestures or signs and the aptness they have imitated many things after me.

Their time is calculated by plantations, moons, and days. The reason of the first is they clear a new field once a year, and if asked the age of a child or any thing else, they will answer, so many plantations, in place of years: they register their moons by notches on a piece of wood, which is carefully hanged up in some particular part of the house.

Their chief amusement is dancing: In the evening men and women assemble in the most open part of the town where they form a circle, which one at a time enters and shews his skill and agility by a number of wild comical motions. Their music is made by clapping of hands and a harsh sounding drum or two made out of hollowed wood covered with the skin of a goat. Sometimes I have seen an instrument resembling our guitar, the country name of which is *bangeon*.⁸³

The company frequently applaud or upbraid the performer with bursts of laughter or some odd disagreeable noise. If it is moonshine and they have spirits to drink, these dances probably continue 'till the moon goes down, or 'till day light.

The *Timmany* [Temne] dialect is commonly spoke here, though the nation so called is some distance to the northward. The natives account for this in the following way: Many years ago the Burees, a tribe of people formerly living

⁸³Forerunner to our banjo?

upon the banks of the river Sierra Leone, were conquered and drove away to other parts of the country by the Timmany's [sic], who, having possessed themselves of the land, invited many strangers to come and live among them. The Timmanys being again engaged in war, which the inhabitants of Sierra Leone did not chuse [sic] to join in, they therefore alienated the connection and declared themselves a distinct nation, and have been considered as such ever since.

Every chief or head man of a town is authorized from the King to settle local disputes—but when disagreements of consequence arise between people of separate places, then a Palaver is summoned to the residence of the complainant, when the King attends or not as suits him; but if inconvenient to go in person, he sends his Palaver-man, who carries the King's sword, cane, or hat, as a signal of inauguration to his office.

When all the parties are met, they enquire into the business of their meeting, and a majority of voices determine who has reason of his or her side. If the crime is fornication, the punishment is slavery, unless the offender can ransom him or herself by paying another slave or the value in goods. It is customary when the judges cannot procure sufficient proof to oblige the party accused to take a poisonous draught, called Red Water—this potion is prepared by the judges themselves, who make it strong or weak as they are inclined by circumstances—if strong and the stomach does not reject it instantaneously, death soon ensues—but if weak, it seldom has any other effect than a common emetic.⁸⁴

At the last town I visited, the head man's favorite woman had a beautiful mulatto child, and seeing me take much notice of it, he said, "God amity, sen, me dat peginine, true, suppose he no black like me, nutting for that, my woman drinkee red water, and suppose peginine no for me, he dead."

I could not help smiling at the old fool's credulity and thinking how happy

⁸⁴Red Water was made from an infusion of the bark of *Erythrophleum guineense*. Winterbottom gives more information on this custom in *An Account*, vol. 1, pp. 129-33.

many of my own countrywomen would be to rid themselves of a similar stigma so easily. Crimes of larger magnitude, such as witchcraft, murder, &c. are punished in the same way, i.e. the criminal is obliged to drink of this liquor unless there be evidence sufficiently strong to acquit or condemn him; when that is the case, if convicted, he either suffers death, or is sold as a slave.

On the opposite shore lives a populous nation called the Bullams,⁸⁵ whose King I had occasion to mention in a former letter. I have been at only one of their settlements, a place directly over against us, belonging to a man named Dean. The people appear more inclined to industry than the Sierra Leonians, which a stranger may readily discern by the superior way their houses are furnished in. I am told it is a fertile country, and the inhabitants make so much rice that they are able to sell a quantity annually.

In the neighbourhood of Dean's Town at a place called Tagrin Point was formerly an English factory belonging to one Marshall; but he unluckily got into a dispute with the natives, who drove him away and pillaged his goods; they are a barbarous implacable set of people.

This is all the history I have learnt of the Bullams, therefore shall return to my own side of the water.

We have had heavy tornadoes and falls of rain for several weeks, and I yet enjoy my health as well, if not better, than I did for several years past in Europe. Deaths are not frequent among the natives; indeed I have not heard of one since we arrived. Their national diseases are few; probably anointing themselves as they do with palm oil makes them less liable to evil consequences from the unhealthy putrid vapour that almost constantly hovers about these mountains; the poisonous effects of which carries off numbers of foreigners.

Another reference to malaria. Anna Maria does not realize that the Africans who have survived the many diseases of the area have developed immunity to them.

⁸⁵"At that period the northern shore was still controlled and inhabited by the Bulom (Sherbro) people, who also occupied the country to the south of the peninsula." Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 48.

Babies and children die in large numbers.

About ten days ago the master of the cutter went to Bance Island, where he drank too freely, and returning a little indisposed, signified a wish of going to the French factory for medical assistance. Falconbridge having had some difference with this man, therefore, lest he might wrong construe any offers to serve him, without hesitation complied with his desire, and he immediately set out in the cutter to Gambia, Falconbridge and myself accompanying him. [Alexander Falconbridge has quarreled with his brother and now with the captain of their cutter. Anna Maria is still careful not to assign any blame.] The distance being but six miles, and a fresh sea breeze, we soon ran up.

Mr. Rennieu not only received us with the politeness of a Frenchman, but with kindness and friendship. When he saw the master of the Lapwing, he said to me, "Madam, Captain Kennedy (for that was his name) will never leave Africa, but in two or three days time he will come under my big tree." I did not instantly comprehend him, which the Frenchman perceived, and explained himself by saying, "under the large tree I saw a little distance off was the burying ground, and," added he, "there is something in the countenance of Kennedy denoting his dissolution to be near at hand; and I am persuaded the man cannot live more than two or three days." I took care not to mention or hint to Kennedy what Mr. Rennieu said to me, lest the force of imagination might kill him—however, in spite of all our endeavours, the prophecy was fulfilled; a severe fever came on the same night, and the second day he was a corpse.

There was no accommodation for sleeping on shore at the Factory which Mr. Rennieu could offer us—we were, consequently, obliged to sleep on board. I could not think of allowing the poor sick man to be exposed to the inclemency of night air and insisted on his taking a birth in the cabin—nor could I think of continuing in the cabin while he was ill lest his disorder might be infectious; and the only alternative was to lay upon deck, or in the hold. The former being most preferable, our mattresses were spread at night under the awning, where we lay; but I took the precaution to wrap myself up in a flannel gown, and cover'd my head with a cap of the same—was it not for that, in all probability I must have added to the number under Mr. Rennieu's big tree.

The Europeans believed that malaria was caused by the mists and miasmas in the

air, and that wool clothing would prevent its spread.

For two nights we lay on deck, and [during] each of them we were unlucky enough to have violent tornadoes. During the storm I threw two large blankets over me, and though the rain penetrated through both, yet my flannel gown and cap intercepted it and prevented me from getting wet, except my feet, which I bathed in spirits when the tornado was over, and thus, I believe, escaped any bad consequences; but being under the necessity of staying another night at Gambia, I did not chuse to experience the good effects of my blankets a third time and accepted an invitation which the Captain of an American [ship] had made us ~~to~~ take a bed on board his ship.

The rains, when they finally come, are welcomed like blessings from heaven. Settlers and Englishmen alike open their mouths and shirts to the sweet scent of it. They dance like pardoned criminals as the benign moisture bathes their bodies. But as day after day rolls by with cascades of relentless stinging, drenching water falling from the heavens, the enchantment turns to misery. Boiling and gushing red laterite mud, the torrent rages down the slopes like a cascade. The storms are so violent that humans can neither hear each other speak nor see, can only sit huddled under their inadequate shelters. Mud sucks at their feet and slides through their tents. The mornings are blotted out by mist and fog, everything indistinct, dreamlike, the air dank and fetid. Great gray masses of cloud snag on the hill above them and hang there leaking steadily over the landscape. The sky is the color of oiled steel and the wind gusts furiously. Blinding flashes of lightning illuminate the landscape, followed by salvos of roaring thunder. Sleep brings little respite, and joints ache on rising. Soon chests are congested, noses running, ears plugged up.

Immediately after the corpse was removed, we had the Lapwing scowered [sic], washed with vinegar, and smoaked with tobacco and brimstone to free her from every suspicion of dangerous infection.

I must avail myself of the present moment to give you some description of Gambia Island. It is small and low, not two miles in circumference, situated in the midst of swamps and marshes from whence a continued stench comes sufficient to choak [sic] a carrion crow—'tis wonderful how any human beings could pitch on such a place to live in. The Europeans there have all complexions as if they were fed on madder and saffron. Their manner of living is slovenly and hoggish, though they seem to have plenty of fresh stock and provisions of almost every kind—they are very inactive and indolent, which I am not astonished at, for such must ensue from the lassitude produced by the unhealthiness of the place.

The buildings are of mean and disrespectable appearance, being a pile of grass and sticks clumsily put together. They have a factory ship, and few goods are kept on shore from a fear of being surprised and robbed by the natives.

Formerly the island was protected by a company of French soldiers, but the vast and rapid mortality deterred their government from sending fresh supplies. Rennieu, however, preserves a kind of consequence and keeps his neighbours in awe by a number of strange legerdemain tricks he has learnt, some of which he shews when ever he has visitors.

After seeing Gambia [Island], I consider Granville Town a delightful spot, where we have none of those swampy low grounds; but a reviving sea breeze that cheers us every day, which is almost spent before it reaches them. I suppose this must be owing to the heavy dense atmosphere that opposes its progress, for distance cannot be the cause.

Since the rains commenced, the nights grew alternately cooler; indeed I find a blanket very comfortable. Even during the dry weather (when I had room to breathe), I found night many degrees colder than day; but it is now, at times, cold, that I am glad to find a fire. This sudden transition from heat to cold, and from cold to heat, I am rather disposed to think, accounts for the turpitude of the climate. At all events it certainly is one of the most considerable causes.

From a fear that my inadequateness to give historical delineations will expose me to your criticism, I have to beg you will look over any rhapsodies with lenity; this is all I can hope for—that all I dread.

Falconbridge thinks of leaving Africa the middle of this month. The loss of Kennedy, want of provisions fit for taking to sea, and the late Mate (now Master of the cutter) and several of our people being sick, disconcerts us a good deal. But we are told the rains will be considerably worse, and every day will render it more dangerous and difficult to get off the coast. Falconbridge is determined to do his best, and get away as quick as possible.

Oh my friend! what happiness shall I feel on seeing Old England again; and, if it pleases God for us to arrive safe, the difficulties, dangers, and inconveniences I have surmounted and have yet to encounter, will only serve

me to laugh at.

Your's, &c. &c.

LETTER V. [actually LETTER VI]

LONDON, Sept. 30, 1791.

My dear Friend,

I have many apologies to make for not giving you earlier intelligence of our arrival; but my excuses are good ones, and no doubt will convince you my silence cannot be attributed to the slightest shadow of negligence or forgetfulness. We arrived at Penzance, in Cornwall, the 2d instant, when (not being able to walk), I was carried in an arm chair by two men to the house of Mrs. Dennis, who friendly invited us to shelter under her hospitable roof while we remained there. The hurry and fatigue of moving, with the restraint one customarily feels, more or less of, upon going to a strange house, prevented me writing you the first day; but the day subsequent I wrote as follows:

My dearest Madam,

"I am returned to this blessed land; join with me in fervent prayer and thanksgiving to the Author of all good works for his miraculous protection and goodness during a circuitous passage of nigh three months, replete with hardships unprecedented, I believe, in any voyages heretofore related, the particulars of which I must take some other opportunity to furnish you with."

Here I made a full pause; and, after thinking and re-thinking for near half an hour whether I should subscribe my name and send it to the post, a thought struck me, ~~Why!~~ I shall be in London in eight or ten days, when it will be in my power to send a narration of what has happened since I last wrote Mrs →; and if I write now, I shall only excite curiosity and keep her in unpleasant suspense for some time; so, it is best to postpone writing till I can do it fully."

Now, in place of eight or ten days, it was almost three weeks before we reached this metropolis; and since I arrived, my time has been wholly occupied in received [sic] inquisitive visitors and answering a few pertinent, and a number of ridiculous questions. I could make many other reasonable

pleas in behalf of my silence, but trust what is already said will be amply satisfactory; shall therefore forbear making any further apologies and proceed with an account of myself since I last wrote to you.

The 16th of June we went to Robana to take leave of the Royal Family, and to receive the young Prince John Frederic [Henry] on board; all this we accomplished, and sailed the same day. Naimbana seemed unconcerned at parting with his son, but the old Queen cried and appeared much affected.

The Prince was decorated in an old blue cloak, bound with broad gold lace; which, with a black velvet coat, pair of white satin breeches, a couple of shirts, and two or three pair of trowsers, form a compleat inventory of his stock of cloaths when he left Africa.

The old man gave John all the cash he had, amounting to the enormous sum of eight Spanish dollars (about thirty-five shillings); and just when we were getting under way, saluted us with twelve guns from some rusty pieces of cannon lying on the beach without carriages.

The Lapwing was badly equipped for sea. The crew and passengers amounted to nine: four of the former were confined with fevers, consequently there were only four (and but one a sailor) to do the ship's duty.

Mr. Rennieu gave me a goat and half a dozen of fowls. King Naimbana put a couple of goats and a dozen of fowls on board for his son. Besides these, I purchased some poultry, and when we sailed, considered ourselves possessed of a pretty good stock consisting of three goats, four dozen of fowls, a barrel of flour, half a barrel of pork, and a barrel of beef.

We had not been at sea a week when all our live stock were washed or blown overboard by repeated and impetuous tornadoes~~so~~ that we had not a thing left but the flower [sic] and salt provisions; however, we were in hopes

of getting in a few days to Saint Jago,⁸⁶ one of the Cape De Verd Islands, where the loss of our stock might be replaced. In this we were disappointed, for instead of a few days, a continued interruption of calms and boisterous weather made it six weeks before we reached that island; during the whole of which time I was confined to my cabin, and mostly to my bed, for it rained incessantly. [The voyage by sailing ship from England to the West Arican coast is much faster outbound with following winds than is the return voyage against the prevailing winds, which requires continual tacking to and fro.]

After being about three weeks at sea, our sick got clear of their fevers, but were so emaciated as to be unfit for any duty except eating, and though there was no food fit for convalescent persons on board, yet the coarse victuals we had stood no chance with them, and made it necessary to put all hands to an allowance. Upon enquiring into the state of our provisions, we found they had been lavishly dealt with; there was not more than one week's full allowance of meat and scarcely four days of flour remaining. These were alarming circumstances, for we had two thirds further to go than we had then come, towards Saint Jago.

I did not selfishly care for the want of beef or pork, as I had not tasted either since we sailed from Sierra Leone; but I lamented it for others. All hands were restricted to a quarter of a pound of beef or pork and a small tea-cup full (rather better than a gill) of flower [sic] per day.

What would have been more dreadful, we should have wanted water was it not for the rains; the worms having imperceptibly penetrated our water casks, all the water leaked out except a small cask, which would not allow us more than a pint each for three weeks.

My tea cup of flower, mixed with a little rain water and salt, boiled to a kind of pap when the weather would admit a fire, otherwise raw, was, believe me, all my nourishment for ten days, except once or twice when some cruel unconscionable wretch robbed me of the homely morsel, I was forced to

⁸⁶Santiago, the largest of the Cape Verde Islands, which lie 620 kilometres off the African coast, directly west of Senegal. The Portuguese brought Africans to the islands to work as slaves in their plantations.

taste the beef.

The week before we arrived at St. Jago, our Carpenter, who had been ill and was on the recovery, relapsed and died in twenty-four hours; which circumstance terrified me exceedingly, least our afflictions were to be increased with some pestilential disease; however, no similar misfortunes attended us afterwards.

We arrived at Porta Praya⁸⁷ in St. Jago, I think the 25th of July, when Falconbridge immediately went on shore to obtain sufferance to remain there a few days while he re-victualled and watered. An officer met him as he landed and conducted him to the chief magistrate of the port, who lives in a Fort on top of a hill which commands the harbour. Falconbridge was well received, his request granted, and he and myself were invited to dine at the Fort next day—but he was informed that no provisions were to be had for almost any price. A fleet of European ships had just sailed from thence and drained the country of almost every kind of eatable.⁸⁸

After being six weeks confined in the narrow bounds of the Lapwing's cabin and most of the time in bed, fed as I was upon scanty wretched food, notwithstanding the benignity of heaven had preserved me from disease of any kind, you will not question my energy of mind and body being considerably enervated. Indeed, so enfeebled did I feel myself that it was with much difficulty I accompanied Falconbridge to dinner at the Consul's, for so the Chief Officer of Porto Praya is termed; but the distance I had to walk was short, and with the help of a Portuguese Officer on one side, and my husband on the other, I accomplished it tolerable well.

The company consisted of the Portuguese and French Consuls, five

⁸⁷The archipelago consists of 10 islands and 5 islets. Porta Praya is the principal town and is on Saint Jago (Santiago), one of the four leeward islands.

⁸⁸The economy of the Cape Verde islands was in any case precarious, with regular periods of devastating famine. Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 56.

Portuguese and two French gentlemen, two Portuguese ladies, Falconbridge, and myself. None of the foreigners spoke English, so you will readily guess we but poorly amused or entertained each other; through the medium of a linguist who attended, any compliments, questions, or answers, &c. &c. were conveyed to and fro.

Our dinner was very good, and I had prudence enough to be temperate, having often heard of fatal consequences from indulgencies [sic] in similar cases. During dinner we had excellent claret and madeira, but no wine was drank after. Directly as the cloth was removed, tea was introduced in the most uncommon way I ever saw or heard of before. It was brought in china mugs containing three pints each, and every person was presented with one of these huge goblets. I had not tasted tea for several weeks. Nevertheless, one third of this quantity was more than I chose to swallow—but with astonishment I beheld others make a rapid finish to their allowance. [One can't help but wonder where, after drinking such quantities of liquid, the ladies and gentlemen retired to relieve themselves. Chamber pots? Out-houses?]

Having thus inundated their stomachs, every one arose and our host desire [sic] the linguist to acquaint me they were going to repose themselves for a while, and if I was inclined to follow their example, a sofa or bed was at my service; being bed sickened, I declined the offer and chose in preference to stretch my feeble limbs with gentle walking in a pleasant portico fronting the sea; for I had gathered strength enough in the few hours I was on shore to walk alone.

The company having indulged about an hour in their habitual slothfulness, re-assembled; we were invited to take a bed on shore, but Falconbridge leant that the generality of people were thievishly disposed, and for that reason did not choose to sleep from the cutter; and you know it would have been very uncomfortable for me to remain without him among a parcel of strangers, when we could not understand what one another said. Besides, I had other prudential objections for not remaining without Falconbridge, which the horror of our loathsome bark could not conquer.⁸⁹

⁸⁹Possibly an allusion to his excessive drinking.

After this we remained four days in Porto Praya Road, during which I went on shore frequently. The town is situated on the same height with the fort. They have a Romish chapel (for the inhabitants are all Roman Catholics), market-place, jail built of stone and covered with slate in the European way—the other buildings are mostly of wood and thatch after the African manner. The French Consul has his house within the fort, which is a decent good looking building, as is the Portuguese Consul's; but this is of stone and that of wood.

Anna Maria gives a lengthy description of the rest of their long voyage from the Cape Verde Island to the Azores and thence to England. Because it interrupts her African narrative, it has been eliminated here.

How deeply do I regret our short stay at Saint Jago and Fayal disables me from giving you a more historical and intelligent account of those Islands; but I was long enough at each place to form this summary opinion: The latter is, without exception, the most desirable spot I ever saw; and the former, as far opposite as 'tis possible for you to conceive.

Having repaired such damage as our vessel had received coming from St. Anthony and supplied ourselves with abundance of stores to bring us to this country, we set sail from Fayal the 25th of last month, and arrived at the time and place before-mentioned. Our passage was short and unattended with such boisterous weather as we had experienced, yet it was so stormy that I was obliged to keep my bed the whole time: which circumstance and a cold I caught threw me into an indisposition that I have not yet recovered from.

The day after landing at Penzance, Falconbridge wrote to Mr. Granville Sharp, and by return of Post received his answer, a copy of which I herewith inclose.

LEADENHALL-STREET, 7th Sept. 1791.

Dear Sir,

The agreeable account of the safe arrival of the Lapwing at Penzance, which I received this morning, gives me very particular satisfaction.

I have communicated your letter to Henry Thornton, Esq.

Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company⁹⁰ (for under this title the late St. George's Bay Company is now established, by an Act of the last Session of Parliament) and to some of the Directors, and they desire you to come by land as expeditiously as you can, bringing with you in a post-chaise, Mrs. Falconbridge and the Black Prince, and also any such specimens of the country as will not be liable to injury by land-carriage.

I inclose (from the Directors) a note from Mr. Thornton's house for thirty pounds, for which you may easily procure cash for your journey, and if more should be wanting for use of the people of the Lapwing, I have no doubt but Mrs. Dennis (to whose care I send this Letter) will have the goodness to advance it, as she will be reimbursed by return of the Post, when I receive advice of your draft.

The Lapwing may be left to the care of any proper person whom you may think capable of taking due care of her, until the Directors give farther orders respecting her.

I remain with great esteem, Dear Sir,
Your affectionate friend and humble Servant,
GRANVILLE SHARP.

In the interim Falconbridge went to Falmouth to procure money for our journey to London. There he met the Rev. Thomas Clarkson, that unwearied stickler for human liberty, with whom, (or at whose instimulation [sic]) the abolition of the Slave Trade originated, and at whose instance Falconbridge quitted his comfortable situation at Ludway [Lodway] to enlist in the present (though I fear chimerical) cause of freedom and humanity.

This is the first time Anna Maria refers to her husband's earlier career as a surgeon.

Mr. Clarkson is also a Director of the Sierra Leone Company, under which

⁹⁰Henry Thornton (1760-1815), wealthy banker, MP, philanthropist, and driving force behind the Sierra Leone Company. His home at Clapham was the meeting place for an influential group of Evangelicals, including William Wilberforce, Hannah Moore, and Zachary Macaulay.

title you find by Mr. Sharp's letter, the late St. George's Bay Company is now called.

He informed Falconbridge that his brother, Lieutenant Clarkson of the navy, was gone to Nova Scotia, authorised by government to collect several hundred free blacks and take them to Sierra Leone, where they are (under the care and patronage of the Directors of our new company) to form a colony.⁹¹ It was surely a premature, hair-brained, and ill digested scheme, to think of sending such a number of people all at once to a rude, barbarous and unhealthy country before they were certain of possessing an acre of land; and I very much fear will terminate in disappointment, if not disgrace to the authors; though at the same time, I am persuaded the motives sprung from minds unsullied with evil meaning.

The criticism is surely her husband's, for it appears verbatim in the 1791 Sierra Leone Company Reports. Alexander Falconbridge is a logical choice to receive the appointment of superintendent of the new colony. When, however, he hears that hundreds of colonists are expected from Nova Scotia, he uses exactly these harsh terms in speaking to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, calling it: "a premature, hair-brained, and ill digested scheme."⁹² Offended by his testy criticism, the directors compromise by offering him the post of chief commercial agent, a position for which he has no experience whatsoever. Needing the salary, he accepts, but is furious at being passed over in favor of John Clarkson, a much younger man who has never been to Africa..⁹³

⁹¹The settlers from Nova Scotia would sail from Halifax on 15 January 1792.

⁹²Anna Maria probably added this paragraph as she prepared her manuscript for publication.

⁹³Clarkson had, however, already completed a distinguished six-year naval career, beginning at age 13 and reaching the rank of lieutenant by 1783. Then, lacking further naval duties, he joined his brother Thomas in the movement to abolish slavery in Britain. When Parliament agreed to pay the passage of any freed blacks in Nova Scotia who wanted to emigrate to Sierra Leone, John Clarkson requested a leave of absence from the navy and volunteered to go to Nova Scotia to recruit settlers.

We set out from Penzance the 12th, taking with us the Black Prince, and the following day arrived at Plymouth, where by appointment we met Mr. [Thomas] Clarkson;⁹⁴ after staying there four days we went on towards London, stopped at Exeter three days, and arrived here the 24th.

As soon as our arrival was known Mr. Thornton, (the chairman),⁹⁵ Mr. Sharp and several others of the directors came to see us, and after many compliments expressive with condolence for our misfortunes and congratulations for our deliverance and safe arrival, a number of enquiries, &c. &c. Mr. Thornton requested Falconbridge and the Prince would dine with him, at the same time gave the latter to understand he was to consider his [Mr. Thornton's] house as his home.

I could not help secretly smiling to see the servile courtesy which those gentlemen paid this young man, merely from his being the son of a nominal king.

It has slip'd my notice till now to describe him to you: His person is rather below the ordinary, inclining to groseness [sic], his skin nearly jet black, eyes keenly intelligent, nose flat, teeth unconnected and filed sharp after the custom of his country, his legs a little bandied, and his deportment easy, manly, and confident withal. In his disposition he is surly, but has cunning enough to smother it where he thinks his interest is concerned; he is pettish and implacable, but I think grateful and attached to those he considers his friends; nature has been bountiful in giving him sound intelects [sic], very capable of improvement, and he also possesses a great thirst for knowledge.

⁹⁴Thomas Clarkson, along with Granville Sharpe and William Wilberforce, was a leading figure in the British abolition movement.

⁹⁵"Henry Thornton was a wealthy banker and Member of Parliament. He was an intimate friend of Henry Wilberforce, and was associated with him in the campaign against the slave trade, and also a member of what was later called the 'Clapham Sect,' an Evangelical pressure group which sought to remodel British society on religious principles. As chairman of the board of directors of the Sierra Leone Company he was largely responsible for making and carrying out policy. Fyfe, A History, p. 28.

While with me although it was seldom in my power, yet now and then amused myself with teaching him the alphabet, which he quickly learned, and before we parted, could read any common print surprisingly well. He is not wanting in discernment, and has already discovered the weak side of his patrons, which he strives to turn to good account, and I dare say, by his natural subtilty [sic], will in time advantage himself considerably by it. (This young man returned to Sierra Leone in July 1793, and died the day after his arrival.)

The Directors seem much pleased with Falconbridge's exertions, have appointed him Commercial Agent to the Company, and he is shortly to return to Sierra Leona. They are very pressing for me to accompany him, but my late misfortunes are yet too fresh in remembrance to consent hastily. Indeed, you may suppose, I cannot but painfully remember them while the bruises and chafes produced by the voyage on different parts of my body continue unhealed. However, it is probable, whether with or against my will, I must tacitly assent to hazard a repetition of what I have already undergone.

When matters are wholly fixed you will hear from me, and perhaps I may shortly have the happiness of assuring you in person how I am,

Your's, &c.

LETTER VI. [actually LETTER VII]

LONDON, 27th Nov. 1791.

My Dear Madam,

The Directors have acted so honorable and handsome it was not possible for me to hold out in refusing to return to Sierra Leona. Besides increasing Falconbridge's salary near three times what it was, they have voted us a sum of money as an equivalent for the extraordinary services they consider he has rendered them and as a compensation for our private losses of cloaths, &c.

But surely mortal never was more harrassed than I have been by their importunities. They used every flattering and inticing argument the ingenious brain of man is capable of, to no purpose; however, tho' all their rhetoric could not persuade me to revisit Africa, their noble, generous actions have effected it. Mr. Thornton is a good creature, one of the worthiest men I ever met; he has assured me should any accident happen to Falconbridge, I shall be well provided for by the Company; he has also, as well as many others of the Directors, made me a profusion of friendly promises and professions, so extravagant that if they came from any other set of men I should look upon them either as chicanery, or without meaning.

In the next letter Anna Maria will comment further on chicanery. She does not say here how incensed Falconbridge is when he arrives back in England and finds himself working for a radically changed company. Granville Sharp's utopian plans have been abandoned in favor of a commercial venture. Financed by English stockholders, the Sierra Leone Company is expected to pay for itself and earn a profit from trade.

The Court has granted £50 to be laid out in presents for King Naimbana and his old Queen, and have particularly desired that I shall purchase those for the latter and present them as from myself by way of enhancing my consequence. They have likewise granted another sum for me to lay out in such private stores as I may chuse to take with me for our use after we get to Africa; besides ordering a very handsome supply for the voyage.

A few days ago I only hinted an inclination to visit my friends at Bristol before we left England, and Mr. Thornton said I should have a Chaise when I liked, and the expence should be defrayed by the Company. Do you not think these are pretty marks of attention?

We have thoughts of setting out for Bristol in the course of next week, where I figure to myself much of that undescriptionable [sic] pleasure which lively affectionate minds involuntarily feel upon meeting the bosom friends and sportive companions of their youthful days, grown to maturity with hearts and countenances neither altered by absence or rusted by corroding time. But I lament to say this happiness will be of short duration, being obliged quickly to proceed to Falmouth, where we are to embark on board the Company's ship Amy, for Sierra Leona.

Adieu.

Does Anna Maria feel a certain satisfaction in returning to Bristol with the husband her sisters had disapproved of, who is now to return to Africa in charge of a large commercial venture?

Five months elapse between LETTERS VI and VII. Unbeknownst to Anna Maria, during that time the directors in London were expressing reservations about her husband. On 30 December 1791 Chairman Henry Thornton wrote privately to Thomas Clarkson (another Sierra Leone Company director and brother of John Clarkson, who was to be the first governor of Sierra Leone):

We were at first considerably pleased with him [Falconbridge] and after a few weeks inquiry and deliberation were so far satisfied as to appoint him chief Commercial Agent at a salary of £250 per annum, adding £100 present also. 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 favorably of him in general and we are grateful to him as I am sure we ought to be for the services he has rendered to the Company.⁹⁶

Thomas Clarkson sent his brother, John, who was assembling settlers in Halifax, a more explicit account ("for your own privacy and conduct") of how the Company intended to treat John's erstwhile campaign comrade and bodyguard (letter dated January 1792).

