

ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE

IMPERIAL STUDIES, No. 2

THE BRITISH WEST
AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

1750-1821

EVELINE C. MARTIN

An account of the administration of the British holdings in West Africa in the second half of the eighteenth century. In spite of the existence of a considerable literature on West Africa no detailed account has been written of the various forms of control set up there between the period of the seventeenth century joint-stock companies, and that of Crown government in the nineteenth century. These experiments in administration that were made between 1750 to 1821 are described:—Control by a regulated company, the Company of Merchants trading to Africa which was established in 1750, Crown control which was introduced by the erection of the Province of Georgia in 1765 and which ceased after the war, and an experiment in self-government which was begun at Sierra Leone in 1787.

The book suggests the place of those experiments and varied devices for the management of trading stations in the eighteenth century empire. Perhaps the most interesting connection is the deliberate use of the American colonies as a model for the Senegambian constitution.

IMPERIAL STUDIES; No 2.

General Editor—A. P. NEWTON, M.A., D.Lit., B.Sc., F.S.A.,
Rhodes Professor of Imperial History in the University of London.

THE BRITISH WEST AFRICAN
SETTLEMENTS, 1750-1821

IMPERIAL STUDIES.

General Editor—A. P. NEWTON, M A.,
D Lit, B Sc, F S A, Rhodes Professor
of Imperial History in the University
of London.

No. 1.

**Political Unrest in Upper Canada,
1815-1836.** By AILEEN DUNHAM,
B A. (Alberta), M A. (Toronto), Ph D.
(Lond), Instructor in History in the
College, Wooster, Ohio. 8vo, 9s net.

No. 2.

**The British West African Settle-
ments, 1750-1821.** A Study in Local
Administration. By EVELINE C.
MARTIN, M A., Ph D, Lecturer in His-
tory, Westfield College, University of
London. 8vo.

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO, LTD.
LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO, CALCUTTA,
BOMBAY AND MADRAS.

THE BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

1750 - 1821

A STUDY IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

BY

EVELINE C. MARTIN, M.A., Ph.D.

Lecturer in History, Westfield College, University of London.

WITH TWO MAPS

Published for THE ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE by
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C. 4
NEW YORK, TORONTO
CALCUTTA, BOMBAY AND MADRAS

1927

**A Thesis approved for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of London.**

Made in Great Britain,

THE SERIES OF IMPERIAL STUDIES MONOGRAPHS

THE last few years have seen a remarkable development in the study of modern history, and the history of our Dominions and Colonies is now beginning to take its proper place. But, although much has been written, the number of monographs in this field is comparatively small and there is still full scope for independent research. Indeed, this research is urgent and imperative: the problems of a century ago throw much light upon the problems of to-day.

The series of Imperial Studies Monographs, of which this volume is one, is a venture of the Royal Colonial Institute. In a strict sense, it is the child of the Imperial Studies Committee, which works in connection with the Institute. The name of Sir Charles Lucas, who was for many years Chairman and is still a member of our Committee, will be a voucher for their serious purpose and historical value.

The conditions which control the issue of these monographs are in one respect novel: the authors must not be over thirty years of age. In other words, the series has been designed and endowed, not for aiding the work of mature scholars, who have already made a name for themselves, but to enable young students, who are just entering the ranks of scholarship, to get their early efforts published. The youth of the authors will perhaps win them special recognition.

M. J. RENDÁLL,

Chairman of the Imperial Studies Committee.

ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE,
LONDON, W.C.2.

To
SIDNEY TODD MARTIN,
1890-1916

PREFACE

THE subject of the present sketch is a series of experiments in providing administration for the British holdings in West Africa in the second half of the eighteenth century. In spite of a considerable and growing literature on West Africa, the English administration there has received scant attention between the period of the seventeenth century joint-stock companies and that of the Crown government in the nineteenth century. An account of this neglected African administration is needed, both because it is essential to the general history of the administration of the empire in the eighteenth century, and because it is on the foundations then laid that the administrators of the nineteenth century have had to build.

As a part of eighteenth century administrative history these African experiments show a variety of attempts to devise satisfactory forms of administration which should be free from certain dangers or disadvantages that were feared at the time. The conception of what should be aimed at, and what avoided, in administration-making varies through the period, and the three experiments here described reflect some of those changes. The organisation that gives unity to this sketch is the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, which was incorporated in 1750 and dissolved in 1821. This was an attempt to provide an adequate government for the slave trade posts which were the British West African settlements of the mid-eighteenth century. By this organisation it was hoped to avoid both the monopolistic tendencies of rule by a joint-stock company, and the expense of government by officers commissioned and paid by the Crown. The Company was established to assist the development of the slave trade, but it survived the abolition of the trade by fourteen years.

The next experiment of the period was the erection of the first Crown colony in West Africa, the Province of Senegambia, in 1765. In this administration the influence of the elder Pitt's views is seen in the attempt to avoid the danger of weakness due to unstatesmanlike economy. The model used in planning the form of government for Senegambia was that of the American colonies, which, it was thought, might be set up in tropical Africa.

The third experiment is that of government by a company of trading philanthropists, or philanthropic traders, who obtained from the government permission to set up a colony. Their aim was to revolutionise English commercial relations with Africa by substituting "honourable trade" for the slave trade, and by setting up a colony where native Africans should be given a large measure of self-government.

These three experiments each have a separate history until after the abolition of the slave trade, and the history of the British administration of West Africa in the second half of the eighteenth century is the history of three British administrations in West Africa. In the nineteenth century after the abolition of the slave trade certain developments took place which led to the formation of a unified administration for British West Africa under the Crown. That movement is outlined in the last chapter of this sketch. During that period of unification, from 1807 to 1821, there appear the lines of future development by which the subject of this study is linked to the next period of British West African history.

The list of acknowledgments due to those who have helped me in the preparation of this book is so long that unless I were to imitate Marcus Aurelius and devote a complete chapter to the subject I should not be able to discharge my debts at all adequately. Accepting Bacon's view that "to praise a man's self cannot be decent, except it be in rare cases; but to praise a man's office or profession, he may do it with a good grace," I must limit my expression of thanks to that due

PREFACE

xi

to the Imperial Studies Committee of the Royal Colonial Institute for undertaking the financial burden of publication, to the Rhodes Professor of Imperial History in London University, Dr. A. P. Newton, for his constant help and criticism and for the stimulus of his research seminar, to the Professor of History at Westfield College, Dr. C. A. J. Skeel, to whose inspiring teaching and unfailing help and encouragement I owe a debt that quite defies expression, and to the Westfield College History School for their tolerance of the pre-occupation of their lecturer.

E. C. M.

WESTFIELD COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON,
May, 1927.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE.
I. THE ENGLISH CONNECTION, WITH WEST AFRICA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	I
II. GOVERNMENT CONTROL IN WEST AFRICA THROUGH THE COMPANY OF MERCHANTS TRADING TO AFRICA, 1750 TO 1821	15
III. THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE COMPANY OF MERCHANTS TRADING TO AFRICA	29
IV. ADMINISTRATION ON THE COAST UNDER THE COM- PANY OF MERCHANTS TRADING TO AFRICA	43
V. THE CREATION OF THE PROVINCE OF SENEGAMBIA, 1765	57
VI. SENEGAMBIA UNDER GOVERNOR CHARLES O'HARA, 1765 TO 1776	76
VII. THE END OF THE CROWN COLONY OF SENEGAMBIA	91
VIII. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COLONY BY THE SIERRA LEONE COMPANY	103
IX. CONSTITUTIONAL DIFFICULTIES AND CHANGES IN SIERRA LEONE	121
X. THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS UNIFICATION OF GOVERN- MENT ON THE WEST AFRICAN COAST, 1807 TO 1821	145
NOTE ON AUTHORITIES	167
INDEX	178

MAPS

A CHART OF THE GOLD COAST	viii
WEST COAST OF AFRICA	xiv

CHAPTER I

THE ENGLISH CONNECTION WITH WEST AFRICA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE importance of West Africa in the eighteenth century to England, as to most European countries, was that it provided the source of a valuable commerce, and fitted admirably into the economic philosophy of the day. The ideal aimed at was that of a self-sufficing empire in which England was the centre, and the outlying parts contributed such commodities as the mother country could not produce, receiving in return the manufactured goods which England had for sale. In this system the West Indies were the most cherished of national possessions, and, as the chief source of wealth outside England, were an object of especial attention. The demand of these plantations for a large labour supply gave rise to the traffic in negroes to meet the planters' requirements. The African trade in this way became the base on which the West Indian prosperity rested. Its importance was fully recognised in the late eighteenth century, and the writer of a treatise on the trade of Great Britain to Africa, which was published in 1772, sums up the views of his contemporaries. After dilating on the benefits of general foreign trade, he writes: "How vast is the importance of our trade to Africa; which is the first principle and foundation of all the rest; the main spring of the machine, which sets every wheel in motion: a trade which arises almost entirely of ourselves, our exports being chiefly our own manufactures, or such as are purchased with them, and the returns gold, ivory, wax, dyeing woods and negroes the first four articles of home consumption, or manufactured for exporting the last affording a most prodigious employment to our people, both by sea and land without whom our plantations could not be improved or carried on, nor should we have any shipping passing between the colonies, and mother country; whereas

by their labours our sugars, tobacco, and numberless other articles are raised, which employ an incredible number of ships, and these ships in their turn must employ a much greater number of handicraft trades at home; and the merchandises they bring home and carry out, pay such considerable sums to government, that of them consist the most flourishing branches of the revenue; so that both for exports and imports, the improvement of our national revenue, the encouragement of industry at home, the supply of our colonies abroad, and the increase of our navigation, the African trade is so very beneficial to Great Britain, so essentially necessary to the very being of her colonies, that without it neither could we flourish nor they long subsist."¹

The same view is expressed in a number of pamphlets which were written before and during the Seven Years' War to awaken the nation to the menace of French development in the West Indies. In these pamphlets the plantation trade of the West Indies and the African trade are treated as inseparably connected, and as forming together the foundation of England's greatness. In a tract published in 1745 called *The African Trade the Great Pillar and Support of the British Plantation Trade in America*, the writer declares that "The Trade to Africa involves in it no less than the Consideration of our whole West Indies in general; a Trade of such essential and allowed Concernment to the Wealth and Naval Power of Great Britain that it would be as impertinent to take up your Time in expatiating on that Subject as in declaiming on the common Benefits of Air and Sunshine in general."² The further advantages of the trade were held to be that it prevented England from being drained of "Husbandmen, Mechanics, and Manufacturers"³ for service in the plantations, that it provided a market for English manufactured goods, and that it was a source from which could be obtained "Gold, Ivory, Bees-wax, Dyeing Woods, Gums, etc. (none of which we can do without)."⁴ A trade so conditioned could not fail to

¹ *A Treatise upon the Trade of Great Britain to Africa* (London, 1772), pp. 4, 5.

² *The African Trade the Great Pillar and Support of the English Plantation Trade in America*, (London, 1745), p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

be satisfactory to a mercantilist age, and it was not until the doctrines of that school were assailed that doubt was cast on the claim of the African trade to rank as one of the main sources of England's greatness. After the loss of the American colonies it was still spoken of as essential to the wellbeing of Britain and her outlying possessions. A writer in 1788 asserted that "the African Trade connected as it is with the West Indian commerce, and that to the remaining continental Colonies, and Newfoundland Fishery, is of the utmost consequence to the employment of many thousands of our Fellow-subjects, to the Naval Power of Britain, and to the Royal Revenues; all of which are conjoined by sympathetic Ties,"⁵ and the same writer alluded to it as "the connecting Medium of our Foreign with our Domestic Commerce."⁶ To the eighteenth century economist this branch of commerce was of greater importance than even the more famous East India trade. One of the writers, who has already been quoted, in comparing the two trades wrote: "However important the East India trade may be judged to the Nation, yet it was never put in Competition with our African and Plantation trades."⁷ The argument for this opinion was that a large part of the merchandize brought from India consisted of cotton goods that were dangerous as rivals to English chintzes and other Manchester goods, and of certain luxury articles of doubtful national advantage and not to be compared with the products of the African commerce which "we have experienced to be of more Value to this Nation than any Advantages that ever were, or ever can be presumed to arise from the East India Company, which exports our Silver, and imports many Things, which to be sure, we might well do without."⁸ Similar views are expressed throughout the mass of pamphlet writing which marks the interest taken in the national commercial development of the day, and until the time of the humanitarian agitation against the slave trade this point of view remained unchallenged.

⁵ Norris, R., *A Short Account of the African Slave Trade* (Liverpool, 1788), p. 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷ *The African Trade the Great Pillar and Support of the British Plantation Trade*, p. 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

4 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

While English writers were expressing their adulation of this trade, and emphasising its importance, there was a profound ignorance about the main geographical features of this continent, whose coasts were so well known and so greatly frequented by Europeans.

A map published in London in 1760 shows the general state of knowledge at the time.⁹ Following the coast south from Cape Blanco, after passing the sea board generally known as the Gum Coast, it shows the region of the Senegal and Gambia rivers. This territory was one of the best known parts of West Africa at the time, the rivers are shown very much in the position they occupy in modern maps and are traced several hundred miles inland. South of this region and passing east is an extent of over two thousand miles marked "Guinney" stretching from about the Rio Grande to the extreme east of the Gulf of Guinea. Guinea is divided into a number of "coasts," from west to east the Grain Coast, Tooth Coast, Gold Coast and Slave Coast, which are thickly marked with the names of settlements and prominent physical features such as river mouths and capes, showing a detailed knowledge of the sea coast. Behind this seaboard lay a vast, unexplored continent of which little was known. The principal physical feature shown in the interior is the "Niger," a river flowing across an otherwise unmarked plain between two lakes in about longitude 3 East and a marsh in longitude 10 West. There is no sign of the Niger's egress into the sea, though the position of the delta is indicated and a few uncertain streams. Apart from the imagined Niger's course no attempt was made to show physical features in this region further than a few miles inland. The name "Guinea Coast" was therefore as late as the middle of the eighteenth century a strictly accurate term with which to describe the territory in which the chief English settlements lay. South of the Gulf of Guinea, in the region known as Lower Guinea, or the Congo, inland exploration had progressed more successfully. This country, including Loango, Congo, Angola and Benguela, had been explored for about four hundred miles up the Congo and Kwanza rivers. From Benguela south to the Cape of Good Hope lay another region in which little exploration had been

⁹ Bennett, R., *Africa according to the Sieur Danville* (London, 1760).

tried. Bennett's map is fairly characteristic of the English cartography of the time, except for his representation of the Niger, which avoids the mistake, common in his day, of considering the Gambia and the Senegal as mouths of the Niger. Within these regions of the west coast the Europeans had made their chief settlements. Malachy Postlethwayt, in his *Dictionary of Commerce*, described the position of the rival Europeans in West Africa as they were in 1751.¹⁰ In the Senegal and Gambia territory the French and English were the leading traders; the French holding Arguin, north of the Senegal, and on the Senegal itself "several very considerable forts, settlements, and plantations, for a great many miles up the river,"¹¹ with a base further south on the island of Goree. The English had a fort on James Island at the mouth of the Gambia, and some out-factories along the river. Between the Gambia and the Guinea coast the Portuguese had bases at Cutcheo and Bisseo, and on the island of Bissagos. In Guinea the Dutch and the English were the leading powers. On the first two divisions of Guinea, the Grain and Ivory coasts, there were no recognised European settlements, but the rest of the coast was dotted with forts and factories. The Dutch had eleven forts, the English had eight, and the Danes had one. In addition to the forts both Dutch and English had a number of factories. The French at this time possessed no footing on the Gold Coast.