After telling him that Falconbridge's salary had been raised to £250 a year, he went on, "The Directors however do not approve his conduct. They consider him hot, rash and impetuous; as likely to involve us in Wars; and as perhaps not over careful how he offends those united with him in office". They had only sent him back because he had made friends with Naimbana and Elliot, and it was now for John to try and supplant Falconbridge in their affections:

"As your influence increases, that of Falconbridge will decline. This is in fact what the Company wish: for it would be a Pity that the noble Objects of our Institution should be hazarded by the Impetuosity and Warmth of Temper of an Individual, or that we, with so large a Capital, should be wholly at his Mercy.

"The above circumstances will not only render it necessary that you should create the Interest alluded to [i.e. make friends with Naimbana and Elliot], but that when

⁹⁶British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd.41262A, vol. 1.

you make up your mind how long you will stay at Sierra Leone (which you should do as soon as you can) you should give the Directors the earliest notice of it and not leave the Country till they send a Successor to you. This is actually necessary, for Falconbridge is the next in Precedence in the Council to you, and in Case of your leaving Sierra Leone without a Successor from England, he comes 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".⁹⁷

⁹⁷Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 93.

LETTER VII.

FREE TOWN, SIERRA LEONA, 10th April, 1792.

Dear Madam,

Here I am once more exposed to the influence of a Torrid Sun, near three thousand miles apart from my dearest friends, experiencing not only the inevitable hardships of Colonization, but wallowing in a multiplicity of trouble and confusion very unnecessarily attached to an infant Colony.

We sailed from Falmouth the 19th of December and arrived at this place the 16th of February, when we found the Harpy, [captained by] Wilson, a Company ship that left England some time after us; but our voyage was prolonged in consequence of being obliged to stop at Teneriffe⁹⁸ for a few pipes⁹⁹ of Wine.

Anna Maria debates at some length whether to provide more details of the voyage from England, but decides against it, for events have been too distressing to put into words. When they called at Teneriffe in the Canary Islands, Alexander Falconbridge was enchanted with the local wine and imbibed so much of it that he was falling-down drunk when it came time to return to the *Amy*. Watching him carried on board, Anna Maria had been embarrassed almost to tears. The memory was too painful to bear reference.

Immediately on entering the river we were visited by Captain Wilson, and after the customary civilities, he told us [that] several Colonial Officers, a few Soldiers, and some independent Settlers came passengers with him, who were greatly rejoiced at seeing the *Amy*; for being all strangers, they were at a loss what to do and wholly relied on Falconbridge to make good their landing. [The 85 junior English officers and artisans who were to supervise and build the settlement arrived in Sierra Leone before Lieutenant Clarkson and his 1,200 Nova Scotian immigrants.]

In the course of conversation many sentences escaped Captain Wilson importing a

⁹⁸The largest of the Canary Islands.

⁹⁹A cask containing 126 gallons.

very unfavourable account of his passengers, but imagining they proceeded from some misunderstanding between them and him, neither Falconbridge or myself allowed what he said to bias or prejudice us in any shape.

Neither Anna Maria nor Alexander Falconbridge know quite what to make of Captain Wilson. He is gruff, opinionated, and out-spoken, making a poor first impression. Not wanting to find fault with the first Company employee they meet, they both reserve judgment. Besides, Captain Wilson has brought his wife with him, and Alexander thinks that female companionship may soften the sharp tongue Anna Maria has directed at him ever since they left the Canary Islands.

Captain Wilson having directed the most eligible spot for us to bring up, waited until our anchor was gone and then returned to his ship. Falconbridge accompanied him to make his obeisance to the Ladies and Gentlemen on board. In a short time he confirmed our surmise with regard to disagreements subsisting between the parties was well grounded, for they were constantly snarling at each other; but it required very little penetration to arrive at the true source of their animosities, and before I proceed further I must acquaint you, the Directors have appointed eight persons to represent them and conduct the management of their Colony under the dignified appellation of Superintendent and Council.

Anna Maria is writing a travel book. She feels it inappropriate to name any of these officials except for the governors. She occasionally uses the first initial of their last names.

It is a pity when making those appointments, they had not probed for characters of worth and respectability, as success in any enterprise greatly hinges on skilful, prudent conduct; qualities more especially requisite in an undertaking like this, laboring under a load of enemies, who will no doubt take advantage to blow the smallest spark of mal-conduct into a flame of error.

Perhaps the Directors imagine they were particularly circumspect in their choice of representatives; if so, they are grossly deceived, for never were characters worse adapted to manage any purpose of magnitude than some whom they have nominated. Are men of little worth and much insignificance fit to be guardians and stewards of the immense property required for

erecting the fabric of a new Colony?¹⁰⁰ Are Men whose heads are too shallow to support a little vicissitude and unexpected immaginary [sic] aggrandizement, whose weak minds delude them with wrong notions of their nominal rank, and whose whole time is occupied with contemplating their fancied consequence in place of attending to the real and interesting designs of their mission, calculated for the executors of a theory, which can only be put in practice by wise and judicious method?

Certainly not; yet of this description are the greater part who guide and direct our Colony; a majority of whom came passengers in the Harpy, and who, intoxicated with false ideas of their authority, wished to assume the prerogative of controuling [sic] Captain Wilson in managing and governing his ship. But the latter treated their arrogance with contempt and consequently grew the dissentions alluded to, which have since been the cause of many disagreeable unpleasant occurrences.

These strong opinions must have been developed over time. Anna Maria could not have sized up the Sierra Leone Company officials so speedily. She comes to these conclusions over a period of some months, but as she prepares her manuscript for the printer, this seems the appropriate place to insert them.

Falconbridge soon returned with Captain and Mrs. Wilson, whom we had invited to dine with us; four Honorable Members of the Council, dressed cap-a-pie¹⁰¹ in a uniform given them by the Directors to distinguish their rank, came with them to make their bows to your humble servant, as the wife of their superior, Falconbridge being the eldest member of this supreme body.

Falconbridge was appointed one of eight councilors who were to govern Freetown and is thus the highest ranking official present. Anna Maria enjoys the homage of the four councilors who come to dinner, but thinks their uniforms are ridiculous. Wool jackets with gold braid and epaulettes, swords, and fancy hats in this climate! What are they thinking of?

¹⁰⁰The Sierra Leone Company had subscribed capital of £235,840. Estimated expenses for the first year were £30,000; for subsequent years, £7,000 annually. Fyfe, *A History*, p. 30.

¹⁰¹From head to foot. Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 75.

A message was then sent to King Jemmy (opposite to whose town the Amy lay) to announce our arrival to him and King Naimbana (who was there at the time), requesting they would come on board. Naimbana, accompanied by Mr. Eliotte and a number of attendants, soon complied with our request, but Jemmy would not be prevailed upon.

The old King was overjoyed at seeing me. Being seated, Falconbridge shewed him the portrait of his son (the first of his family transferred on canvas), a present from the directors. The picture is an admirable likeness, and the poor Father burst into tears when he saw it.¹⁰² He stayed with us five days; and notwithstanding every courteous art was used to persuade King Jemmy to honour us with a visit, we could not effect it. He once consented on condition I remained in his town a hostage till he returned; this I agreed to and went on shore for the intention; but his people dissuaded him just as he was going off.

You may remember I mentioned in a former letter the ground where the first settlers were driven from by King Jemmy being the most desirable situation hereabouts for a settlement, but by the Palaver it was objected to. However, with coaxing and the powerful irresistibility of presents, King Naimbana was prevailed upon to remove whatever objections there were, and on the 28th of February, put us in quiet possession of the very spot which is named Free Town, from the principles that gave rise to the establishment. (It is situated on a rising ground, fronting the sea; six miles above Cape Sierra Leone, and eighteen from Bance island; seperated from King Jemmy's town by a rivulet and thick wood near half a mile through. Before the Town is pretty good anchorage for shipping, but the landing places are generally bad in consequence of the shore being bound with iron rocks and an ugly surge most commonly breaking on them.)

White men had been stopping on that shore by the Sierra Leone estuary for two centuries or more before Freetown was founded and had slashed away the jungle that was in their way with reckless abandon. Those who stayed there to trade

¹⁰²Clarkson believed that the portrait has done "more in our favour than the most sanguine of us could have expected." E. G. Ingham, *Sierra Leone after a Hundred Years* (London: Seeley & Co., 1984), p. 150.

cleared ground to live on and felled trees to build shelters. When the freed slaves from the American colonies arrive, they find the site they chose long since denuded of virgin growth, and they set about ruthlessly and systematically slashing away the secondary growth which mars their vision of neat rows of houses, each nestled in its flourishing garden.

When their clearing finally reaches the fringe of the untouched jungle, the axes and machetes are wielded with renewed vigor as the relentless drive to provide each settler with his promised twenty acres of land goes forward. Actually the area on the south side of the high ridge would be far more suitable for farms than the narrow slopes along the harbor chosen for Granville Town and Freetown, but the Company has no way of protecting settlers at such a remove from the indigenous Africans who live in tiny hidden villages tucked into the jungle. The steady effort to clear farm land laid bare the narrow plain at the base of the mountains to the scour of unchecked torrents rushing down from the heights above. Children who fall into the ditches along the lanes will be swept down into the sea and drowned.

The second day after our arrival there was a grand council held on board the *Amy*, when their secretary delivered Mr. Falconbridge new instructions from the Directors directly counter to those he received in London; subjecting him in his commercial capacity to the control of the Superintendent and Council, and acquainting him [that] Lieutenant Clarkson was appointed Superintendent. This has disconcerted Falconbridge vastly and inclines him to construe their conduct to us in England as juggle and chicane for the mere purpose of enticing him here, knowing he was the fittest, nay only person, to secure a footing for the Nova Scotia emigrants [*sic*]; but I cannot think so harshly.

Anna Maria does not feel compelled to explain who the Nova Scotia emigrants are, for this is a travel book. Her reader must look elsewhere to learn that 3,000 black loyalists, most of them slaves freed by the British for service during the American Revolution, were evacuated from New York to Nova Scotia in 1783. They expected to receive land grants and become prosperous farmers, but few of them were given land, and those who did receive their grants found the land rocky, swampy, and stingy of garden produce. Impoverished, they suffered for eight years in the harsh climate and scrounged for a livelihood. One of their number, Thomas Peters, went to London in 1790 to seek redress for his fellows, at the time the Sierra Leone Company was being formed. Thomas Peters was introduced to the English abolitionists and the directors of the Sierra Leone Company, who took up his cause. The British government agreed to pay transport costs for any blacks in Nova Scotia who wanted to go to Sierra Leone. Lieutenant John Clarkson was sent to Halifax to recruit settlers and signed up 1,200 so quickly that he had to stop recruiting to find transport for all of them.

They sailed from Halifax in January 1792.¹⁰³

John Clarkson expects to find an English governor awaiting him in Sierra Leone, directing the beginnings of an organized colony. He is astonished when a group of councillors dressed in cockaded hats and gold-braided, epauletted waistcoats row out to meet him. Although the company directors have reluctantly sanctioned the wearing of these conspicuous uniforms by their officials, the inappropriate garb is the first hint to Clarkson of where their priorities lay. They tell him, again to his surprise, that the directors have decided that he himself should step into the superintendent's position on his arrival.¹⁰⁴

After being here a fortnight, Mr. Clarkson arrived with the blacks from America, a part of whom came some days before him. [The fleet from Nova Scotia consisted of 15 ships, which were separated during the voyage by fierce storms.] When he left Nova Scotia, they amounted to between eleven and twelve hundred, but during the voyage a malignant fever infested the Ships and carried off great numbers.

Sixty-seven of the Nova Scotian settlers died on board, and another thirty-eight during the first weeks on shore.¹⁰⁵

Mr. Clarkson caught the fever and miraculously escaped death, which would have been an irreparable loss to the colony, being the only man calculated to govern the people who came with him, for by his winning manners and mild, benign treatment he has so gained their affections and attachment that he can by lifting up his finger (as he expresses it) do what he pleases with them.

Anna Maria finds it amazing that such a sweet man can have come out of an early naval career. Doesn't the navy make men tough? She watches John Clarkson treat the settlers from Nova Scotia with all the patience and concern of a beloved parent, and they adore him for it.

She asks her husband about Clarkson. "Is he single?"

¹⁰³For complete details see Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown*.

¹⁰⁴See Elen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976), p. 240.

¹⁰⁵Fyfe, *A History*, p. 38.

Falconbridge's snort is disdainful. "Yes, but engaged. Haven't you noticed how he's naming everything Susan? So far we've got a Susan's Bay and a sloop named Susan."

Anna Maria grimaces at how critical Falconbridge is of everything around him. She sighs and turns away.

Clarkson himself is feeling far from sweet-tempered as he surveys the slopes beside the Sierra Leone estuary. He is appalled that the scores of officers and artisans sent from London have done absolutely nothing to prepare for the needs of the black settlers except to erect a single canvas shelter on the shore in which some of them sleep. In the daytime they use it for "dining, preaching, praying, working, palavering, & Council Chamber."¹⁰⁶ No streets have been laid out, no surveying done, no storehouse erected to protect supplies, no houses started—in spite of the many letters Clarkson has written to Chairman Henry Thornton in England stressing the importance of appointing sympathetic officials who would exert themselves on behalf of the settlers. Clarkson's experience gathering the blacks together in Nova Scotia has made him very aware of how sensitive they are to the way whites treat them. He empathizes completely with their feelings, and writes to Thornton of his worries about "captains of your vessels, sailors, keepers of the storehouses and inferior people, who would think no harm in calling these people what I cannot mention on paper You may probably say that none will be appointed but those who detest slavery . . . but consider the education of man . . . and you have reason to fear."¹⁰⁷

Clarkson immediately sends men on shore to clear a path to the tall cotton tree that stands like a beacon on a narrow plateau halfway up the mountain. On March 10, Alexander Falconbridge, second in command, conducts his sixth and last council meeting on board the ship, and swears in Clarkson as governor—first among equals in a council of eight. On Sunday, March 11, the entire company—black and white—goes ashore early from their anchored ships, which rock gently on the broad estuary in the nacreous morning light, and climb the slope to the cotton tree, where they hold a service of thanksgiving.¹⁰⁸

They are in general a religious, temperate, good set of people.

Anna Maria observes the fervor of this service, the tears of joy, the obvious piety

¹⁰⁶Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, p. 242.

¹⁰⁷Charles Bruce Fergusson (ed.), *Clarkson's Mission to America* (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1971), pp. 3-94.

¹⁰⁸See Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown*, pp. 110-111.

of the newly arrived settlers and comes to a very general conclusion. She probably does not attend any of the black chapel services, where the preaching has a passion and vigor that astonishes and dismays the staid Anglicans. The congregations respond with shouting, hand-clapping, stomping, and fervent embracing as individuals act out their ardent faith in salvation and redemption.¹⁰⁹

She is, however, so insulated from their daily concerns that she makes no effort to know any of them as individuals. Or, if she does, she does not think them pertinent to a travel book so does not record them anywhere in her journal. Perhaps she is just not very interested in these newcomers. They were, after all, before their departure from the colonies, slaves, and slaves must seem like a strange breed of animal to a sheltered Englishwoman. They are certainly not of her social class, whereas she perceives the Temne chiefs as being royalty—something she greatly esteems. The English officials sent out to manage the settlement would also appear closer to her social class, although their dilatory behavior soon makes her contemptuous of many of them.

Because the immigrants from Nova Scotia are an undifferentiated mass to her, Anna Maria never outlines what John Clarkson makes clear in his journal—that whole Protestant congregations, led by charismatic evangelical preachers, wound up their affairs in Nova Scotia to come to Freetown.¹¹⁰ Thomas Peters, who had gone to England in their behalf, and America Talbot brought their entire Methodist congregations from Digby. Moses Wilkinson led his devoted Methodist followers from Birchtown, Richard Ball from Halifax, Henry Beverhout from St. John. Boston King brought his Wesleyans from Dartmouth. The Countess of Huntingdon Methodists followed Cato Perkins and William Ash to Freetown. David George and Hector Peters brought their Baptist chapels from Shelburne and Birchtown.

Because these black congregations had been kept segregated in Nova Scotia by white prejudice or indifference, they developed a strong sense of unity and opposition to the authority and rigidities of the white churches and government there. Their self-appointed preachers had persuaded them of the validity of their understanding of God's message and their right to follow their own path to redemption. As a result, their chapels become their guarantee of both spiritual and temporal security, the bulwark of their communities. Their preachers were their natural leaders before they even left New York and through the nine long years in Nova Scotia; they would guide their communicants in their exodus to their new African home.

¹⁰⁹The same religious fervor is an integral part of services in black churches today.

¹¹⁰See Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown.*, Chapter 18.

At present they are employed in building huts for their temporary residence till the lands promised them can be surveyed. When that will be, God only knows. The surveyor, being a Counsellor and Captain of our veteran host [militia], is of too much consequence to attend to the servile duty of surveying, notwithstanding he is paid for it.

James Cocks was sent to Freetown to be the surveyor, but before Clarkson's arrival, his fellow officers had named him captain of the soldiers, a role he much preferred.¹¹¹

Clarkson immediately gives Cocks a plan for laying out town lots on the slopes above the landing, drawn up at his request by the chief surveyor in Nova Scotia. Twelve streets, each named for a company director, are to be cut—nine running up the slope at right angles to the waterfront, and three broad avenues (80 feet wide) parallel to the river. One of the three, Water Street along the waterfront, is to be double the width of the others. The streets will be paved in Bermuda grass and cropped by cattle, sheep, and goats. Two squares are to be laid out, one with a tower in which to hang the great bell that will be rung at sunrise to start the day's work. Above this grid the hump of the mountain above the cotton tree is named Thornton Hill after Chairman Thornton and designated for the governor's future residence. Settlers are to occupy the town in whatever random order the lots are laid out, until such time as a lottery can be held to determine permanent locations.

Few of the settlers have yet got huts erected; they are mostly encamped under tents made with sails from the different ships and are very badly off for fresh provisions. Indeed such is the case with us all, and what's worse, we have but half allowance of very indifferent salt provision and bad worm eaten bread. (The James of Bristol, being unfit to proceed her voyage, was condemned and sold at Bance Island about this time; from her a quantity of beans and other provisions were purchased which was a fortunate circumstance for the colony, then in a starving state.)

The storekeeper and accountant do not arrive until May. In the meantime, supplies are unloaded from the ships and taken ashore, unpacked, then left where they are scattered. Settlers and Africans alike appropriate what they find lying about—knives, hoes, axes, and other tools. The rains, of course, soon ruin everything left out in the open. The store tent becomes unfit to work in. John

¹¹¹Elen Gibson Wilson, *John Clarkson and the African Adventures* (London: the Macmillan Press, 1980), p. 85.

Clarkson writes in his journal of the “nauseous putrid stench produced by stinking provisions, scattered about the town—rotten Cheese, rancid Butter, bad provisions, damaged pickled Tripe. Sacks of flour infested by insects and drenched with Molasses leaking from the Casks.”¹¹²

A supply ship, the *Trusty*, arrived in May, but was so badly packed in London that the cargo was worthless—lime and coal in casks so old they fell apart in the sunlight; beef and pork tainted; biscuits, flour, and oatmeal in leaking bags rather than in casks; butter rancid; molasses leaking from barrels into the dry staples.

Painfully do I say nothing promises well. Mr Clarkson, as Superintendant, is so tied up that he cannot do a thing without the approbation of his Council, and those opinionated upstarts thwart him in all his attempts. He is an amiable man, void of pomp or ostentation, which his senatorial associates disapprove of exceedingly from the ridiculous idea that their dignity is lessened by his frankness. How truly contemptible is it to see men stickle in this way after foolish unbecoming consequence, blind to the interest of their employers, whereby they must without question rise or fall.

John Clarkson shares Anna Maria’s contempt for the members of the Council. In his journal he wrote that “their brains have been turned from being allowed to wear a flaming sword and cockade with a fine coat and epaulette, when a jacket and trousers would have been more consistent for those employed in founding a new settlement.”¹¹³

Their absurd behaviour (Few days escaped without a quarrel, which sometimes came the length of blows: Members of Council were daily ordering goods from the ships, not wanted, and inevitably to be destroyed, merely for the purpose of shewing their authority) make them the laughing stocks of the neighbouring Factories and such masters of slave ships as have witnessed their conduct, who must certainly be highly gratified with the anarchy and chagrin that prevails through the Colony.

The Blacks are displeased that they have not got their promised lands; and so little do they relish the obnoxious arrogance of their rulers that I really believe, was it not for the influence of Mr. Clarkson, they would be apt to

¹¹²Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, p. 247.

¹¹³Ingham, pp. 65-66.

drive some of them into the sea.

The independant European Settlers [mostly artisans] are vastly disappointed and heartily wish themselves safe back in their own country. About a hundred Europeans, employed by the Sierra Leone Company, came in the first expedition, as well as ten who came as independent settlers. This is not to be wondered at when in addition to the calamity of being in a new Colony over-run with confusion, jealousy, and discordant sentiments, they are exposed to the oppression of wanting almost every necessary of life, having no shops where they might purchase, or any other medium of procuring them.

I have only one piece of pleasing intelligence to give you: The Colony just now is tolerable healthy; very few deaths have occurred among the Blacks since their arrival, and but two among the Whites; the latter were Doctor B— (our physician), and the Harpy's gunner.¹¹⁴

Strong drink is regularly prescribed to assuage fevers. John Clarkson's first encounter with Dr. John Bell, the chief physician, is on March 12, when the doctor returns from a visit to Bunce Island, feverish and too drunk to recognize anyone.

Anna Maria protests to her husband. "Why would the company send such a man out here?"

"He's said to have had great experience with diseases in warm climates."

"But still . . . such behavior sets a terrible example."

Falconbridge shrugs.

Dr. Bell dies the following night. Clarkson argues that Dr. Bell's drunken behavior sets a very bad example to the settlers, but the councilors immediately lower the flag to half-mast, for he is one of their own. The next morning they don their fancy

¹¹⁴Dr. John Bell, despite some obvious drawbacks, was appointed by the directors because of his experience in tropical medicine. Thornton's introduction of him was not promising; to John Clarkson he wrote: "I am sorry to have to hint to you that I have heard that he has been observed to be in liquor once or twice." 31st Dec. 1791; British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41262A, vol. 1.

gold-braided uniforms to accompany the coffin in a solemn burial at sea. The *Harpy's* guns are fired at one-minute intervals as Bell's body is removed.

The gunner's death was occasioned by that of the former, who brought on his dissolution by inebriety and imprudence. Being a member of the Magisterial body, he was buried with all the pomp and ceremony circumstances would admit of. While the corpse moved on in solemn pace, attended by the Members of Council and others in procession, minute guns were fired from the *Harpy*. In executing this, the gunner lost his arm, of which he died very shortly.

I yet live on ship-board, for though the Directors had the goodness to send out a canvas house purposely for me, I have not the satisfaction of occupying it, our men of might having thought proper to appropriate it another way.

Anna Maria never mentions it, but Clarkson wrote in his journal on 27 April that Falconbridge (aided by his brother-in-law) was spending his time building a house instead of going off, as Commercial Agent, on a trading expedition. She nowhere writes in her letters that her brother, Charles Horwood, was with them in Sierra Leone.¹¹⁵

Mr. Gilbert, our clergyman,¹¹⁶ returns to England in the vessel I write by, a fast sailing schooner Mr. Clarkson has purchased for the painful but indispensable intention of sending the Directors information of our distracted, deplorable situation; at the same time exhorting them in their wisdom to make some immediate, efficacious change in our government, without which their colony will irrecoverably be stifled in its infancy.

The haughty behavior of the company personnel disgusts the settlers. The councilors seem more eager to attend official receptions and lengthy council meeting than to supervise the work of building a town. They bicker endlessly over every step to be taken, and when agreement is finally reached among the eight, they then jockey with each other to control the execution of every decision.

Anna Maria does not mention it, but Alexander Falconbridge and James Cocks are drinking too much as well, deluded that alcohol will protect them from

¹¹⁵Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 82.

¹¹⁶Reverend Nathaniel Gilbert, son of a wealthy Antigua planter.

disease. Clarkson notes as well in his journal that the captain, mates, councillors, and clerks living on board the *Harpy* consumed 144 dozen bottles of porter and 96 dozen of port wine in less than three months. "Drunkenness—Pilfering the Cargoes—insulting the Natives—and debauching the Nova Scotian women were the most prevailing acts at the Commencement of this intended religious Colony."¹¹⁷

Along with his report of the settlement's problems, Clarkson sends a request for more executive power. He writes Chairman Thornton that "eight gentlemen, all them invested with great power, each of them acting for himself, and none of them accountable to the other, form . . . a system of government as pregnant with contradictions and inconsistencies as can be imagined."¹¹⁸ He refuses to sign the council dispatches and threatens to return to England if he is not given more authority.

Mr. Gilbert is a man of mild agreeable manners, truly religious, without the hypocritical shew of it. He is universally liked in the Colony, and I am sure his absence will be greatly regretted. But Mr. Clarkson's indisposition, rendering him unable to write so fully as he wishes or necessity demands, has prevailed on him (Mr. Gilbert) to return to England and represent to the Directors by word of mouth whatever he may neglect to do in writing.

A party of us will accompany him to the Banana Islands, about ten leagues from hence, where he is in hopes of procuring fresh stock and other necessary sea stores, which are not to be had here for love or money. I do not think it will be in my power to write you from the Bananas; shall therefore close this letter with sincere hopes my next may give you a more favourable account of things.

Farewell, &c.

¹¹⁷Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, p. 256.

¹¹⁸Ingham, p. 53. John Clarkson was not aware that this system of government was designed when the Sierra Leone Company directors expected Henry Hew Dalrymple to be governor, or failing that, Alexander Falconbridge—neither of whom they completely trusted.

LETTER VIII.

FREE TOWN, July 1, 1792.

My dear Friend,

We accompanied Mr. Gilbert to the Island of Banana, where he succeeded in getting some fresh stock, and after staying there two days, departed for your quarter of the globe, and I hope is safe arrived in London long ere now.

The Island of Bananas derives its name from the fruit so called, which grows there spontaneously and in great abundance, as do most tropical fruits. It is a small Island, but a wonderful productive healthful spot, throngly [sic] inhabited by clean, tidy, sociable, and obliging people.

They have a town much larger and more regularly built than any other native town I have yet seen. The inhabitants are mostly vassals to one Mr. Cleavland [a few lines further on Anna Maria spells his name Cleveland], a black man, who claims the sovereignty of the Island from hereditary right.¹¹⁸ The houses are chiefly constructed in a circular form, but of the same kind of stuff with those I formerly noticed. In the centre of the town is a Palaver, or Court House; here we observed a bed neatly made up, a wash-hand bason, clean napkin, and every apparatus of a bed chamber. This had a very curious appearance; but we were told that the late Mr. Cleveland used to indulge himself with the luxury of sleeping in this airy place, and the inhabitants superstitiously thinking (though he has been dead more than a year) that he yet invisibly continues the practice, they would not upon any account forego the daily ceremony of making up his bed, placing fresh water, &c. as was the custom in his life time. The idolatry shewn the memory of this man, I make no doubt is greatly encouraged by his son, as it secures consequence and

¹¹⁸ James Cleveland (or Clevland) was the grandson of an English slave trader, member of a prominent Devonshire landowning family, who had settled on the island early in the eighteenth century, and married into a prominent Sherbro ruling family. Fyfe, A History, p. 10.

popularity to him.¹¹⁹ He was from home, I therefore did not see him, but understand he is clever and (being educated in England) rather polished in his manners.

We sailed from the Bananas in company with Mr. Gilbert, consequently my time was so short that I am not able to give you but a very superficial account of that Island; but shall refer you to Lieutenant Mathews's Voyage to Sierra Leone, where you will find it amply described.¹²⁰ While there, we dined on board an American ship commanded by an Irishman, who has since then been here entertaining himself at the expence of our Senators. He invited them all to dine with him, which being accepted (by every one but Mr. Clarkson and Falconbridge),¹²¹ they were treated with true Hibernian hospitality, and made beastly drunk.

Our illegitimate son of Mars was of the number who the master of the ship cull'd out for his butt [made the butt of his jokes].

The surveyor, James Cocks, was nicknamed by his fellow councillors 'Captain of the soldiers'. Anna Maria is even less kind in calling him 'our illegitimate son of Mars'.

He not only played upon him during dinner, but afterwards finding him lull'd into the arms of Morpheus in consequence of too much wine, had the ship's cook, a slave, dressed in the noble Captain's dashing coat, hat, sword, &c. and stationed immediately before him with a mop stick on his shoulder,

¹¹⁹According to Winterbottom, the funeral, or cry, was not solemnized "until near three years after the body had been buried." Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 1, p. 243.

¹²⁰John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra Leone*, London, 1789; Matthews, a former naval lieutenant who lived on the Sierra Leone peninsula, trading in slaves, gave his readers a well-informed description of the country and its people, still of use to historians and anthropologists. His book, too, is styled as a series of letters. Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 9.

¹²¹Like Alexander Falconbridge, Clarkson was very reluctant to go on board slaving ships, or to accept hospitality from their captains.

when the master himself fired two pistols, very heavily charged, within an inch of his ear, and having thus roused him from his lethargy, the sable cook was desired to shew with what expertness he could perform the manual exercise which he went through, our Hero giving the word of command, to the ridicule of himself and great amusement of his colleagues and the ship's crew.

Surveyor Cocks is amiable, but inexperienced. He has been given charge of the tiny band of company soldiers, and prefers dressing up in his uniform and marching his battalion up and down to laying out lots and farms. Company plans are to augment the 18 European soldiers with 20 blacks. Cocks offers the Nova Scotian men extra provisions and free rum if they will enlist. Some do, but the white soldiers die one after the other until only four are left. They are sent home at their own request in September, leaving Freetown with only a black militia. Not many years pass before Sierra Leone will be known in England as the "*white man's grave*."

The surveying is assigned to Cocks and Richard Pepys. Both *delegate their work to junior officials*. Anna Maria watches them quarrel over which laborers should work on their various projects. Work parties venture out to cut the great trees—African mahogany, cottonwood, ironwood, golden walnut, pearwood—and saw them into building lumber. Soon they are lured away by a different councillor promising higher wages, abandoning one work site for another. Pepys insists that the survey parties deserve a daily rum ration, a custom of long standing in the British navy. Clarkson very reluctantly agrees, but later regrets the concession because other work parties then demand the same privilege, and the men gradually acquire a taste for rum. When the workers are defeated by the huge trees entangled in masses of vines and creepers, white officials think them lazy, calling them 'black rascals'.

Clarkson speaks at Anglican services every Sunday, which all the settlers are expected to attend, urging the congregation to behave in an exemplary manner, to set a good example for their brethren and for the heathen Africans. But his own English officials are hardly setting a good example. In a letter to England he confides that among his colleagues, "Pride, Arrogance, self-sufficiency, Meanness, Drunkenness, Atheism, and Idleness are daily practiced."¹²²

When Cocks falls ill and returns to England in June, Clarkson writes in his journal that the man has done no surveying and has only caused confusion and expense. Engineer Pepys agrees to take charge of the surveying if he can add Cocks title to his own, but he is soon embroiled in a feud between his wife and the large family of storekeeper White. Anna Maria does not draw attention to the conduct of

¹²²Clarkson's Papers. British Library Additional Manuscripts 41,263.

the women in the colony, but John Clarkson writes on March 29th that “the ladies in the colony, by their mutual jealousies and absurd notions of their rank and consequence, give rise to many private piques, which often cause open dissensions amongst the gentlemen, and the mischief they have occasioned from the time the ships left the Downs to the present cannot be estimated”¹²³

Blunt, outspoken, and insensitive to either the feelings of others or the gossip caused by his behavior, Richard Pepys soon interferes in the domestic affairs of Captain Wilson of the *Harpy*. In mid-August Clarkson writes that “Mr. Pepys has unfortunately made himself so unpopular with his brother officers and particularly of late—respecting his conduct about Mrs. Wilson, that many unpleasant things are said of him which never would have been agitated if he had conducted himself otherwise.”¹²⁴ It appears that Mrs. Wilson is ill and Captain Wilson not paying enough attention, at least in Mrs. Pepys’ mind. She nags Mr. Pepys until he takes matters into his own hands and extorts a promise from Captain Hoffman to take Mrs. Wilson home to England. John Clarkson believes that he would have to hire Captain Hoffman’s ship if this is to happen. Instead he offers to fit up a company ship, *Catherine*, for that purpose.¹²⁵ He goes on to say, “I should not have made this offer, if I had not been fully satisfied of the advantages the colony would derive from Mrs. Wilson quitting it.”¹²⁶

Earlier Clarkson has written that Mr. P----- “is a very industrious, active, insinuating man, but these valuable qualifications are greatly lessened by an unbounded ambition, and a haughty and unpleasant way of carrying on business. He is, besides, such a decided stickler for the rights and privileges of the council, that he would suffer the colony to be ruined, sooner than relax one tittle of what he conceived to be his rights.”¹²⁷ He appears to have no sense of what other people are thinking or their reaction to his arrogant behavior.¹²⁸

¹²³E.G. Ingham, p. 32.

¹²⁴Sierra Leone Studies, Volume VIII, p. 10.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 1.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 2.

¹²⁷Ingham, p. 64.

¹²⁸Pepys remains an enigma throughout, until September 1794, when French ships fire on Freetown and the entire population flees. “Richard Pepys was the principal casualty of the French attack. He apparently feared for his personal safety outside of Freetown and fled into the woods with his

Since this, I have taught a large overgrown female Monkey of mine to go thro' several manoeuvres of the same and have made her exhibit when the Captain [Cocks] came to see me, who not seeing the diversion I was making of him, would sometimes take the pains of instructing her himself; but, poor fellow! he has been sadly galled lately by the arrival of a gentleman from England who supersedes him in his military capacity.

This "gentleman from England" is Isaac DuBois, an American planter. Is he important? Yes. Although Anna Maria never identifies him by name, he will play a pivotal role in the months to come. Keep him in mind.

When I last wrote to you, I was in hopes my next would atone by a more favourable and pleasing account for the hapless description I then gave of our new Colony, but alas! alas! in place of growing better, we seem daily advancing towards destruction, which certainly awaits us at no great distance unless some speedy change takes place.

There is about twelve thousand souls [Anna Maria clearly means twelve hundred], including all ranks of people, in the Colony, seven hundred or upwards of whom are at this moment suffering under the affliction of burning fevers. I suppose two hundred scarce able to crawl about and am certain not more, if so many, able to nurse the sick or attend to domestic and Colonial concerns. Five, six, and seven are dying daily, (about three-fourths of all the Europeans who went out in 1792 died in the course of the first nine or ten months) and buried with as little ceremony as so many dogs or cats.

The West African coast had a reputation for pestilence and rot unequalled anywhere in the world. The rains bring such heat and humidity, such galaxies of insects, that the jungle turns into an enervating soup of frightening diseases—malaria, dysentery, spotted fever, yaws, typhus, trypanosomiasis, hookworm, cholera, plague. Water carries bilharzia and guinea worm; mosquitos carry malaria and filariasis. Any drink of water or scrap of food can move bacteria

wife and son. Although the [black] settlers offered him shelter, he refused any help except transportation to the Bullom shore across the estuary. He died there of exposure on October 6, and was commended in the Sierra Leone Company's 1795 report for 'extraordinary exertions' in surveying the land." Clifford, p. 171.

and viruses into the human body where they quickly damage organs, vision, and memory.

It is quite customary of a morning to ask "how many died last night?" Death is viewed with the same indifference as if people were only taking a short journey, to return in a few days. Those who are well hourly expect to be laid up, and the sick look momentarily for the surly Tyrant to finish their afflictions, nay, seem not to care for life!

Clarkson soon orders the carpenters to stop making coffins, for the wood is needed more urgently to build houses.

The doctors sent out by the company are of very little use to the settlers, for they know almost nothing about treating malaria (which they called "ague"), sunstroke, scurvy, dysentery, or rheumatism. They have only chinchona bark (from which quinine would later be derived), opium, and laudanum to work with. Dr. Bell is already dead. Dr. Charles Thomas ministered to the sick during the winter passage from Nova Scotia, but the chills and fevers raging in the soggy equatorial heat are not part of his experience. Knowing how little he can do to aid the stricken, the hapless doctor wanders away almost daily to King Jemmy's town nearby, where (according to his journal) he admires the flora, fauna, and nubile young women (who wear nothing but wraparounds called *lappas* and strings of beads). The spectacle of these half-naked women is a shocking contrast to the pious atmosphere ordained by the company's sponsors. Taylor and another surgeon soon ask to return to England, as does a third man when Clarkson refuses to double his salary to compensate for the frustrating conditions.

Those who fall sick have very little effective medical attention, save for the healing skills of a young African woman who seeks refuge in the settlement. She has fled Signor Domingo's village upriver because he intends to sell her—or so she claims. When she sees how many of the settlers are stricken with fever, she immediately brews infusions of local barks and herbs, which ease the symptoms for many of the sick. They are so delighted that they ask John Clarkson to buy her; the men pledge their labor to pay for her. The governor is very reluctant to get involved in the slave trade, but how can he refuse to redeem slaves who claim refuge in Freetown—particularly at the urging of leading settlers? In any case, this African woman is allowed to stay after promising that she will wear a blouse with her *lappa*.

After reading this, methinks I hear you invectively exclaim against the country and charging those ravages to its unhealthiness; but suspend your judgement for a moment and give me time to paint the true state of things, when I am of opinion you will think otherwise, or at least allow the climate has not a fair tryal [*sic*]. This is the depth of the rainy season; our inhabitants were not covered in before it

commenced, and the huts they have been able to make are neither wind or water tight. Few of them have bedsteads, but are obliged to lie on the wet ground; without medical assistance, wanting almost every comfort of life and exposed to nauseous [*sic*] putrid stenches produced by stinking provisions scattered about the town.

Would you, under such circumstances, expect to keep your health or even live a month in the healthiest part of the world? I fancy not; then pray do not attribute our mortality altogether to baseness of climate.

I cannot imagine what kind of stuff I am made of, for though daily in the midst of so much sickness and so many deaths, I feel myself much better than when in England.

Anna Maria smiles as she finishes this paragraph. She has disproved all the dire predictions her friends made when they learned of her plans to return to Africa. She is pleased, proud of herself, feels justified in bragging. No hot-house flower, she. No, she is made of much sturdier stuff than her English friends can possibly imagine. And much sturdier stuff than the rest of the hapless population of Freetown. She will show them the strong inner fiber to which they should aspire.

I am surprised our boasted Philanthropists, the Directors of the Company, should have subjected themselves to such censure as they must meet for sporting with the lives of such numbers of their fellow creatures. I mean by sending so many here at once, before houses, materials for building, or other conveniences were prepared to receive them, and for not hurrying a supply after they had been guilty of this oversight. But I really believe their error has proceeded from want of information and listening with too much credulity to a pack of designing, puritanical parasites whom they employ to transact business. I cannot help thinking so, nay, am convinced of it from the cargoes they have sent out, composed of goods no better adapted for an infant Colony than a cargoe of slaves would be for the London market.

Anna Maria is aware of growing discontent among the black settlers. The various congregations gather daily for prayer meetings, at which all of their problems are debated vigorously. Some of the preachers—David George and Cato Perkins among them—attempt to act as peacemakers and reassure Clarkson of their continued loyalty. In fact, it is unfair of Clarkson to accuse those who felt betrayed of disloyalty for expressing their strong feelings about the actions taken by the company directors. He, after all, had made sweeping promises to them, and the directors have placed Clarkson in an impossible position. Much of the discussion

among the settlers takes place with only one side represented. The freed blacks have little experience to prepare them for the hard realities of government and politics.

The sentiments which surface in each congregation doubtless reflect the eloquence and persuasive power of their leader in articulating their grievances. Thomas Peters, the Methodist preacher, is a commanding figure, older than most, and hardened in the crucible of the War for Independence, when he was one of only three black sergeants in the British regiment of Guides and Pioneers. He is very aware of the disorder in Freetown, and is clearly furious with the waste, the lack of progress, and the bickering and fumbling of the white administration while the rains pour down and people are dying daily.

Although Peters was his strong right hand in preparing the voyage from Halifax, John Clarkson is now mistrustful of his influence over the Methodists, suspecting that they are in a mood to rebel and put Peters in charge of the settlement. Clarkson knows that support from England would end if that happened, and in April he calls a public assembly to make that clear to the settlers. He and Peters are at loggerheads thereafter.

Peters' death on June 26 rocks Clarkson, for he remembers Peters' willing and able assistance in Halifax in the hasty preparations for the voyage to Africa. Peters' wife writes, not to Clarkson, but to Alexander Falconbridge, asking for supplies that are needed for an appropriate funeral—"a Gallon of Wine, One Gallon of porter, & ½ Gallon of Rum, 2 lbs. Candles, 5 Yards of White Linen." Clarkson orders the storekeeper to meet all her needs, and when a deputation comes requesting pine boards for a coffin, he breaks his no-coffin rule. He arranges a pension of £20 a year for Mrs. Peters and her six or seven children. He also grants permission to those wishing to attend the funeral to leave work. His journal note is cryptic: "Thos. Peters funeral went off without disturbance," attended by "a great many." How much more eloquent that description might have been had one of the black preachers recorded the final rites of the most prominent of Freetown's founding fathers. They would remember him as heroic in stature, having braved the wild Atlantic to take their pleas to England, and standing steadfast both in Nova Scotia and Freetown in demanding that the white officials keep the promises made to them by English officials.

Two vessels arrived from England last month, viz. the Sierra Leona Packet, belonging to the Company, and the Trusty of Bristol, a large ship they chartered from that port. Several passengers came in each of them; in the former were a Member of Council, a worthy discreet man; a Botanist, who I cannot say any thing of, having seen but little of him; a sugar planter, who is since gone to the West Indies in disgust, and the Gentleman who has superseded our Gallant Captain, and who, I understand, is also a cotton planter. But it is not likely he will have much to do in either of those

departments for some time; his fellow soldiers being mostly dead, and agriculture not thought on.

The “worthy discreet man” is John Wakerell, whose health soon breaks down, forcing him to return to England. The Botanist is Adam Afzelius, a Swede, the first to do systematic botanical work in West Africa.

Anna Maria labels the third Englishman only “Gentleman,” but surely he catches her eye. This is not a pure fiction, as later events will prove.

So, how should we picture Isaac DuBois, who is to take charge of the colony’s defenses? Let’s make him tall, built like an athlete, and with a resolute air that appeals to Anna Maria. Whenever she sees him, Anna Maria might feel a little *frisson* of excitement, struck by his manliness. Surely she would have asked someone about him—most likely John Clarkson, whom she regularly encounters on the waterfront.

“Mr. DuBois?” he replies. “Why, he is an American colonist from a wealthy family in North Carolina. He was forced by the American rebels to abandon his home and property.”¹²⁹

“The DuBois were loyalists?”

“Very definitely. His father died before the war, but Mr. Dubois served as a lieutenant in the New York volunteers and fought on our side. Their Carolina plantation was seized by the Americans and Isaac and his mother and siblings exiled to England when the war ended.”

“What on earth is he doing here?”

“Apparently Dubois has never been compensated for his lost property in America. He asked the Commissioners for Loyalist Claims for assistance in claiming property confiscated during the war and was sent back to North Carolina to seek compensation under the terms of the Peace Treaty. Instead of honoring his claim, the good men of Wilmington tossed him in jail for ten months and then banished him from the state for life as a traitor.”

¹²⁹DuBois’s father was one of the wealthiest men in Wilmington. The family property included houses, warehouses, a bakery and a mill, as well as “a great number of valuable boat Negroes and tradesmen”—valued at nearly £30,000, yielding an income of about £4,000 a year. Isaac was born around 1764. Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 83n.

“How dreadful.”

“Yes, he was penniless when he returned to London. There he found the Claims Office closed,¹³⁰ so he was forced to take the first job he could find. Many thousands of loyalists were evacuated from the colonies when the rebellion ended, and most of them need employment to survive. Many in England are struggling to find work.”

“What can he do here to help you?”

“He is supposed to start a cotton plantation.”

“A cotton plantation—before we even have roofs over our heads?”

“Yes, our other needs are more pressing.”

Anna Maria shook her head in dismay. “He seems very capable.”

“Indeed.” Clarkson replied. “He has nursed the sick during this period of severe illness in Freetown, saving many lives. Now as you see, he is building houses. The Nova Scotian settlers like him. Some of them had known him in North Carolina.”¹³¹

Having demonstrated his industry and organizing abilities, Dubois soon wins John Clarkson’s confidence and is set to work building a new storehouse beside Susan’s Bay.¹³² He also starts a cotton plantation on Thompson’s Bay. The settlers find him an admirable contrast to his dilatory colleagues.

Unfortunately, the soil is poor on the peninsula, for the heavy annual rains erode away topsoil and leach nutrients faster than they are replaced. Settlers who had labored on prosperous southern plantations in the colonies soon share with their African neighbors a bewildered sense that dark forces somehow hold the land in thrall, for nothing really thrives around them except the jungle that binds the soil in place and forms a huge but permeable umbrella to break the force of the winds and rains. Cut the great trees, kill their roots, and soon nothing remains but a sticky red clay composed of iron, manganese, and other insolubles that barely support decent grass.

¹³⁰*House of Commons Journals*, vol lxii, pp.277-8, 845, 954-5.

¹³¹Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 83, 168.

¹³²*Sierra Leone Studies*, Volume VIII, p. 31. The bay was named for John Clarkson’s fiancée.

In the latter [the *Trusty* of Bristol] came the store-keeper with his wife, mother-in-law, and a large family of children; a mineralist,¹³³ and several clerks and tradesmen—in all twenty three. (Six returned to England, one left the Colony and went into the employ of Bance Island, and the remainder died in the course of three or four months.)

Those vessels brought so little provisions (with which they should have been wholly loaded) that we have not a sufficiency in the Colony to serve us three weeks. The goods brought out in the *Trusty* and quantities by other ships, amounting to several thousand pounds value, at this moment line the shore, exposed to the destructive weather and *mercy* of our neighbours, who cannot, I am sure, withstand such temptation. Those [supplies] remaining on ship board, I have heard Falconbridge say, are perishing by heat of the hold and damage received at sea.

The settlers catch fish and an occasional deer or wild pig to eat, but little in the way of African fruit and vegetables will be available until the new harvest matures toward the end of the rainy season. Barely three weeks after their arrival, shortages force Clarkson to cut rations by half. Everyone is dismayed. They watch the horizon hopefully for another supply ship to ease the deprivation.

Notwithstanding the Company's property is thus suffering and our people dying from absolute want of nourishment, Mr. Falconbridge has been refused the *Sierra Leona* packet to go in quest of cattle and otherwise prosecute the duties of his office as Commercial Agent. She is the only vessel fit for the business; but it is thought necessary to send her to England. Yet, if things were ordered judiciously, she might have made one serviceable trip in the meanwhile, and answered three desirable purposes by it: relieve the Colony, bartered away goods that are spoiling, and please the Directors by an early remittance of African productions. In place of this she has only been used as a *Pleasure Boat* to give a week's airing at sea to Gentlemen in perfect health.

Mr. Falconbridge has had no other opportunity but this to do any thing in the commercial way. The Directors no doubt will be displeased, but they should not blame him; he is placed altogether under the control of the Superintendent and Council, who throw cold water on every proposal of the

¹³³August Nordenskiöld, also Swedish.

kind he makes.¹³⁴ His time is at present employed in attending the sick, particularly those of scrophulous [sic] habits, while our military gentleman [Isaac DuBois], who has acquired by experience some medical knowledge, attends those afflicted with fevers, &c. This is the only phisical [sic] help at present in the Colony, for though we have two Surgeons, they are both so ill as to disable them from helping either themselves, or others. One of them returns to England in the Packet, as does our mortified soldier [Cocks].

I am, &c.

* * *

On 17 July 1792 John Clarkson's brother Thomas, a Sierra Leone Company director, wrote him as follows:

You will be sorry to find, as I am, that poor Falconbridge is to be recalled. It was impossible for us to help him out of it. He is said to have given no account whatever of the *Lapwing's* cargo; to have taken up without leave of the Company a person of the name of Coppinger at Falmouth; to have disregarded in every Instance his Instructions; to have acted such a drunken Scene at Teneriffe as to be disgraceful to a Company whose object is so amiable. These and a variety of other things are alleged against him, but in particular the disregard to all the Instructions given him.

William Wilberforce, another director of the Company, also wrote to John Clarkson (17 July 1792) about Falconbridge:

I regret very sincerely that in my public capacity I have been compelled to consent to the Measure of his Removal. But in these Cases we must be ready to sacrifice our private feelings no less than our personal Interests. What I wanted to add on this head is that I hope if Falconbridge behaves well, the Directors will be prevailed on to make him some pecuniary Acknowledgment beyond what he has a Right to demand: of course no assurance of this Sort ought to be given him, but perhaps it might not be amiss for you to throw out the Idea as from yourself, and as what you

¹³⁴Certainly Clarkson had little sympathy with the Company's emphasis on trade. He believed it was much more important to settle the Nova Scotians on their lands, agriculture being a much more improving activity than trade, which would ensure only 'gain and laziness' to the settlers. Ingham, *Sierra Leone*, pp. 136-37.

would be willing to promote. All this is left to your Discretion.¹³⁵

In a later letter (14 September 1792) Thornton made Falconbridge a general scapegoat for the early misfortunes of the settlement (a charge that he later repeats publicly): "I think however much of the evils that have happened are to be laid at his door." Thornton also absolved himself and the other directors from blame with the excuse that it was not in fact they who had originally appointed him—that he had been "rather continued than appointed by us."¹³⁶

Anna Maria, of course, is unaware of this correspondence. John Clarkson knows he should warn Falconbridge of his imminent replacement, but the poor chap is so far into his cups that the appropriate moment never seems to arrive.

August is a month of sustained activity in the fields, and the Europeans who believe that man's lot is to labor look with approval on the African women bending, hoeing with their short-handled hoes, dropping the rice, hoeing the exposed seeds into small mounds, weeding from dawn to dusk. Back-breaking work, often carried out while the white man huddles under his shelter to escape the inexorable rain. The pageant of sowing the seed wins Anna Maria's approval. Along with the rice are planted okra, sour-sour, green-green, with yams, beans, and cassava cuttings thrust here and there into the mounds—these to mature as quickly as possible and tide the families through the rainy season until the rice ripens in the fall.

The black skins of those laboring in their gardens are no protection against rheumatism, nor against the swarms of malaria-carrying mosquitos that appear with the rains, nor against the endless flies that cling to perspiring skin and eyes in the steamy sunlight, depositing their tokens of glaucoma and dysentery.

Small wonder that the Africans chew their kola nuts—*aspirin*, *nicotine*, and *caffeine* combined—although Anna Maria doesn't know this. Nor is there any protection to be begged from the spirits against the rats and grasshoppers, the frogs that chew the plant stems, the weaver birds that settle in flocks to eat the grain, the herds of monkeys and wild pigs that come to scavenge as the rice is ripening. Now the children must pay continuous attention to their duties, slinging stones at the predators, chasing the monkeys, frightening the birds, spearing the frogs and rats with pointed sticks. Anna Maria might be repelled if she knew that the speared animal goes into the cooking pot, but its contents are thin now with last year's harvest long gone and only the enduring cassava roots to fill empty stomachs.

¹³⁵Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 93.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 92-93. The above letters are found in BL, Add. MS41262A.

LETTER IX

SIERRA LEONA, Aug. 25th, 1792.

My Dear Friend,

You must not promise yourself either instruction or entertainment from this letter, for my strength of body and mind are so debilitated by a severe fit of illness that with much ado I could summon resolution enough to take up my pen or prevail on myself to write you a syllable by this opportunity, but having made a beginning (which is equal to half the task), I shall now endeavour to spin out what I can.

I was confined three weeks with a violent fever, stoneblind four days, and expecting every moment to be my last; indeed I most miraculously escaped the jaws of death. Fortunately just as I was taken sick, a Physician arrived, to whose attention and skill I consider myself principally indebted for my recovery.¹³⁷ I am yet a poor object, and being under the necessity of having my head shaved, tends to increase my ghastly figure. You will readily guess it was very humbling and provoking for me to loose my fine head of hair, which I always took so much pride in, but I cannot help it, and must thank God my life is preserved.

Stricken herself finally, Anna Maria is shocked by the speed with which one can sicken and die on this soggy hillside. All the pride she expressed earlier over her robust health has been erased by this sudden encounter with mortality. As she recovers slowly, her outlook is invaded by a growing infusion of humility. Perhaps bragging does tempt fate and would best be abandoned.

A few weeks since arrived the Calypso from Bulam with a number of disappointed adventurers who went to that Island. They came here in expectation of finding accommodation for a part of them during the rainy season, who meant afterwards to return to Bulam. But they entertained wrong notions of our Colony when they supposed we had it in our power to accommodate them, for most of our own gentlemen are obliged to sleep on ship board for want of houses or lodging on shore.

The adventurers seem vexed at being thus defeated in their expectations and

¹³⁷Thomas Winterbottom, who arrived in mid-July 1792.

intend returning to England in the Calypso when she sails, which will be shortly. Perhaps you have not heard of the Bulam expedition before, and I can give you but a very imperfect account of it. However, I will laconically tell you what I know. A Mr. Dalrymple was engaged by the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to come out as governor of this colony; but they disagreed from some trifling circumstance, [Mr. Dalrymple had asked the Sierra Leone Company to send 150 soldiers to protect his new colony; the Directors told him he could have 15] and Mr. Dalrymple feeling himself offended, set on foot (towards the latter end of last year) a subscription for forming a settlement on the Island I am speaking of, in opposition to the Sierra Leone Company. A number of speculators soon associated, subscribed to Mr. Dalrymple's plan, and I fancy, prematurely set about the completion of its objects before they had well digested the theory or accumulated a sufficient fund to ensure success.¹³⁸ Be that as it may, they purchased a small sloop, chartered the Calypso and another ship, engaged numbers of needy persons, who with many of the subscribers personally embarked in the enterprize and placing themselves under the direction of Mr. Dalrymple and a few others, sailed from England in April last, and arrived at Bulam in June.

I understand they were all novices in the arts and modes requisite for attaining their wished for possession, which was unfortunate, for their ignorance led them into an error that proved fatal to several. Although the island of Bulam was uninhabited, it was claimed by persons residing in the adjacent Islands, who by some means or other learnt the errand of the adventurers, and to prevent them from getting a footing without consent of the proprietors, secretly landed a party of men on the Island where they for several days watched the motions of Mr. Dalrymple's people, between thirty and forty of whom, having disembarked and landed (without any previous ceremony according to the custom of the country), the natives took the first

¹³⁸In November 1791, six men—Henry Hew Dalrymple, Lieutenant Philip Beaver, Sir William Halton, John King, John Young and Robert Dobbin—formed a committee at Old Slaughter's Coffee-house for the colonization of Bulama. A Constitution for the settlement was drawn up in February 1792. The plan was to grow sugar and other tropical plantations. Dalrymple, an unemployed army officer who had served on the west coast of Africa at Gorée, was the prime mover behind the plan. Coleman, p. 162.

opportunity to catch them off their guard, fell upon them, killed five men and one woman, wounded two men, carried off three or four women and children, and obliged the remainder to return to their ship.

After this Mr. Dalrymple went to the neighbouring Island of Bissao, belonging to the Portuguese, where he, through the medium of a merchant of that country, became acquainted with the measures he should have adopted at first, and having courted the friendship of the native chiefs and made them sensible of his peaceable and honorable intentions, they restored the women and children uninjured and gave him possession of the Island for some trifling acknowledgement I have not yet ascertained.

After this Mr. Dalrymple fell sick, and many of the emigrants foreseeing frightful hardships which they were unwilling to encounter during the present rains, he and they resolved to return to England, but first to come hither for the purpose I before mentioned. The Island is not altogether abandoned; a Lieutenant Beaver of the Navy, with a few people remain upon it.¹³⁹ Since their arrival here many of them have died and the ship is just now very sickly. So much for Bulam.¹⁴⁰

Now I must say something of ourselves, which I have the heartfelt satisfaction of telling you before hand will be more cheerful and satisfactory than any thing I have heretofore said. By the last ship Mr. Clarkson received instructions from the Directors vesting him with more ample powers than he held before. This was much to be wished for and its beneficial effects are

¹³⁹Lieutenant Philip Beaver (1766-1813) was the younger son of a Somerset clergyman. His career resembled John Clarkson's, to whom he was well known. They had both entered the navy as fatherless young boys, served on the same ships and been retired on half pay in the 1780s. In 1805 Beaver published an account of the failed colony in his *African Memoranda*: relative to an attempt to establish a British settlement on the island of Bulama, on the western coast of Africa, in the year 1792 (London: C. & R. Baldwin, 1805). Coleman, pp. 162-3.

¹⁴⁰A third of those on the *Calypso* died of fever during the six weeks before she sailed to England. Coleman, p. 163.

already visible.¹⁴¹

Directly after getting this enlargement of authority, Mr. Clarkson invited all the gentlemen and ladies in the Colony [the white officials, that is] to dine at a mess-house built for the gentlemen who came out in the *Sierra Leone Packet*. Every one that was well enough gladly attended to celebrate a meeting which was intended to give birth to pleasantness, unanimity, and perpetual harmony, and to deface every thing to the contrary that previously existed in the Colony: The day I am told (for being sick at the time, I could not be there) was spent as it should be, with every demonstration of satisfaction by all parties, and the house was named *Harmony Hall*, by which name it is now, and I suppose ever will be known while a stick of it stands. This house and the one I have are all the buildings yet finished (I mean for the Whites), but several others are about it.

Anna Maria does not tell us that Isaac DuBois was responsible for building Harmony Hall.¹⁴² Before her illness, did she come ashore regularly to watch it taking shape? Did DuBois stop for a moment's respite, stroll up the slope to where she sits on a rock under her parasol and drop down beside her? He would wipe his damp forehead with the full sleeve of his shirt, flash her a glimpse of wonderfully even white teeth, and ask her how she does. Surely these brief chats make her ridiculously light-hearted, but she hides her pleasure, and never admits the slightest hint of being drawn to DuBois.

The Colony is growing healthier every day; most of the Blacks are able to turn out to work. The men are employed in the Company's service and receive two shillings per day wages, out of which they pay four shillings per week for their provisions. The women are occupied in attending their little gardens, and rearing poultry.

¹⁴¹In his first address to the colony after receiving his new instructions, Clarkson argued that "though I have it in my power to do as I please, . . . I detest an arbitrary government." Ingham, *Sierra Leone*, p. 97.

¹⁴²John Clarkson wrote on August 15: "Mr. DuBois having finished Harmony Hall, as well as some alterations in the stoehouse, reports to me to-day that he is ready to receive all the fish and cheese from the Duke of Savoy in a place calculated for such articles . . ." *Sierra Leone Studies*, Volume VIII, p. 10.

The natives daily grow more intimate with us and are constantly bringing in fruits of different kinds, but seldom any livestock unless now and then a few fowls, or perhaps a goat, which they barter away for cloath, soap, or spirits. Every moon-light night we hear the drums of King Jemmy's town, which is scarcely half a mile from hence. This music of our neighbours for a long time after we arrived used frequently to alarm the Colony; but by custom it has become familiar. For several months King Jemmy could not be persuaded to come into Free Town; but at last being prevailed upon and relishing his reception, he now repeats his visits so often as to be very troublesome. Whenever he comes, a boy attends him with a pair of horseman's pistols, loaded, and I will not be surprised if he does mischief with them some day or other, for he never returns home until he has drank a sufficient quantity of rum or brandy to kindle his savage nature for any manner of wickedness.