The arrangement of these rival settlements differed from that found in the Senegal and Gambia region, as on the Guinea Coast the Dutch and English forts were not concentrated in separate territories, but alternated along the sea-board, rival forts often lying within sight of each other, and in some places so close as to be within reach of each other's guns. The English head-quarters, Cape Coast Castle, lay about five miles to the west of Elmina, the Dutch head-quarters. The other English forts, passing along the coast from west to east, were Dixcove, Succondee and Commenda to the west of Cape Coast Castle, and Tantumquerry, Winnebah, Accra and Whydah to the east. These were the forts handed over by the Royal

¹⁰ Postlethwayt, M., *Dictionary of Commerce* (London, 1751), I, pp. 728 to 730.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 729.

6 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

African Company to the Company of Merchants trading to Africa in 1752.¹² A certain discrepancy in the estimates of the total number of the Dutch and English forts, which appears if the various maps and geographical notes of the day are compared, is due partly to the difficulty of distinguishing between forts and factories, and partly to the ravages of the climate, which led frequently to the description of some of the forts as "ruinous," and therefore as suitable either for inclusion in or omission from the total according to the discretion of the writer. For this reason the fort of Annamaboe, which had been used by the Royal African Company, and which was to be of great importance later in the eighteenth century, was omitted from the list of forts handed over to the Company of Merchants trading to Africa in 1752.

The Benin and Calabar coast was free from European settlements, though trade was carried on there in which the French took a leading part. In Lower Guinea, consisting of Loango, Congo, Angola and Benguela, the Portuguese were the chief European nation, and had established settlements in the interior, where they were said to have exercised such considerable authority that in Angola the natives "ne soient, pour ainsi dire, que les Vassaux de la Couronne de Portugal, à laquelle ils payent chaque année un tribut d'Esclaves."¹³ In spite of the Portuguese domination of the interior, English, French and Dutch traded freely on the coast, and Angola was one of the chief sources of the West Indian slave supply.

The European settlements in the region north of the equator consisted of the simplest type of trading post, that of forts or factories. These varied from well-appointed forts to mud-walled and thatched houses, and served the dual purpose of providing fortified warehouses for goods, and being marks of possession. The conditions of the trade demanded that there should be places in which goods and stores could be kept until there were an opportunity of putting them on board the vessels going to the West Indies, and that there should be some means of protecting traders both against native depredation and against other Europeans who might attempt to

¹² 25 Geo. II, c. 40, schedule I.

¹³ Savary des Bruslons, J., *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce* (Paris, 1723), I, 1068.

oust their rivals. Such considerations had led to the erection of forts by all trading countries and the history of those outposts is the history of the Europeans in West Africa during the Slave Trade period.

Throughout the eighteenth century the lines of communication with these forts led, not from one region of the West African coast to another, but from any part of West Africa either to Europe, or to the West Indian and American colonies. The communications across the Atlantic were kept extraordinarily clear even in times of war in the eighteenth century, and were frequently used, while African coastal communications were little attempted. The Governors in the Senegal region and on the Gold Coast were in general far better acquainted with the West Indies than with so-called "neighbouring" districts in Africa. The Atlantic was a well-trodden highway, and the Guinea tides made at best a rough and uncomfortable track.

For trading into this region Englishmen had been organised from time to time in companies, of which a long series may be traced to the establishment of the Royal African Company in 1672. That company was ruling the English West African forts when the seventeenth century ended, and the break-up of the power of the Royal African Company led to the series of experiments in the administration of the English West African holdings which forms the subject of this study.

At the end of the seventeenth century the Royal African Company had fallen on evil days partly as a result of the attacks on monopolies and close corporations in William III's reign and partly owing to their own conflict with the Dutch, the French and interlopers. The loss of their monopoly in 1689 had been to some extent compensated for by a grant in 1698 to the company of the right to the profits of a ten per cent duty on goods sent to and from West Africa.¹⁴ This sum was to assist in the upkeep of their forts, which under the new conditions were to be a protection to all British vessels. After fourteen years the ten per cent came to an end and the Royal African Company was left dowerless. In 1730 it appealed to Parliament, pointing out its unhappy situation and asking for financial assistance. In reply a series of grants were

¹⁴ 9 and 10 W. III, c. 26.

allowed by Parliament for the upkeep of the forts, which had been declared to be "undoubtedly necessary for the preservation and well-carrying on the said trade."¹⁵

The period of Parliamentary grants was not one of harmony on the coast; the Royal African Company found the sums allowed them inadequate, and those who traded outside the Company considered the protection afforded them not worth the sums paid for it. In 1747 African affairs were brought to a crisis by a rejection in the Commons of the motion for making what had come to be regarded as the regular annual grant for the support of the African forts, and the Company was once more left to its own resources. In a petition to Parliament¹⁶ they set forth that such a task was beyond their strength and prayed for relief. In opposition to this request merchants from Liverpool, Bristol and London, American planters and others petitioned the House to make the African trade free and open, arguing that joint-stock company control was contrary to the truest commercial interests of the country.¹⁷ The matter was referred to a committee, and a bill was drawn up which passed the Commons, but which was stopped in the Lords in order that the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations might be consulted and asked to prepare a scheme for the upkeep and control of the African forts. From June, 1749, to February, 1750, the information necessary for the scheme was being collected, and on 6th February, 1750, the Board of Trade and Plantations presented to the Commons certain proposals which had been laid before them. These proposals made suggestions which were entirely contradictory to each other, but the Board submitted them as they were to the "judgment and wisdom of Parliament" and did not attempt to decide between them.¹⁸ The suggestions represented three points of view. The Royal African Company, a section of the London merchants, and the West Indian planters all supported control by a joint-stock company as better than "any temporary mutable, and transient Set of Men whatsoever, who might renounce it (i.e., the trade) at Pleasure, and who would

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, preamble.

¹⁶ *Commons' Journals*, XXV, 526a.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 597a, Petition from Liverpool; *ibid.*, p. 604a, Petition from Bristol.

¹⁸ Board of Trade Entry Book, C.O. 389/30, p. 201, 6 Feb., 1749-50.

be answerable each for his own acts only and not one for the acts of another."¹⁹ In opposition to this point of view the merchants of Bristol and a number of London merchants maintained that the trade could best be carried on by an open regulated company; while a more modern point of view was held by the Liverpool traders, who carried the principle of free and open trade to its logical conclusion, asserting that "it is vain for the nation ever to attempt the prosecution of the trade by any company whatsoever," since in the hands of a company forts "will be (as they hitherto have been) a Burden and Nuisance, and obstruct rather than serve our foreign Trade and Navigation."²⁰ The men of Liverpool therefore proposed that the Government should take the forts into their own hands and entrust the disposition of the money granted for support of the forts and factories to a committee of nine merchants.

In February and March, 1750, the Commons took these proposals into consideration, and a new bill for improving and extending the trade to Africa was drafted, embodying the scheme of those who had pressed for the establishment of a regulated company. This bill successfully passed its third reading in the Commons on 1st March,²¹ and was sent to the Lords, where it was accepted with certain slight amendments, and on 12th April the royal assent was given to the "Act for extending and improving the trade to Africa."²²

The object of the act as set forth in the preamble was to provide freedom of trade for all His Majesty's subjects trading to the African coast, who were declared free "to traffic to and from any port or place in Africa between Port Sallee in South Barbary to the Cape of Good Hope when and at such times and in such manner, in or with such quantity of goods, wares or merchandises as he or they shall think fit, without any restraint whatsoever save as is hereinafter expressed."²³ To secure this freedom "The Company of Merchants trading to

¹⁹ *Papers laid before the Honourable House of Commons by the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations pursuant to an address of the House of Lords to His Majesty the 8th June, 1749, for the better securing, improving and extending the Trade to Africa* (London, 1750), p. 49.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²¹ *Commons' Journals*, XXV, 1058b.

²² *Commons' Journals*, XXV, 1114b.

²³ 23 Geo. II, c. 31, preamble.

Africa" was incorporated as a regulated company open to all traders to Africa. In it were to be vested all the forts, settlements, territory and property claimed by the Royal African Company after the passing of an act to divest that company of its charter.

In characteristics and powers the Company of Merchants trading to Africa differed from all its predecessors, the most essential distinction being that the new Company was prohibited from all trading in its corporate capacity, as the act provided that it should not be legal for the Company "to trade to or from Africa in their corporate or joint capacity or to have any joint or transferable stock."²⁴ By this means it was hoped to prevent the growth of a commercial monopoly in the hands of those who controlled the forts.

The constitution of the company was extremely simple in design, consisting of two main parts, the general body of traders, all those who by paying forty shillings had become free of the company, and a committee of nine. The freemen acting in three separate groups, one in Liverpool, one in Bristol and one in London, had the annual duty of choosing representatives for the Committee.²⁵ That election was the only obligation imposed upon them. The proportion of representation on the Committee for the different ports had been a matter of debate. In the earlier bill of 1749 it had been proposed that a committee of eight should be appointed, four members representing London, two for Bristol, and two for Liverpool, but the number of the committee was by agreement of the merchants increased to nine, with equal representation for each of the three great ports. The argument for this proportion was expressed by the Liverpool merchants, who pointed out that "the committee should consist of Persons from these Three Ports only, because the Trade in a great measure is now carried on from Bristol and Liverpool, and it is natural to suppose They are most likely to execute this Trust in the best Manner who have most Concern in the Success of it. And we propose Three in London as it is the Capital; tho' the Trade from thence is not large, to this Coast."²⁶ No

²⁴ *Ibid.*, clause 4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, clause 6.

²⁶ *Papers laid before the Commons by the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, 1750, op. cit.*, p. 45.

restrictive qualifications for office were demanded from the committeemen, but certain regulations were designed to prevent the development of anything in the nature of a monopoly. Annual election was clearly not enough to prevent the committee from falling into the hands of a group of nine, who might be continued in office by constant re-election, and it was therefore provided that no person might be elected for more than three years successively. A further restriction was that no members of the Committee might trade jointly to the coast during their year of office.²⁷ The Committee so chosen were the executive body of the new company, and to them a variety of duties was entrusted. They were given the work of making orders for the government and maintenance of the forts and factories, of appointing officers and servants, civil or military, for the forts and settlements, and of making rules for the government of those who were given appointments by them.²⁸ To carry out these functions the Committee was to receive the income of the company, brought in by payments of fines for membership "or otherwise," and to invest such part of it as they should think necessary in goods and stores to be sent to the coast for the upkeep of the forts and payment of salaries.²⁹ In carrying out these duties the Committee were not left entirely free and unchecked. Though they were to administer the forts and factories in West Africa they were not to make any regulations which should "tend to lay any restraint whatsoever" on those who traded to the coast,³⁰ and the position of the separate traders was zealously guarded all through the act. A limitation was also imposed on the discretionary authority given to the Committee in disposing of the money annually received by them. While they were empowered to invest "such part of the money in their lands as they shall judge necessary" in the purchase of goods and stores for the upkeep of the forts,³¹ instructions were given as to the way in which these moneys were to be appropriated. The Committee were limited to £800 for the expenses of management in England, on which sum the salaries of clerks,

²⁷ 23 Geo. II, c. 31, clause 39.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, clause 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, clauses 16, 20.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, clause 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, clause 20.

and other expenses, were to be the first charge, the residue of the £800 being available for distribution among the committeemen "as a compensation for their trouble." The rest of the money received by the Committee, after deducting the £800 for management expenses, was to be appropriated "wholly to the maintenance, support and improvement of the forts and settlements."³²

In addition to these restrictions a number of provisions were made for the supervision of the Committee by the government acting through the Exchequer, the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations and the Admiralty. For any money which the Committee should receive they were to make an annual return to the Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer, and to Parliament,³³ to whom they were also to send copies of all orders and regulations made by them relating to the forts and settlements, and to the government of their officers and servants there. To the Commissioners for Trade was given power to remove any of the committeemen, or of the officers and servants appointed by them, should they be guilty of misbehaviour,³⁴ and they were further authorised to receive copies of the accounts, regulations and correspondence of the Committee and to call for information on any matter on which they might choose to make enquiry.³⁵ The third means of investigating the Committee's work was the provision that the settlements under their management should be inspected by the captains of the men-of-war sent out to cruise along the coast, who were to report on the condition of the forts to the Commissioners of the Admiralty.³⁶ The supervisory authority of these three state departments kept the Committee under official surveillance, and provided a variety of means by which its action might be criticised and controlled.

Though the act of 1750 incorporated the new company and devised machinery for its government it did not also accomplish the removal of the Royal African Company, which still owned the forts and settlements on the coast. Provision was, however, made in the act for the appointment of commissioners to examine the claims of the creditors of the Royal African Company, as a preliminary to divesting it of its

³² *Ibid.*, clause 24.

³³ *Ibid.*, clause 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, clause 21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, clause 33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, clause 30.

charter.³⁷ The examination of these claims proved long and complicated and it was not until March, 1752, that the act was passed by which the Royal African Company was formally divested of its charter, and its forts and other property in Africa.³⁸

As the Company of Merchants trading to Africa had come into being in 1750 there were several months in which the rival organisations existed side by side. The first committee of the new company met on 6th August, 1750,³⁹ and after making certain rules for their own government set about the most serious part of their business, that of sending out supplies for the forts on the coast. At every step the work was encumbered by the anomalous position of the old company, and by the limitations imposed on their action by the provision that until the Royal African Company were abolished the new company should act in all matters concerning the forts and garrisons "as far as the said African Company shall assent."⁴⁰ The application of the Committee to the Treasury for the issue to them of £10,000 which was granted by Parliament in 1750 for the support of the forts was not acceded to until they could report to the Treasury that the Royal African Company had assented to the arrangement.⁴¹ The appointment of officers to the coast service and the sending of supplies to the forts during the months of dual control caused much friction. The new company could do nothing without the consent of the old, yet they held the £10,000 on which the upkeep of the forts depended. Their requests for information about the state of the forts, the stores needed, the filling of vacancies, all met with irritating delays. New officers had to be sent out, and their appointment could only be made by the Committee of the 1750 Company if the Royal African Company would confirm the choice. As the old company refused to give the necessary confirmation of appointments the Committee put their case before the Board of Trade, complaining of these obstructionist tactics,⁴² but the Board

³⁷ *Ibid.*, clauses 32, 34.

³⁸ 25 Geo. II, c. 40.

³⁹ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, T. 70/143, p. 1.

⁴⁰ 23 Geo. II, c. 31, clause 5.

⁴¹ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 26 Oct., 1750, T. 70/143, p. 15.

⁴² Minutes of the Court of Assistants of the Royal African Company, 10 April, 1752, T. 70/99.

declined to intervene on the ground that their control in African affairs was only operative after the dissolution of the Royal African Company.⁴³ Finding their efforts and appeals to the Board of Trade powerless to secure a settlement of the dispute, the Committee laid the matter before Parliament. In answer to their petition the Commons summoned representatives of both sides, and early in April, 1751, a conference between the disputants held in the House resulted in an agreement as to the list of appointments to be made for the service, and as to the instructions to be given to those who went out.⁴⁴ At the conference it was agreed that these arrangements should hold good unless by July, 1752, the old company had not been divested of its charter, in which case its members were to have the right to make new appointments.⁴⁵ The difficulty of renewed negotiations was, however, avoided, as early in 1752 the Royal African Company ceased to exist. Its end is described in the minutes of the last meeting of the Court of Assistants, which took place under the presidency of the Sub-Governor, the Hon. John Vaughan, on the 10th April, 1752; "Resolved and ordered that all the Company's Books that are in the House be delivered over to the Committee of the Company of Merchants. Present of the Committee of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, Mr. Richard Bodicoats, Mr. Vincent Biscoe, Mr. Samuel Touchett, Mr. Abraham James Hillhouse, Mr. Nathaniel Basnett, Mr. William Bowden attended by their Secretary, Mr. Hollier, came to take possession of the Company's Books, Papers and Effects pursuant to the Act of Parliament. And Mr. Newland having now delivered the three Books and two Paper Writings as all he has the said Gentlemen took possession of the Charter and all the Company's Books Papers and Effects accordingly."⁴⁶ After this the Company of Merchants trading to Africa was the body responsible for the management of the British forts and factories in West Africa.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25 Jan., 1750-51, p. 34.

⁴⁵ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 5 Mar., 1750-51, C.O. 391/58, p. 51.

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, T. 70/143, p. 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

CHAPTER II

GOVERNMENT CONTROL IN WEST AFRICA THROUGH THE COMPANY OF MERCHANTS TRADING TO AFRICA, 1750 TO 1821

THE bounds of the territory for which the Company of Merchants trading to Africa was to provide the local administration could not be considered cramping to their ambition, as from Port Sallee in South Barbary to the Cape of Good Hope was a coast line of some seven thousand miles. The spaciousness of this grant contrasts strikingly with the narrowness of the real power entrusted to the new administration. What they had to do in practice was, under the dominating supervision of Parliament and His Majesty's ministers, to attend to the detail of the management of nine comparatively small and insignificant forts. Nor were these forts so placed that the Company's sway extended even at intervals from Barbary to the South Atlantic; they were situated in two regions only, one fort gave them connections with the River Gambia, and the other eight were concentrated on the Gold and Slave coasts, roughly five hundred miles along the Gulf of Guinea. Of these two regions the Gold Coast was considered the more important, and contained the headquarters of the African administration at Cape Coast Castle.

The tale of these settlements from 1750 to 1821, when the Company ended, cannot be considered one of the romantic pages of British overseas history. They were not the occasion of much dark diplomatic plotting, though English diplomatists had to give some attention to them; they were not a scene of marvels of British naval or military prowess, though both naval and military operations were at times carried on within their borders; they were not a place where much lustre was added to the roll of British missionaries, though there were missionaries on the coast; and though they were held because of their value in the most barbaric of eighteenth-century

enterprises, they were not the scene of the worst atrocities of the trade. For the most lurid episodes in the slave trade, accounts of the "middle passage," or of the processions of slaves from the interior to the coast, should be consulted rather than the records of the forts. The annals of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa provide little material for those in search of the heroic in empire building, while the villains they provide could be outmatched in almost any London newspaper of the time. In sketching coast administration of the period the absence of dramatic interest also appears. There is no great revolution, no striking development and no outstanding administrator to make a central point round which lesser events or persons might be grouped. The men of force and enterprise in the company did not bend their genius to problems of government. The history of the West African holdings under the Company of Merchants trading to Africa therefore provides a study in administration which can be viewed as an experiment in government not dominated by any over-mastering personality.

When in 1752 this Company entered fully upon their powers and responsibilities the scheme of 1750 became a working reality. Not unnaturally the practice showed some variation from the paper model provided by the incorporating act, though the main features were reproduced. According to the act, as has been seen, the Committee were not left entirely to their own devices, but were limited by control from the Exchequer, the Board of Trade and Plantations and the Admiralty,¹ and by their entire dependence on Parliament for their income.

Concerning the relations of Parliament to the Company the available evidence makes possible somewhat varying conclusions. From time to time Parliament took very considerable interest in the management of the African forts, and was ready to criticise and condemn the Committee for default in duty, but in spite of this there seems hardly adequate ground for saying that the African interest was constantly and carefully watched over by Parliament. After all, it is true to the character of late eighteenth-century Parliamentary rule that the Company's doings should have received at times

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 12.

detailed examination, necessitating the production of documents and records of every kind, and that after reports based on their enquiries had been received the House should seem to have wearied of the subject and appear disinclined to pursue the question. Critical apathy with spasms of reforming zeal would perhaps best describe the attitude of Parliament to the Company during the major part of its existence. Opportunities for discussion of the management of the West African forts were frequently given to the Commons. Each year the Company had to make formal petitions to secure the grant that supplied their income, and other opportunities were given when readjustments of territory following peace treaties between England, and France or Holland made it necessary to arrange for the disposal of new possessions, or when the "exertions for the public benefit" made by would-be reformers brought African affairs before the House.² In their control of the Company's income Parliament had an admirable means of impressing their wishes on the Committee, as it was possible to make any grant subject to what provisions the House chose. The opportunity was little used. Grants were made regularly of £10,000 a year for the support of the forts, with an increase of the sum to £13,000 in 1761, at which amount it continued with one year's increase in 1764 to £20,000 till 1807, when after the abolition of the slave trade the regular amount was increased to £23,000 to meet the added expenses. In addition to these annual grants, which were only enough for a very economical upkeep of the forts in peace time, the £10,000 being less than the estimate made by the Royal African Company for the normal cost of maintaining the forts,³ special grants were made occasionally to meet expenditure for special purposes. Such grants were made in 1753, when £6,000 was allowed for rebuilding a fort at Annamaboe to check feared French intrusion,⁴ and in 1755, when a second grant for the same purpose was made,⁵ in 1765, when £7,000 was voted towards the erection of a blockhouse at the village of Appolonia as a check on the Dutch,⁶ and at

² Petition of Richard Camplin to the Board of Trade, 1780, C.O. 391/87.

³ *The Case of the Royal African Company* (London, 1730), p. 27.

⁴ *Commons' Journals*, XXVI, 678a.

⁵ *Ibid.*, XXVII, 281a.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XXX, 352a.

intervals between 1769 and 1772, when £6,400 was granted for the repairing of Cape Coast Castle.⁷ Though these sums were not strikingly generous for the purpose for which they were intended, they were large enough to cause investigation into the way in which they were spent. On suspicion that the officers of the coast were using the sums granted towards the rebuilding of Annamaboe for other purposes, the House, after sitting in Committee on the African trade, early in 1755 prayed the Crown that the forts might be inspected by the Ordnance Board and if it should be found necessary to undertake further expense for Annamaboe that the Ordnance Board, and not the Committee, should receive any sum voted for the purpose.⁸ The Company's administration having in this way been brought under discussion, continued to be debated, and in 1756 a committee of the House presented a cautiously condemnatory report on the African Committee's financial operations to the Commons.⁹ Action taken on this report, by which a surveyor was sent out under the Ordnance Board to make detailed investigation into the condition of the forts, led to an inquiry into the African management in 1758.¹⁰ In the course of this inquiry evidence was received from the Admiralty, the Ordnance Board, the Board of Trade and Plantations, and from various witnesses called before the House. The conclusion of the inquiry was a startling contrast to the suspicions and implied condemnation of 1755. The Commons on the 8th June resolved "that it appears to this House that the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa have faithfully discharged the trust reposed in them."¹¹ With this resolution the discussions arising out of the Annamaboe grant ended in the vindication of the Committee.

In spite of this expression of confidence, a few years later the African administration was again under critical review. The end of the Seven Years' War gave new territory to Great Britain, and in the course of making arrangements for the coast government, which is treated more fully in a later chapter, regulations were passed for the reform of the financial

⁷ *Ibid.*, XXXII, 369b; XXXIII, 326a, and 670a.

⁸ *Commons' Journals*, XXVII, 291b, 22 April, 1755.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 612 seq., 25 May, 1756.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, XXVIII, 70a, 8 Feb., 1758.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 289a, 9 June, 1758.

practices in the African service which had been felt in the Annamaboe investigations to be unsatisfactory. An act for the disposal of the ground conquered from France in the Senegal and Gambia region contained two clauses by which greater control over the Gold Coast accounts was arranged.¹² These clauses did not necessarily imply a contradiction of the vote of confidence of 1758, as they were directed against mismanagement on the coast, which the Committee had little power to remedy, and were in some ways a strengthening of the Committee's hands. The most dramatic episodes in the relations of Parliament and the Committee between 1750 and 1821 arose neither out of financial debates, nor from discussions of territorial readjustment, but from direct attacks made on the Committee. In 1772 Sir William Meredith introduced a bill "for regulating the election of Committeemen for the management of the African Company."¹³ The bill was a deliberate censure of the Committee, who were accused of subverting the intention of the Act of 1750, in that they secured their own frequent re-election by making free of the Company large numbers of persons who had no interest in the African trade. According to the bill the election of the Committeemen was to be restricted to those actually engaged in the African trade. In the discussion of the bill it was clearly established that large numbers of persons who had no intention of commercial undertakings were made free by the Company in order that their vote might be at the disposal of certain men who were planning to capture the control of the forts,¹⁴ and even the Clerk of the Committee stated that "very few of the voters were concerned in the African trade."¹⁵ The proof of this state of affairs did not secure the passing of Sir William Meredith's bill, as Burke came to the aid of the Committee by making the plan to limit the freemen to those actually concerned in the African trade appear an attack on the liberty of the subject, and a dangerous measure because it might lead to the creation of a monopoly in the hands of a few rich traders.¹⁶ The bill failed to pass,¹⁷ but a few years

¹² 5 Geo. III, c. 44, clauses 4 and 5.

¹³ Parliamentary Papers, 1772, VI.

¹⁴ *Parl. Hist.*, XVII, 505, 507.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 505.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 507.

¹⁷ *Commons' Journals*, XXXIII, 776.

later a second attack was made on very similar lines. In January, 1777, the Commons petitioned the Crown to direct the Board of Trade to prepare a report on the condition of the trade to Africa,¹⁹ and in April the report was presented.¹⁹ It was an unqualified condemnation of the management of the African committee, and after its presentation a stormy debate took place in the Commons. The attack was led by Mr. Temple Luttrell and Mr. Bamber Gascoyne, a member of the Board which had prepared the report. The main charge brought against the Company was that the Committee were a packed body; whose election was secured by control of a number of freemen, among whom were "members of Parliament, East India directors, not a few tavern-keepers, shoemakers, butchers, barbers, lamplighters, pastry cooks, persons under age, and persons without any known residence or occupation—a most singular and curious medley of commercial adventurers."²⁰ In addition to this charge Mr. Temple Luttrell accused the Committee of conniving at, and being party to, a trading monopoly maintained on the coast by those in the African service. The results of mismanagement were held to be shown in a decline in trade and rise in the price of negroes, and the sole effect of the large annual grants was said to be subversion of the objects for which the Company had been founded. "The African Committees have acted contrary to the trust reposed in them . . . have misconstrued the import and spirit of the Act . . . they have perverted the true intent of the legislature; have acted diametrically contrary to the real interest of the nation, and nearly annihilated your trade: nor can so destructive a system of folly and mismanagement be too soon abolished."²¹

The company in face of this heavy attack was fortunate enough to have Burke's support again. He vehemently denied that the charges were proved, and maintained that, far from

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XXXVI, 94b, 29 January, 1777.

¹⁹ *Return from the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, to the Honourable House of Commons, in consequence of the address of the said House to His Majesty on the 29th day of January, 1777; relating to the General State of the Trade to Africa, the Condition of the forts and settlements there belonging to the African Company, and in what manner the several sums of money granted by Parliament for maintaining and supporting the same have been applied* (London, 24 April, 1777).

²⁰ *Parl. Hist.*, XIX, 301.

²¹ *Ibid.*, XIX, 303. Mr. Temple Luttrell.

being wasteful and mismanaging the public grants, the Committee were to be congratulated on supporting the forts at all with such inadequate funds. He also strongly opposed a general revision of the administration of the trade as likely only to "terminate in government jobs and putting the trade upon a still worse footing than at present."²² Owing to Lord North's intervention the proposals for regulating African affairs were deferred,²³ and the debate ended in a resolution praying the Crown to direct that the sum granted in that session for the support of the forts should be made subject to a proviso that it should not be applied to the payment of any debt contracted before 31st December, 1776.²⁴ The proviso raised a great outcry on the coast, and was rescinded later, but it was an effective method of making the Governor and Council conscious of the reality of Parliamentary control.