The pagan drumming and dancing through the long reaches of the night seem like mere drunken orgies in Anna Maria's Puritan mind. She cannot glimpse in those shadowy throbbing tapestries of sound and movement the appeal to higher powers that parallel the supplications Anna Maria makes silently on her knees in her church pew.

She believes in heavenly rewards, but her concept of life after death is a much more stereotyped one than the straightforward belief of the Africans that a deserving or meritorious life is rewarded with a high station in the spirit world of the village, where the dead live on. Nor could she dismiss casually, had she understood, the satisfaction an African might contemplate in receiving perpetual adulation from the living once he has achieved a position of importance among the spirits.

As she lays in her narrow cabin aboard an English sailing ship in the harbor, she is thankful that Falconbridge no longer joins her there, demanding his marital rights. She ponders her odd situation, a woman married but alone and far away from home, as she listens to the nightly throbbing of drums from King Jemmy's town. The sound annoys her, for it has a persistent, inescapable quality as steady as heartbeats, and the muffled sequence echoing through the stillness of the African night unfolds in an endless irritating monotony. She hears it inside her head long after the drums have fallen silent. It does not lull or stupify her as it does the Africans who immerse themselves joyfully in the rhythm, and her fury mounts as she lies tense, listening, yet striving vainly not to hear.

In August, a few months after the arrival of the Freetown settlers, the Africans perform the rituals which always accompany the planting of the new crop. The indigenous people know that their earth is ready to be fertilized because the ground orchids are blooming their great purple spikes and the six-inch centipedes

with their shivery poisonous feet have emerged from their cocoons. No seed can be planted, however, without first offering the proper supplications to the ancestral spirits to nourish the soil that sustains the crops.

Anna Maria has seen in the rough-slashed, burned-off patches near King Jemmy's town the small 'shimbecks', huts of sticks and palm fronds containing part of an ant hill and graced with a miniature seed bed of rice before the door. A broken hoe lies there, and within, small soapstone figures of men and animals stand on the altar. Dogs sniff among the cock feathers and blood stains from a ceremonial sacrifice and the small offering of red rice. All these are symbolic pleas to the benevolent power of the spirits who can, if they choose, cast their weight against the unpredictable forces of nature, mitigating man's presumption in disturbing and abusing the earth in his need to obtain sustenance.

The last ship brought out a large house of one hundred feet in length, which is to be erected in the vicinity of the town as an hospital; but the people being mostly on the recovery, I think it would be more advisable to erect it as a store-house and thereby not only save the Company's valuable property, which is just now perishing for want of shelter; but would serve as a repository for vending many goods that are wasting on board of ships, which would greatly contribute to our comfort, and which we are deprived of from not having a proper place where they might be exposed to sale. And again, I do not think our Blacks will submit to be sent to an hospital. Therefore the intention will be frustrated; however, the house is so constructed that it can be put up or taken down in a few hours, consequently may at any time hereafter be removed; and we understand several houses of the same kind are expected in two large ships, which are hourly looked for.

Since the rains we have been sadly infested by a variety of insects, but more particularly cockroaches and ants. The latter come from their nests in such formidable force as to strike terror wherever they go. You will think it strange that such an insignificant insect as the ant is in England should be able, in another country, to storm the habitations of people and drive out the inhabitants; but I pledge my veracity to you. I have known them in one night [to] force twelve or fourteen families from their houses, who were obliged to make use of fire and boiling water to destroy them, which are the only weapons we can attack them with that will effectually check their

progress.¹⁴³

Musquetos [sic] are not so troublesome here as I have felt them elsewhere; but we have a perpetual croaking of frogs and buzzings of various vermin, very discordant and unpleasant to the ear of a person in perfect health, yet much more so to those who are sick.

There has been several large serpents killed in the Colony, but none of the overgrown size Lieutenant Mathews and other authors mention.¹⁴⁴ The largest I have heard of measured nine feet in length. We have been twice visited by some ferocious wild beast, supposed to be a tyger [sic]. The last time it was attacked by two mastiffs of ours, who were beat off and materially injured. One of my poor domestics, a very heavy Newfoundland dog, had his throat terribly lacerated; the other, I imagine, fought shy, as he came off with little damage.

Anna Maria has two large dogs, not mentioned before. Did she bring them with her?

There are many good hunters among our Settlers, through whom we sometimes get wild deer or pork; the latter is a coarse unpleasant food. I lately had a haunch, the hide of which was full an inch and an half thick; the former is meagre, dry meat, very unlike your English venison, but such as it is, we are glad when it comes in our way.

Some little time ago an accident happened [to] one of the most expert hunters we have, which has considerably lessened our supply of game. He

¹⁴³Clarkson wrote of this period: 'We are now tormented with ants and . . . crickets, cockroaches, spiders, etc., are driven out of their crevices and jump about the floor in a distressing situation amongst their enemies.' Ingham, Sierra Leone, p. 137.

¹⁴⁴Mathews, on pp. 43-44, wrote that "The tenneé when full grown, is from fifteen to twenty feet long, and about three feet round . . . The natives even assert that they are so large in the savannahs, in the interior country, they will swallow a buffalo."

was laying in ambush near where he knew a deer frequented; another person in pursuit of the same, passing hard by and hearing the rustling of leaves, immediately fired into the thicket from whence the noise proceeded and lodged the greater contents of his gun in the head and right shoulder of his unfortunate rival, but not killing him. He brought him home two miles through the wood on his shoulder. Falconbridge extracted several of the shot and thinks he may recover.

Our Botanist and Mineralist have as yet made little proficiency in those branches of natural philosophy.¹⁴⁵ The confusion of the Colony has retarded them as well as others. They are both Swedes and considered very eminent in their professions.¹⁴⁶ The Mineralist is about to make an excursion into the interior country and is very sanguine in his expectations. He has but slightly explored the country hereabouts and been as slightly rewarded. The only fruits of his researches are a few pieces of iron ore, richly impregnated with magnetism, with which the mountains abound.

The Botanist is preparing a garden for experiments and promises himself much amusement and satisfaction when he can strictly attend to his business. His garden is now very forward, but it is attended with considerable expence; however, a mere nothing, when put into the great scale of Colonial charges, which, including shipping, Officers' salaries,

¹⁴⁵Afzelius and Nordenskiöld were both members of the Swedenborgian Church and were hoping to discover, somewhere in the heart of Africa, the pure African Church which Emanuel Swedenborg believed to be hidden there. See Fyfe, *A History*, pp. 42-3.

¹⁴⁶The botanist was Adam Afzelius, student of Linnaeus, who later taught at the University of Uppsala. He planned to write an ambitious natural history of Sierra Leone. The mineralist was Augustus Nordenskiöld, a Swedenborgian alchemist and visionary who, together with C. B. Wadstrom, dreamed in the 1780s of a free Church in West Africa. Together (with others) they wrote the utopian document, *Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa, under the Protection of Great Britain; but intirely independent of all european Laws and Governments* (London: 1789). Coleman, p. 163.

wages of labourers, and provisions, does not amount to less than the enormous sum of one hundred and fifty pounds per day, without naming incidental charges such as presents to natives, daily waste and destruction of property, &c. Those aggregated from the birth of the Company to the present time, may at least be computed at £25,000.¹⁴⁷

This is not a supposition of my own, for I have heard it from those who must certainly be informed on the business. But notwithstanding the Company's purse is so much weakened by folly and want of circumspection; if the harmony and good understanding at present existing in the Colony continues, it is yet sufficiently strong, by being applied with method and proper exertions, not only to retrieve their losses and answer their original laudable and magnanimous purposes, but amply requite any pecuniary motives they may have.

Mr. Falconbridge has obtained permission from Mr. Clarkson to commence his commercial career and had selected goods for the purpose, but was checked by illness and is dangerously ill at this moment. If he recovers, his first assay will be on the Gold Coast, where he anticipates success and often says he hopes he shall be able to cheer the despondent Directors by a valuable, unexpected cargo.¹⁴⁸

Clarkson writes that "Mr. Falconbridge talks of making a trip to purchase stock for the Colony, but from his constant drinking, he has rendered himself incapable of being trusted, and I do all I can to amuse him, in order to keep him quiet; if he

¹⁴⁷Clarkson was later to estimate the money wasted during the first year "upwards of £40,000." (British Library, Add. MS41263, Clarkson to Hartshorne, September 1793) Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 90.

¹⁴⁸Clarkson's story was different—that Falconbridge knew nothing about trade and had taken to drink instead. His health had broken down, and on 18th August, a week before she wrote this letter, Clarkson wrote in his journal, "Mr. Falconbridge talks of going in the Ocean to fetch stock from the Sherbro country, but it is all talk, he is ill and will never be better." Sierra Leone Studies, Volume VIII, p. 12.

had not one of the strongest constitutions, he must have been dead long ago."¹⁴⁹ The Gold Coast (today called Ghana) was further east along the West African Coast and had been the source of astonishing quantities of gold when the Portuguese were the dominant traders on this coast in the 17th century.

In early August John Clarkson takes a short recuperative cruise, leaving Richard Pepys, the chief engineer, in charge of the colony. Unpopular with the other officers, Pepys only increases their jealousy. Falconbridge is the logical second in command, but he is regularly too drunk to be reliable.

Mr. Clarkson thinks it too early to meddle with trade, from the idea that it will procrastinate the regularity and comfort of the Colony, which he is strenuously endeavouring to establish. But from my slender notion of things, I humbly beg leave to differ from him and rather suppose it would greatly contribute to accelerate his wishes; at least it would not be the smallest hindrance or by any means interfere with our police,¹⁵⁰ which to be sure will not yet bear a scrupulous investigation. However, it is mending, and I dare say, in time, our able, zealous pilot will steer us clear of the labyrinth which he found us entangled in.

May it be so is the earnest wish of, Your's, &c. &c.

* * *

Four months pass before Anna Maria writes her next letter—very eventful months for the new settlement, although not the stuff of travel books. And her recollections in her next letter are not necessarily in the order they occurred. For clarity, the segments of her December 28th letter which occur in earlier months are presented here.

I shall now return to the arrival of the York [on August 30]: in this ship came out the Rev. Mr. Horne and a Mr. Dawes, who is a new appointed member of council.¹⁵¹ I must not proceed any further till I inform you that the

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵⁰In the sense of 'administration'.

¹⁵¹Thornton wrote of Horne that he was "in some degree of connection with Mr Wesley, tho' he is of the Church of England." A man of

Directors have wholly changed their original system of government, dismantled the old Council, and placed their political reins in the hands of Mr. Clarkson, who is to be assisted by two Counsellors [sic], one of whom is the gentleman I just mentioned, the other is not yet appointed.¹⁵²

This new ministry is titled, "the Governor and Council," and are charged with the management of all civil, military, and commercial affairs, but have no authority whatever to interfere in ecclesiastical matters, which are left to the guidance of Mr. Horne or any other Minister for the time being. Time will shew whether this alteration of politics proves propitious; as yet things have not fallen off but rather mended.

Dispatches dispensing with the old eight-member council and containing new authority reach Freetown in August. Now a governor and two councillors will rule, with the governor having power to act, when necessary, without the concurrence of his councillors. Clarkson is greatly relieved, and for a time this restores confidence among the settlers. Tensions might have ended permanently if land had been distributed promptly thereafter, for in the settlers' minds the delays in land distribution in Freetown are a repetition of the delays in Nova Scotia.

Unfortunately, the hillside between the harbor and the steeper mountain slopes above is simply not large enough to accommodate all the settlers with farms of the size they have been promised. The Sierra Leone peninsula is highest in the north along the harbor, sloping gradually southward to the sea. But any move to flatter land beyond the peaks of the mountains would put the settlers beyond the protection of the armed white officials in Freetown and the few cannon landed from the company ships. The local Africans made it clear during the Granville Town experiment that they are not entirely trustworthy neighbors. Nor can a large enough area along the harbor be cleared quickly enough to satisfy all the settlers. The jungle on the Sierra Leone peninsula is an almost impenetrable wall of huge intertwined trunks and vines, which take time and strong men to hack away. The

"extraordinary zeal," Thornton believed he would "be the delight of the Methodistical part of the Blacks." British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41263, vol. 1. William Daves (1762-1836) was an officer of marines, scientist and administrator, who had recently served in Port Jackson. He was to take over as Governor of Sierra Leone after Clarkson's departure in December 1792. Coleman, p. 163.

¹⁵²Sierra Leone Studies, Volume VIII, p. 26.

savage greenery surges again as soon as the workmen turn their backs. Much of the terrain is rocky or hilly. The daily downpour prevents sustained work for weeks on end.

The nearby Africans protest angrily when surveying parties impinge on their villages, rice fields, and sacred shrines. King Naimbana must be summoned to palaver again with the local chiefs. The king's former secretary, Abraham Elliott Griffith, is now chief interpreter in Freetown—one of the few blacks with some authority. He proves very useful in that role until he sides with Thomas Peters in his dispute with John Clarkson. Thereafter Griffith is no longer invited to dine with the officers.

King Jemmy, Freetown's nearest neighbor, is not happy with the settlement scheme. He argues that he should have dominion over a holy place above the freshwater spring "to make sacrifices to a large black snake living under one of the trees for the continuance of the spring, which otherwise would dry up and distress the country."¹⁵³ Clarkson agrees to skirt King Jemmy's village of 40 or 50 huts and the adjacent fields, as well as fence the holy place. He also pays 100 bars (a common medium of exchange on the African coast) for a family spoon and a gold cross taken from King Jemmy's house three years earlier by a marine from *HMS Pomona*.

Clarkson writes in his journal that he takes "every opportunity to ingratiate myself with them, and to convince the chiefs of our honourable disposition towards them. I told them we would be glad to teach their children book, and to do all in our power to make them have *good heads*; that it was a good plan when either party felt injured, to call a palaver that a clear explanation might take place; by such conduct we should be sure to live happily together and render each other mutual benefits."¹⁵⁴

The restrictions about impinging on African villages and fields decreases the land available to the Nova Scotians. When this problem becomes clear, the white officials inform the settlers that in the beginning farms would be only one-fifth the promised size—the rest to be claimed at some later date. Neither Clarkson or the directors in London foresee how negatively the settlers will react to this reversal. None of them—directors in London or settlers in Freetown—understood yet that farming in Africa would never sustain the Nova Scotians, that shopkeeping and commerce would be the key to their prosperity..

We are and have been frequently much pestered by renegade seamen quitting ships employed in the Slave Trade and refuging here, to the great

¹⁵³Ingraham, p. 129.

¹⁵⁴Clarkson journal, July 14, 1792.

detriment of their employers and inconvenience of the Colony. The circumstance considerably perplexes Mr. Clarkson, who on the one hand is not only threatened with lawsuits by the masters and owners of ships detained for want of their sailors, but is well convinced of the injury they sustain. On the other, his orders are to protect every man, which leaves him in an aukward [sic] situation and at a loss what to do; however, by way of intimidation to practices of the kind, he had the following notification (which has not availed anything) sent to some of the neighbouring factories, and stuck up in the Colony:

FREE TOWN, SIERRA LEONE, Sept, 3d, 1792.

“This is to give Notice, that I will not on any account, permit Seamen, who may leave their respective Vessels, to take shelter in this Colony; and I shall give orders in future, that the seize Constables seize every man who cannot give a good account of himself, or whom they may suspect to have deserted from their employ. At the same time I shall be always ready to listen to the complaints of every injured man, and shall transmit their affidavits home to England, provided they make application in a proper manner.

(Signed) JOHN CLARKSON.”

It is much to be lamented, however desirable the abolition of the Slave Trade may be, while it is sanctioned by the English Government, property of individuals in that trade should be harrassed and annoyed by want of order and regularity in this Colony or by the fanatical prejudices of any set of men. One ship in particular has suffered most essentially, viz. the Fisher, [captained by] Clark, of Liverpool, whose men deserted from her in July last, and though she has had her cargo engaged ever since, she is not yet able to quit the coast for want of seamen; some of whom died and others are now here, employed in the Company's service.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 97: The Fisher had arrived at the Isles de Los, north of Sierra Leone, at the end of June and was only able to

On the 26th, 27th, and 28th of September there was an assembly of native Chieftains here, and a Palaver was held for the purpose of ascertaining the limits of the Company's territory.

When the work parties assigned to clearing ground come upon the tiny African settlements hidden in the forest—half a dozen thatch huts with a flock of scratching fowl and an irregular patch of cassava root growing in the dooryards—these meager untidy clearings seem like only a feeble pretense at earning a living, not displaying enough effort in their making to be taken seriously. They give the impression that their occupants are only camping there temporarily, as indeed they are in the sense that half a dozen years hence they will move on to another spot, and their abandoned dwelling place will soon be swallowed up by the tide of green in which it nestles. The European officials are mystified that the Africans should object, and object vociferously, to having the forest around them cleared away to make room for real gardens and farms.

This [palaver] was attended with considerable more expence than Falconbridge's palaver [a year previously] and the consequence far less productive. They finished by curtailing the bounds from twenty miles square (the quantity purchased by Captain Thompson and afterwards confirmed to the St. George's Bay Company) to about two miles and a quarter fronting the sea and running in a direct line back as far as the district of Sierra Leone may be, which is generally supposed not to exceed five or six miles, and three fourths of it a barren, rocky, mountaneous [sic] country where it will be impossible for men who are to earn their bread by agriculture even to support themselves. But admitting it was all good, there is not more than will enable the Company to comply with one-fifth part of their engagements to the blacks brought from America, which proportion is now surveying for them.

There is much that she and the other Englishmen who went to Sierra Leone two hundred years ago could hardly understand. The rain forest gives an impression of enormous fertility. To the eyes of European visitors, the thickness and lushness of the vegetation in that hot humid climate promises rich potential for agriculture. Sierra Leone is originally chosen as a home for freed slaves on the basis of reports written in the 1780s describing the speed and vigor with which trees grow and the ease of cultivation when mere scratching of the surface by the Africans brings a crop within a few weeks.

sail in March 1793. Meanwhile fourteen of the 356 slaves purchased had died, and another nineteen died on the passage to Grenada (HLRO, L5/II/2).

Appearances are deceptive. Trees grow rapidly because the forest is all that does thrive easily in the wet African tropics. The vision of cultivated fields growing on the same land with vigor to equal the forest's is a cruel illusion. The dense jungle, the mass of roots, the intricate blanket of vine and creeper are the benefactors of the Africa soil rather than the benefitted. When the thick stand of forest which shrouds the landscape is cleared away and the red earth bared, the vigor of the massive waves of green vanishes with the rains.

The soils of Africa are porous; water seeps through them as through a sieve and is absorbed with unbelievable rapidity. A dirt road which disappears under heavy rain emerges high and dry almost within minutes after the sun reappears. But even though the water is transient, it takes its relentless toll. Solubles in the soil, which are the minerals—nitrate, phosphate, and the rest—dissolve and wash through the igneous rock. After countless poundings by heavy rain, only insolubles are left—a dusty red concentration of iron, aluminum, and manganese that is known as laterite. This brittle substance does not nourish crops.

The rains fall year after year with relentless regularity, and their falling controls the dimensions of life and agriculture in Africa. The rains fall and the rivers rise to staggering heights, rushing to the sea laden with thick ribbons of muddy red. The depletion of the thin peninsula soil had already commenced before the Freetown settlers arrived.

The indigenous Africans do not till large areas, because their numbers are thin and scattered and because they cultivate only such crops as they need to guarantee a minimum supply of food. Their apparent disinterest in cultivation is from necessity rather than choice. They know from long experience that the land never yields up a bounty of food, and every plot of ground painfully cleared and tilled soon loses its fertility and returns less and less in payment for the human endeavor expended on it. In three years or five years or seven years at the most, it must be abandoned to fallow. The forest must repossess the land, breaking again the force of the pounding rain, absorbing water, holding and binding the soil, providing natural mulch to fertilize the exhausted earth and pumping back some of the mineral richness washed away into the subsoil, diffusing the sun's heat and dessication, and keeping moist the bed into which nature drops her countless seeds. The Africans know that land which they have cleared for cropping is thereby made useless to them for a quarter of a century, and few men in the 1700s lived longer than twenty-five years after they had reached maturity.

One does not heedlessly ignore deities who demand such stringent penalties for man's depredations. The Africans accept what their gods have decreed, baring the land for their hoes with a frugality that looks like sheer laziness to the Europeans, their apathy greatly abetted by a host of endemic diseases.

This circumstance [the reduction in land available for settler farms], I am persuaded, will hereafter lead to much discontent and uneasiness among the settlers,

and, if I do not soothsay wrongly, will shackle those gentlemen who have been the instruments of removing them with such disgrace as they will not easily expunge.

When the Palaver was ended and Naimbana (who presided at it on the part of the natives) was about to return to Robana, Mr. Clarkson, by way of amusing and complimenting the King, took him in a boat with six oarsmen and a cockswain, who rowed them through the fleet in the harbour, consisting of six or seven sail. Each vessel as they past [sic] saluted them with several guns, till they came to the Harpy, when they were not noticed by the smallest token of respect. On the contrary, Captain Wilson called to Mr. Clarkson and told him he had a few words to say to him. Mr. Clarkson replied [sic], if they were not of much consequence he wish'd to be excused just them—but upon Wilson's assuring him they were of some importance, the Governor complied with his request and went on board. Captain Wilson then said he was much offended that Mr. Clarkson should take a boats crew from his ship and a cockswain from another. Till that moment Mr. Clarkson had not observed such to be the case and assured Captain Wilson it was done inadvertently, without the slightest intention of giving offence. This acknowledgment was not enough for Captain Wilson, and his temper being irritated, he used some very indiscreet expressions to Mr. Clarkson: such as telling him—"Damn me, Sir, if ever you shall have another boat's crew from my ship, unless you have a cockswain also," &c. &c. The governor was hurt at such language and returned to his boat. King Naimbana enquired of him why that ship did not fired? He answered, "Mrs. Wilson is sick, and the Captain does not like to disturb her with the noise."¹⁵⁶

The King then embarked on board the Lapwing Cutter, and went home. When he was gone and the colony clear of all the chiefs, Mr. Clarkson sent a message to Captain Wilson desiring him to make an apology for his unhandsome behaviour, or he (Mr. Clarkson) would be under the necessity of taking steps very repugnant to his inclination. Wilson positively refused, and continuing obstinate two days (wholly engrossed with messages and answers, to and fro), Mr. Clarkson, although a man of humility and

¹⁵⁶ Sierra Leone Studies, Vol. VIII, p. 63-65.

condescension, unwilling to brook so gross an insult summoned every gentlemen in the colony to meet him on board the Amy; and when they were collected, wrote a letter summoning Captain Wilson; which summons being disobeyed, he appealed to the assembly, who unanimously determined the delinquent should be dismissed from command of the Harpy; in consequence whereof his dismissal, signed by the Governor and Mr. Dawes, was sent immediately.

When the boat that carried it came under the Harpy's stern (being a little after eight at night), she was hailed and asked whither she was bound? "To the Harpy with a letter for Captain Wilson," answered the bearer. "I am desired to inform you [that] no boat will be permitted to come alongside at such an improper hour, and if you proceed a boat's length further, Captain Wilson's orders are to fire on you," replied a voice from the Harpy. These threats not intimidating the boat's crew, two muskets were actually fired on them, but did no mischief; and reaching the ship before another fire, the undaunted messenger attempted to ascend the gangway but was prevented by the ship's company, who cut away the gangway ropes and beat him off with cutlasses, sticks, &c.

Captain Wilson having learnt the purport of this letter from some person who afterwards went on board, declared he would not be removed from his ship with life, and he would blow out that man's brains who dared attempt to enforce him!

This boisterous disposition subsided by the following day when his dismissal, with minutes of every gentleman's opinion who had been at the meeting over night, were sent him. He then persisted that he would not tamely leave his ship, but if any person authorised forcibly attempted to take him out, he would make no unlawful resistance. Mr. Dawes volunteered this duty, went on board, and after in vain persuading Wilson not to put him to the unpleasant task of using violence, he took him by the collar and gently led him over the ship's side. When descending into the boat, he called to his officers and men, "Observe, I am forced out of my ship." He was then conducted to the York, where he was informed his residence would be until an opportunity offered to send him to England.

This fracas being thus quieted, perfect harmony otherwise subsisting among us, and Mr. Clarkson having some idea of returning to Europe, wished before hand to furnish Mr. Dawes with a trial of his influence among the blacks and individual management of the colony; and judging a trip to sea for a few weeks would be the best means of affording such an opportunity, he sailed in the Amy on the 2d of October, in company with a small brig of the Sierra Leone Company's then bound home to England; but in which Mr. and Mrs. Wilson could not take their passage, the accommodations being previously disposed of.

Clarkson is having memory lapses and realizes that he needs to get away from the endless demands of Freetown. He takes Falconbridge along in the hope of improving his health. Although he intends to be gone only a week, he writes Dawes a voluminous letter, containing a long list of instructions covering everything from how to keep accounts of the ships' stores; record births, christenings, marriages, and deaths; distribute provisions to work parties; and lay out lands plots, to raising guns from the sea bottom, building a bath house, and being circumspect in extending credit to the settlers.¹⁵⁷

When Mr. Clarkson sailed, he desired Captain Wilson might be informed [that] he was not to consider himself a prisoner, but at liberty to conduct himself as he pleased and visit any where he liked except the Harpy, which ship he was strictly prohibited from putting his foot on board.

In about three weeks Mr. Clarkson returned. A multiplicity of complaints were then poured into him by the Settlers against Mr. Dawes, whose austere, reserved conduct (so reverse to the sweet manners of the other) they could not possibly relish, and, consequently, all hopes or expectations of the latter gaining popularity proved abortive. It may not be mal-a-propos to mention here that Mr. Dawes is a subaltern of Marines; that the prejudices of a rigid military education has been heightened by his having served some time at Botany Bay,¹⁵⁸ where no doubt it is necessary for gentlemen to observe an

¹⁵⁷Sierra Leone Studies, Volume VIII, p. 74-84.

¹⁵⁸Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 200: William Dawes had served for several years at Botany Bay, but was dismissed from the service by the governor because he objected to being made to take part in an attack on some aborigines. M. B. Eldershaw, Phillip of Australia, London, 1938, pp.

awful severity in their looks and actions; but such behaviour, however suitable for a Colony formed wholly of Convicts and governed by the iron rod of despotism, should be scrupulously guarded against in one like this, whose basis is Liberty and Equality, and whose Police is dependant, in great measure, if not altogether, on the whimsical disposition of an ignorant populace, which can only be advantageously tempered by placidness and moderation.

Anna Maria pauses to scratch a mosquito bite. That last phrase pleases her as being very felicitous. She muses on how un placid and immoderate William Dawes really is. Every time she sees him, brow sweaty, striding furiously in the tropical heat, looking so imperiously important, she wants to poke him to see if he would either pause or protest, display any natural feelings at all.

The Directors having ordered home the Harpy when she could be spared from the Colony, Mr. Clarkson, on his return, desired she might be expeditiously fitted for sea, and on the 28th of last month, being Sunday and most of the Colony piously engaged, Captain Wilson, knowing she was nearly ready, availed himself of the chance, and through the means of her boat that came under pretence of giving him an airing, replaced himself, by consent of his Officers and crew, in command of his ship, and immediately after divine service, Mr. Clarkson received the following letter from him.

November 18, 1792.

SIR,

I apprehend it is needless to inform you I have taken possession of the Harpy, and mean, in defiance of all opposition, to carry her to England.

As I should be very sorry to be exceeded in politeness on this occasion,¹⁵⁹ I write this to ask your commands for London, intending

201-2, 314.

¹⁵⁹In the 1802 edition Falconbridge appended the following explanatory footnote: "Mr. Clarkson had wrote a day or two before this to Mrs. Wilson, offering her a passage in the Harpy, and at the same time

to sail immediately. Nevertheless, Sir, if within an hour I receive an answer assuring me of your pacific intentions, signed by yourself and Mr. Dawes, I will wait your orders.

Take care, Sir, how you attempt anything like force; if blood is shed, be it upon your head. Wishing you more prudence and better advisers,

I remain, Sir,

Your most humble Servant,
T. H. WILSON

This was a step so unlooked for that it puzzled the Governor and Council how to conduct themselves. After some deliberation, they determined not to answer Captain Wilson's letter, and the time he limited having elapsed, we saw the Harpy under the guns of the York and under the guns of the Battery, get under way and triumphantly sail off.

Various opinions prevailed respecting the propriety of Captain Wilson's repossessing himself of the Harpy. Some said it was an act of piracy, and they were certain he would never take her to England; but others judged less harshly, with whom I join; and, from my knowledge of Captain Wilson, feel myself authorized to say [that] he possesses too great a share of pride and too high sense of honor to shipwreck his character on the rock of infamy—but at the same time I will not aver him inerrable. On the contrary, [I] think his behaviour to Mr. Clarkson monstrous disrespectful and inconsistent, which without doubt he was betrayed into by warmth of temper and too lofty, but wrong notions of punctilio's [sic].

I have been particularly obliged to Captain Wilson. Therefore it would be truly ungenerous, nay, the blackest ingratitude in me mischievously to hint at any thing prejudicial to him, and must beg you not to suppose I have touched upon the subject by way of assailing his character; considering it a circumstance of importance, I could not pass it over in silence. (Should this

informing Captain Wilson, she was to sail in a few days, if he wished to write.”

Narrative meet the eye of Captain Wilson, I trust he will do me the justice to say [that] I have not wandered from the Broadway of the truth.)

If the truth be known, Anna Maria is amused by Captain Wilson's capricious behavior, for it has leavened the pious propriety of the passing days. She is aware that Captain Wilson's wife and Mrs. Pepys had clashed on the outbound voyage, which led the hot-tempered Captain to feud with all the company officers and refuse to allow his ship to be used as needed.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Captain Wilson, although circumspect, has made it clear in inconspicuous ways that he admires Anna Maria's beauty and spunk and thinks her a great asset in the community. How could she not be grateful to him?