Though, as has been suggested, the attention given by the Commons to African administration was spasmodic, Parliament was throughout the Company's life the final authority which controlled and guided the Committee.

The relation of the Committee to the executive government had been only very partially outlined in the incorporating act, and the authority of the Secretaries of State, which was in practice of essential importance, had no specified place. The explanation of the omission is to be found in the position of the Board of Trade and Plantations, which was the connecting link between the Committee and the Secretaries of State. Before the Colonial Secretaryship was created in 1768 the Committee's appeals for assistance and executive action by the Government in any crisis were, as a general rule, received and considered by the Board of Trade, and if thought by them to be of sufficient importance, were then transmitted to one of the Secretaries. When the Colonial Secretary was appointed and given the Presidency of the Board of Trade in addition to his other duties, little formal difference was made to the African Committee. As before, petitions for help went to the Board of Trade, where in many cases they were disposed of, while the presence of the Colonial Secretary at the Board

²² *Ibid.*, 312.

²³ *Ibid.*, 312.

²⁴ *Commons' Journals*, XXXVI, 538b, 5 June, 1777.

did not do away with the need to transmit the greater difficulties to other departments. When Lord Halifax was President of the Board (1748-60) African affairs received considerable attention, but as during a large part of his Presidency the Elder Pitt was a Secretary of State, the credit for appreciating the needs of the African traders must be divided between these two men, and cannot be ascribed solely to the President of the Board of Trade or to one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State. Lord Shelburne also showed great interest in African affairs as Secretary of State, but his tenure of office was so short that his interest had little practical result. In the period of Colonial Secretaries both Lord Hillsborough and Lord Dartmouth when in office complied with the requests of the African Committee for diplomatic intervention on their behalf in an Anglo-Dutch coast quarrel. In 1771 reports from the coast of the aggression of the Dutch Governor against the English, which were laid before the Board by the Committee, were transmitted to the Earl of Halifax, Secretary of State for the Southern Department.²⁵ Through him the matter was taken up and entrusted to the Ambassador at the Hague, Sir Joseph Yorke, who was instructed to inform the States General that it was His Britannic Majesty's intention to support the honour and dignity of his crown and protect his subjects in full enjoyment of their commercial rights and privileges "and that unless speedy redress of the English grievances were assured His Majesty will direct a force to be sent to the coast to support the honour and dignity of the crown."²⁶ Long and wearisome negotiations followed in which the rival powers flooded each other with memoranda and counter-memoranda and a hard-fought paper war took place. An interlude in these diplomatic efforts at the Hague was caused in 1773, when envoys were sent from Holland to see if a conference in London would lead to an agreement. The Dutch envoys were to meet representatives of the views of the English merchants, and that duty was allotted by the Crown to the Board of Trade, who were instructed to discuss the rival claims with the Dutch envoys.²⁷

²⁵ Board of Trade and Plantations to Lord Halifax, 22 May, 1778, C.O. 391/78.

²⁶ Lord Suffolk to Sir Joseph Yorke, 9 Feb., 1773, S.P. For., Holland 538.

²⁷ Lord Suffolk to the Board of Trade, 22 Oct., 1773, C.O. 891/80.

The conference failed of its object, as neither the Dutch envoys, nor the Board would yield their rights claimed by those they represented. After being taken up again by the Ambassador, negotiations lingered on till the English troubles with the American colonies began and Sir Joseph Yorke had more serious matters to discuss than African coast quarrels.²⁸ Though these negotiations had failed to secure acknowledgment from the Dutch of the rights claimed by the Committee, the Crown had throughout continued to support the Company's demand, and the practical value of the Crown's interest was recognised by the Committee, who wrote to the Governor at Cape Coast Castle that "although the late negotiation hath produced no direct acknowledgment on the part of the Dutch that their claim cannot be justified we are yet inclined to believe they will be more cautious how they act in future."²⁹ Besides such moments of diplomatic crisis, other times at which the Secretaries of State gave attention to the African Committee were the periods of peace treaty negotiations. In the two great treaties in the second half of the eighteenth century that affected Africa, the Peace of Paris of 1763 and that of Versailles, 1783, the Secretaries gave a certain amount of attention to the views of the African Committee. The absence of the elder Pitt from the drafting of the Peace of Paris weakened the terms demanded on behalf of the African traders in that treaty, though large and valuable concessions were won. Twenty years later, in the Peace of Versailles, West Africa was one of the places in which the French successfully pressed their demands for revenge for the humiliation of 1763. Though the Committee were consulted as to their views about the terms that should, if possible, be demanded, the points which they put forward as of especial importance were not secured.

The making of peace treaties was, however, the exceptional and not the normal activity of His Majesty's government in attending to the development of overseas territories, and in the everyday work of supervision and planning of policy there was not much sign of keen interest in West Africa on the part

²⁸ Correspondence of Sir Joseph Yorke, S.P. For., Holland, 542, 543.

²⁹ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Governor at Cape Coast Castle, 5 Dec., 1774, T. 70/69.

of the Secretaries of State. This is to be accounted for, in part at least, by the fact that there was no rich field of patronage in the African appointments. The officers for that service were chosen by the Committee themselves, and even had they been susceptible to pressure from high places in selecting their servants, the appointments in the forts were of so little value that they would not have brought much advantage to their patrons.

As a source of advice, criticism and help the Board of Trade gave more valuable assistance to the Committee than did the Secretary of State, and the general supervisory authority which that body exercised was of more real and solid importance to the Committee than the occasional displays of energy by His Majesty's ministers or ambassadors. The control and assistance of the Board was shown in various ways. A very valuable part of its work was that it served as a source of information on all matters concerning the African settlements. It was a singularly well-informed body on all questions of African administration or trade, and was used both by Parliament and by the Secretaries of State as an authority to which questions of fact might be referred, and as the most trustworthy means of investigating matters on which the House or the ministers wished to be informed. In the Parliamentary inquiries into African affairs between 1750 and 1782 the Board was constantly required to prepare reports on the condition of the trade and the management of the settlements, and the Board's correspondence bears witness to the use made of it. When the Company of Merchants trading to Africa was incorporated the Board's powers in relation to the Committee were generally indicated but not precisely defined. They were authorised to dismiss any of the Company's officers or servants, or any of the members of the Committee who should be found guilty of misbehaviour, and to call for information from the Committee on any matter.³⁰ Their powers were so limited in extent that, interpreted by the letter of the law, they might have been merely vague control. In practice, however, the Board exercised considerable influence over the policy pursued by the Company. In 1752 when a zealous Governor at Cape Coast Castle projected a scheme for introducing cotton and

³⁰ 23 Geo. II, c. 31, clauses 21 and 23.

indigo cultivation on the coast the Board intervened and ordered instructions to be sent out immediately to stop such a scheme as contrary to the national interest. The opinion of the African Committee, who had expressed approval of the cultivation project was overridden and they were forced to contradict their own orders.³¹ In the same year when there were rumours of French activities on the coast the Committee were ordered to censure the Governor, who, the Board considered, had shown negligence in protecting English interests against the French.³² The passage of arms that ensued between Board and Committee showed that their respective appreciations of conditions on the coast were not identical. Governor Melvil, whose conduct had incensed the Board, was considered a most valuable and efficient officer by the Committee as he had successfully settled a dispute between the English and Dutch. To the Board of Trade the conclusion of a Anglo-Dutch quarrel was of far less importance than prompt means to oppose the French, and so negligent did they consider the Governor to have been, that they suggested to the Committee that it would be well if he were allowed to leave the coast. To this the Committee were firmly opposed and they expressed their views with clarity and vigour. Having authority to dismiss the Company's servants the Board might have ordered the enforcement of their opinion, but they left the Committee triumphant, safeguarding their own position by the warning that "if any accident should happen and the French get possession the Committee must take the blame upon themselves, and that none should lie on the Board."³³ In this incident the Board's interest was not confined to criticism of the Governor's lack of action, but was continued by their laying the information before Parliament, with the result that the grant for the building of Annamaboe fort was made.³⁴ Similar services were rendered by the Board in adding weight to the Committee's petitions for assistance in asserting their rights against their rivals, Dutch and French, as has already

³¹ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 14 Feb., 1752, C.O. 391/59.

³² Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 17 June, 1752, C.O. 391/59.

³³ *Ibid.*, 28 May, 1752.

³⁴ *Commons' Journals*, XXVI, 678a, 15 March, 1753.

been seen in the Anglo-Dutch quarrel of 1771.³⁵ The part played by the Board in that incident was gratefully acknowledged by the Committee, who expressed their thanks for "the very great care you have been pleased to take of the interests of the British merchants during the whole of the negotiations between your Lordship and the Dutch deputies."³⁶ A smaller service which the Board performed for the Company, but which was of great importance for traders and for the Committee was in approving petitions for license to export prohibited articles in time of war.³⁷ During the American war stringent prohibition was put upon the export of gunpowder; against this restriction the African merchants appealed, as gunpowder was a valuable, almost an essential, trading commodity in Africa, and through the Board exemptions from the restriction were obtained. While supervising the Company the Board was extremely cautious not to assume responsibility for the Committee's actions. In 1776 the Committee appealed to the Board of Trade for advice as to the payment of a debt due to their servants on the coast, which, if not paid, might lead to trouble with the Dutch. The Committee, therefore, asked the Board whether they would be justified in stating the debt as a charge on a future Parliamentary grant. The Board refused to commit themselves to a definite opinion on the ground that advising measures was outside their powers, though they expressed their willingness "to receive the same as information."³⁸ Again, when in 1779, the Committee were appointing Commissioners to inquire into the coast government and submitted to the Board the instructions for the commissioners which contained a clause stating the orders to "have been passed under their Lordship's direction," the Board insisted on the removal of this clause because the instructions contained "matters of local regulation not referred to the direction of the Board." Instead of the disapproved clause the phrase "with their Lordship's approval" was substituted.³⁹ The same caution was shown by the Board in exercising their

³⁵ *Vide supra*, p. 22.

³⁶ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Board of Trade, 12 Jan., 1774, T. 70/69.

³⁷ Board of Trade Entry Books, C.O. 389/33. 34.

³⁸ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 8 Nov., 1776, C.O. 391/83.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11 Dec., 1779, C.O. 391/86.

authority to remove servants of the Company or members of the Committee. No officer or servant was dismissed, nor committeeman suspended by their orders though complaints against both officers and committeemen were frequent. In 1774, in reply to a direct request that they should remove defaulting committeemen, the Board regretted that the matter lay outside their powers.⁴⁰ One reason for the Board's caution in assuming authority over the Committee was that they had no desire to have the direct responsibility for African affairs themselves. In 1758 the suggestion was made that the management of the African forts should be put under the Board's immediate control, but the proposal met with no favour from them and they reported themselves "from multiplicity of business as well as other causes" quite unable to undertake the direction of the trade.⁴¹

After 1782, when the Board of Trade and Plantations was abolished and the work done by it was divided between the Secretaries of State and a Committee of the Privy Council, "the executions of powers vested in the late Board of Trade by any act of Parliament, particularly those for regulating the African Trade" were assigned to the Privy Council Committee.⁴² This Committee, whatever its energy in other matters may have been, was of far less assistance to the African company than the Board of Trade had been. After two years of the 1782 arrangement the Privy Council appointed a standing committee for matters concerning Trade and Plantation in March, 1784.⁴³ The attention given by the new Board of Trade and its successors to African matters was very different from that of the old Board. Questions of the relations of the West Indies to the American mainland, of trade with America, and the consideration of the commercial treaty with France in 1786 occupied the Board's attention and African affairs had little place till 1788 when, as a result of the Anti-Slave Trade agitation, the Crown instructed the Board to investigate and report on the conditions of the trade. With that investigation the slow siege of the government by the philanthropic party

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 Mar., 1774, C.O. 391/81.

⁴¹ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 21 April, 1758, C.O. 391/65.

⁴² Memorandum in Board of Trade papers, C.O. 5/2.

⁴³ Minutes of the Committee of the Privy Council, 5 Mar., 1784, B.T. 5/1.

began, and the everyday affairs of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa gradually lost their place as matters of national importance. To the African Company the abolition of the Board of Trade in 1782 was a distinct misfortune. In 1786 the French renewed their attempts, which had been successfully foiled in 1752, to secure a footing on the Gold Coast. A report of the attempt was immediately laid before the new Board of Trade,⁴⁴ but in striking contrast with the interest aroused by the receipt of similar news thirty years before, no active reply was given to the petition for assistance. The Committeemen repeated their appeals frequently, but without success, and also addressed petitions to Pitt, Lord Carmarthen, and Lord Sydney, but failed to secure assistance.⁴⁵ As a result the French won their coveted prize of a footing on the Gold Coast.

Other state departments which had controlling authority over the Committee were the Exchequer, where their accounts had to be formally passed each year, and the Admiralty, on which the coast establishment relied for effective defence, and by which they were inspected.

Throughout the Company's life the navy was the essential support of their settlement, without which they could not have continued to exist. As England was the headquarters of the coast government, and the source of all supplies and advice, a clear sea-way from Africa to London was a *sine quâ non* for the maintenance of the forts, and for the marvellously successful way in which this communication was kept open even during times of war the Company owed a great debt to the Navy.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 23 April, 1786, T. 70/145.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9 Jan., 1787.

CHAPTER III

THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE COMPANY OF MERCHANTS TRADING TO AFRICA

THE central part of the subordinate administration devised in the 1750 scheme to work under the government control which has been described, was the annually elected committee of nine who were made responsible for the practical management of the African forts. The two years of difficulties with the Royal African Company had given the Committee an uncomfortable apprenticeship to the mystery of West African administration, and when they entered on their full responsibilities they had considerable experience. The organisation of the Committee for the management of their London headquarters was extremely simple, and in marked contrast with the elaborate machinery of the Royal African Company's Directorate. The Committee did not delegate their power to sub-committees; the only one appointed was a "Committee of Treasury" to carry out financial transactions and keep the official seal; nor do they appear to have been dominated by their salaried official, the Secretary. The Committee being theoretically a new body each year, no permanent Secretary could be installed, and one of the first duties of a newly elected nine was the making of this appointment. As the functions of the Committee involved acquaintance with methods of procedure in communication with the Secretaries of State, the Board of Trade, the Exchequer, and a large amount of routine clerical work in drawing up agreements, petitions and memorials and carrying on business negotiations, continuity in the Secretariat was essential, and therefore the annual election tended to become mere formality and there was constant re-election of the same Secretary.

The Committee itself tended also, in spite of the provisions of the 1750 Act, to become a permanent and not an annually

changing body, though the letter of the law was kept and the annual election took place, and no committeeman sat for more than three years in succession. In practice the Committee became a permanent body of about sixteen, nine of whom sat each year. In the first ten years after the incorporation the three London committeemen were chosen from among six names, those for Bristol from six also, while Liverpool had only four representatives during the ten years. This departure from the obvious intention of the framers of the 1750 constitution did not pass unchallenged, as was shown in the attack led by Sir William Meredith in 1772, which has already been described.¹ Though the reforming bill was lost, owing to Burke's intellectual agility and not to a breakdown of the attack, the solid grounds for criticism of the methods of election were confirmed. After the failure of the bill the Committee were left to continue to be elected as they had been before, and the principle of recurrent elections persisted. The names of the committeemen gradually changed, but between 1780 and 1790 London had only five representatives, Bristol four, and Liverpool six.²

The list of the committeemen does not show a single well-known name during the whole of the Company's life, unlike the lists of the Directors of the Royal African Company or of the East India Company. They were an undistinguished body, and the work of the African Committee did not bring them very far out of their obscurity, for though the Committee was made responsible for local administration on the West African coast, the limitation imposed by their financial dependence on Parliament left them a very small field in which to act on their own initiative. Ambitious policies towards natives or European rivals were impossible without extra grants, and as the Committee were strictly prohibited from interfering with the doings of the separate traders, their control in West Africa was further limited. Nor was the means of defence of the forts and settlements in their hands, as the security of the English holdings depended on the Navy in all times of serious conflict. What the Committee was expected to do had been

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 19.

² Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 1780 to 1792, T. 70/145, 146.

laid down in the Act of 1750. It was "to make orders for the governing, maintaining, preserving and improving the forts and factories," "to appoint governors, deputy governors or any other officers civil or military of or for the said forts and settlements . . . to make orders and regulations for the better government of the said officers and servants abroad,"³ and to "invest such parts of the money in their hands as they shall judge necessary in the purchase of goods and stores which after the same are insured . . . are to be sent and exported to Africa, there to be sold, disposed of and applied for the sole use, preservation and improvement of the forts and settlements there, and for the payment of salaries and wages to the officers and other persons employed for keeping and preserving the said forts and settlements and not otherwise,"⁴ and the activities of the Committee, when they were at work, were fairly strictly limited to these three practical duties. On their success or failure in choosing officers' servants for the coast service, in providing them with regulations and in translating the annual grant into provisions and necessaries for the West African forts the Committee should be judged, and it cannot be over-emphasised that they must not in fairness be judged by the progress or decline of the trade over the management and organisation of which they had no control.

In making appointments for the coast service the Committee were in no way assisted or limited by Parliamentary regulation, but were left free to devise what scheme they chose. This freedom had, however, been hampered in the first two years by the Royal African Company, and while the Committee in London were always clearly distinct from the Directorate of the Royal African Company there was not the same clear-cut distinction in the coast organisation. The appointments made between 1750 and 1752 were a compromise arrived at after conference between the two companies,⁵ and there was no clean sweep of the old administration when the new company began their rule. When the two companies were acting together it was natural that no drastic alteration should be

³ 23 Geo. II, c. 31., clause 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, clause 20.

⁵ *Vide supra*, p. 24.

made in the organisation, but in 1752 the Committee were free to plan the service on lines of their own. In spite of this freedom there were obvious difficulties in the way of making a completely new coast establishment, and the committee showed no desire to give themselves the task. They worked on the basis left to them by their predecessors making certain necessary changes. They received from the Royal African Company their responsibilities in the form of nine forts, one on the Gambia, seven on the Gold Coast and one on the Slave Coast.⁶ Of these forts Cape Coast Castle was the largest and most important, being the centre of authority on the coast. Under the Royal African Company all the chief officers of the service, Governor, surgeon, surveyor, secretary, accountant and lieutenant of the guard, had their quarters at Cape Coast Castle, and except for the seven chief agents detailed to take charge of the out-forts, and an additional writer at Accra, all the trading staff of writers and factors and more than half of the soldiers were employed there. The appointments made under the joint control of the two companies simply reinforced the existing administration. When the Committee became free from Royal African Company shackles they told Thomas Melvil, who had been appointed senior chief agent in 1751,⁷ and who was to be the first Governor under the Committee's régime, that they had "thought proper to alter the number and titles of the officers established by the old Company, as their appointment regarded their trade as much as the preservation of the out-forts."⁸ A few changes were then made in the factors, writers and soldiers, but the main alteration was in the list of officers. Thomas Melvil was appointed Governor in Chief, president of the council, treasurer and warehousekeeper, some of the old servants of the Royal African Company were dismissed and others were retained with altered title. The title "chief agent" disappeared, and the officers in charge of the out-forts were called "chief" of their respective forts. Among the subordinate officers and servants the old terms were retained and the service was still recruited by factors and writers in spite of the purely adminis-

⁶ 25 Geo. II, c. 40, Schedule I.

⁷ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 17 April, 1751.

⁸ Committee to Thomas Melvil, 3 Nov., 1752, T. 70/143.

trative purposes of the new company. The resulting establishment was in many ways very like its predecessor, and was in fact a continuation of it, taking over the coast responsibilities and relationships into which the Royal African Company had entered, and making comparatively little break with the old order.

In interpreting that part of their instructions by which they were to "make orders for the governing, maintaining, preserving and improving the forts and factories" and for the "government of the said officers civil and military" the Committee were more free to introduce innovation. The regulations of their predecessors were unsuited in many parts to the work of the new administration, yet the Committee moved very cautiously in carrying out this part of their duties. They invented no new coast code, but contented themselves with providing a letter of general directions for Melvil. By these he was instructed to give watchful attention to any activities by foreign powers on the coast and to inform the Committee of any attempted encroachments, to pay the salaries of those in the Company's employment, to use supplies and stores sent to him for the preservation of the settlements; and for all goods that he received and of all events on the coast to render regular and careful accounts to the Committee.* The matters omitted from these instructions are more striking than those included. Nothing was said of the relations of Melvil to the other officers, or of his power to control and direct them, and though allusion was made to a "council" with which Melvil was to act in filling up certain places, no orders as to its composition or duties were given. These omissions in the 1751 instructions may be explained by the control of the dying hand of the Royal African Company, but in 1752 they were not made up except in one or two particulars, and Melvil's instructions remained the basis of a slowly developed body of directions for Governors. An omission that was made up in 1752 was the provision for the coast Council. It was then decided that the Council should consist of the Governor and President and Vice-President, and the Chiefs of Annamaboe and Commenda forts, with the

* Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 17 April, 1751, T. 70/143.

accountant and surgeon.¹⁰ The Council's duties were not made definite when its membership was, though the implication of the Committee's correspondence and certain later instructions showed that the Governor and Council were together considered the responsible authority on the Coast.

The form of the Council was altered by the Committee several times during the Company's life. In 1769 certain "standing orders" were made as to its membership, but unfortunately these orders were passed at a meeting of the Committee in a year for which the minutes are missing, and though they are alluded to in a letter book, the actual instructions are not given there.¹¹ Nine years later new instructions were sent out, providing that "for the future" the Council should consist of the Governor, the three senior fort chiefs, and the Governor of Whydah, thus emphasising the privilege of seniority in the service.¹² The 1778 provisions "for the future" only lasted till the next year, when an emergency council had to be appointed, as the acting Governor and Council were suspended to answer charges brought against them in the 1777 debate in the Commons.¹³ This 1779 Council was really a board of inquiry, and its work was an examination into the abuses said to exist in the Company's service on the coast. It only lasted for one year, and in December, 1780, the membership of the Council was again reorganised,¹⁴ "for the future" to consist of the Governor, the Chiefs of Annamaboe (Vice-President) and Commenda, the accountant and the surgeon. Still, the Committee was experimenting, and in 1785 a special emergency led to another reorganisation. The new French *Compagnie de Sénégal* at that time was making a great effort to secure a footing on the Gold Coast, and was causing so much unrest among the Fantis, on whose territory they wished to settle, that it became imperative to concentrate the strength of the service in the forts in that region. For this purpose it was planned that the places under Fanti influence, Annamaboe, Tantumquerry and Winnebah, should

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28 Sept., 1752.

¹¹ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Governor at Cape Coast Castle, 30 Nov., 1769, T. 70/69.

¹² *Ibid.*, 22 June, 1778.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3 Dec., 1779.

¹⁴ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 12 Dec., 1780, T. 70/145.

be governed by the most experienced officers on the coast, and therefore a definite order of importance for the forts was arranged, Cape Coast Castle, Annamaboe, Accra, Winnebah, and membership of the Council was attached to the command of the first five.¹⁵ The new form excluded from the Council the surgeon and accountant, and limited membership to senior chiefs and those actually in command of the most troublesome forts on the coast, an arrangement which facilitated coastal defence.

The functions of the Council were less conclusively defined than its form. In the absence of a coast constitution the powers and duties of the Governor and Council were settled piecemeal when circumstances made definition imperative. The most evident characteristic of the coast government was that it was strictly controlled from London, and only possessed such powers as the Committee chose to delegate. The general lines of the Company's policy in inter-European relations on the coast were guided from London, and not entrusted to the Governor or Council, but certain duties connected with it were made part of the Governor's responsibilities. The order in Melvil's instructions that he should resist the encroachment of rival powers involved the maintenance of "marks of right," such as forts and factories, and being watchful to discover any Dutch or French attempts to gain influence over territories where the English claimed exclusive trading privileges. Keeping the Committee informed of all events on the coast was the Council's most important duty for securing the position of the English forts against foreign rivals, as beyond a very limited extent the Governor and Council had no power to oppose the Dutch or other aggressors, and for redress of their grievances depended on the action of His Majesty's government. The Council's part in securing redress was that of making substantiated reports to the London Committee. In the negotiations carried on by Sir Joseph Yorke at the Hague on behalf of the English traders, the information on which he grounded his representation to the States General was correspondence from David Mill, the Governor of Cape Coast Castle,¹⁶ and the Committee's petitions for diplomatic

¹⁵ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 24 Oct., 1786, T. 70/145.

¹⁶ *Vide supra*, p. 23.

assistance were based on evidence sent home in the official coast dispatches. In 1785 the Council reported Danish hostilities,¹⁷ and the next year they were reporting the arrival of the French force at Annamaboe.¹⁸ Beyond the continual reporting the coast government was not encouraged to activity in inter-European relations, and up to 1788 it was unusual in the Company of Merchants' régime for a Governor at Cape Coast Castle to negotiate with the Dutch Governor at Elmina without previous reference of the proposed agreements to Europe. When Governor Roberts in 1780 entered into neutrality with the Dutch, his attempt at peace-making was reversed by the arrival of an armed force from England,¹⁹ and it was not until the Defensive Alliance between England and Holland in 1788 that authority was given to the Governor to enter into agreements of any force. By the sixth clause of that treaty the governors of settlements belonging to either nation, "whether in Asia or Africa," were in case of attack "to consult together the succour to be furnished." This treaty considerably altered the position of the Governor at Cape Coast Castle, and in 1792, acting on its authority, the commanders of the Dutch and English settlements conferred together as to the best means to be taken in view of Danish aggression.²⁰ In general, however, defence, whether diplomatic or by force of arms, did not lie with the Governor and Council, but with the authorities in London.

For the defence of the coast by arms the Governor and Council had certain military duties in commanding the garrisons which were kept in the forts, as the soldiers enlisted by the Committee were under the orders of the Governor and of the chiefs of the out-forts. These military duties involved little exertion on the part of the Governor as the force was extremely small, amounting at full strength to about a hundred soldiers for nine forts,²¹ a body of little practical value and kept for appearance rather than serious use. In time of war the Governor and Council had to co-operate with what naval

¹⁷ Governor of Cape Coast Castle to Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 9 July, 1785, T. 70/33.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14 May, 1786.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 June, 1781.

²⁰ Minutes of Council at Cape Coast Castle, 3 May, 1792, T. 70/153.

²¹ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 14 Nov., 1781, T. 70/145.

and military assistance was sent out from England. In a campaign of 1781 against the Dutch the operations were led by Captain Shirley, of H.M.S. *Leander*, and Captain Mackenzie, in command of two companies of Independents. A company of officers and men from the fort garrison and of free blacks and slaves also took part, under the orders of the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, but the main attack was made by the specially detailed forces under commanders independent of the Company.

Besides these duties of correspondence and defence the Governor and Council were responsible for maintaining order, efficiency and discipline in all the forts. At the Council at Cape Coast Castle grievances, complaints and charges against any member of the service were considered, and temporary dismissals could be ordered, though these had to be confirmed by the Committee before they were valid. In this way the Council kept a general control over the outlying forts, though the Committee's right to overrule any decision of the Council was frequently used in matters of discipline or order in the service. For the government of the separate out-forts instructions were given by the Governor and Council to the fort chiefs as to their duties, which were largely a delegation of the functions with which the Governor and Council had been entrusted by the Committee. The chief was to receive, examine and report on all supplies sent to him, keep accounts, which were to be sent to Cape Coast Castle every three months, pay the garrisons and dependents of his fort, maintain discipline in it, and keep on good terms with the natives.²² From time to time additional instructions were dispatched. In the orders given to the chief of Accra in 1780 he was directed not to enter on his own responsibility into palavers with the natives, but to submit any difficulties to the Governor and Council.²³ The Council also had to transmit to the out-forts any new orders as they came out from the Committee.

Below the responsible directing authority of the Governor and Council the fort chiefs, some of whom were members of the Council, were the officers of most power on the coast. Their normal work, as set forth in the instructions quoted

²² Instructions to the chief of an out-fort, 1780, T. 70/1541.