On the 2d instant¹⁶¹ arrived the Felicity from England. I mention the arrival of this vessel because she was expected to bring a number of useful stores for the Colony, in place of which her cargo consisted principally of garden watering pots.¹⁶² In her way out she stopped at Gambia and took in several head of cattle, whereby we are now and then indulged with roast beef, the first we have had since our arrival, for the inhabitants hereabouts are too indolent to attend to rearing domestic quadrupeds of any kind. King Naimbana has two or three very fat beeves [sic]; and I think there may be as many more at Bance Island; but before the Felicity arrived, I can venture to say those were all in this part of the country, unless I include a couple of milch cows and a bull brought out from England by the York, which, from the inimical climate, died in a very short time. These brought from Gambia are thin, the flesh dark and coarse, and only the name of beef as a recommendation. Mutton and goat's flesh are the most preferable in their kinds; indeed, the former, though not overloaded with fat, I think nearly as sweet as our English mutton, but the little we get of them come chiefly from the interior country.

¹⁶⁰Wilson, John Clarkson, p. 101.

¹⁶¹Clarkson's diary indicated that the Felicity arrived on the 21st, not on the 2nd.

¹⁶²Clarkson also commented on the absurdity of this in a country where it rained for almost half the year. Ingham, Sierra Leone, p. 145.

About the latter end of October, the rains began to diminish and for a month past have entirely ceased. They are succeeded by dense, disagreeable, and unwholesome fogs, which are supposed will continue near a month longer. These are termed smoaks and considered more unhealthy than the worst rains, but we cannot say so from experience for the Colony is healthier just now than it has been since the beginning of May. Yet a few deaths happen now and then. Among those who lately died was Mr. Nordenschild, the Mineralist, who was taken ill on the expedition I noticed in my last he was then about to make, and forced to return without acquiring any satisfaction for his journey, which was attended not only with innumerable disadvantages from the time of year, but with many other impediments he did not foresee or expect.

The loss of him is much to be regretted for he was an enterprising clever man, and no doubt had he lived, would have procured a vast deal of useful information.¹⁶³ The Governor and Council have at last thought it advisable to embark in Agriculture and have purchased a small track of land on the opposite (Bullam) shore. This new undertaking is placed under the management of a man who was some time an Overseer in Dominica and who was a Member of the first Council.¹⁶⁴ It is called Clarkson's Plantation, and from the richness and apparent fertility of the soil, much advantage may be looked for, provided no disagreement arises with the natives and a sufficient number of steady labourers can be obtained; but being in its

¹⁶³Nordenskiold died 10 December 1792, having returned gravely ill from a journey of several months, during which he was robbed by natives and persecuted by slave traders. Officially he was looking for gold, but the urgency with which he set out on his travels suggests he may also have been hoping to verify Swedenborg's vision about the New Church of Jerusalem in Africa's interior. Coleman, p. 164.

¹⁶⁴James Watt, plantation manager; at one point he was also in charge of the hospital at Savoy Point. By 1803 he had joined the slave trade. Coleman, p. 164. He remained in Sierra Leone until his death in 1795. Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 103.

infancy, all we can do at present is to wish it success, which time must determine.

The plantation John Clarkson started on the Bullam shore soon dwindled to four acres planted in coffee, plantains, cinnamon, and mangoes. The cotton plantation started by Isaac DuBois on Thompson's Bay lapsed until an overseer (paid £60 a year) and 12 African laborers were hired to grow plantain, yams, corn, and coffee. Few of the settlers could amass the necessary capital to copy these examples.¹⁶⁵

Three or four new houses are now erected and most of the gentlemen are comfortably lodged. There is a retail shop opened in the Colony from whence we are furnished with such goods as the Directors have sent out, most of which are not only badly adapted for a warm climate, but wretchedly bad in their kind. We have little gold or silver among us; that want is substituted by paper notes, from five dollars down to six-pence, signed by the Governor or Mr. Dawes. The credit of this medium is established by giving bills of exchange to the holders, upon the Directors, at a trifle more than eleven per cent discount, which is only the difference between sterling and currency, a guinea being nominally twenty-three shillings and four-pence here. It is taken in payment for goods at the Company's store, and its reputation is now so good that the neighbouring Factories and casual Traders receive it for what our Settlers purchase for them.

Mr. Clarkson is so convinced the Company have been sadly imposed upon that a few weeks ago he wrote a circular letter to the gentlemen of the Colony acquainting them with his intention of sailing for England very quickly, requesting their opinion of the various goods that came under their notice, their general ideas as to the wants of the Colony, and their advice how to prevent abuses being practised on the Company in future.

I saw part of a letter from one gentleman in answer wherein he says, "You have done me the honour of asking my advice how to prevent abuses being practised on the Company in future? In answer to this I shall only say it would be the height of presumption in me to offer an opinion on the subject, being persuaded your own penetration and discernment is sufficient to

¹⁶⁵Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown*, p. 184.

discover a remedy without the assistance of any one; and if the Directors will attend to your advice upon this as well as every other circumstances respecting the Colony, I am sure they will find their advantage in it."

Had my opinion been asked, I should have said, "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. Let them employ men conversant in trade, acquainted with the coast of Africa, and whose religious tenets have never been noticed. Under this description they will find persons of sound morals, fit to be intrusted, but they will ever be subject to impositions while they employ a pack of canting parasites, who have just cunning enough to deceive them."¹⁶⁶

We are in great tribulation about Mr. Clarkson's going away, for Mr. Dawes is almost universally disliked, and more than probable, anarchy and discord will again return in full force among us when the management of things are left to him alone; however, it is wrong to anticipate misfortunes, and our Governor has made every arrangement in his power to prevent intruders of this kind.

Is the "we" above editorial? Or does Anna Maria discuss the imminent departure of their governor with Isaac DuBois? They both admire and respect Clarkson for the sympathetic way he deals with the settlers. Without ever admitting to calculation, wouldn't Anna Maria and Isaac have found moments when they could sit by themselves in some shady spot and reassure each other with their observations.

Isaac would have had the most to say about Richard Pepys, whom he thoroughly despises. "I'm still annoyed about the letter he wrote to John Clarkson, complaining because I wouldn't let him have the deals he wanted for the *Susan*. They were intended for the church floor. Poor John had to ask me to be more pliant in my intercourse with Pepys."¹⁶⁷ The man is a complete egotist. He sees everything that happens in terms of how it affects him—holds continuous grudges against anyone who crosses him."

¹⁶⁶As this is not a theme she has hitherto mentioned in her letters, but will bring up subsequently, this paragraph may have been inserted later. Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 104.

¹⁶⁷See Sierra Leone Studies, Volume VIII, p. 20.

"He certainly is hopeless in his personal dealings," Anna Maria agrees. "I find his way of glaring at everyone most distasteful."

"I've tried over and over again to appease him, but he turns around and obstructs everything I do."

"It must make you so impatient, having to work with such incompetents."

DuBois shakes his head. "I'll miss John Clarkson. He is the only one who has a clear, overall picture of what we're trying to accomplish here."

Anna Maria nods. "I hope he comes back soon. I know he needs a good holiday, but our popinjay William Dawes will be no substitute for him."

"Dawes manages to provoke the settlers every time he turns around."

"Do you think the directors in London have any sense of how unsettled things are here?"

"Clarkson is going there to tell them. No one knows better than he how emotional he settlers get when they are not consulted."

Anna Maria nods. "But will the directors listen to him?"

"That's the question." Dubois unwinds his long legs and rises to his feet. "Time for me to get back to work." Does he smile down at her, offer a hand, and help her up? Does he hold her hand several moments longer than necessary, then turn away? She watches him walk briskly down the hill. Anna Maria shivers slightly. What a delight to have intelligent conversation with a man who respects her opinions and shares her contempt for their status-greedy colleagues.

The Surveyor¹⁶⁸ has assured him [that] the blacks shall have the proportion of land now surveying for them in a fortnight at furthest. Every one has pledged himself to use his utmost efforts to preserve harmony and order during Mr. Clarkson's absence, which we expect will be five or six months; and to insure Mr. Dawes the good will of King Naimbana, he has been allowed to make the King a very considerable present out of the Company's Property.

Adieu, Your's, &c.

*

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¹⁶⁸Now Richard Pepys, who succeeded James Cocks as surveyor.

General conditions in Freetown improved gradually as the autumn progressed. The rains diminished in force and frequency, abating the fevers that had stricken so many. Supply ships arrived with much-needed food and tools. Dozens of Africans came daily with the fresh fruit of the new harvest (mangoes, plums, bananas, plantains, limes, lemons, oranges, pineapple, guavas, papayas, and palm oil) and vegetables (yams, beans, pumpkins, cassava, groundnuts, rice, and millet). Pigs and poultry were multiplying. The death of a cow was important enough to be noted in Clarkson's journal; by mid-November all the cattle are dead. James Watt, the plantation manager, has been examining the soil inland and across the estuary in hopes of establishing larger plantations, and is pessimistic about sugar cane, but hopeful that cotton and indigo might thrive.¹⁶⁹

In November, a drawing is finally held for farm lots: 40 black families receive land grants of about five acres each. On November 13, 1792, the fortunate new landholders join Clarkson and the company officials for a picnic on the way up to Director's Hill [now Mount Aureol] overlooking the harbor. Dinner is served under a tent, followed by a toast to the Sierra Leone Company and the inhabitants of Freetown and Granville Town. Immediately thereafter the 60 survey workers fire their muskets in "three distinct volleys" and give three cheers, to which the cannons in the town below respond, and the Freetown settlers give three cheers. The company ships anchored in the estuary, their colors flying, respond, "which had a beautiful effect," Clarkson reports, "and I have no doubt made an impression on the whole neighborhood." Clarkson seizes this and every opportunity to "show the natives the armed power we possess."¹⁷⁰

Life in Freetown is much more bearable than it was in the spring. Several of the congregations have completed their meeting houses and are proud of their sanctuaries. By the end of 1793 the colony's 300 school-age children will all be enrolled in classes at eight schools, seven with black teachers (who are often preachers as well), one headed by a European sent from England. The Anglican chaplain is made superintendent of the schools. To ensure some uniformity, all students are examined together once a month. Boys are taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and church music, while girls work on reading, singing hymns, and needlework. Evening classes, mostly in Bible reading, are conducted for adults, either by the school teachers or by literate adults.

The teachers are paid by the Sierra Leone Company, but classes are held in private homes, shutters left open to let the soft breeze from the sea slip through and freshen the shadows. The air smells sweetly green and luxurious. The children can see the little triangular sails of the Bullom boats (lateen-rigged as the Portuguese explorers taught then three centuries earlier) drifting across the

¹⁶⁹Clifford, p. 137.

¹⁷⁰Clifford, p. 145.

estuary. Hawks wheel lazily over the treetops above King Tom's village. Flycatchers dart among the branches of the trees along the edge of the clearing; weaver birds mend their hanging nests; crickets sing raucously in the fringe of shade. Somewhere up the hill a faint string of ax blows echoes from a work party. Time seems to hang suspended in the shadow of the overhanging thatched roof during those hours of tutelage, permitting the children to forget the worries and dissatisfactions that haunt their parents.¹⁷¹

The students sit on narrow wooden benches, reading the King James Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer*, learning the pious lessons of their preacher instructors. These books are written in standard English; they hear the white officers speaking the standard English of the 1790s. The blacks themselves, however, including the preacher/teachers speak the black English learned on the colonial plantations of America. With no formal training, they were forced as slaves to learn enough English vocabulary to understand the instructions of their masters, but they fitted that vocabulary into the grammatical construction of the West African languages they had originally spoken. This was particularly evident in their idiosyncratic conjugation of English verbs, but actually follows a logical West African pattern¹⁷²—a pattern that survives in black English today.¹⁷³

* * *

Now to return to the event which kept Anna Maria's pen idle for four months: On August 30 the *Samuel and Jane* arrived from England, bringing Alexander Falconbridge's replacement, Mr. Wallace.¹⁷⁴ On September 6th, John Clarkson wrote in his journal:

I took an opportunity of communicating to Mr. Falconbridge in as delicate a way as I could the nature of the despatches received from the Court of Directors respecting him. He received the account of his dismissal with calmness as he generally does any thing I say whenever I feel it my duty to advise him. He says he will never return to England, which he *may very safely say*, for had he not had one of the best constitutions he must

¹⁷¹Clifford, p. 149.

¹⁷²In the West African languages, verb forms are constant in every tense. For example, if the third person of the present tense of the verb to be is he is, that the conjugation will be I is, you is, he/she is, we is, you is, they is.

¹⁷³Clifford, p. 149.

¹⁷⁴Serra Leone Studies, Volume VIII, p. 25.

have died long since. He is wasting away daily and his habits will in the end destroy him; but he appears to have strength to contend with every attack [of malaria ?] and may last for some time to come.¹⁷⁵

Having been dismissed from company service, why didn't Falconbridge ask for passage on the next ship back to England, at company expense, and then demanded severance pay from the company, with which he could have set himself up again in another surgery? Would it have been too humiliating? Or was his alcoholism too far advanced for him to plan a new beginning?

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 44.

LETTER X.

FREE TOWN, SIERRA LEONE, 28th Dec. 1792.

My dear Friend,

Within ten or twelve days after the date of my last [letter, there] arrived the two ships that were expected. One is the York, a large vessel of a thousand tons (belonging to the Company) that is intended to end her days here in the character of a storeship, for which purpose she is admirably adapted. The other is the Samuel and Jane, likewise a vessel of great burden chartered to remain here six months if wanted. This vessel arrived some days before the York; in her came a Mr. Wallis [spelled Wallace by John Clarkson] to supersede Falconbridge; the Directors having thought proper to annul his appointment as Commercial Agent.

That they had a right to do so I will not question; but methinks it develops [*sic*] treachery; and I now suspect their whole conduct to us in England was only a complication of hypocritical snares to answer selfish purposes, which having attained, they cared not any longer to wear the mask.

Does Anna Maria go to Isaac DuBois to seek information?. DuBois queries John Clarkson, who has misgivings, and reports back to Anna Maria. "Mr. Wallace knows the West African coast well; he has spent twenty-five years in the slave trade."

"They've sent a slave trader out to replace my husband?"

"So it appears."

"But the Sierra Leone Company directors are determined to stop the slave trade. Why on earth would this man want to work for them when the slave trade is so much more profitable?"

DuBois shakes his head. "Mr. Wallace seems to have gotten himself into severe financial difficulties."

Anna Maria is furious—too angry, in fact, to write another letter for many weeks. By the time she does take up her pen again, it has become clear to everyone that Wallace is just as addicted to drink as poor Falconbridge. On 7 September John Clarkson writes in his journal: "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."¹⁷⁶

By the time Anna Maria sits down again to write her friend in Bristol, her fury against the Sierra Leone Company has coalesced. She writes that Falconbridge's every proposal was dashed with cold water by the Council, and that his request for a ship in which to go in quest of cattle and local foodstuffs was preemptorily refused, although the refused vessels are put to no profitable use. It may be that Clarkson hardly dares trust Falconbridge with a company ship, knowing well how much of his time is spent in some state of intoxication. Ships are the slender thread on which the tiny settlement is wholly dependent for supplies and safety, and Clarkson can hardly afford to endanger one in an enterprise he expects to fail.

It is unfortunate that Anna Maria's husband is not molded from clay as sturdy as she is, or he might have made some more positive contribution to the new colony rather than being a dead weight on all concerned. By mid-September Clarkson is alarmed about Falconbridge's failing health. "Dr. Winterbottom . . . has given up Mr. Falconbridge as a lost case."¹⁷⁷ Clarkson takes Falconbridge with him on a holiday voyage in October, hoping that the sea air might improve his disposition. It does not.

Back in Freetown three weeks later, Falconbridge is intransigent. Clarkson thinks he is too shamed to return to England, and is distressed by Falconbridge's resolution to give in to indolence—to retreat to a tumble-down house that had been built some years before in Yamacoupra's town by an English naval officer. The house, like anything left neglected in that part of the world, is overgrown with brush and creepers, and will take some time to be made habitable. Falconbridge refuses to wait and staggers off to collapse in a native hut nearby until the house is ready, leaving Anna Maria on her own in Freetown.

Having been abandoned by her husband, why didn't Anna Maria board the next ship sailing out of Freetown harbor for England?

After all, the chairman of the Sierra Leone Company had promised her that should any accident happen to Falconbridge, she would be well provided for by the Company. Why was she willing to stay on in Freetown after Falconbridge's dismissal? Something kept her there.

As soon as he learns of Falconbridge's defection, does Isaac DuBois seek out Anna Maria? "Come," he says angrily, "I need to talk to you. Let's walk along the waterfront."

¹⁷⁶Clarkson journal, 7 September 1792.

¹⁷⁷Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 90.

Anna Maria follows him without protest.

“The bastard!” Isaac growls. “How can he do this to you?”

Anna Maria can only sigh.

“He’s put you in an impossible situation! What are you going to do?”

“I should probably take the next ship to England.”

Isaac halts abruptly and turns to her. Both anguished, they gaze into each others eyes. He shakes his head. “That would break my heart.”

Anna Maria turns finally and walks slowly on. After some moments she whispers, “I could wait for you in England.”

Isaac paces beside her, head lowered, hands clasped behind his back. “I don’t know when I’ll be returning to England. I need this job. We haven’t received any compensation for all the property the American rebels took from us in North Carolina during the war. My mother and my siblings are completely dependent on my income.” He kicks a withered branch aside, then lifts his head and turns his angry gaze to the hilltops above them. “Having you here makes all this bearable. I want . . .”

She turns and touches his arm, interrupting him. “Say no more—please—no more.” Then she walks on.

Isaac watches her face as the silence between them lengthens painfully. Finally Anna Maria lifts her head and smiles faintly at him. “I will stay.”

Of course, there is always the possibility that Anna Maria and Isaac were already carrying on a torrid affair. Some steamy pages relating that possibility could be inserted here, except that the logistics would have been very difficult. Bachelors and men without their wives in Freetown did not each have a private dwelling. They shared the limited accommodations, so that assignments where Isaac lived would have been very awkward and certainly much frowned upon. Nor would an abandoned African hut have been a comfortable rendez-vous because its thatched roof would have long since become the abode of a deadly green mamba or spitting cobra. And one certainly wouldn’t lie down to make love in the African bush, where all sorts of creepy critters crawl around. Spiders the size of saucers? Yes. Night adders? Deadly.

When she next writes in her journal, does Anna Maria nurse DuBois’s declaration in her heart as she spells out her defense of her delinquent husband? She might rather condemn Falconbridge, but that would upset the flow of the many chapters she has already written in her travel book. Her pride prohibits her from admitting his defection.

In their dismissal they accuse Falconbridge of not extending their commercial views and wanting commercial knowledge. The latter charge may be in some measure well founded for Mr. Falconbridge was bred to physic, and men of perspicuity would have known how unfit such a person must be for a merchant. Indeed he was aware of it himself, but it being a place of much expected profit (a temptation not to be withstood), he was in hopes by application soon to have improved the little knowledge he had so as to benefit both his employers and himself; but in this they disappointed him and were actually the cause of choking the attempts he might have made.

They should recollect the deep deception played upon him. He left England with independant and unlimited powers, which were restrained immediately on our arrival here. Thus bridled, with the reins in possession of men who considered commerce only as a secondary view of the Company and who negatived [sic] every proposition of the kind Falconbridge made till a very short time before his appointment was annulled. ~~What~~ What was he to do?

Two days before his dismissal came out, he crawled from his sick bed and, at the moment it was delivered him, was in the act of arranging and preparing matters for the trading voyage I mentioned in my last. I am certain it proved a mortal stab to him. He was always addicted to drink more than he should; but after this, by way of meliorating his harrowed feelings, he kept himself constantly intoxicated. A poor forlorn remedy you will say; however, it answered his wishes, which I am convinced was to operate as poison and thereby finish his existence. He spun out his life in anguish and misery till the 19th instant, when, without a groan he gasp'd his last!!!¹⁷⁸

I will not be guilty of such meanness as to tell a falsehood on this occasion by saying I regret his death. No! I really do not; his life had become burthensome [sic] to himself and all around him, and his conduct to me for

¹⁷⁸"He has been killing himself by slow degrees for the last three months, and for some days past his Bones have been through his skin in several parts of his Body. He died this eveng. at six o'clock a very happy release both to him and those about him." John Clarkson's Journal, 19 Dec. 1792, quoted in Ellen GibsonWilson, *John Clarkson and the African Adventure* (London, Macmillan, 1980), p. 117.

more than two years past was so unkind (not to give it a harsher term) as long since to wean every spark of affection or regard I ever had for him. This I am persuaded was his greatest crime. He possessed many virtues: an excellent dutiful son and a truly honest man were conspicuous traits in his character.

Isolated in his hut, Alexander Falconbridge is not found until the next morning. The tropical heat and flies have already begun their assault on his remains. They wrap the body immediately in canvas and bury him among the other deceased Englishmen in the red laterite soil beside the Anglican chapel. Anna Maria stands mute as John Clarkson reads the Anglican burial service over his grave. Isaac DuBois waits quietly behind her, ready to offer any support she might need.

John Clarkson feels a qualm at the haste with which his countryman is consigned to eternity, but death in Africa is not something to be lingered over. It occurs to him that Falconbridge would resent being denied a coffin, but no precious building wood has been wasted on coffins for any of the scores of dead—black or white—since April, with the exception of Thomas Peters.

Clarkson also feels a pang of guilt over his failures with both Falconbridge and Peters. Would it have made any difference if he had given Falconbridge more encouragement? Was he too hasty in concluding that Peters was challenging his authority? Perhaps the man had a right to challenge. He, after all, had gone to England and initiated the plan to move the Nova Scotian settlers to Africa. He had recruited a large share of their numbers and commanded their loyalty till the very end. Six months later, burying another problematic associate, Clarkson is humbled by his inability to engage two such diverse and determined personalities. He knows that Mrs. Falconbridge is furious with the Sierra Leone Company directors. He can admit to himself now that Peters too had grounds for so vehemently opposing arbitrary Company rule.

As Anna Maria turns away after the Benediction, does Isaac DuBois fall into step beside her? The others watch the two move away down the slope but make no effort to intrude. Surely Anna Maria deserves whatever consolation she can find after the many weeks of being abandoned by her husband.

Isaac keeps his hands clasped behind his back and his head lowered, but she hears him murmur, "May I speak now?"

Anna Maria draws a long, deep breath. "Yes, the time has finally come."

* * *

In late December, Clarkson boards ship for England, ostensibly for a short holiday and consultation with the directors of the Sierra Leone Company. Before he

leaves, he promises the settlers that farm allotments will be made within the following two weeks. Life is easier now, and reassured, the settlers look forward to his return to a prosperous colony. Forty-nine men and women, including David George (the leading Baptist preacher in Freetown), Richard Crankapone (elected town marshal in Freetown, then undersheriff), Boston King (a leading Methodist preacher), John Kizell (elected tithingman in Freetown and a determined farmer), Ely Ackim (who became the apothecary's apprentice and invested in real estate), and Hector Peters (a Baptist preacher), sign a petition to the Sierra Leone Company, requesting his speedy return.

Clarkson himself sets out to visit each household to say good-bye personally, and finds himself reduced to tears by the "expressions of gratitude, affection, and Respect."¹⁷⁹ He is charged with all sorts of errands in England: Mary Perth (a successful shopkeeper, boarding-house owner, and housekeeper to the second English governor) can no longer read her New Testament and needs spectacles; Luke Jordan, trusted assistant to Moses Wilkinson (a leading Methodist preacher), wants a seine and fish hooks; Joseph Brown would like a loom. Others ask that watches be repaired, a spinning wheel and tailor's tools be purchased, and so on. On Christmas Day, Joseph Leonard (an Anglican preacher and schoolteacher) leads his schoolchildren through the town, singing hymns before various houses. Clarkson helps serve communion in the Anglican service.

David George, the leading Baptist preacher, accompanies Clarkson in boarding ship; he has applied directly to Chairman Thornton for permission to study in England and increase his understanding of Baptist theology. Chaplain Horne gives him letters of introduction to several clergyman. George will stay six months in England, tell his life story to Baptist leaders there who publish it,¹⁸⁰ and return with new clothes and gifts worth £150, enough to build a new chapel in Freetown.

One of the last things Clarkson does before his departure is to sign a marriage license on 27 December.¹⁸¹ He tries to dissuade the couple from their intent to marry immediately. "I fear that such a precipitous act will meet with strong disapproval among the other officers and artisans."

"The banns have already been posted," the prospective bridegroom replies.

"I don't care what any of them think or say," says the future bride. "After being abandoned by a derelict husband for the last four months, I am impervious to any

¹⁷⁹Clarkson journal, December 16, 1792.

¹⁸⁰"An Account of the Life of Mr. David GEORGE, from Sierra Leone in Africa," *The Baptist Annual Register* for . . . 1793.

¹⁸¹which survives among Clarkson's papers: BL, MS41262A, fol. 224.

further gossip.”

As Clarkson boards ship on December 28, settler women come bringing food for the six-week voyage: six dozen chickens, 600 eggs, dozens of yams, onions, fruits, and even a pig or two. As the ship weighs anchor the following day, the battery of cannon on shore fires a 15-gun salute, and the settlers and white officials gathered at the landing “Waved their handkerchiefs and gave three hearty cheers.” This moving farewell from the assemblage on shore must have lingered with Clarkson long after the estuary faded away behind him.¹⁸²

Anna Maria would have appreciated the irony in the fact that the Falconbridge name is immortalized in Freetown in that point of land which juts out into the estuary east of St. George's Bay. Although the superintendent, John Clarkson, was beloved by the black settlers, the map of Freetown, as decreed by the company directors, can be searched from end to end without finding his name.

JOURNAL

Anna Maria knows that her last letter was much too long and rambling and covered far too many topics. Letting so much time pass between letters muddles her memory and mixes up events. And she has other interests absorbing her attention now. She decides to abandon the formal letter format and simply make journal entries as events occur.

FREE TOWN, SIERRA LEONE, Jan. 1st, 1793.

Two days ago Mr. Clarkson sailed; his departure operated more powerfully and generally upon people's feelings than all the deaths we have had in the Colony. Several gentlemen accompanied him two or three leagues to sea and returned the same night.

Jan. 2d. The Surveyor has stopped surveying the lots of land for the settlers, although he assured Mr. Clarkson they should have them in a fortnight. His attention is now taken up with fortification, which seems to be the hobby-horse of Mr. Dawes, and a large Fort is plan[n]ed out upon a hill

¹⁸²Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown*, pp. 150-151.

about a half a mile from the water side.¹⁸³

Acting Governor Dawes has found a willing sycophant in Richard Pepys. The two of them listen to the drumming and drunken gunfire from King Jemmy's town and fear that the Africans intend to attack Freetown, as they attacked Granville Town in 1789. Governor Dawes orders Pepys to halt all surveying work and start work immediately on a fort on Thornton Hill above the cotton tree.

We no longer have John Clarkson's journal to supplement what Anna Maria records. We would be hard put to determine what happened next had John Clarkson not asked, before he departed, that his good friend Isaac DuBois keep a daily journal and send it to him. Some of his entries parallel Anna Maria's, but on January 3rd DuBois includes a single startling sentence: ". . . *Made my wedding ring* this day. . . . He then reports, as Anna Maria will as well, that King Jemmy is upset that John Clarkson made no farewell call on him: "I saw several tears fall from his eyes. I comforted the King with a Glass of wine & he went away in good humour, *everything quiet — but the people are rather dissatisfied that neither their Town or Country Lotts are now run out, the Engineer very busy with his New Fort.*"

DuBois also repeats Anna Maria's news of "the *Providence* Sloop arrived from the Carrimancas, has on board 3 ½ tons of Camwood, three goats, some rice, etc." Got three Gramattas [free labourers] today, I have in all 19. — I feel in better health & spirits this night than I have done for some time. — Amused myself till ½ past 10 O'clock at my *Neighbour's* [the next time he mentions this *Neighbour*, he clarifies her sex] & am just going to bed — but I recollect one or two more occurrences of the day. — The bales of Goods from the Amy which are lodged in the new Cellar are all more or less damaged, some of them considerably so. — I called on Mr. Dawes & requested that he would order a Survey on them. — *Yesterday I began to cut down the side of the Hill & to level the foundation for the Grand Store House but have had a hint that the Masons are to be taken from me to build the Fort; surely this cannot be true. — Querie — will not one room in that store house be of more consequence than twenty Forts? Have we anything to dread or have we soldiers to occupy a Fort?* ½ past 11 O'clock thunder & lightning the first we have had for two months past; the weather looks wild & squally."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³DuBois, busy with a number of public works, complained bitterly about the uselessness of the fort. Stripped of workmen from his own projects, he jokingly described Dawes and Pepys as "Fort Mad." British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41263, vol. 3. Coleman, p. 164.

¹⁸⁴Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 172.

After a few Nova Scotian traders in the interior are seized and sold into slavery, a permanent night watch is set to guard against outside infiltration into Freetown. Official preparations for attack unsettle the Nova Scotians, even though many Temne people come peacefully enough every day with food to trade, while others work as day laborers on the plantation. Nervous settlers feel they should be armed to defend themselves, particularly since the slave ships passing so regularly up and down the river seem a constant threat to them.

King Jemmy came to see me this day; he asked what was the reason Mr. Clarkson did not call upon him before he sailed, and said he did not suppose Mr. Clarkson would have left the country without coming to see him. His cheek was furrowed with tears as he spoke; I did not imagine he had so much sensibility.

There was a very heavy tornado last night, an unusual thing at this time of the year. The roof of my house has become so dry that the rain had free access through, and I got thoroughly wet.