²³ Instructions to the chief of Accra, 1780, T. 70/1541.

above, was the usual coast combination of office work, diplomacy and military duties. The European staff in the out-forts was small, varying from fourteen at Accra to five at Whydah, consisting of a chief, factor and soldiers.²⁴ In addition there were slaves kept for heavy labour and, in emergency, for defence work. Over these small garrisons the fort chiefs had practically independent authority, partly owing to the difficulties of communication along the coast. That authority they appear in many cases to have abused. Apart from incidents of gross cruelty, such as that of a fort chief, Buchanan, who was responsible for the death of one of his soldiers by flogging him, beating him with an axe and then sending him to the slave hole,²⁵ or of Lysacht, who, being drunk, belaboured one of the sergeants so terribly with a bottle that he killed him,²⁶ the more ordinary charge of cruelty to their subordinates by neglect became so notorious that in 1770 the Committee sent out detailed regulations as to the pay and victualling of the soldiers in the hopes of securing to them the means of existence.²⁷

Conditions were not, however, reformed, and two years later a letter by "An African Merchant" pointed out the miserable state of the ill-treated soldiers as one of the scandals of coast management.²⁸ While the English soldiers in the Company's employment were probably by far the most miserable and worst treated of all in the forts, not excluding negro slaves, the junior officers, the factors and writers, had also a very hard life, and an unusual degree of toughness, both of spirit and body, was necessary for those who hoped to survive. One of the chief attractions of the service seems to have been the system of promotion which was used on the coast. With singularly few exceptions the rule of promotion by seniority, and not by special choice, was followed, so that once a boy had secured his entry into the service as a writer he had every reason to expect to rise in time to the command of a

²⁴ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 14 Nov., 1781, T. 70/145.

²⁵ Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 17 Aug., 1786, T. 70/153.

²⁶ Deposition of Robert Stubbs, 5 Jan., 1784, C.O. 267/8.

²⁷ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Governor and Council at Cape Coast Castle, 7 Feb., 1774, T. 70/69.

²⁸ *A Treatise upon the Trade of Great Britain to Africa* (London, 1772), chapter V.

fort, and if fortune in the way of health favoured him, and if he were prepared to endure the climate for long enough, to arrive in the end at the Governorship of the coast. The very heavy mortality among Englishmen in West Africa which constantly raked the forts made promotion rapid, and promotion was allowed to all ranks from all ranks, the occupation in which a man served his first years having singularly little effect on his subsequent career. William Mutter, who became Governor of Cape Coast Castle in 1763, began his services as a surgeon's mate with a salary of £60 a year in 1753; Thomas Trinder, who entered as a mason in 1762, received the command of an out-fort in 1765, and John Cockburn, who enlisted as a soldier in 1751, after serving as serjeant and then as butler at Cape Coast Castle, used this as a stepping-stone to becoming a factor in 1756, after which his progress to the command of a fort followed the normal course of coast promotion.²⁹ Another attraction, possibly more powerful than that of promotion, was the freedom allowed to those in the service to engage in private trade. About this private trade there has been some misunderstanding. Mr. Hilary Jenkinson, in a paper on "The Records of the English African Companies," published in the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* in 1912, speaking of the career of one of the officers of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, stated that "the more important articles of trade (gold, ivory and slaves) the Company's servants were specifically forbidden to touch in their private capacities,"³⁰ and he writes of their private trade as a yielding to temptation.³¹ This view is a complete misconception of conditions in the African settlements in the late eighteenth century. Private trade by the officers in the African forts, far from being forbidden, was encouraged by the Committee, who in 1764, in answer to a Board of Trade inquiry, explained their attitude on this matter. They then stated that they approved of private trading by their officers because it "encourages the natives to bring down their slaves and commodities in the absence of ships . . . as otherwise they would be obliged to carry them to the forts of other

²⁹ Register of Officers and Servants employed by the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, T. 70/1454.

³⁰ *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1912, p. 217, note.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

nations."³³ At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Committee still held to their policy, and in writing to Lord Castlereagh, after the act for the abolition of the slave trade had been passed, they appealed for increased financial support to enable them to pay larger salaries to their officers, who had in the past accepted "salaries greatly inadequate to the service" because of the trading facilities afforded to them,³⁴ and they constantly endorsed in practice the view expressed by the Governor of Cape Coast Castle in 1778 when a rumour was current that private trade was to be restricted, that "All Europeans in this country are respected according to the extent of their trade, so that if the new set of Governors are restricted in this particular they will be considered as mere cyphers . . . for everyone knows that as a chief is respected by the trade he carries on in the same proportion is the town peopled from the extent of that trade. Hence if the Governors do not trade the population and with it the trade will go to the Dutch."³⁴ Such restrictions as were laid on this private trade were all designed to prevent abuses in a fully recognised practice. Certain regulations controlling the trade of officers in the service were made in 1751 in the instructions to Thomas Melvil, when it was provided that the Governor and those under his authority were strictly prohibited from trading with foreigners except in one specified case,³⁵ and in 1765, when they were forbidden to sell slaves off the coast.³⁶ The most restrictive pronouncement of the Committee was made in 1766, when they had been subjected to a gale of complaints against the trading practices of their officers. They then dismissed the Governor, William Mutter, because he had exported slaves from the coast contrary to the orders of the service, and added a postscript to this warning later, "It is our desire that all persons in our service should thrive, but they ought to keep within the bounds prescribed."³⁷ On the coast various customs developed in the service for the mutual benefit of the officers,

³³ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 30 June, 1764, T. 70/69.

³⁴ *Ibid.* to Lord Castlereagh, 14 Oct., 1807, T. 70/72.

³⁵ Miles to Shoolbred, 9 April, 1778, T. 70/1482.

³⁶ Instructions to Thomas Melvil, 17 April, 1751, T. 70/143.

³⁷ 5 Geo. III, c. 44, clause 4.

³⁷ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to Governor and Council at Cape Coast Castle, 3 Sept., 1766, T. 70/69.

by which the monopoly of the trade of an out-fort was considered part of the regular perquisites of the position and the Committee, in the course of adjudication on a coast quarrel in 1811, stated "that every attempt on the part of any officer in the service at one fort to establish a factory, or to interfere with the local trade of any officer at another fort whether personally or by means of an agent . . . is in opposition to the desires of the Committee, and it is subversive of good order and subordination, and inconsistent with what is equitably due from the officers to each other," and they showed their appreciation of the two attractions of the service by remarking that in addition to the promotion of seniority they wished their officers to enjoy the advantages of their positions, and that therefore they considered it "unjust that any officer stationed at one fort with all the advantage of his appointment shall interfere with and endeavour to rival his brother officer stationed at another fort."³⁸ This regular practice of private trade was of chief advantage to the senior officers, but the writers and factors profited from it to some extent, and while still quite young in coast experience could begin to trade by peddling liquor to the natives as a means of eking out their small salaries.³⁹

Though the usual objective of an ambitious member of the African service was the command of a fort, with all the advantages of that position, there were certain appointments which, without entailing special governing powers, were of considerable importance. These were those of the surgeon, surveyor, registrar, accountant, secretary and chaplain. Of these officers, the surgeon was one constantly in demand, but unfortunately the doctors who were willing to go to the African coast in the eighteenth century were not a credit to their profession. In 1778 the Governor at Cape Coast Castle wrote to a friend, "Buchanan the surgeon is a good kind of fellow enough, but like most of that profession who come out here I believe he is not sufficiently conversant in his business,"⁴⁰ and in 1790 the Committee decided to raise the surgeon's

³⁸ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 31 Jan., 1811.

³⁹ Governor of Cape Coast Castle to Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 31 March, 1784, T. 70/33.

⁴⁰ Miles to Bell, 15 July, 1778, T. 70/1483.

salary from £100 to £150, "to encourage men of medical knowledge and experience to enter the service."⁴¹ Unfortunately the first recipient of the increased salary was in 1791 found by the Council "by no means competent to his station, either from a wrong practice with his patients, or in ignorance of his profession, the number of officers and soldiers who have died under his care will testify that one or other is the case."⁴²

The clerical officers of the service were the secretary, responsible for the preparation and copying of the minutes and dispatches, the registrar for the disposal of "dead men's effects," and the accountant, from whose office by far the largest part of the Company's records came. In his office the Cape Coast Castle accounts were kept, and those of the out-ports were checked and copied for transmission to England. Had there been a standard currency in use in the forts and on the coast this work would have been no light task, but as the income and expenditure of the forts was reckoned in terms of goods, and salaries were paid in supplies of all kinds, the accounts were an intricate labour.

The chaplain to the African establishment was not one of the early appointments made by the Company of Merchants. The first to be sent out for this difficult post was Rev. Philip Quaque, a Gold Coast native who had been educated in England by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and ordained. In 1765 he was sent back to his own country to act as chaplain and missionary. He failed to justify the hopes of those who had educated him, and in 1792 was suspended by the Governor and Council because of his disreputable living, which the Council did not consider consistent with his position. The Committee, however, revised the Council's decision and reinstated him, but the Society which had appointed him recognised that he had failed and "quite deviated from the Intentions of the Society, and his proper Line of Duty by paying more Attention to the Purposes of Trade than of Religion."⁴³

⁴¹ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 27 Jan., 1790, T. 70/146.

⁴² Council at Cape Coast Castle to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 20 June, 1791, T. 70/33.

⁴³ Letter from the Society for Propagating the Gospel, in *Report of the Board of Trade on the trade to Africa* (London, 1789), Pt. I, Detached Pieces of Evidence, No. 3.

CHAPTER IV

ADMINISTRATION ON THE COAST UNDER THE COMPANY OF MERCHANTS TRADING TO AFRICA

CONSIDERED as a whole this coast administration appears to have an extraordinarily simple design, consisting mainly of a general body of soldiers, writers and factors, who by length of service might work their way up to the position of commanders in charge of forts, from among whom the small governing council was chosen. The Committee on being questioned as to their system of choosing applicants for the service declared that they considered general education, rather than specialized training, the necessary qualification, and that they desired candidates to be "from the middle class of life, young men of respectable connections, and very well educated," though "we do not make the classics a *sine quâ non*."¹

The position of the Governors in this organisation was until the nineteenth century simply that of the senior officer on the coast in charge of Cape Coast Castle and president of the Council. None of those who held this position appear among the notables of the age. The most energetic and enterprising of the Governors in the eighteenth century was Richard Miles, who held the chief command from 1777 till 1781, with a break of two years in which he had to defend himself from charges brought against him. His career illustrates better than any general description could do what life was like in the African service, but it needs more space than can be allowed it here. In 1804 plans were made for the reform and improvement of the service under a military governor, who, it was hoped, by being given greater power, would be able to introduce order, discipline and efficiency into the service and

¹ Report from the Committee on Papers relating to the African Forts, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1816, VII, 2, p. 39.

so end the demoralised condition into which it had fallen owing to the supine conduct " of the existing government."³

That attempted reform and its consequences are discussed later.³

In carrying out the third part of their duties, that which was concerned with the investment of the grants made for the upkeep of the forts, the Committee had a large amount of detailed work to do in which they were left to their own devices, untroubled by intervention from higher authorities. The only provisions for control in the expenditure of the annual grants made in the incorporating act were in clauses ordering the Committee to make an annual account to the Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer of the money they had received and its application, and prohibiting the Committee from applying more than £800 a year, a sum raised in 1764 to £1200, for the expenses of management in England,⁴ and within these limitations they were free to spend the grant as they thought fit. On the way in which the investing of the grant was done depended the life of the officers and servants on the coast, and the strength of the forts for the upkeep of which the Committee had been appointed. The work involved making the necessary and often tedious applications to the Treasury for the issue of the grant ; a task which became part of the secretary's routine duties. More attention and discrimination was needed in deciding upon the way in which the money was to be invested for the support of the forts. Part of it was used for food supplies, part for ammunition and building materials for the garrisons, but the bulk of it was needed for the purchase of goods that could be issued as salaries for the officers and servants and natives in the Company's employment, and as payment for anything that had to be purchased in Africa. There was no regular currency on the coast, and the practice of direct barter of goods for goods, or goods for labour, prevailed. It was because of this barter system that the Committee's list of officers and servants included a large proportion of factors and writers, though the Committee had no trading duties. The standard of value in

³ Torrane to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, May, 1804, T. 70/34.

⁴ *Vide infra*, chapter X.

⁵ 23 Geo. II, c. 31, clauses 24, 25.

all important transactions between natives and Europeans was gold dust, but it was not a very practical medium of exchange because of the possibilities of fraud in its use. The salaries of the officers and servants were paid partly in goods for barter, and partly in food and clothing, and the upkeep of the forts was provided partly by ammunition and building materials, and partly by a store of trading goods which could, as needed, be used for securing labour and any materials procurable on the coast. Any unfortunate or ill-directed purchasing of goods and supplies in England very seriously affected the position of the garrisons and forts on the coast. If the Committee failed to reckon with native taste and sent out supplies of unfashionable commodities, the salaries of the officers and servants and the incomes of the forts suffered a very material reduction in value, and the Parliamentary grant did much less for the upkeep of the African establishments than it might have done. In carrying through the difficult and important work of selecting the goods to be sent out as the coast income, the Committee in London relied to some extent on the suggestions sent home to them from the coast. Native taste, on which the marketability of the stores depended, was by the late eighteenth century by no means passive and content to receive what goods it should please the English trader to send out. European rivalry for the slave trade was sufficiently acute to provide competition which ensured a good variety to the native purchasers, and they became a most exigent *clientèle*. Rum and brandy, firearms, English woollen goods and chintzes, and East India cotton materials were among the items which were frequently sent out in large quantities, but all these were subject to periods of unpopularity. West India rum, at one time a favourite commodity on the coast, was in 1773 "a perfect drug on the coast,"⁶ and therefore in 1774 it was omitted from the stores sent out by the Committee, yet the next year an officer wrote to a correspondent in England: "I would by all manner of means advise both West India rum and English brandy to be sent out and that in large quantities."⁷ One reason for the fluctuation in demand for English spirits was that the natives

⁶ Miles to Bourke, 31 Jan., 1773, T. 70/1482.

⁷ Miles to Shoobred, 10 Aug., 1775, T. 70/1482.

preferred American rum to that of the West Indies, and therefore while the American was plentiful in 1773, there was no market for West Indian, but when troubles in America hampered their trade, the less popular brand of rum was acceptable as a *faute de mieux* to natives so addicted to spirit drinking that it was asserted by an officer who had been out for several years that "the whole race will perjure themselves for brandy."⁷ In the selection of cotton and woollen goods care and discrimination was also necessary to secure the kind that best accorded with native fashions. In 1773 an officer in the service wrote to a European correspondent that particular attention should be paid to the pattern and quality of the chintz sent out, as on these points depended its value.⁸ The Company's records are full of allusions to these changes in matters of taste, and during the American War there were lamentable groans from the officers when their salaries were paid to them in goods for which there was no sale. Against this there was no redress; it was one of the hardships of the service. The choice of the food supplies also greatly affected the garrisons. When it was badly done it entailed very considerable suffering, especially among the lower ranks of the service. The provisions generally sent out were beef, pork, bread, butter, cheese and flour, all of which often reached the coast in an uneatable condition. Besides the risks from fraudulent contractors there was a real difficulty in getting supplies so packed that they might survive the journey, and the Committee made several experiments in different forms of packing in the hopes of getting better results. The stores that had to be sent out were building materials, bricks, stone, deal and paint, medicines, garden seeds and various miscellaneous supplies.