5th. A remarkable fine ox (sent as a present to the Colony by King Naimbana) was killed this day. I never saw fatter meat in my life. Our acting governor (notwithstanding it was a present) had it sold at 4d. per pound. I suppose he has done this to shew us he intends being an oeconomist [sic] and thereby reimburse the Company's heavy losses; but that will require more fat oxen than he will be able to procure in this part of Africa for some years.

This is not the only instance of his oeconomy [sic], or I should say, parsimony, for a few days after Falconbridge died, he came and demanded of me his uniform coat, sword, gun, pistols, and a few other presents that the Directors had made him, and which I gave up, they being of no use to me. He also engrosses all the Yams, Pumpkins, Turtle, and almost every kind of provisions in the neighbourhood and has them retailed from the Company's store at an enormous advance. When turtle is killed he sends his own servant to take an account of the weight lest the butcher should embezzle a few pounds; but I doubt, after all, he will verify the trite proverb "penny wise and pound foolish," for I have heard it remarked by a Gentleman of information that the new fort, if finished on the plan proposed, will cost £20,000.

Anna Maria and Isaac Dubois describe many of the same events in their journals.

“But the style and comments are hers, in particular the comments about Dawes's meanness, something DuBois does not mention in his journal. Nor did she bring into hers the constant complaints he makes in his journal about the way Dawes interfered with his work, nor yet his own long-standing feud with Richard Pepys, the Surveyor.”¹⁸⁵

On January 6 DuBois writes: “Returned from Bance Island at three O'clock this afternoon, called at King Naimbannas in my way down, found the King much indisposed but he received my visit very kindly & I was entertained with palaver sauce and different kinds of fruits. *His Majesty* took a fancy to my snuff box which I made him a present of & by his request engraved his name on the lid. — Hear such shamefull accounts of my workmens Idleness during my absence yesterday that it puts me out of humour — which my *Neighbor* takes for indifference towards her, and gets quite in a *pet*; however a Reconciliation [*sic*] is quickly brought about, and we agree to be married tomorrow. — *all well*, Good Night.”

Neighbor? Isaac and Anna Maria have had a spat over his ill humor, but he does not name her. They kiss and make up, and agree that tomorrow is The Day. Anna Maria's entry on January 7 is a short two paragraphs, the second of which refers to Isaac DuBois, although she does not name him or mention their spat.

7th. This day another plantation was began at Savoy Point about half a mile from hence, which is intended for the cultivation of cotton. Whether it succeeds or not, clearing the wood about the town will certainly be conducive to health.

The manager [DuBois] of Clarkson's plantation¹⁸⁶ complains that most of his gramattos or labourers have left him to attend the cry or funeral ceremony of one of their brethren who lately died by the wound of a shark; it is uncertain how long the cry will last.

What Isaac DuBois writes in his journal on the same day is in stunning contrast: “At 9 O'clock this morning the Reverend Mr. Horne performed the Marriage Ceremony and now I am once more, I trust, Happily joined in the bands of wedlock; we intended our marriage would be kept a secret until the 21st of this month & Mr. Horne had promised to do so, but the *poor* parson was not born to keep secrets; he carried it piping hot to the ears of every one he met, but desired

¹⁸⁵Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 116-17.

¹⁸⁶Clarkson's plantation was a square mile rented by Governor Clarkson towards the end of November 1792. Coleman, p. 164.

every one he told it to, not to mention it to any one. However in less than two hours it was known over the whole Colony. It made very little difference to me whether it was known today or a fortnight hence. I am happy & Parson is pleased at telling the news. — Mr. Dawes & Mr Pepys went to Signior Domingos upon some business respecting the lands. — I began at four O'clock this afternoon to clear a field at Savoy Point for Cotton, I have in all 21 gramattas, 2 chief men and two Settlers.¹⁸⁷

Does Anna Maria write of these events at this time? Not one word. The celebratory dinner may have been delayed to await the arrival of Captain Morley and his slave ship *Nassau* from Bristol, on its way up the river to Bance Island. Captain Morley is Anna Maria's brother-in-law, married to one of her older sisters.

DuBois writes on the 8th: "Mr. Dawes returned last night from Sigr Domingos and I understand the business he went upon was settled to the satisfaction of all parties. — *Mr. Dawes hinted to me this morning that he did not wish I should go on with the Grand Store House under the Hill, this no doubt was the advice of Pepys yesterday. — I pointed out to Mr. Dawes that there was already sufficient stone cut to compleat the building which was the worst of the labour over; also that it was Mr. Clarkson's particular wish for me to go on with that work. — To this he made no reply, and I mean to go on with it, till I have his positive written orders to stop. I am of the Oppinion there is no other objection than the Masons being wanted for the Fort. Which of the two buildings does the Colony stand most in need of?* Mr. Dawes took a walk with me this afternoon to see where I am digging the foundation of my Store, in the course of all the afternoon he neither *approved* nor disapproved of any thing I showed him which was rather unpleasant."¹⁸⁸

On the 9th: "I turned several men away from work on account of their sulky behaviour. The *Duke of Bucklieu* came down from Bance Island. Mr. Tylly [Tilly] came on shore & dined with me. — I went on board with him in the afternoon & wrote several letters to my friends in the West Indies & in Europe — stayed until 10 O'clock at night — drank bad wine, got a violent head ache & came home sick."¹⁸⁹

9th. Came down from Bance Island the Duke of Buccleugh, bound for Jamaica, with upwards of three hundred slaves. Yesterday arrived two ships, one an American, the other a French man; they have plenty of provisions on

¹⁸⁷Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 172.

¹⁸⁸Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 173.

¹⁸⁹Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 173. British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41263, vol. 3.

board, which the Colony is greatly in want of. Mr. Dawes called on most of the gentlemen to request they would not purchase any, saying he intends buying what is wanting by wholesale and will retail it to them at a small advance. Such a proposal would have come better from a jew pedlar than [sic] from the Governor of Sierra Leone or a Lieutenant of Marines.

11th. The Duke of Buccleugh sailed yesterday and the French man this day. I understand Mr. Dawes has purchased some articles of provisions from the Frenchman, who would have nothing but slaves in return, and for the sake of accommodation, Mr. Dawes gave him an order on Mr. Rennieu, who pays him in slaves. I think if this is not, it borders on an infringement of the Act of Parliament for incorporating the Company, which says "that the Company shall not, through the medium of their servants, or otherwise, directly or indirectly, traffic in slaves."¹⁹⁰ It seems as if Providence frowns on this purchase, for an unusual high tide carried away part of the provisions after they were landed.

It serves him right, the penny-pinching arsehole, Anna Maria says to herself. She feels a little *frisson* of delight at having such a naughty word in her vocabulary. A proper lady shouldn't. But she has heard some very salty language from the seamen aboard the *Lapwing*. She knows they have been warned more than once to be circumspect when she is on board, for she has heard the first mate yelling at them. But of course they forget, and she has learned some terms so outrageous that she isn't quite sure what they mean. She would never say them aloud, of course, or even write them down. Much more circumspect to blame disaster on fate, as she is sure the unpopular governor will.

A small coasting cutter of the Company's called the Providence arrived this day from the Turtle islands, about fifteen leagues to leeward. She brought eight goats, four sheep, and twenty-one turtle; sixteen of the latter died since twelve o'clock, which has disconcerted the Governor very much; but I am

¹⁹⁰An abbreviated version of the Act of Parliament incorporating the Sierra Leone Company can be found in Carl Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization, particularly applied to the Western Coast of Africa, with some free thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce; also Brief Descriptions of the colonies already formed, or attempted, in Africa, including those of Sierra Leona and Bulama* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1794-1795). Coleman, p. 164.

told he has made a calculation and thinks if he can sell the other five at four pence per pound, it will be yet a saving voyage.

Between eleven and twelve o'clock last night, the Colony was alarmed by the report of guns, beating of drums, and shrill shoutings of our neighbours at King Jemmy's town. Mr. Dawes assembled all the men and had arms and ammunition given them from a supposition that the natives meant to attack us—but it turned out to be a groundless alarm and is suspected to have been a contrivance of some ill-disposed persons to get the settlers armed.¹⁹¹

King Jemmy and Signior Domingo being informed of this, came to-day to enquire why their good faith was mistrusted. They dined with Mr. Dawes, and after dinner King Jemmy paid me a visit. He seemed much offended and said it was very foolish to suppose he would make war without a cause—if he had a Palaver with the Colony, he would first come and talk it over, and if it could not be settled in that way and he was forced to make war, he would give us timely notice that we might defend ourselves, but it was the custom of his country to compromise disputes amicably and never to engage in war till there was no other alternative, or words to the same effect. The former assertion, I believe, is not untrue, and his behaviour to the first settlers is an example; in that dispute, he gave them three days notice of his intention to drive them off and burn their town;—with regard to the latter, I have frequently heard wars were common among the natives for the purpose of obtaining slaves. Such may have been the practice, but I have enquired of several Chiefs who positively deny it; and I am certain, since my first acquaintance in this part of the world, none of those predatory wars have happened hereabouts, notwithstanding upwards of two thousand slaves have been shipped and sent to the West Indies from this river within these last twelve months.

¹⁹¹The chief suspect was Naimbana's interpreter, Eliotte Griffith, an 'assured Rogue' according to DuBois and Clarkson; apparently Dawes could not see the dangerous extent of Griffith's sway over the settlers (British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41263, vol. 3). Coleman, p. 164.

15th. Arrived a Cutter belonging to Bance Island from the Isle de Loss. A Mr. McAuley [this is Zachary Macaulay, whose would be a leading player in Freetown for years to come], Member of Council, and the Reverend Mr. Gilbert came passengers in her. These gentlemen came from England to the River Gambia in the Sierra Leone Packet, where they left her to take in cattle for the Colony. The Settlers are highly pleased at Mr. Gilbert's return; indeed, every one must rejoice in the society of so amiable a man.

I have not heard any thing of Mr. McAuley except his lately being an overseer upon an estate in Jamaica. Tis not to be questioned that the prejudices of such an education must impress him with sentiments favorable to the slave trade, and consequently I should not suppose him qualified for a member of Administration in a colony formed mostly of blacks, founded on principles of freedom and for the express purpose of abolishing the slave Trade.¹⁹²

16th. I heard this morning there was another alarm last night, but as groundless as the last. Seven or eight canoes full of natives passing the settlement on their way to King Jemmy's, hooping and halloing as they went, stirred up unnecessary fears in the minds of the settlers, who flocked to Mr. Dawes requesting he would furnish them with ammunition, which (not thinking requisite) he refused, and they returned home greatly dissatisfied.

I learn [that] those people are come down to make one of their periodical sacrifices to the devil—should like to witness the ceremony, but strangers

¹⁹²Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838) had returned to England in 1792 after a stint as book-keeper, then manager, of a slave estate in Jamaica.

Also mentioned in Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 108: "Her comment on Zachary Macaulay (as he spelt it) was wide of the mark. Though he had been employed briefly on a plantation in Jamaica, he had left in disgust and had found more congenial employment with the directors of the Sierra Leone Company whose principles he fully agreed with. Moreover, after his return to England in 1799 he became a leading figure in the abolitionist movement."

(particularly whites) are not admissible. It will be performed between Free Town and King Jemmy's on the side of a small brook under a cluster of large trees.

The English in Freetown probably never heard the words *Poro* or *Sande*. If they did, they had no idea what they meant. "Poro" means "laws of the ancestors," and initiation into the secret society is compulsory for the attainment of adulthood.¹⁹³ The Poro operate, even today, through independent branches in every important town or village, all observing similar rules. The branches are organized into a series of grades. Men who have talent and want additional instruction pay fees to learn the secrets of the next grade. The upper grades constitute an elite inner circle, who organize and train the initiates.

Poro schools are held every few years throughout the countryside in restricted areas adjacent to the village. These are fenced off, and no one is permitted to enter save Poro members and the boys of eligible age who are to be inducted. In the center is a sacred clearing where leaders are buried and sacrifices made.

The bush school lessons in those days lasted two or three years. Initiates were instructed in native law and tradition, in singing and dancing, acrobatics, and crafts. They learned to farm, build houses, defend their villages, and manage their wives. They endured stern tests of bodily toughness and self-discipline, practiced cooperation in work and obedience to their elders, and gained a sense of spiritual communion in their tribal identity. They swore eternal allegiance to the tribal laws and customs and promised under penalty of death never to reveal the Poro secrets.

The central function of the secret societies has always been to deal with the supernatural, which is beyond the scope of ordinary men. Their primary emphasis is on obedience to the authority of the elders and the spirits with whom they mediate. The top officials of the cult—some of whom impersonate the guardian spirits of the society—are important men in everyday life, but their particular office in the Poro is concealed from all nonmembers. Their power in the Poro has a spiritual base which serves to balance the secular authority of the tribal chiefs.

The Sande society is the women's counterpart of the Poro, and is very similar in both organization and function. The head of the Sande is also the village midwife, and girls in the bush school learn all the womanly virtues and arts—cooking, nursing, fishing, spinning, dancing, singing. These societies were important in creating a sense of common identity among ethnic groups which were not united

¹⁹³See also Roy Lewis, *Sierra Leone*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954), p. 129-131

politically in any way.¹⁹⁴

The weather is particularly fine at present—the fogs or smoaks are mostly dispelled, a salubrious sea breeze fans us daily and agreeably tempers the burning sun.

17th. We are prodigiously distressed to understand King Naimbana is so dangerously ill that his death is hourly looked for. Mr. Dawes, Mr. Gilbert, the Physician, and some others went up to visit him this morning; his death will certainly inconvenience the colony very much.¹⁹⁵

Last night arrived the Lapwing cutter from the river Carimanca¹⁹⁶ (twelve or thirteen leagues from hence) with a load of Camwood, ivory,¹⁹⁷ and rice—the Company have a small factory there under the direction of a free mulatto-man, but the trade is yet very trifling, not nearly equal to the charges attending it.

That river produces the largest and finest oysters I ever eat—not such as are in common hereabouts generated on the mangrove tree and rocks, but genuine bed oysters—I have been fortunate enough to get a supply of them several times. The settlers, having now a number of small boats, are able to furnish the colony with abundance of capital fish, and they have such plenty of fowls that the gentlemen get what they require; but the propagation of the

¹⁹⁴Mary Louise Clifford, *The Land and People of Sierra Leone* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1974), pp. 125-126.

¹⁹⁵Winterbottom wrote of Naimbana's death that it was “much and deservedly lamented.” Winterbottom, *An Account*, vol. 1, p. 260. Coleman, p. 164.

¹⁹⁶Should be “Camaranca.”

¹⁹⁷Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 108: Camwood, a hard, red-coloured timber, then used in making red dye, was a valuable commodity in the export trade. Elephants were plentiful enough in the coastal region to supply ivory for export.

feathered species is considerably protracted by the multitude of enemies they have here, viz. snakes, rats, wild cats, armadillas (a kind of scaly lizzard), ants, &c. The most formidable of all these are the ants—in the dead hour of night they come in swarms and attack the helpless chickens while roosting under the mother's wing, who is scarcely able to defend herself. I have had four or five killed in a night by them; and so prying and assiduous are they after their prey that I have known them [to] discover two doves which were hanging in a cage up one pair of stairs, whom they not only killed, but carried off every morsel except the feathers before morning.

19th. Mr. Dawes and two or three other gentlemen went to Bunch river this morning to visit Pa Bunkie, who some people imagine will succeed King Naimbana. They took a present, or as it is termed, Dash, for this chieftain, by far richer than any yet made [to] King Naimbana or any other chief. Returning in the evening, they stopped at Signior [sic] Domingo's, where they expected to have seen a late favourite woman of King Jemmy's drink the red water for suspicion of witchcraft, but their curiosity was disappointed by the ceremony being performed in an inland town;¹⁹⁸ however they were informed the woman had drank the water and recovered, and that in consequence, Jemmy, by the customs of his country, is obliged either to pay the woman's parents a slave or the value of one in goods.¹⁹⁹

At half past twelve o'clock P.M. a spark from the kitchen fire kindled in the roof of my house, and before water could be procured, communicated itself in all directions. In a few moments the roof fell in, and in less than fifteen minutes the whole building was consumed; but by the extraordinary exertions of some labourers who were working hard by, most of my cloaths and furniture were saved, so that my loss is trifling. I suppose (from a cursory view of what has escaped), not above £50 [worth]. As luck would have it, I

¹⁹⁸The botanist Adam Afzelius succeeded in witnessing one of these trials and gave a detailed account in Afzelius, *Journal*, pp. 21-30. Coleman, p. 164.

¹⁹⁹Winterbottom gave a full account of trial by red water in his *Account*, vol. I, pp. 129-33. Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 109.

moved my lodgings some days ago [to Isaac DuBois's house obviously, but she doesn't tell us this] and only stayed in the thatched house during the day, intending to leave it entirely when another room was finished in the house where I now am, which will be the case shortly. Indeed, it is already so forward that I have asked a party of two and twenty to dine with me the day after tomorrow on an extraordinary occasion; therefore I cannot complain of wanting shelter.

Anna Maria sticks to the travel nature of the book she is writing. She tells us only about her new house and the coming dinner party, with not a word about marriage.

DuBois entry on the 19th (either he or Anna Maria has the date wrong): "About ½ past 12 O'clock a spark of fire was discovered in the thatch of our house at the Point, & before any water could be procured, it communicated it self to the whole roof, which in a few minutes fell in. The building was shortly consumed.. I was much alarmed for the Hummums,²⁰⁰ but most fortunately in the morning I had cleared away all the shavins & trash between the two buildings as tho I had foreseen what was going to happen. The wind was about S.W. and carried the flames clear of the Hummums.. I saved a great many things, but notwithstanding must have losed £40 or £50 at least. The only thing I seriously regret is Mr. Clarksons *china* which tho saved from the fire did not escape destruction, most of them were broken. I hope when he reads this part of my journal he will recollect what confusioun [*sic*] fire makes, & not suppose that his china suffered from carelessness."²⁰¹

20th. I have been informed that Pa Bunkie was advised by his Palaver Man not to accept the great dash which Mr. Dawes carried him yesterday; and that this Palaver Gentleman made use of the following, or similar language,

²⁰⁰Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 122: "Hummums", from hammam, a Turkish bath (OED). Though she calls it "our" (and earlier, in her journal entry for 15 January, "my") house, it seems to have been intended for the company offices (see Dawes' letter in the journal of DuBois, entry for 13 February 1793). The site, the point of land at the east end of the town, became known as "Falconbridge Point", and when Freetown was fortified, the gun battery constructed there was called "Falconbridge Battery". The name "Falconbridge Point" still appears on twentieth century maps.

²⁰¹Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 178.

to dissuade him from taking it:

"Father—these people have been here twelve moons now. Have they ever taken the slightest notice of you by inviting you to their camp (the name given Free Town by the natives) or making you the smallest present heretofore? No, Father! And what makes them thus suddenly over generous to you? Because they think your services will soon be requisite for them. Do not you know white men well enough to be convinced that they never give away their money without expecting it returned many fold [sic]? Cannot you see the drift of this profuse, unlooked for, and unasked for present? Let me warn you against taking it—~~for~~ be assured, however disinterested and friendly they appear at this moment, they are aiming at some selfish purposes, and although they may not discover what their wishes are immediately—before twelve moons more you will know them."

Bunkie replied, "I know they want something, nevertheless I'll take the ~~dash~~—rest with me, whether to comply with any request they make or not. I shall not consider the present by any means binding on me."

Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Horne went up this afternoon to Signor Domingo's (who claimed to be a Catholic), where Mr. Horne preached a sermon to a congregation of natives. How preposterous! Is it possible that a sensible man like Mr. Horne can suppose it in 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? He might as well expect that holding a candle to the eyes of a blind man, or exposing him to the sun, would reclaim his sight! The desire of spreading Christian knowledge through this ignorant land is questionless, most praise worthy, but it will require patience and time to effect it.²⁰²

²⁰²In a letter to Clarkson, John Gray, the colony's accountant, relayed King Jemmy's joke about Horne's fruitless missionary efforts: "This Country People no like dry Palavers." Gray thought the focus should be on the native children, and that they should be trained up "into plantation workers." Feb. 15, 1793; British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41263, vol. 3. Clarkson believed Horne's time would be more profitably spent instructing the settlers

On January 20th DuBois writes in his journal: "The Nassau Captn Morley arrived from the Isles Deloss.. He seems to be a good honest fellow & I am rather gratified by his being highly pleased at his sister[s] Marriage."²⁰³

21st. Last night arrived the Nassau, ([captained by] Morley)²⁰⁴ from Bristol, but last from the Isles de Loss; Captain Morley this day added to the number at our convivial gala. I was highly complimented for the elegance, variety, and richness of my dinner, which without doubt was superb considering where we are. We had three removes, from six and twenty to thirty dishes each; besides an admirable desert consisting of a variety of European and tropical fruit, the whole of which was garnished with comfort and pleasantry.

This is the date when the secret marriage on the 7th was to be revealed. Again Anna Maria teases us. The customs of the times would not have permitted a lone white woman to set up a household (although several black women in Freetown were heads of households) and hold a dinner party attended by all the elite of the town. Anna Maria has yet to mention marriage.

DuBois writes on that same day: "Gave my wedding dinner this day to such gentlemen in the Colony as chose to attend. Mr. Horne was absent; sent word that he was unwell. Such a dinner in all probability was never seen in the Grain Coast of Africa.. Mr. Dawes invited us to dine with him on Wednesday."²⁰⁵

Anna Maria abruptly changes the subject:

24th. On Sunday last notice was given that Mr. Horne or Mr. Gilbert would perform divine service in future every morning and evening; and every one is desired to attend. I am of [the] opinion the morning service is superfluous. Why? For many reasons, and I will here enumerate three or four: Among the Black Settlers are seven religious sects, and each sect has one or more

to read and write. Coleman, p. 165. Also see Ingham, Sierra Leone, p. 146.

²⁰³Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 178.

²⁰⁴Captain Morley is Anna Maria's brother-in-law. Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 111.

²⁰⁵Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 108.

preachers attached to it who alternately preach throughout the whole night. Indeed, I never met with, heard, or read of any set of people observing the same appearance of godliness; for I do not remember since they first landed here my ever awaking (and I have awoke at every hour of the night) without hearing preachings from some quarter or other. Now, those people being so religiously bent, I think it unnecessary, or, as I first said, superfluous that they should be convened every morning because the primest part of the day for exercising their worldly vocations is occupied thereby; the vicious and lazy (and some such will creep into every society) are furnished with the plea of being at church; an excuse, I am told, many already make after skulking an hour or two beyond the customary and proper time when they have not been within a church door; and it detains the mass of labourers an hour every day, which, lost time, costs the Company at the rate of £1300 per annum. Vice and laziness surely ought not to be protected by Religion any where, but they should be more especially discountenanced in a new Colony where success greatly depends on industry.

Anna Maria never names any of the black settlers except Elliott Griffith, who became King Naimbana's scribe, then returned to Freetown as interpreter. This is a pity, for many of the other settlers played prominent roles in the founding of Freetown. Fortunately, Governor John Clarkson in his diaries records all of his dealings with the various black pastors, who commanded such loyalty among their flocks that whole congregations had emigrated together from Nova Scotia. They built chapels as soon as possible and held almost daily prayer meetings. The settlers in each congregation wanted their town lots contiguous to each other. The pastors were the political leaders of the black community; they were the ones with whom the governors negotiated at they organized the functions of government. And they were the leaders of the factions which either supported or opposed the rulings of the governor and his council.²⁰⁶ Anna Maria, of course, was not privy to the conversations Clarkson had with the black pastors, nor did she attend the chapel meetings as he did to find out what the settlers grievances were and try to gain their support.

This day I [I, not we] dined on board the Nassau in company with Mr. Rennieu and some gentlemen of the Colony. Rennieu says an old man named Congo Bolokelly is on his way from the interior country to succeed

²⁰⁶This detailed history, focusing on the black leaders, is contained in Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown*.

King Naimbana;²⁰⁷ and that such great pains has been taken to impress him with an unfavourable opinion of our Colony that he is determined the Company shall re-purchase their land, or he will do every thing in his power to perplex and annoy us.

DuBois's entry on the same day: "By accounts from Robana this morning King Naimbanna is not expected to live. Mrs. DuBois, Grey & Self dined on board the Nassau. Messieur Rennieu, three or four french men were there. Rennieu told me that there is another King now on his way down the Country to succeed Kind Naimbanna, & I also understand the slave factories have been giving him large dashes, & prejudicing him against the settlement, that in consequence he is determined we shall make a new purchase of the Country as soon as he comes to the *throne*; his name is *Congo, Bolikie*.. I learn that Mr. Dawes has been very liberal in his dashes to Pa Bunkie & other chiefs. However I do not disapprove of that, for surely the Sierra Leone Compy should be at least as liberal as the slave factories in the Neighbourhood."²⁰⁸

Mr. Dawes met with a circumstance very galling to him this forenoon. He had in contemplation to palisade a piece of ground for an immediate asylum in case the natives should take it in their heads to attack us. The spot fixed upon unfortunately took in part of a lot occupied by one of the Settlers, which Mr. Dawes, conscious of his unpopularity, did not wish to encroach upon without obtaining permission, although the Settlers only hold their present Town lots as a temporary accommodation until their permanent ones are surveyed.

He called on the tenant²⁰⁹ and took him out to explain what he wanted; many people in the neighbourhood, having previously heard of Mr. Dawes's intentions, assembled about him, who declared they would not suffer an inch more ground to be enclosed upon any pretence whatever before their

²⁰⁷Pa Kokelly, as the name is more usually rendered, did not succeed Naimbana, but did succeed King Jemmy when he died in 1796, taking the title of King Tom. By then a successor to Naimbana, with the royal title Bai Farama, had already been appointed. Fyfe, *A History*, p. 74.

²⁰⁸Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 179-80.

²⁰⁹William Grant.

town and country lots were given them, and most solemnly protested they would destroy every fence which might be erected till such time.

Mr. Dawes endeavoured to persuade them by argument that what he wanted to do was for their protection; but they were deaf to everything he said and gave him language in return which he could not stomach. He told them [that] if he had imagined they would have treated him with so much indignity, he should not have come among them; and if they continued to behave in the same way, he would certainly leave them as early as he could. To this with one voice they exclaimed, "Go! go! go! we do not want you here, we cannot get a worse after you." He was so disgusted at this that he turned his back and walked off. It was directly before my door, therefore I witnessed the whole and could not help feeling for the Governor, who seemed dreadfully mortified and out of temper.

Dawes's experience in a convict colony in Australia had accustomed him to arbitrary government, where orders were given and obeyed without question. He was not of a mind to tolerate initiative among his officials or to consult the settlers before announcing his decisions. Not for him the patient convincing and cajoling of illiterate blacks that Clarkson had believed necessary. Dawes's immediate termination of the farm surveys had already roused the settlers' wrath.

Feb. 3. Nothing worth recording for these ten days past. Yesterday the manager of Clarkson plantation came over from Bulam; he has had a serious quarrel with the natives, but reason was determined on his side. His advances in cultivation I understand are very slow; for he is not able to keep any number of labourers together more than a month at a time; it is customary to pay them every moon and when they get their wages, like our English tars, they quit work while they have money.

The Sierra Leone packet arrived from Gambia this day with thirty head of cattle; I have not learnt what her European cargo consists of, but it is said to be very trifling.

7th. Since the departure of Mr. Clarkson a number of subtle ungentlemanlike attempts have been made to singe his reputation in the opinion of the people and to warp away their affections from him, which as yet have proved unsuccessful; but I never heard of so unmanly, unprincipled, and diabolical an assault on any one's [sic] character as was last night made on his. The

Settlers were summoned to meet Mr. Dawes and the Surveyor in the evening; and being collected, they were informed that their permanent Town Lots were surveyed and ready for them and that they must relinquish those they at present occupy immediately. To this they replied, "when placed on the lots we at present occupy, we were informed they were merely for our temporary accommodation, and we promised, when the plan of the town was fixed upon and surveyed, we would remove. But we were assured no public or other buildings would be erected between our lots and the sea; now in place of this the sea shore is lined with buildings. Therefore, your promise being broken, we consider ours cancelled and will not remove unless the new lots are run from the water's edge and we indiscriminately partake of them. Mr. Clarkson promised in Nova Scotia that no distinction should be made here between us and white men; we now claim this promise. We are free British subjects and expect to be treated as such; we will not tamely submit to be trampled on any longer. Why are not our country allotments of land surveyed? Why are not all the Company's promises to us fulfilled? We have a high regard and respect for Mr. Clarkson and firmly believe he would not have left us without seeing every promise he made performed; if gentlemen here had not given him the strongest assurances they should be complied with immediately."

In answer, they were told [by Pepys] "that it was not uncommon for Mr. Clarkson to make prodigal and extraordinary promises without thinking of them afterwards, that the great advantages he held out to them in Nova Scotia he was in no shape authorised by the Sierra Leone Company to make; they all came from himself 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 was drunk when he made them."²¹⁰

²¹⁰Perkins and Anderson, the settlers' delegates who travelled to London in 1793 to petition the Directors, spared Clarkson the exact details of Pepys's speech. They wrote in a letter to him: "We are sorry to tell you that the Gentlemen you left behind you speaks mightily against you and we was present when Mr Pepys told all the people that you had no authority for the Promises you made us in Nova Scotia . . ." See Christopher Fyfe, ed., *Our Children Free and Happy': Letters from Black Settlers in Africa in the 1790s*,

He stated as well that Clarkson would not be coming back to Freetown, and so the settlers had better forget him and obey their new governor.

Here they groaned and murmured, but said "they believed Mr. Clarkson to be a man of honor and that he never made any promise to them but such as he was authorised by the Company to make." The altercation now ended; I have had it nearly in the same language from more than a dozen people who were at the meeting.²¹¹

After Pepys had stalked off haughtily, Moses Wilkinson, Boston King, Cato Perkins, and the other black preachers agreed on one thing: Clarkson was the only white official they trusted. They were certain that the directors in London would not want them treated so arbitrarily as Dawes and Pepys were treating them now. They discussed how to make their needs known.²¹²

The blacks seem vastly alarmed and uneasy. Nothing else is spoken of all this day, and I understand they have determined to send two deputies to the Court of Directors to know from them what footing they are on and what were the promises Mr. Clarkson was authorised to make them. Indeed, it is not to be wondered at for no other conclusion can be formed from such base insinuations but that a wish exists somewhere to do them injustice.

DuBois added to his journal: "Memorandum: He Richard Pepys is as black a Hearted insinuating a Villain as this day exists."²¹³

Anna Maria does not elaborate further about the two delegates chosen, but Cato Perkins and Isaac Anderson do not walk on stage at this point with no history

(Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 35.

²¹¹Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 114: She fails to make it clear that the "answer" quoted was given by Richard Pepys, the surveyor, not by Dawes. DuBois's journal contains a very similar text. Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 182-3.

²¹²Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown*, pp. 154-155.

²¹³British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41263, vol. 3.

behind them. Perkins came originally from Charleston, South Carolina. In Nova Scotia he became a Methodist preacher of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection and brought his whole congregation to Freetown, where they built their own chapel. In the early months in Freetown he led an unsuccessful strike by the carpenters for higher wages. They gave in after a week because they had no cash income with which to buy provisions and had to continue working in order to have credit at the company store.

Isaac Anderson was also from Charleston but had been born free, so that he had no memory of slavery to make him cautious. A carpenter by trade, he served in the British Army during the American Revolution. In Freetown one of his first acts against the Sierra Leone Company was to lead a protest when the company wanted to take all waterfront lots away from the settlers.²¹⁴

12th. We had reason to think for some days past that King Naimbana was dead, but had no certainty of it until this morning; nor do we exactly know when he died [actually in January 1793], but it is supposed several days ago. The country custom is to keep a great man's death secret some time; his coffin (the first in all probability any of his family ever had) is making here and will be sent up to Robana this evening.²¹⁵

To make matters worse, his son John Henry, who had been sent to England in 1791 to be educated by the company, died on board a company ship just as he

²¹⁴Anderson was an activist throughout his years in Freetown. Besides being a settler delegate to the Board of Directors, he was later appointed a justice of the peace. He carried a petition to the senior naval officer on the coast, asking him to arbitrate in a settler dispute over the quit-rent. He was elected a hundredor by his peers. He was one of the principal leaders of a settler revolt in 1800, put down by the English with the help of Maroons from Jamaica. Anderson's punishment for his role was to be hanged for treason. Anderson's story is included in Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown*.

²¹⁵"One of his daughters was accused of bewitching him & drank red water in consequence—she escaped its effect—several people have been taken up supposed to have used Witchcraft or Poison on the Person of the King, & no doubt some will loose their lives." John Gray to John Clarkson, 15 Feb, 1793; British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41263, vol. 3. Coleman, p. 165.

was returning to Sierra Leone.²¹⁶ Other sons of King Naimbana accused company officials of complicity in the death. Several colonists were murdered by vengeful Temne, and Nova Scotian patrols were armed to prevent further attacks.

14th. Yesterday being the anniversary of the Harpy's arrival, a few celebrated it by dining at the house of a late member of council who came out in her. I think it would have been more a propos to have fasted and mourned on the occasion. The day was cloudy accompanied with a rumbling thunder and spitting rain (a circumstance rarely known at this season) as if the heavens were groaning and weeping at the recollection. It was intended to have fired minute guns in compliment to the remains of Naimbana, which would have been very timely, but that ceremony was postponed until this day, when it was performed.

²¹⁶"A little tract, *The African Prince, A Sketch of the Life of John Henry Naimbana, An African King's Son* (London, n.d.) was published after his death. It has a woodcut frontispiece in which he is depicted spurning an improper book." Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 70.

LETTER XI.

February 15th, 1793.

My dear Madam,

The *Good Intent*, [captained by] Captain Buckle, affords me an opportunity of sending you the foregoing journal, which I fear you will think very insipid, but every day produces such a sameness that really there is not subject for high seasoning even a common epistle, and you will allow journalizing still more difficult; however, to avoid tautological writing as much as possible, I skipped over several days at a time, which of course you will have observed, but after all, it is so dry that I am almost ashamed to send it [to] you, and am determined in future to have recourse to my old epistolary mode.

My dinner on the 21st of January will somewhat puzzle you at first, and least you may not at once hit upon what occasioned it, I must not keep you in suspense, but acquaint you that I have changed the name of Falconbridge for one a little shorter, under which I beg to subscribe myself,

Your's sincerely, &c. &c.

Less than a month after Alexander Falconbridge's death Anna Maria has married Isaac DuBois. The splendid dinner party is to celebrate the occasion. They were married on January 7, but Anne Maria does not disclose the fact in her letters until February 15. Not until June will she further defend her action in marrying rather than mourning.

LETTER XII

FREE TOWN, SIERRA LEONA, June 5th, 1793.

My Dear Madam,

I finished my last by hinting that I had once more enlisted under the banners of Hymen, but made no apology for my hastiness; or in other words for deviating from the usual custom of twelve months *widowhood*. To be plain, I did not make any because I thought it unnecessary. Narrow minds may censure me, and perhaps the powerful influence of habit might operate against me in your opinion before you reflected upon my situation or well digested the many circumstances which plead in my favour; but having done this, I am mistaken indeed if your heart is not too expanded to sully me with reproach afterwards. My own conscience acquits me from having acted wrong; next to that I wish for the approbation of my friends, and after them, the charitable construction of the world. I know you wish me happy, and no woman can be more so than I am at present, with every expectation of a continuance.

Doesn't that last sentence sound as though her marriage to Isacc DuBois was a love match—a happy contrast to her experience with Falconbridge?

I must now proceed to give you a summary view of occurrences since the fifteenth of February:

The first thing I shall mention is the universal discontent which has prevailed among the Settlers ever since the altercation they had with Mr. Dawes and the Surveyor on the 7th of February, and it must be confessed by every candid person, their murmurs are not excited without cause. To give you an idea of what their complaints are, I shall state the outlines of a petition which they intend sending to the Court of Directors by two Deputies [Isaac Anderson and Cato Perkins] elected about the middle of March, who for want of an opportunity have not yet sailed, but are just on the eve of embarking in the Amy for England. I have not only seen the petition, but have a copy of it

verbatim.²¹⁷

It first of all states, "That the Petitioners are sensible of, and thankful for the good intended by sending them from Nova Scotia to this country, and in return assure the Directors, they are well inclined to assist the Company's views, all in their power.

"That they are grieved beyond expression to be forced to complain of hardships and oppressions loaded on them by the managers of the Colony, which they are persuaded the Directors are ignorant of.

"That the promises made by the Company's Agents, in Nova Scotia, were preferable to any ever held out to them before, and trusting the performance of them, with the Almighty's assistance and their own industry, would better their condition, induced them to emigrate here. That none of those promises have been fulfilled, and it has been insinuated to them that Mr. Clarkson had not authority for making any; they therefore beg to be informed whether such is the case or not, and that the Directors will point out on what footing they are considered.

"That health and life is valuable and uncertain; that notwithstanding they labour under the misfortune of wanting education; their feelings are equally acute with those of white men, and they have as great an anxiety to lay a foundation for their children's freedom and happiness as any human being can possess. That they believe the Directors wish to make them happy, and that they think their sufferings are principally due to the conduct of the Company's Agents here, which they suppose has been partially represented to the Directors.

"That Mr. Clarkson had promised in Nova Scotia, among other things, they should be supplied with every necessary of life from the Company's stores,

²¹⁷The full text of their petition is included in Christopher Fyfe, *Our Children Free and Happy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 35-40.

at a moderate advance of ten per cent on the prime cost and charges. That while Mr. Clarkson remained in the Colony they paid no more; but since then they have been charged upwards of 100 per cent. That they would not grumble even at that if the worst of goods were not sold and paltry advantages taken of them, particularly in the article of rum. That they had known, by Mr. Dawes's order, several puncheons filled up with thirty gallons of water each, and even, though thus reduced, sold to them at a more extravagant price than they had ever paid before. (This is perfectly true, but upon investigation, it appeared to proceed from religious motives; Mr. Dawes said he ordered a little water to be put into each puncheon, from a fear the consumers would neglect to dilute the spirit sufficiently. Had such a trick been played at a Slave Factory, how would it be construed?)

"That the only means they have of acquiring those goods is by labouring in the Company's service, and even this they are deprived of at the whim of Mr. Dawes or any other Gentleman in office, which they consider a prodigious hardship as it is the only resource whereby they can provide bread for their families; that out of mere pique several have been discharged from service and not permitted even with their little savings, to purchase provisions from the Company's store-house, the only one here.

"That Mr. Clarkson informed them before he sailed for England [that] the Company had been mistaken in the quantity of land they supposed themselves possessed of, and in consequence only one fifth part of what was originally promised them (the petitioners) could be at present performed; which quantity the Surveyor would deliver them in a fortnight at furthest, but they should have the remainder at a future time.

"That they should have been satisfied had they got one fifth part of their proportion (in good land) [in] time enough to have prepared a crop for the ensuing year, but the rains are now commenced and the Surveyor has not finished laying out the small allotments, which he might have done had he not relinquished the work as soon as Mr. Clarkson sailed; and the greater part of those he has surveyed are so mountainous, barren and rocky, that it will be impossible ever to obtain a living from them."

After mentioning many more trifling complaints and dwelling greatly on the

happiness and prosperity of their children, they conclude with words to this effect:

"We will wait patiently till we hear from you because we are persuaded you will do us justice; and if your Honors will enquire into our sufferings, compassionate us and grant us the priviledges we feel entitled to from Mr. Clarkson's promises. We will continually offer up our prayers for you and endeavour to impress upon the minds of our children the most lasting sense of gratitude, &c. &c."²¹⁸

This petition is signed by thirty one of the most respectable Settlers in behalf of the whole;²¹⁹ and they have raised a small subscription for supporting their representatives while in England. 'Tis to be hoped the Directors will pay attention to them and not suffer themselves to be biassed [sic] by the misrepresentations of one or two plausible individuals, who must of course say all they are able in vindication of their conduct, and who, we have reason to believe from their hipocritical pretensions to religion, have acquired a great ascendancy over a few of the leading Directors;—but surely they will not be so forgetful of their own characters and interests as to allow that ascendancy to operate against honesty, truth and justice, and ruin the quiet and happiness of a thousand souls:—no! they must be strangely altered indeed, laying aside their partiality for Ethiopians, if they do not possess too much probity to hesitate a moment when it comes before them.

Letters to Thornton from Dawes and Macaulay label all the settler complaints "frivolous and ill-grounded." The directors in London are much happier in reading the praises Pepys, Dawes, and Macaulay heap on each other than in hearing Clarkson's critical judgment after seven months of governing Freetown. This bias may seem curious, but the three counsellors now in charge in Freetown share

²¹⁸Fyfe points out in *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 120, that "these extracts from the petition illustrate well how differently the settlers and the directors saw the Colony. The settlers saw it primarily as a new home for themselves and their children. The directors saw it however primarily as a means to enable them to transform West Africa."

²¹⁹Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 120: The only surviving copy, in the Clarkson papers in the British Library, lacks the signatures.

with Chairman Thornton and his closest associates an enthusiasm for the evangelical piety of a growing Anglican sect in Clapham. Indeed, Dawes and Macaulay won their appointments because they had joined Thornton's circle at Clapham.

Thornton was born in Clapham; as a successful banker he bought and enlarged a lovely house there. The business of the Sierra Leone Company is largely conducted in offices next door to Thornton's bank, where, ensconced in great comfort, the evangelicals plan the future of the penniless freed blacks in Freetown as one segment of their campaign to reform Protestant religion and end the slave trade.²²⁰

Clarkson arrives in England in February and wastes no time informing the directors of the heavy toll sickness had taken in Freetown, exacerbated by widespread incompetence among the white staff and a shortage of basic supplies. Chairman Thornton, the largest shareholder in the Sierra Leone Company and now a Member of Parliament, takes Clarkson's criticisms personally, believes they reflect badly on him and the other directors. He is deeply offended. He points out that war in Europe has affected shipping and justifies all actions taken by the board of directors as vital to maintaining a public perception in England that Freetown is thriving.

The directors are not happy when Anderson and Perkins arrive in England to complain in behalf of their fellow settlers. Their reception is decidedly chilly. The two get in touch with John Clarkson, who writes Thornton that he will join Anderson and Perkins for a conference with the directors. Thornton ignores the suggestion. Days stretch into weeks; Anderson and Perkins soon run out of money. They are told to find jobs or mortgage their farms (not yet received) if they want loans. When Anderson and Perkins present Thornton with a letter from John Clarkson, they are told to board the *Amy* and return to Sierra Leone, where they will receive their answer. When they protest, they are told to put any further complaints in writing.²²¹

Besides displeasing the blacks and rendering them uneasy, Mr. Dawes is at constant variance with some one or other of the officers, and since I wrote you last, few days have pass'd over without some fresh feud; one in particular is of so extraordinary a nature I must relate it that you may have a peep into the disposition of our Governor.

²²⁰See Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, Chapter 15.

²²¹Clifford, p. 160.

Mr. S—,²²² a surgeon who came out in the Sierra Leone Packet, was two months here without a room to lodge in on shore, which was attended with great inconvenience to him and interfered considerably with his duty. He after some time interceded with Mr. Dawes to let him have a small room fitted up in our house, which he soon got finished and removed into. The apartment being very comfortable and snug, Mr. Dawes took a fancy to it, and the day after Mr. S— had taken possession, without any apology or preface, sent his servant to demand the key. Mr. S— was surprised at so uncouth and arbitrary a proceeding and did not feel inclined to treat it with passive obedience, but gave a positive refusal, as such rudeness merited. In consequence, he was immediately dismissed from the service, and here follows an accurate copy of his dismissal.

Council, FREE TOWN, 26th April, 1793

Sr,

I am desired to transmit the enclosed resolution of Council to you and am Sr, your obedient humble Servant:

(signed) J STRAND, Secretary.²²³

Resolved, that Mr. S—, who came out to this Colony as surgeon in the Hon. the Sierra Leone Company's service, has pointedly refused obedience to the commands of the Superintendant, he be dismissed from the service, and that from this day he is no longer considered as a servant of the said company.

JAMES STRAND, Secretary (signed)

²²²Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 121: DuBois in his journal (6 February 1793) gives his name as Sealy.

²²³Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 122: Strand was another of the Swedenborgian Swedes in the Company's service. Neither the incident nor the letter is recorded in the minute book of the Governor and Council (PRO, CO 270/2).

Did you ever hear of any thing more ridiculously despotic? but mark the sequel: the day following, Mr. Dawes attended by the Secretary and his (Mr. Dawes's) servant, came to the Hummums, for by this name I must tell you our house is known. I was sitting in the piazza reading. They took no notice of me, but Mr. S— being present, the Governor address'd him and demanded the key of his room, which of course was not complied with. He then desired his servant to break open the door, who immediately got to work and would have done it, but was silyly check'd by Mr. Dawes, who with as little ceremony or preface as he had offended, went up to Mr. S— and said, "I am much concerned sir for what has passed. If you feel offended, I beg your pardon. I've been unwell, or would not have acted so rudely. I wanted your room because it was retired, that I might be a little quiet. Pray sir return my papers and forget what has passed; you will greatly oblige and make me happy by doing so."

Mr. S— heard this penitential confession with amazement, and replied, "Had you asked me in a gentlemanlike manner for my room at first, it would have been much at your service. As it is now I bear no malice; here are your papers."

I could fill up twenty pages was I to acquaint you with all the private quarrels of this sort: but as they can neither afford amusement or instruction, it is best to pass them over in silence.

On the 25th of April we heard of the French King being massacred and that 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.

His Majesty's frigate Orpheus, Captain Newcomb, Sea-flower Cutter, Lieutenant Webber, and the African Queen, a ship chartered by the Company, arrived here the beginning of last month. Captain Newcomb in his way out touched at Senegal and Gorée and captured six French ships, four of which arrived safe at this port and have since been condemned and sold at Bance Island; the other two were lost on the shoals of Grandée. The Orpheus came out to protect the British Trade on this part of the coast of Africa, as did

the *Sea-flower* in some measure; but she is only to run down the Coast, and proceed to the West Indies. After remaining here a few days, they both went to leeward, unfortunately three or four days too late, or they would have intercepted a French Corsair that has scoured the coast from Cape Mount (about fifty leagues from hence) downwards, considerably annoyed our trade, and taken eight valuable ships clear away, it is supposed to Cayenne. She had captured many more, which have been retaken by the *Sea-flower* and *Robust* (a Privateer from Liverpool). These two vessels we hear have consorted and gone to Old Calabar, where they expect to fall in with and take a large French Guineaman that has twelve hundred slaves on board and is just ready to sail. One of the ships they re-captured was sent in here. I have seen the master of her, who says he never saw such a savage looking set in his life as were on board the Frenchman. They all had on horsemen'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 dreadfully ferocious that one would suppose them capable of eating every Englishman they met with without salt or gravy. Unluckily the *Orpheus* sprung her foremast, which obliged her to give up pursuing those Republican ragamuffins, and returned here.

During her absence, one of the most atrocious infringements on the liberty of British subjects and the most daring extension of arrogated power that has yet occurred among us was practised by our Colonial Tribunal on the persons of three sailors belonging to the *African Queen*. These thoughtless sons of Neptune came on shore to regale themselves with a walk while their master was away (I believe at Bance Island) and as they strolled through the town, wantonly killed a duck belonging to one of the Settlers. They were immediately apprehended and taken before the Chief Magistrate, who committed them to prison, and the subsequent day they were tried, 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. The self-created Judge then sentenced one of them to receive thirty-nine lashes by the common whipper, fined the other two in a sum of money each and ordered them to be confined in irons on board the *York* till their fines were paid.

These sentences were accordingly put in execution. Poor Jack was dreadfully mortified at being whipped by a black man, but his punishment being soon over. I considered it the lightest, for his fellow sufferers were kept ironed in the close hold of a ship, already infested with disease, upwards of three weeks till the Orpheus returned, when the master of the African Queen presented a petition from them to Captain Newcomb, who did not hesitate to interpose his authority. He came on shore, waited on the Governors, and without waiting for compliments or paying any himself, he demanded of them by what authority they tried white men, the subjects of Great Britain, by a Jury of blacks. It was so novel a circumstance that it struck him with astonishment. "By Act of Parliament," answered Mr. McAuley. "Shew me that Act of Parliament," replied Captain Newcomb. The Act for incorporating the Company being produced, Captain Newcomb read it over carefully and finding there was no sanction given for holding any Courts of the kind, exclaimed, "Your Act of Parliament mentions nothing of the sort—your Court is a mere usurpation and a mockery on all law and justice. I desire the prisoners may be released instantly." This, you imagine, was very unpalatable language to our mighty men; but they were forced to stomach it, and comply with the orders of their superior. It is much to be wished [that] 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.

The first Sunday in every month is the day appointed for holding this sham Court, which, withal, serves very well for regulating any internal quarrels or misunderstandings among the Settlers, by whom it is credited; but extending its functions beyond them is most iniquitous presumption.

Letters arrived by the African Queen from Mr. Clarkson saying he was coming out immediately. The joy this news produced was of short continuance and suddenly damped by dispatches from the Directors mentioning Mr. Clarkson being dismissed and succeeded by Mr. Dawes. This cannot in any way be rationally accounted for, but it is universally supposed the Directors have been betrayed into an act so prejudicial to their interests and the welfare of their Colony by listening to some malicious, 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.

What neither Anna Maria nor Clarkson himself grasped was that because William Dawes and Zachary Macaulay had no personal attachment to the American blacks, as Clarkson did, they were more concerned with returns to the Sierra Leone Company stockholders than with the welfare of his fractious settlers.

Mail comes on each arriving ship and is carried to Harmony Hall where it is distributed along with whatever spoken news is available. When Isaac DuBois receives the news of John Clarkson's dismissal, he surely rushes home to share it with Anna Maria. "The worst possible news! John Clarkson will not be returning to Freetown!"

"What?"

"The directors have dismissed him."

Anna Maria's mouth falls open. After a moment she says, "I don't believe it!"

"The captain of the ship just arrived has brought the news."

"Oh—that's terrible. Just terrible."

"I'm looking for his last letter," Dubois replied. "Yes, here it is."

"Listen to this.²²⁴ Clarkson wrote that when he arrived in London, he was received 'with every mark of affection and respect and in short the Directors in private made great Professions to me but took care never to mention in public the services I had rendered them'."

"Oh," Anna Maria exclaims. "Just as they did with Falconbridge—concealing their real intentions. Thornton is ever the cautious banker, protecting his own interests regardless of how much he harms others. He mistrusts Clarkson's popularity with the Nova Scotian settlers. They sent him to Nova Scotia with instructions that the settlers would receive free land in Africa, and changed their minds after he had departed. Now the Company wants to levy quit-rents on the land to recoup their

²²⁴Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 126. British Library, Add. MS 41263. Actually, much of what follows was contained in a letter written by Clarkson to DuBois on 1 July 1793. DuBois left Freetown on June 9th, so the letter did not reach him until much later. It is clear, however, that Anna Maria and Isaac decided to leave Freetown almost immediately after they learned that Clarkson would not be returning.

investment.”

“Yes—the quit-rents are going to cause all kinds of trouble.”

“What else did he say?” Anna Maria asks.

“He said he was ‘impatient with their want of Method and their want of Exertion, with their strict adherence to nonsensical forms, and told them so.’ He says that their general way of doing things is so disgusting that he really could not keep his temper and very often flew out in abuse of their general plans’.”

“Oh, dear. That would infuriate Thornton. He would take any criticism personally and be insulted.”

“To put it mildly,” Isaac replied and continued reading. “They’ve received despatches from Dawes and Macaulay contrasting the success of their own style of government by firmness with Clarkson’s lazy style of persuasion and promises.”

Anna Maria snorted. “Those two would tell any kind of lie to further their own interests.”

“The Directors have believed them. They’ve dismissed Clarkson.”

“Surely not.”

Dubois nodded his head, folding the letter. “Word today is that Thornton offered him a handsome stipend if he would resign as governor. Clarkson refused, and was promptly dismissed.”

“Oh, that’s shocking. The one man who had won the settlers’ trust and affection. I hope Clarkson is going to tell every newspaper in London how he’s been treated.”

DuBois shakes his head. “If he does, it will be very detrimental to our settlement here.”

“But Freetown is left in the hands of Thornton’s pious evangelicals!”

“Yes.” DuBois stares out the door at the tiny lateen-rigged Bullom boats sailing over the estuary. “I thought I could stick it out here until Clarkson returns. But if he’s not coming back . . .”

“Dawes and Pepys are thwarting you every time you turn around, aren’t they?”

DuBois flexes his shoulders in frustration. “I can’t accomplish anything useful here while they are in charge. They won’t let me. They are so intent on building fortifications that they ignore the welfare of the colony.”

Anna Maria watches his face as it reflects his dismay at this unexpected crisis. The warm brown eyes, the narrow nose, the full lips that melt her with kisses. "We can always go home to England," she reminds him.

No language can perfectly describe how much the generality of people are chagrined on this occasion. They have added to their petition the most earnest solicitation for Mr. Clarkson to be sent out again. Numbers, hopeless of such an event, are about to quit the Colony, and ever since the news transpired, they have harrassed Mr. Dawes with insults in hopes he may take it in his head to be disgusted and march off. They even went so far as to write a letter reminding him of the recent melancholy fate of Louis XVI and threatning something similar to him if he did not instantly acquiesce with some demand they made relating to provisions, and which I learn he complied with, without hesitation. I should not be surprised after obtaining one demand so easily, if they repeated their threats until all the promises made them were fulfilled. But they say it was the want of provisions that incited them to frighten the Governor, and they will now wait peaceably till their Deputies return from England, or till they know what the Directors mean to do for them.

Meanwhile Clarkson received letters from the settlers informing him that the surveying had stopped, that he is being accused of making drunken promises to the settlers, and that DuBois (whom Clarkson knew to be the most efficient white official in the colony) has in frustration asked to leave Freetown. Isaac Anderson and Luke Jordan write him that "Our present governor allows the Slave Traders to come here & abuse us."²²⁵

Clarkson recognizes, however, that the Freetown colony is still fragile and would suffer if his views were circulated in England. He restrains his public comments because he knows that the settlement could not survive without British funds and protection. Instead, he writes his black friends in Freetown that they must "be obedient to the laws or else the Colony will be at an end." He assures them of his firm belief that the Sierra Leone Company will do everything in its power to protect them and further their prosperity.

It will be a monstrous pity if this Colony does not succeed after the immense sum of money expended on it; the original theory of its establishment (so

²²⁵Clarkson Papers, June 28, 1794. British Library Additional Manuscripts, 41,263.

generally known) was praise worthy and magnanimous, nor do I suppose such a scheme by any means impracticable; but injudicious management, want of method, anarchy, perpetual cabals and cavils, will thwart the wisest and noblest intentions, which I predict will be the case here unless some speedy salutary alterations are adopted. If the present system is continued, not only the settlers, but the natives will be provoked; all kind of confidence will cease, the Company's funds will be fruitlessly exhausted, and more than probable, before ten years we may hear that the Colony is dwindled into a common slave factory. Some situations make it necessary for superiors to be feared, and all situations require they should be loved; but if the present managers continue here their life-times, they will never experience the pleasure of the latter or the honor of the former; and retire when they like, I very much question whether they will leave one friendly thought towards them behind. For this (tho' an idea well meaning men would blush to foster) must ensue where the seeds of dissention and rancorous²²⁶ jealousy are sowed and encouraged by those whose province should be to suppress their growth.

The Amy tis said will sail in a week; she carries a small cargo of about £1500 value, a laughable return for [expenditures] upwards of £100,000. Being the first remittance, I dare say it will be well puffed off in your news-papers; to see one of those puffs would put me in mind of a persons face, distorted with a forced laugh, when the heart felt nought but emotions of agony: for here is a capital stock of more than £200,000. Half expended, and this first harvest I suppose will barely defray the disbursements of shipping and carrying itself. What is more lamentable, such as it is cannot be often repeated, for the property is mostly sunk in such a way that no probable or real advantages can ever revert from it without the aid of an immense sum most judiciously applied.

The periodical rains are just commencing and seem to set in very severe, but I am in hopes of escaping its inclemency, being about to turn my back on them and bid adieu to this distracted land, so you may probably hear of our arrival in England very shortly after the receipt of this letter, although we are

²²⁶rancorous' in the 1802 edition.

to take a round about voyage by way of Jamaica. Mr.— [DuBois] had taken our passage in the Amy, but the Discontents about to leave the Colony are so numerous that she will be greatly crowded, and as the Nassau has excellent accommodations, sails well and immediately, he thinks we will be more comfortable in her²²⁷ and less liable to fall in with French Pirates than we should in the former, which is a dull sluggish vessel though it is a prevailing opinion here should she (the Amy) meet with a French man of war, she will be in no danger as the National Convention have offered protection to all the Company's ships. How true this may be I cannot say; but it is probable enough as two of the Directors were some time since nominated Members of the Convention.²²⁸

We are to sail in a day or two, and I am very much hurried in packing up, and preparing for our voyage, therefore must bid you farewell, &c. &c.

On May 1st in a letter to Clarkson, DuBois mentions that Dawes has dismissed "Mr. Horwood, Mrs. DuBois's brother, without assigning any reason whatsoever for so doing; and after dismissing him, telling him that he might be *re-appointed* in the service if he chose. Be assured I did not let it drop in silence, and after some altercation on the subject, I told Mr. Dawes that as Mr. Horwood was appointed by you I certainly should mention the circumstance to you in my first letter; to which I was answered they were not accountable to Mr. Clarkson for their conduct but to

²²⁷Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 128: The Nassau was the ship commanded by Anna Maria's brother-in-law Captain Morley, who was taking "a round about voyage by way of Jamaica" to enable him to deliver there the cargo of slaves he had taken on board at Bance Island.

²²⁸In October 1792, the Convention conferred French citizenship on Clarkson and Wilberforce, together with Tom Paine, Joseph Priestley and George Washington; see Elen Gibson Wilson, Thomas Clarkson: A Biography (London: Macmillan, 1989; 2nd edn, 1996), p. 79. It is true that there were informal negotiations between the Company and France regarding immunity for the colony, but this did not prevent Freetown from being totally destroyed by the French in late September 1794 (Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pp. 316-17). Coleman, p. 166.

the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company only."²²⁹

An hour or so before they sailed on May 9 DuBois wrote hastily to John Clarkson explaining why they were leaving, sending his letter on the ship that was going direct to England:

Mr dear Sir:

Should this reach you before I arrive, it will just serve to inform you I am on my way. You will not be pleased to hear of my leaving the Colony, but I hope it is for the best; believe me unless the directors will listen to truth their Colony is lost, such conduct—such every thing—you little dream of: two of the Black settlers deputed by the whole, go home in the *Amy* to represent their Grievances, they have been shamefully trampled on since you went away. I sail in about an hour with Captn Morley. Mr. Afzelius goes home in the *Amy* who will deliver you this with a large bird.. The *Ocean* arrived two days ago; why did you not write me by her? As I make no doubt that you are by this time married, let me assure you there is no man in the world who I sincerely wish should enjoy more happiness in that state than your self. — & be pleased to make my best respects to Mrs. Clarkson.

All the ill treatment I have received since you left this I am convinced has been due to my not taking a diabolical part which I shudder at—in poisoning the minds of the people against you—but all their affairs have been in vain. The people cry loudly for your return. Adieu/& believe me/ most sincerely/ & affectionately/yours/ Isaac DuBois.

Mrs. DB begs her best respects to your self & Mrs. Clarkson.

Free Town 9th June 1793

²²⁹Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 188.