In purchasing the goods for dispatch to the coast the Committee divided the favour of their orders among a considerable number of contractors in the hope that competition among them would keep up the quality and keep down the price of the supplies. In 1789 seventy-six bills were paid for goods sent out that year.⁹ These supplies went out to the

⁷ Miles to Bourke, 15 Sept., 1779, T. 70/1483.

⁸ Miles to Bourke, 2 Nov., 1773, T. 70/1482.

⁹ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 28 Oct., 1789, T. 70/146.

coast generally once a year, about October or November, and as the Committee in their corporate capacity owned no means of transport, they had to charter vessels for the purpose. It was a heavy expense, especially in time of war when insurance was high; £1,000 had to be paid on a £10,000 cargo for freight and insurance in the American War.

The reception of this annual store ship and the disposal of its contents was considered the most serious part of the duties of the Governor and Council on the coast and that about which they received the most careful instructions from the Committee. The supplies were sent from England to Cape Coast Castle, where they were unloaded and checked. A report on their condition was then made to the Committee. After being temporarily housed in the Cape Coast Castle store rooms part of the supplies was distributed to the out-forts. This work of distribution provided a stiff test of the integrity of the senior officers in the service, as it offered many possibilities of unauthorised profit making. The cargo was valued in England, and the price at which the separate articles were to be reckoned in Africa for calculating such payments as that of salaries was arranged on a fifty per cent advance on the prices paid in England. At this "coast price" the goods were distributed whatever their value in the African market at the time, a system which was not accepted without occasional murmurs.

On the arrival of a store ship the Governor and Council had to apportion a definite part of the goods from the newly received supplies to each fort. So important was this duty considered to be that in 1776 special instructions were sent out to prohibit the Governor from making the distribution by himself, and it was ordered that all apportioning of goods should be done "by and under an Act of Council and not otherwise."¹⁰ As a means of ensuring faithful distribution and disposal of supplies books had to be kept at each fort to show the stores received and the way in which they were spent, supported by such vouchers as it was possible to secure. For expenditure among the natives the production of written receipts could not be made compulsory. Copies of the accounts so kept were to be transmitted to the Committee every six

¹⁰ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Governor at Cape Coast Castle, 4 Dec., 1776, T. 70/69.

months. Neither the accounts nor the insistence on joint action by the Governor and Council was effective in securing a just division of supplies. The coast accounts were often in arrears, in spite of constant protests from the Committee against such notorious and criminal breach of orders,¹¹ and in 1779 the Governor and Council were accused of abusing their powers of distribution in a way that no accounts could check. It was asserted that they used the contents of the store ship for their own purposes and substituted in distribution to the forts goods of an inferior quality, which they charged at the store-ship rate, greatly to the prejudice of the junior officers.¹²

While the provision, equipment and maintenance of the forts and garrisons was the duty for which the Committee did most responsible work, the relations of the coast government with the natives of the fort districts were under their immediate direction, subject to the limitations of the supervisory authority of His Majesty's Government, and to the need for strict economy. When they began their rule the Committee were bound by the treaties and agreements into which the Royal African Company had entered, and in 1752 they found themselves, not territorial owners, but tenants of the natives, to whom they paid rent for the forts that they held. This tenancy basis of the Company's position was recognised by the Board of Trade, who opposed the introduction of cultivation on the coast because "in Africa we were only tenants of the soil which we held at the goodwill of the natives."¹³ As the English forts were scattered along the coast in different native territories, payments of rent had to be made to a number of local rulers. The boundaries of these kingdoms or republics changed considerably during the eighteenth century, but early in the Company's rule there were eleven native divisions on the Gold Coast.¹⁴ For Cape Coast Castle rent of £72 a year was paid to the Dey of Fetu.¹⁵ This payment seems to have been made continuously throughout the period of the Company's

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3 Dec., 1783.

¹² Charges against the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, 10 Nov., 1779, No. IX, T. 70/1541.

¹³ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 14 Feb., 1752, C.O. 391/59.

¹⁴ Bennett, R., *Africa according to the Sieur Danville*, 1760.

¹⁵ Day Books Cape Coast Castle, *passim*, T. 70/1007, etc.

management. Rents for the other forts were also continuously paid to various authorities. In 1816, in addition to the Dey of Fetu, the King of Annamaboe, the King of Ashanti and the King of Appolonia were noted as the chief rulers from whom the English held their land.¹⁶ The sums paid for rent varied from £72 for Cape Coast Castle, £36 for Tantum, Winnebah, Commenda, and £12 for Succondee to £9 for Dixcove. The principle of tenancy was fully accepted by the Company of Merchants and not altered during its existence. In 1816 one of the members of the Committee asserted that "we recognise the sovereignty of the natives as lords of the soil and entitled to rent."¹⁷

During the period of the management by the Company of Merchants one addition was made to the number of the forts, exclusive of the rebuilding of Annamaboe,¹⁸ which affords an example of the methods of securing holdings under this system. The Dutch were in the middle of the eighteenth century the strongest European power in the Ahanta country, the most westerly division of the Gold Coast. A dispute arose between the Dutch and Ammoniah, the native ruler of a district of Ahanta called Appolonia. The Dutch maintained that they had sovereign rights over the territory and attempted to put down "rebellion." Ammoniah appealed to the English to protect his territory, offering them the right to build a fort.¹⁹ As the territory was considered a valuable trading centre the offer was accepted, and the natives entered into a treaty by which they agreed to "cede to the British nation our territory called Appolonia for them to build a fort or warehouse of what kind they choose, and ten acres of ground to be allotted for a garden on any spot where no town or village is at present standing, no rent to be required."²⁰ Though no rent was to be required, the agreement maintained the tenancy principle, the English were given no authority over the natives or native territory and were limited to the ten acres allowed for the fort grounds.

¹⁶ Report of the Committee on Papers relating to the African Forts, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1816, VII, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁸ *Vide supra*, p. 17.

¹⁹ Correspondence from the Coast, 1766, T. 70/1531.

²⁰ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 27 Oct., 1783, C.O. 267/20.

The continuance of the annual payment of the rent obligations into which the earlier Company had entered was the simplest part of the Committee's native policy, but they had a much more difficult problem in the attempt to remain on sufficiently friendly terms with the natives to ensure the good trade relations on which the safety of the forts depended. Though the Committee were not a trading corporation, the maintenance of good relations between the forts and the native traders was a matter for which the Committee were to some degree answerable. The trading value of the forts was that they provided centres to which native merchants might bring their stores and other goods with the certainty of finding a market for them at any time. Owing to the peculiar conditions of the slave trade it was important that a constant market should be open at which dealers might be sure of being able to dispose of their slaves speedily, as any delay was prejudicial when each extra day between purchase and sale added to the risks of loss by death, and to the expense of feeding the slaves. This condition made the forts, where large numbers of slaves could be kept at a time, useful markets, and it was to the interest of English traders that the native slave dealers should become accustomed to making the English forts the objective of their slave routes from the interior down to the coast. As has already been noted, the natives were not apathetic customers and they did not sell their slaves indiscriminately for the first European commodities offered to them. If the English forts were poorly provided with stores the traders made their way elsewhere, and after a few disappointments deserted the unsatisfactory fort. A worse trouble arising from a poor trading store at the forts was that the surrounding natives considered themselves injured and occasionally expressed their disapproval fiercely. During the American War the Governor of a fort in the Fanti country wrote that the natives had become hostile because of the English neglect of trade "without," as he wrote in an aggrieved tone, "making allowance for our situation with the Americans."²¹ To revenge themselves on Europeans who were out of favour the natives had some regularly practised devices for the punishment of those by whom they considered them-

²¹ Westgate to Miles, 2 Sept., 1778, T. 70/1480.

selves to have been wronged. The Gold Coast was not thickly populated, and a favourite revenge was for natives near an unpopular fort to remove themselves to some other part of the coast. William Bosman, chief factor in the Dutch service in the seventeenth century, alluded to this habit in his day,²² and the same danger was described by the Governor and Council in 1778.²³ Other ways in which native resentment might be expressed were by attacks on the forts, or on the persons of officers of the forts. In 1786 the Governor of Tantum fort was stopped on the beach as he was about to embark in a canoe to go to Cape Coast, and was carried inland, stripped and beaten because he had imposed a fine on some natives who had beaten a sergeant and a soldier, though his punishment had been assented to by some of the leading natives.²⁴ Captain Mackenzie, who incurred native anger, received similar treatment as, among others, did a Governor of Succondee who left his fort late in the evening to call on the Dutch Governor. So little excitement was raised by this kind of native punishment that the Council's comment on this incident was that the Governor ought not to have been paying visits so late.²⁵ As native resentment was prejudicial both to trade and fort security the Governors were greatly occupied by attempts to keep the leading natives friendly towards them. Friendly relations could not be extorted from them by force, as the English military position was extremely weak, and an extensive system of bribery was developed to keep the natives on good terms with the forts. Payments to natives made up more than half of the annual expenses of the fort service.²⁶ The bribery was partly direct and partly indirect. Indirectly a large number of natives were kept in the English interest by being given pay for various services, while others were definitely given an annual payment, not for service, but for goodwill. To keep communication clear between Cape Coast Castle and the out-forts, payments were made to the leading men of the districts through which

²² Bosman, W., *A new and accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London, 1705), p. 43.

²³ Miles to Shoolbred, 9 April, 1778, T. 70/1483.

²⁴ Governor of Cape Coast Castle to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 8 June, 1786, T. 70/33.

²⁵ Minute of Council at Cape Coast Castle, 2 Feb., 1799, T. 70/1576.

²⁶ Abstract of Cape Coast Castle Day Books, T. 70/175.

messengers and travellers had to pass. In the Fetu territory, beyond the rent charges, payments were made to the chief men of the country, to the King £18 a year, to his son £12, to the chief Cabboccer £8.²⁷ In the Fanti district, by far the most difficult of all the native countries, where, as Bosman said, the Dutch and English had equal power—"that is, none at all"²⁸—there was a long list of payments to be made to influential people. In addition to these subsidies the payments for native labour helped to make the English acceptable tenants, as they provided profitable occupations for considerable numbers of the population. The canoemen, needed for unloading the vessels, which could not come in close to land owing to the absence of natural harbours, were free natives who were constantly employed by the officers in the service. Free labour had also to be engaged for certain services which the natives guarded jealously as their own privilege. Of these the most important were cutting wood, as the English had no right to the forests, for which they did not pay rent, and carrying water from the native ponds.²⁹

One other part of the native problem was caused by the slaves who were employed in the service of the forts. Their privileges show something of the subtleties in the distinction between free and unfree on the coast. Of the Castle slaves some had been handed over by the Royal African Company to the Company of Merchants as part of the fort equipment in 1752,³⁰ and some had been bought by the Company of Merchants. The position of the Castle slaves was in certain ways like that of the domestic slaves of the coast, who were not as a rule sold unless they had been convicted of misdemeanours. The Castle slaves were even more privileged, as it was an order of the Company that none of them should be sold off the coast whatever their crimes.³¹ The Castle slaves were, in this way, in a safer position than even the free natives,

²⁷ Day Book, Cape Coast Castle, July, 1781, T. 70/1046. A Cabboccer was a native official.

²⁸ Bosman, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

²⁹ Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 10 Oct., 1781, T. 70/152.

³⁰ 25 Geo. II, c. 40, schedule I.

³¹ *Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations submitting . . . Evidence and Information . . . concerning the present State of the Trade to Africa* (London, 1789), Part I, Richard Miles' evidence.

who could be sold if found guilty of certain crimes, and their treatment was by no means that of the slaves transported overseas. They received pay for their work, had regular hours of work, and any overtime work was paid for specially. In Whydah Day Book for 1770 there is a note of pay given to "Company's slaves working out of their hours."³² They were also able to protest against grievances. Forty of the Cape Coast Castle slaves who felt aggrieved because their wives had been sent to work at a distance ran away in protest, and refused to return until the Governor promised that they should not be punished.³³

A great complexity in the question of free and unfree was caused by the marriages between slaves and freemen. According to the custom of the coast if a man slave married a free woman their children were free,³⁴ and there therefore grew up round the forts a free population who had family connections with the slaves, which occasionally embroiled the Company in faction disputes in the native town.³⁵

The list of payments to natives may be ended with the item known in the account books as "Presents and Dashees." All ceremonial occasions were marked by the giving of presents, which varied greatly in value, but which accounted for a very large part of the annual expenditure. On native festivals, at times such as the putting down and taking up of the nets,³⁶ or at harvest,³⁷ and on English festivals such as Christmas,³⁸ the officers in the forts were expected to assist the celebrations by liberal gifts of rum, brandy or tobacco. When messengers came from native kings to receive the rent due for the tenure of the forts³⁹ or other payments, when a new English officer entered on his duties in command of a fort, or on the accession of a new native ruler presents were distributed. Entries such as a note of payment to "Aggerly on his being placed on Tado's

³² Whydah Day Book, 28 Feb., 1770, T. 70/1160.

³³ Governor at Cape Coast Castle to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 19 Feb., 1786, T. 70/33.

³⁴ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 9 May, 1781, T. 70/145.

³⁵ Governor of Cape Coast Castle to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 21 Sept., 1780, T. 70/1478.

³⁶ Day Book, Cape Coast Castle, 27 Sept., 1781, T. 70/1046.