LETTER XIII.

Swan with Two Necks, Lad-lane,
LONDON, 11th *October*, 1793.

My Dear Madam,

I hasten to acquaint you that after a passage of nine weeks and four days in the *Alexander* ([captained by] Shaw) from Jamaica, we landed safe at Dover the 9th instant. My heart jump'd with joy when I found myself once more treading the sod of Old England, which at one time during our voyage I did not expect would ever be the case, for an ill-natured contagious fever (when we had been but a few days at sea) discovered itself in the ship, and before it could be checked, scourged almost every person on board; however, by the skill and vigilance of the ship's surgeon only one death happened. We had been out about three weeks when it attacked me, and was it not for the good nursing and attention I had from every one, particularly the Captain, Surgeon, and my own good man, in all human likelihood I should have fallen a victim to its barbarity. Indeed, Captain Shaw's impartial kindness to his sick was beyond every thing I ever witnessed before, and in my opinion stamps him a man of genuine humanity.

Our ship was armed with two and twenty guns and had between fifty and sixty men on board. We sailed from Kingston the 3d of August and the following day fell in with thirteen sail of Spanish ships under convoy of a frigate, who was so very negligent of her charge as to permit us to intercept seven of them, which had they been French we must have taken in spite of all she could have done, being at that time so far to leeward as to be scarcely discernable. A Liverpool ship bound home had joined them the preceding day and now begged to be taken under our protection. This was granted, and she kept company with us until we got into the chops of the Channel.

The fever that infested us broke out among her crew and hurried a fourth of their number into the other world. Here Captain Shaw displayed his humanity again in a high degree by waiting several hours every day and thus prolonging our voyage to the prejudice of his own interest merely for the purpose of rendering them what assistance he could. Had he not, their situation would certainly have been extremely comfortless as the calamity I have just mentioned was aggravated by the ship being so leaky that the master and crew had it frequently in contemplation

to abandon her.²³⁰

We had little bad or boisterous weather during our voyage, and the time pleasantly vanished after health was restored in the ship. Scarcely two days passed away without meeting one or more vessels; we always brought them too, and although none of them were of the sort wished for, they amused and furnished us with news of some kind. Clearing ship when a strange sail was seen as if we really expected a rencounter, and exercising our guns once or twice a week, with all the manoeuvres practised in an engagement, were sources of amusement altogether new to me. At first when a broad side was fired, it operated like an electrical shock, but habit soon made it familiar, and at last I was less sensible of vibration from it than the awful tremendous thunder we oftentimes had off the coast of America, which was more severe by far than any I ever heard on the coast of Africa. This being the substance of every thing worth notice on our way home, I shall therefore turn back to my quitting Sierra Leone and say something of what occurred from that time till my departure from Jamaica.

Anna Maria has written the foregoing with regard to Captain Shaw's ship, *Alexander*, which had delivered its cargo of slaves in Jamaica before the DuBoises boarded it. Then she describes the earlier passage from Freetown to Jamaica in her brother-in-law's ship, the *Nassau*. She never explains why the switch to the *Alexander* in Jamaica was necessary. Perhaps her brother-in-law, Captain Morley, was not returning immediately to England.

The passage from Freetown to Jamaica contains a lengthy commentary on the slave trade, as well as descriptions of that Caribbean island, and has been eliminated in order not to interrupt the flow of Anna Maria's narrative.

I believe I have now noticed every circumstance meriting attention from the time of leaving Sierra Leone until our arrival here; and having spun this letter out to a greater length than was either expected or intended, I must therefore

²³⁰Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 131: One of the charges against the slave trade that Thomas Clarkson had made, and that Falconbridge had substantiated from numerous instances, was the brutal way that captains of slave ships ill-treated the members of their crews. It may be that the praise given here to Captain Shaw, who was no doubt returning home from delivering slaves in Jamaica, was a conscious attempt to present a slave-ship captain in a favourable light.

hurry it to a conclusion and shall only observe that I understand the Amy is arrived with the two black Deputies from Sierra Leone, but I am not informed what kind of reception they have met with from the Directors, none of whom I've yet had the pleasure of seeing.

Mr.— [DuBois] has some business with them which he is in hopes of accomplishing shortly; we then intend paying a visit to you and the rest of my friends in Bristol.

Adieu. Believe me always Your's sincerely.

* * *

When Isaac and Anna Maria DuBois arrive in England, Isaac Anderson and Cato Perkins are still there, waiting for some reply from the directors to their petition. They get in touch with the DuBoises, who are staying at the Swan with Two Necks. Isaac is entirely in sympathy with their cause and immediately sits down to help them word their petition more strongly. Anna Maria would have been wary. "Your assistance will anger the directors of the Sierra Leone Company," she cautions him.

"I can't in good conscience deny them the help they need. Anderson and Perkins can read and write, but just barely. If their petition is poorly written, the directors will just laugh at them."

"But what about your own future?" she reminds him.

Isaac shakes his head and sighs.

In subsequent correspondence (written with DuBois's help) Anderson and Perkins are much more insistent that the settlers would not be governed by the company's agents in Sierra Leone and want to have a voice in the selection of any future governor: "We did not come upon a childish errand, but to represent the grievances and sufferings of a thousand souls. We expected to have had some attention paid to our complaints, but the manner you have treated us has been just the same as if we were *Slaves*, come to tell our masters of the cruelties and severe behaviour of an *Overseer*."²³¹

When the directors realize that Anderson and Perkins are in touch with DuBois, he soon receives a letter from them. He reads it in the public room as he and

²³¹Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, p. 297.

Anna Maria are having lunch. "They are dismissing me."

"The directors?"

"Yes. Thornton says that the settlers' petition had been 'Hasty, and the facts therein ... chiefly founded on mistake and misinformation'." He scans down the page, then summarizes what he has read. "Malicious advisors like me are at fault. Any hardship in Freetown has been caused by a temporary shortage of provisions; since that problem has been corrected, Anderson and Perkins should go back to Freetown and stop causing trouble."²³²

"And you may go to the devil."

"That's what it amounts to."

* * *

Here ends Anna Maria's travel book. What she adds hereafter is written in frustration because she and Isaac are short of funds. The Sierra Leone Company owes money to the late Alexander Falconbridge, which she is determined to collect.

²³²See Clifford, pp. 160-161.

LETTER XIV.

"Even the declarations made by themselves, seem wholly new and strange to them; they forget not only what they have seen, but what they have said."

Wilberforce, on the Slave Trade. 18th April, 1791.²³³

LONDON, 23d Dec. 1793.

My dear Madam,

I concluded my last by telling you Mr.----- [DuBois] had some business to settle with the Directors, part of which was on account of what they were, and yet are, indebted to me as the widow of Mr. Falconbridge, for money left in their hands, and for salary due to him when he died.

Six months earlier John Clarkson had written in a letter to Isaac DuBois (dated 1 July 1793) that Alexander Falconbridge had made a will before he left for Sierra Leone, and that the Company 'had money of his in their Hands'. The will was in the custody of Richard Phillips, the lawyer who had helped Falconbridge with his book. Although that money should go to Anna Maria after her husband's death, Clarkson warned DuBois that 'the Company are now so very, very frugal that I should not wonder if they hesitated paying the money as they all exclaim against Falconbridge and say he has deceived them so much, and run them to such immense expenses'.²³⁴

²³³From 'Debate on Mr. Wilberforce's Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1791', in Hansard, *The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1817), vol. 29, p. 256. Coleman, p. 167.

Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, p. 139. "Here she boldly turns the tables on Wilberforce, a director of the Sierra Leone Company, by quoting back at him from his historic speech in the House of Commons in which he introduced the first motion for the abolition of the slave trade, his own ironic strictures on those who defended it."

²³⁴British Library, Clarkson Papers, MSAdd. 41263, vol. 3, Clarkson to Dubois, 1 July 1793.

About a week after we came to town, I called at Mr. Henry Thornton's, but not finding him at home, left my address with a message, that I wished to see him on business. Several days elapsed without a syllable from Mr. Thornton, and conjecturing the servant might have omitted delivering either my card or message, I called again, when his house-keeper assured me he had received both, but was then at his country seat at Clapham; I now left a note mentioning the circumstance of having waited on him twice, and beg[ging] to be acquainted when I could have the pleasure of seeing him; four or five days more passed away without any answer, which puzzled me very much to account for. Unwilling, however, to nurse any suspicion that either insult or injury could possibly be intended me by a man who had spontaneously made such declarations of friendship as Mr. Thornton did to me before I went last to Africa, and whose character is currently reported to possess as little alloy as frail man can be charged with, I therefore determined to venture another letter before I formed any opinion. The consequence of this was an answer that staggered me a vast deal more than his silence; he informed me I would find him at his banking house in Bartholomew lane from ten to twelve the following day, if I chose to call there. I was vexed at receiving so affronting a note from Mr. Thornton because it gave me room to question his veracity and the Directors good intentions towards me; nevertheless, a consciousness of having done nothing to merit such rudeness, and my interest requiring me to see him, I curbed my nettled pride, collected as much composure as it was possible, and met the gentleman on his own ground. I believe he neither expected or wished for this meeting; when I entered his counting room, he blushed confusion and with some difficulty stammered out, "Pray, madam, what is your business with me?"

"I have been induced to take so much pains to see you, Sir, to request you will get the Directors to settle Mr. Falconbridge's accounts and pay what is owing me," answered I.

"Why," said he, "Mr. Falconbridge kept no books, and he appears to be considerably in debt to the Company."

"Kept no books, Sir, how can that be when I have a copy of them this moment in my hands, a duplicate of which I know your Accountant at Sierra

Leone (in whose possession the original books are) has sent the Directors."

"I have never seen them; pray what is the amount of your demand?" replied Mr. Thornton. I then produced an abstract account stating the sum.

"Why," says he, "it's a large amount; I did not know Mr. Falconbridge left any money in our hands. I thought he had received it; and his accounts for the Lapwing's first voyage were never settled."

This language startled me a good deal, but I refreshed his memory regarding the money left with the Directors and told him he also laboured under a mistake respecting the Lapwing's accounts, for he must recollect they were settled, and that he, fortunately, paid the balance of £74. 19s. 6d. to myself.

Naked truths thus staring him in the face, made him at a loss what to say; however, after a little reflection, he told me, "Whatever is due to you, madam, must be paid; if you will walk into another room and wait a few moments, I will send for Mr. Williams, the Secretary, who will see every thing set right."

I was then shewn into a large cold room covered with painted floor cloth, where, after waiting some time half frozed, Mr. Williams came. His behaviour was gentlemanlike. When I had recapitulated nearly what I said to Mr. Thornton, he enquired if Mr. Falconbridge left a will in my favour? which having answered in the affirmative, he wished me joy, as it would prevent others from sharing of the little property he left—desired me to get the will proved, and when that was done there would be no impediment whatever in my way, and I should be paid immediately.

In a few days after, Mr.— [DuBois] saw Mr. Williams, who told him he had better omit proving the will till the Court exactly ascertained what amount I had to receive, as it would save expence. Perhaps Mr. Williams intended a kindness by this admonition, for he must have known then, what I am now sure of, that the Directors mean, if they possibly can, to withhold every sixpence from me. At least there is great reason to suppose so from their quibbling conduct.

After detaining us here all this time, and shuffling Mr.— [DuBois] off from one Court to another, without assigning any honest, business like reason for doing so; they now wind up their prevarications, by saying they must wait for further information from Sierra Leone, which I look upon tantamount to a positive refusal. Indeed, it would have been much handsomer had they candidly declared at once that it was not their intention to pay me—~~for~~ their evasive answers have increased the injury by prolonging our stay here to the overthrow of some plans Mr.— [DuBois] had in contemplation.

What do you think of their charging me with the presents they particularly directed I should purchase for, and make, Queen Naimbana; with the stores granted by the Court for me to take to Sierra Leone, my journey to Bristol and Falmouth, and every little donation they made, either to Mr. Falconbridge, or myself?

But besides these paltry, pitiful charges, they bring forward three others of much greater consequence, though founded on equally shameful and frivolous grounds, viz. the Lapwing's cargo with all the expences of her first voyage and for eight months before she left the river Thames;—~~the~~ goods sent in the Duke of Buccleugh, together with the freight and passage money paid Messrs. Anderson's, and the Amy's cargo when we last went to Africa.

They might with as much propriety have included the whole of the Company's funds that have been thrown away;—~~yes, shamefully so, no~~ set of raw boys just let loose from school could have disposed of them more injudiciously. What had Mr. Falconbridge to do with the disbursement of the Lapwing? Her master was the ostensible person. The trifling goods sent out in her and the Duke of Buccleugh were all appropriated conformable to the instructions Mr. Falconbridge received; they were not intended for trading with, but merely as gifts of charity and bribes to pacify the covetous natives. Therefore, if Mr. Falconbridge had not accounted for them, it would be very easy to find out whether they had been disposed of that way. But I know every thing was settled previous to our second voyage, and it is only a poor, mean finesse in the Directors to say otherwise.

As to the Amy's cargo, true—~~it~~ was consigned to Mr. Falconbridge; but that consignment was done away when he received his fresh instructions after we

arrived at Sierra Leone; and before that vessel left Africa, the Master of her got a receipt for his whole cargo from the Governor and Council, which receipt the Directors have at this moment.²³⁵

I will not interrupt your time with this subject longer than to give you the sentiments of the late Governor of Sierra Leone, who says in a letter of the 15th instant to Mr.— [DuBois], "I am sorry the Directors should give you so much trouble and particularly about the cargo of the Lapwing for her first voyage. They certainly are unacquainted with the circumstances and the situation of Falconbridge on his first voyage, or they would never be so minute, particularly with his widow, who experienced such unheard of hardships.

"I hope I speak truth when I pronounce their late Commercial Agent an honest man, but a very unfortunate one, not in the least calculated for the station he filled, which men of discernment might have discovered at first view. I assure you, had I been on board the Lapwing on her first voyage by myself in Sierra Leone river without a person in the neighbourhood likely to befriend me (which was the case with Falconbridge), knowing the country as I do, I should have thought myself extremely happy to have returned safe to my native country, without any cargo at all."

Anna Maria is so furious with Henry Thornton that she decides to make her situation public, regardless of any effect it may have on the Sierra Leone Company or the settlement in Freetown. She is not as magnanimous as John Clarkson, who has written DuBois that he will not take any action to protest his dismissal. He dares not do anything that will bring public discredit on the Colony, for it has many enemies in England who would rejoice at having an opportunity of prejudicing the minds of the subscribers against it. Their cavalier treatment of John Clarkson adds further fuel to Anna Maria's fury with the Director's attitude toward her.

I shall now leave you to make what comments you please on the vexatious treatment I have received from those Gentlemen, and to turn in your mind what my prospects would have been had I come home implicitly confiding

²³⁵Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 142: The records of the London office of the Sierra Leone Company, which would have elucidated her claims, have not survived.

in the profusion of friendly promises they bestowed on me (unsought for) when last in England.

I certainly had a right to build some expectations from them; but in place of any, you find those paragons of virtue and human excellence unwilling to do me common justice, refusing to pay me what is religiously my right—a little pittance, which God knows I gave the highest price for!

However, if there is any comfort in having company in one's misfortunes or ill usage, I have that satisfaction. Their treatment to Mr. Clarkson (the late Governor) and others has been highly discreditable, but their behaviour to the two Deputies from Sierra Leone and consequently to all their constituents is the most inconsistent part of their conduct because any injury done them must annoy and jar the Company's interest.

(At this point Anna Maria inserts a lengthy reiteration of the grievances of the black settlers in Freetown and their representatives who have come to London to protest to the Sierra Leone Company Board of Directors. Because this segment interrupts the flow of her narrative, it has been eliminated.)

When Isaac DuBois is dismissed by the Sierra Leone Company directors, Anna Maria has reached the point where further protest seems pointless. She will complete her documentation of her two voyages to Sierra Leone for publication and be done with it. The public does not need to know any more about her personal life.

When John Clarkson hears of DuBois's dismissal, he writes Thornton in dismay: "With respect to DuBois I am to [sic] much hurt to say anything about him—his behaviour was so exemplary, his Manners so engaging, and his zeal and industry to promote the Happiness and Comfort of the Colony so conspicuous that I assure you I attribute the first foundation of the Colony in great part to him."²³⁶

To DuBois, who writes asking him for a character reference, Clarkson replies, "Truth obliges me to say, that I attribute the commencement of regularity, order and the comfort of the Colony, principally to your exertions, and your readiness to comply with every request of mine for the good of the Company with respect and cheerfulness. I must also thank you for your kind and humane treatment of those committed to your care, and the great allowances you made for their Situation, as well as for your firmness in enforcing a just and proper behaviour of the People towards the Company. All this I informed the Directors upon my arrival in

²³⁶British Library, Add. MS41263, Clarkson, 24 September 1793.

England."²³⁷

And in a letter to a friend in Nova Scotia Clarkson writes, "the Government there has induced a man to resign whom I can justly say has done more good in the Colony than all the rest put together, but he happened to have rather a more enlarged Mind than his Superiors and would not brook their behaviour to him ... I fear altho' I mentioned him so handsomely upon my arrival and specified the numerous works he had undertaken and completed, yet they will not listen to any thing he may have to say to vindicate his behaviour in quitting the Colony. The Nova Scotians were doatingly fond of him, he kept them at a proper distance, behaved kind to them and made them do their duty. Besides he was known to many of them when they were slaves in America."²³⁸

Thornton ignores all of Clarkson's protests. He intends to couple DuBois with Falconbridge as scapegoats for the Colony's early misfortunes.²³⁹

* * *

Anna Maria writes one more letter:

To HENRY THORNTON, Esq. M. P. and Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, &c. &c.

King's Arms Yard, Coleman-street, London.

BRISTOL, April 4, 1794.

SR,

Being earnestly solicited by several friends to publish the History of my Two Voyages to Africa, and having with some reluctance consented, I feel it incumbent on me to address this letter to you (which is hereafter intended for publication) by way of acquiting a tribute truth and candor demands, in support of what I have, necessarily, mentioned regarding the Directors

²³⁷ibid. Clarkson 3 November 1793.

²³⁸ibid. Clarkson to Hartshorne, September 1793.

²³⁹The above quotations from Clarkson are found in Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 156.

behaviour to me.

It is needless, Sir, to take a more distant retrospect of the subject matter than to the time of our arrival from Sierra Leone in 1791. If you will turn over to that period and search into your personal behaviour, as well as the Court of Directors, to Mr. Falconbridge, I am persuaded you will find it marked with repeated testimonies of approbation and applause for the services you were pleased to say he had rendered the common interest and original views of the Company.

For what purpose did the Directors vote us a compensation for our losses? Or for what purpose did they remove Mr. Falconbridge out of his particular province as a medical man and make him their Commercial Agent?

Were these not tokens of satisfaction and rewards for his extraordinary exertions to serve the Company; or were they mere tricks of chicanery and deception to inveigle him to return to Africa and answer the desirable end of securing a footing for the Emigrants, then expected from America? Let your own heart, Sir, decide upon these questions.

I understand the Directors persist to say [that] Mr. Falconbridge had not settled the accounts of his first voyage before he left England the second time; and that they impeach his memory by saying he has not accounted for the cargo of the Amy, consigned to him as Commercial Agent. Is it so, Sir? Are these the paltry subterfuges made use of for withholding the poor pittance I am entitled to? If they are, I shall charitably suppose, for a moment, they proceed from error, and endeavour once more to set you right, though, believe me, [with] not with the smallest expectation of profiting thereby.

To the first I shall observe: You must labor under the misfortune of a very careless memory if you cannot recollect that all Mr. Falconbridge's accounts, anteceding the 25th of December, 1791, were adjusted to that time, and that I received from yourself a balance of £74. 19s. 6d., which appeared on the face of the account in his favor.

Can you deny the truth of this assertion and say there was no such

settlement? If you can, I will not attribute it to any harsher cause than bad memory, for I yet think it is impossible, Mr. Thornton would be so pitiful, willingly, to utter an untruth.

But if this pointed circumstance had not happened and I was wholly ignorant of the affair, I should suppose men of business (as some of the Directors must be) would never have suffered him, or any person else, to commence the transactions of a new concern 'till those of the old were clearly concluded, but more especially so in this instance, as the charities Mr. Falconbridge had the distribution of on his first voyage were the property of the St. George's Bay Company, whose original funds and effects were taken in account by the Sierra Leone Company upon their incorporation, and therefore it was certainly necessary that the Directors should be made acquainted with the true state of their affairs.

To the second, I have to remind you that Mr. Falconbridge never received the Cargo of the Amy and consequently cannot account for what he was not in possession of. Upon his arrival in Africa he got instructions from the Directors placing him entirely under the control of the Superintendant and Council, and the property of the Company solely under their direction. Consequently the first consignment and unlimited instructions given him became nugatory. Furthermore, the master of the Amy got a receipt for his whole Cargo from the Governor and Council previous to his leaving Sierra Leone, which is just now in possession of the Directors.

Mr. Falconbridge had no independent authority or management over the company's goods after he received those instructions, nor did he give any orders of himself, as other hair-brained members of council did, but got written instructions from the Superintendant and Council for every sixpence worth he had, either from ship-board or else where, all of which is accounted for in his books, delivered Mr. Grey by the particular desire of Mr. Dawes.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 159: Macaulay however reported to Thornton that "there is no document whatever of Falconbridge's transactions." *Journal*, 29 August 1793. John Gray [sic] the government

I am inclined to believe the Directors are already acquainted with these circumstances; indeed it is almost impossible they can be ignorant of them. But admitting they are, what excuse can they have for swelling up an account against me with fictitious niggardly charges such as charging me with disbursements for the Lapwing's first voyage, not only during her voyage, but for six or seven months before she left the river Thames? The freight and passage money of the Duke of Buccleugh paid Messrs. Anderson? The presents I was desired to purchase and make Queen Naimbana, for which I have your letter as authority? The stores I was allowed to take with me for our use at Sierra Leone? Our journey to Bristol, Falmouth, &c. &c.?

How can your Honorable Court, formed as it is of Members of Parliament, Bankers, and some of the first Merchants in the City of London, all professing the quintessence of philanthropy, thus depreciate its worth by being guilty of such gross meanness? I verily believe it would be impossible to cull from the Migratory Chapmen of Rag Fair, any number of men who would not blush to be detected in a similar transaction.²⁴¹

That the Directors had cause to be displeased with Mr. Falconbridge for not extending their commercial views may be in some measure true; but tied up as he was to obey the dictates of the Superintendent and Council, who would not listen to any arrangements of the kind until comfort and regularity were established in the Colony—What was he to do? However if he was altogether in fault, was he not punished by annulling his appointment as Commercial Agent? Could the Directors do more? If they had blindly (as they certainly did in many instances) made improper appointments, what more could they do than annul them when they discovered their mistake?

accountant, had arrived in Freetown in 1792. He remained there until 1802 when, “after having devoted the best ten years of my life” to the Sierra Leone Company, he resigned and moved to the rivers north of the colony to trade in slaves. Public Record Office, CO 270/8, Council minutes, 27 January 1802, 8 December 1802.

²⁴¹Rag Fair was a second-hand clothes market in Houndsditch, a poor part of London. Coleman, p. 168.

But I should suppose it did not require any great discernment to know that a Surgeon, unacquainted with mercantile affairs, would make but as poor a figure in that line as a Merchant, who had not studied physic or anatomy, would make in the practice of surgery.

Mr. Falconbridge's dismissal did not charge or accuse him with any crime but wanting knowledge of his business; and what information the Directors could get on that score must have been from a quarter as ignorant, if not more so than himself; but surely it was their province to have convinced themselves, when they made the appointment, whether he was equal to it or not.

Did not Mr Falconbridge's dismissal stipulate that his salary was to continue till the Governor and Council procured him a passage to England? Could there have been the smallest idea at that time of detaining either the money left in the hands of the Directors, or his wages? Surely not. Then why do the Directors now (he is no more) withhold payment from me?

For shame, Mr. THORNTON, for shame!!! How can you wink at my being so shabbily treated after the unexampled sufferings I have undergone, and after the prodigality of fair promises I had from you to induce me to return a second time to Africa. Did you not tell me [that] if any accident befell Falconbridge, I should be handsomely provided for by the Company? Surely you cannot forget making such a promise; which you not only forego fulfilling, but shamefully keep back (all I require of you) the trifling sum so justly due to me.

If the Directors were not fearful of subjecting their conduct (towards me) to the investigation of impartial men, they never would have refused submitting the affair to arbitration, as was offered; nor would they have threatened or boasted that they would ruin me with an expensive law-suit in Chancery when I signified my intention of trying the cause at Common Law, if they meant to do the fair thing.

I cannot help forming those conjectures, for how are we to calculate the principles of men but by their actions? Though, believe me, Mr. Thornton, notwithstanding all I have said of the Court of Directors, I yet firmly believe

[that] if the decision was left wholly to yourself, I should have ample justice, and I cannot avoid thinking, from the opinion I have heretofore formed of your benevolence of heart, that you are secretly ashamed of the Directors nefarious treatment to me.

I will not trespass on your time any longer, but shall quit the subject, with referring my cause to the loftiest of Tribunals, where reigns a judge of mercy, vengeance, and justice, who, I am persuaded, will not let such turpitude go unpunished, and who has probably already began to shew his displeasure.

Pray, Sir, receive this letter with temper and consider it comes from a Woman aggravated by insults and injury.

I am, &c. &c.

ANNA MARIA ——

FINIS.

APPENDIX.²⁴²

In the Preface, the Public is referred to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company for the authenticity of the Author's assertions, who now thinks proper as a further vindication to annex the following letter, which speaks for itself.

Moreover, she avails herself of this supplement to express her vexation at the number of typographical errors throughout the foregoing pages; besides those enumerated, she has discovered several others, such as, Preface, allmost for almost; page 35, spinnage, for spinage; page 80, maddern for madder; page 176, least for last-and one or two more which she hopes the reader has mercifully looked over and not charged to her pen.

* * *

²⁴² This Appendix is dropped from the 1802 edition.

To Henry Thornton, Esq., M.P. and Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company.

Bristol, August 11, 1794.

SIR,

Your not answering my last letter, and the disdain you have shewn me on other occasions since I came last to England, has not deterred me from doing what I considered honorable and upright.

Conscience, never wandering Monitor, advised me I should fall short of that sincerity I boast to possess and proudly nourish if I omitted sending you a copy of my Voyages to Africa before they were presented to the World.

This admonition (which no doubt grew from a desire "to hide the fault I see,"²⁴³ and a persuasion of having adhered most scrupulously to truth) prompted me to present a Copy to that valuable and ever to be esteemed Divine Mr. GILBERT, who will give the same to you for your perusal, immediately on his arrival in London, for which place he sets off this morning.

Would to God! you may read with calmness! but I fear a prepossession of the Author's obscurity and insignificance will betray you; nay, I already anticipate your reproachful smiles at my mean diction and trite remarks, but remember, Sir, Truth, though unadorned, never fails to attract notice—it carries its own value—always shelters the innocent, and brands conviction on the malefactor's threshold.

Search the secret recesses of your bosom and enquire if the Directors conduct to me has not been a violation of those fundamental principles which should govern the actions of every man or body of men? Yes, Sir, ask there if I am not an injured Woman?

²⁴³Fyfe, Anna Maria Falconbridge, p. 162: 'Teach me to feel another's woe/To hide the fault I see': Alexander Pope, Universal Prayer.

Remember for a moment my little patrimony has been expended in your service. Remember my matchless sufferings; and remember likewise your own honour and credit. I say, remember these things, and they may point out what you ought to do.

The second document of Christianity is to make contrition for our offences. All, from the Palace to the Cottage, are liable to err, and none of us should blush to confess our penitence; however, let the impulse of your own heart guide you. What I have done exonerates mine.

I am, Sir, Your obedient Servant,

ANNA MARIA _____.

Anna Maria would have laid down her quill and muttered, "So there." She would like to stomp into Henry Thornton's solemn banking house, stride into the inner sanctum where he rules from a gilded chair far above all the ordinary citizens in the public rooms, and thumb her nose at Henry Thornton.

But it would be futile. Thornton, by accident of birth and position, has it in his power to withhold from her the trifling funds that her late husband would have passed on to her. She can do little about it save make her grievances public. Even then, Thornton is probably immune to embarrassment, confident no one will pay any attention to her ranting.

She thinks of her patient Isaac, going from committee to commission to court, trying to pry his own inheritance out of the legal system. He will probably be shafted too. The patrimony worth £30,000 abandoned in North Carolina during the war will doubtless be translated by the Compensation Board into a far more meager sum.²⁴⁴ Their attitude: Take it, and be glad you get anything at all.

Never mind. Anna Maria exults in the fact that she and Isaac are both young, both handsome, both energetic. The conjugal relations are delicious (she fears she is enjoying them far more than a proper lady should), and they like each other out of bed as well. They may have to pinch pennies, but when she remembers the

²⁴⁴DuBois, who claimed 15 dependent relatives, eventually collected £5,320 from the Treasury in 1801 and another £5,000 from a committee of the House of Commons in 1807. In the meantime he was appointed Barrack Master at Tenterden in Kent in 1804 (at £150 a year) and subsequently Controller of Customs in Curaçao. Fyfe, *Anna Maria Falconbridge*, pp. 168-9.

vicissitudes of her first marriage, Anna Maria believes that with Isaac her prospects for future happiness are so felicitous that her heart sings.

In 1802, when Anna Maria's journal was printed for the second time, how many people did she hope to reach with her *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone*? A thousand? Five thousand? Ten thousand? Surely no more than that. Yet two hundred years later three writers, one in Australia,²⁴⁵ another in England,²⁴⁶ and a third in Virginia have been so entranced with her narrative that they sat down at their desks to bring her tale to the attention of many hundreds more. Could she but have known.

²⁴⁵Deirdre Coleman

²⁴⁶Christopher Fyfe

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