³⁷ Day Book, Apam and Berracoe, 23 May, 1783, T. 70/482.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Day Book, Cape Coast Castle, 1 Oct., 1781, T. 70/1046.

stool,"⁴⁰ and of payment to the people of "my custom as a new chief,"⁴¹ both made by the officer in charge of Commenda in his accounts, are paralleled in the accounts of the other forts. The Committee from time to time attempted to check this policy of keeping on good terms with the natives by means of payments, because it was a very serious financial burden to the Company. The proposal of any such economy was, however, always stubbornly resisted by the officers on the coast. In 1774 instructions were sent out that expenses for presents should be reduced, but no attention was paid to the order because, as the Governor and Council replied, "owing to the weakness of the Company's position it is necessary to keep black men of power in our pay that we may live at peace with the natives who would otherwise molest us knowing we have not sufficient power to protect ourselves."⁴²

As far as it is possible to find a general "native policy" in the Committee's government it appears to have been one of uncertain opportunism and of attempts to keep the peace at all costs, by avoiding as long as possible any intervention in native politics. The main development in native relations during the Company's rule in which the English took an anxious interest was the constant quarrelling between the Ashantis and the Fantis, the two native powers which by the second half of the eighteenth century had outstripped all other native powers of that region; the Fantis holding a strong coastal position, and the Ashantis being a strong inland power. Rumours that the Ashantis were about to make an attack on the coast were received in England in 1768,⁴³ and from then until the early nineteenth century, when the invasion actually took place, the English forts were from time to time uneasy about the possibility of an Ashanti descent. In spite of this anxiety the English did not enter into defensive alliance with any native power.

The Committee's policy of cautious peace-keeping and non-intervention was largely forced on them by the limitations of their position, their restricted financial resources, and their

⁴⁰ Day Book, Commenda, 25 Feb., 1756, T. 70/1120.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3 April, 1756.

⁴² Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 20 Oct., 1871, T. 70/152.

⁴³ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 26 April, 1768, C.O.

dependence for defence upon the national government. This expensively guarded peace was from time to time imperilled by the English traders who frequented the coast, and over whom the Committee and their officers had no control. The absence of power in the only resident British authority on the coast over the trading population was made clear in the Committee's orders to their officers. "You neither have, nor do we want you to have any control over the free traders, it is your duty to assist, not to direct, much less to restrain or cramp them in their dealings."⁴⁴ The result was inevitably conflict between the free traders and the Company's officers, and a lack of good order on the coast, the English population who resided on the coast outside the forts, or who paid trading visits, being free from any form of government. In 1782, when Captain Mackenzie, the Commander of the Independents, committed acts of piracy, squandered the funds of the troops in private trade, and after starving and ill-treating his soldiers deliberately killed one of them without a shadow of a trial, the Council could do nothing except report to England, as they had no power to arrest or try him.⁴⁵

An examination into the Coast government held in 1816 shows clearly how powerless the Governor and Council were. In that inquiry it was stated that there was legally no military or civil authority through which the Governor of the forts could take cognizance of any crime or irregularity committed on the coast.⁴⁶

By following in some detail the working of the Company of Merchants' administration the insignificance of its powers in local government becomes evident. That the coast government was strictly controlled from London need not necessarily have implied weakness of authority, but only a different balance of authority from that evident in other distant settlements. In the West African administration under the Company of Merchants there was, however, unmistakable weakness, and

⁴⁴ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 26 June, 1782, T. 70/69.

⁴⁵ Governor of Cape Coast Castle to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 5 Feb., 1782, T. 70/33.

⁴⁶ Report from the Committee on Papers relating to the African forts, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1816, VII, 2, pp. 24, 25.

56 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

the lack of sufficient governing powers in the Committee for the control of those who frequented the coast was not made up by the activity of His Majesty's ministers and other officers. The inadequacy of the authority provided for the Guinea Coast settlements is a reminder that they were looked upon simply as a row of trading posts, and in no sense as a colony or plantation.

CHAPTER V

THE CREATION OF THE PROVINCE OF SENEGAMBIA, 1765

THE first breach in the administrative monopoly of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa was made as a result of the Seven Years' War, which brought new African responsibilities to the British government. English trading enterprise, personified in a certain Thomas Cumming, explained to the Elder Pitt the great commercial possibilities of that part of the African coast which lay just north of the English settlement on the Gambia.¹ The desirability of the region was mainly due to its being a great centre for the gum trade, and gum was a rare and valuable commodity much needed in the manufactures of various kinds of silk materials. At the time when Cumming approached Pitt, the trade to Europe in West African gum was practically a French monopoly, as the French, with forts and settlements on the Senegal and on the island of Goree, were well entrenched on the borders of the gum-bearing country. As the slave trade was also carried on from there, more than one reason could be found for considering the region desirable. Cumming suggested to Pitt that the war with France provided a good opportunity for the English to invade the French monopoly and to secure a share of the gum trade for themselves. Pitt gave the project favourable consideration and in 1758 sent an expedition to the Senegal. Both the fort on the island of Goree and Fort Louis at the mouth of the Senegal capitulated to the British forces, Fort Louis in May, 1758, and Goree in December.² The value of the conquest was described in the *Annual Register*. "By these successes we have taken from the enemy one of the most valuable branches of their commerce."³

¹ Cumming to Pitt, 26 Jan., 1756, C.O. 267/12.

² Mason to Pitt, 3 May, 1758 (capture of Fort Louis). Keppel to Pitt, 3 Jan., 1759 (capture of Goree), C.O. 267/12.

³ *Annual Register*, 1758, p. 75.

Until peace was arranged between France and England the new forts were governed under military rule. In June, 1758, Major Mason, of the Marines, was appointed Governor of Fort Louis and other places which might be captured,⁴ but in September of the same year Lt.-Col. Worge received a commission as Governor of Fort Louis,⁵ and was sent out to supersede Major Mason, much to that officer's astonishment.⁶ Lt.-Col. Worge remained in command of the Senegal until after the peace.

While the success of the 1758 expedition was undoubted, and the conquered territory remained in English hands, it was not of full use to English merchants until the terms of peace had been arranged between England and France. With regard to West Africa as to other parts of the Empire, it was one thing to make conquests of time of war, and quite another matter to keep the conquests in treaty negotiations. What terms might or might not have been secured in the Peace of Paris is a subject for endless speculation. Pitt declared that it would have been possible to keep both Goree and the Senegal,⁷ but such favourable terms were not won in 1763. By the tenth article of the treaty between England and France Goree was restored to France, and to England was ceded the River Senegal "avec les forts et comptoirs de St. Louis de Podor, et de Galam et avec tous les droits et dépendances de la dite rivière de Sénégal."⁸ Much scope for variant readings was left in the phrase "les droits et dépendances."

The weakness of the settlement considered as an attempt to make peace was patent, though some defence might be made of it as an effort to adjust the new territorial claims of the two nations. The restoration of Goree undoubtedly gave France a base from which it was possible to continue the trade with the mainland, and from which to watch, or in time of hostilities to prey upon, English shipping; but the value of this base, an island incapable of providing supplies even for a small garrison, was dependent on the maintenance of com-

⁴ Pitt to Mason, 10 June, 1758, C.O. 267/12.

⁵ Pitt to Worge, 3 Oct., 1758, *ibid.*

⁶ Mason to Pitt, 22 Jan., 1759, *ibid.*

⁷ Pitt's speech on the preliminaries of peace, 9 Dec., 1762, *Parl. Hist.*, XV, 1266.

⁸ Definitive Peace with France, 10 Feb., 1763, S.P. For., Treaties, France, No. 123, article 10.

munication with the mainland, which a strong, well-established English settlement at the Senegal could prevent. The English gains have been inadequately appreciated by those who condemned the peace terms. England had won a large new trading district, the value of which depended practically entirely on the way in which it was administered. Had the nation had the brains, enterprise and capital necessary to develop the region and defend it from French attacks and from the dangers of continued French influence with the natives, there was no reason inherent in the settlement to prevent the English traders from securing the commercial benefits which Cumming had hoped for. And it would have been an extremely difficult task for the English simply by means of a clause in a peace treaty to exclude the French altogether from a coast line of between four or five hundred miles where they had been old-established traders. It was found impossible to prevent the French from forcing an entry on the Gold Coast, in spite of long-standing Anglo-Dutch possession there, and the suggestion that the official retention of Goree by England would keep out French traders from the Senegal and Gambia district, argues a sublime faith in the potency of treaties which is hardly warranted by eighteenth century history.

The disposal of the new territories was under consideration by His Majesty's Government as soon as it was won. While authority was still in Pitt's hands he had been approached as to the possibility of making a monopoly trading grant of the Senegal to Samuel Touchett, Merchant.

This request, on being referred to the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General for advice as to its legality, was given a very chilling reception. The lawyers' report was that no trading monopoly could be granted in West Africa, as the whole coast had been declared open to all Englishmen by the Act of 1750. At the same time they pointed out that nothing in the act prevented His Majesty from disposing of the soil, forts and dependencies of the newly conquered settlements as he should think fit. In spite of this decision, Mr. Touchett renewed his efforts to secure a monopoly in 1762, when Pitt had been replaced by Lord Egremont. The petition received cautious attention. Lord Egremont sent it on to the Board

of Trade for their opinion, they sent it to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, that Committee referred it to their constituents in Bristol, Liverpool and London and then sent back to the Board a protest against it as an infringement of their rights. Legal advice was again sought and the Attorney-General repeated to the Board the decision which had been given to Pitt in 1759. On receiving this opinion from the Board, Mr. Touchett decided "to consider further," and the matter dropped,⁹ but the Company of Merchants having been stirred to activity on the question of the new territory decided to secure recognition of their right to this part of the West African Coast which lay within the boundaries assigned to them in 1750. In April, 1763, Lord Egremont wrote to Worge, Acting-Governor of the Senegal, of coming changes, and reported that His Majesty was pleased to deliver the Senegal forts to the Company of Merchants and that the military government was only to continue till the Company should send out their officers.¹⁰ A more formal grant had however to be made of their new possessions to give security to the Company's position. In January, 1764, their Committee appealed to the Board of Trade for a report on Mr. Touchett's petition, as they wished to make application to Parliament praying that the forts in the conquered territory might be added to those already in their jurisdiction.¹¹ The Board gave the Committee's intended petition a non-committal blessing, and the decision as to the fate of the Senegal district was left to be made in Parliament.¹² On the 7th March, 1764, a petition of the Company of Merchants recommended by the Chancellor of the Exchequer was presented to the Commons.¹³ The petitioners informed the House that they had received and invested £7,000 which had been granted in the previous March for the expense of the Senegal, and they submitted to the House that it would be advantageous to have this region administered by their Company as the other forts were. The petition was referred to a committee

⁹ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 17 Jan., 1763, C.O. 391/70, recapitulates the whole case.

¹⁰ Egremont to Worge, 18 April, 1763, C.O. 267/12.

¹¹ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 30 Jan., 1764, C.O. 391/71.

¹² *Ibid.*, 7 Feb., 1764.

¹³ *Commons' Journals*, XXIX, 918b.

of the whole House, which resolved that the Senegal and its dependencies should be vested in the Company of Merchants trading to Africa and that their Committee should be allowed a further sum for defraying their expenses in England.¹⁴ A resolution was passed in the Commons that a bill should be brought in to this effect and ten members were chosen to prepare it, three of whom were members of the Board of Trade at the time. On the 19th April, 1764, the royal assent was given to the bill for vesting the Senegal and its dependencies in the Company of Merchants trading to Africa.¹⁵ The act was brief, consisting of two clauses in addition to the preamble. By the first clause the fort of Senegal and its dependencies were vested in the Company "to be employed at all times hereafter for the protection, encouragement and defence of the African trade in the same manner, under the same regulation and subject to the same rules as the other forts and settlement on the African coast now vested in the said Company."¹⁶ The second clause empowered the Committee of the Company of Merchants to deduct a further sum of £400 a year for charges of management and in England as compensation to the Committeemen for their trouble.

With the passing of this act the problem of the disposal of the West African gains was solved in the easiest possible way. The Committee which already existed, and was already experienced in the administration of forts and settlements on neighbouring parts of the coast, was given responsibility for the additional miles that had been won. The expense of the upkeep of the new districts was to be met by annual Parliamentary grants, and the Committee was given an additional allowance for office work in London, and as compensation to the Committeemen for this addition to their labours. The arrangements which the Committee made for the administration of the territory were on similar lines to those made by them for the other parts of the African coast. They appointed a Governor, a number of officers, such as accountant, surgeon, storekeeper, overseer of works, and a garrison of between twenty and thirty privates. In addition to these white men

¹⁴ *Commons' Journals*, XXIX, 967b.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 1056a.

¹⁶ 4 Geo. III, c. 20, clause 1.

they employed from thirty to forty negroes as labourers and three as linguists.¹⁷ It was an establishment suited to keep a fort in British occupation, but not strong enough for a policy of extension or forceful assertion of right against aggression from outside.

This simple expedient of administering the new territory by granting it to the Company of Merchants trading to Africa had a very brief life. Before the royal assent had been given to the act vesting the Senegal in the Company the Board of Trade had taken into their consideration reports of French activities on the Gambia,¹⁸ which led in the following months to a series of inquiries into the state of the English holdings in the Gambia and Senegal region,¹⁹ and in July, 1764, a representation to His Majesty on the state of the British claims to the Gambia, and on the "pretensions of France" was sent to the Earl of Halifax by the Board.²⁰ The investigations that the Board made into the aggressive activities of the French seem to have led them to the conclusion that the administration by the Committee of the Company of Merchants was not sufficiently strong to afford adequate protection to the English traders on parts of the coast where there was powerful French rivalry. Throughout the autumn of 1764 the Board gave careful attention to the condition of the West African territories, and early in 1765 presented a representation to His Majesty on the subject.²¹ This representation was a well-drawn-up, concise and convincing report on the British position in West Africa, the first thorough and able state paper on the subject that had been produced. The Board prefaced their report with a statement of their belief that for the furtherance of the African trade it was essential that the British establishment on that coast should be maintained, both to secure due influence amongst the natives, and to prevent encroachment of foreign powers. Having made this general statement of principle the Board went on to express

¹⁷ Governor Barnes to Conway, 17 Feb., 1766, C.O. 267/13.

¹⁸ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 13 April, 1764, C.O. 391/71.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, April to July, 1764, *passim*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 July, 1764.

²¹ Report to the Crown on the British Establishments on the Coast of Africa by the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, 21 Feb., 1765, C.O. 389/31.

the results of their inquiries into the conditions of these forts and settlements. The material on which the report was based consisted of returns from captains of His Majesty's ships which had visited the coast and on the correspondence of the Company of Merchants. For the purposes of report the subject was divided into two sections, one on the newly acquired districts, and the other on the old possessions. The section on the old possessions was briefer and less elaborate than that on the new.

A general lack of repairs in the forts, undisciplined garrisons, a condition of such military weakness that even native attacks could not be repelled, and at the same time the absence of signs of attempts to extend British influence were reported as the main features of Gold Coast organisation. Yet with that caution which appears a notable characteristic of the Lords of Trade of those years, the conclusion drawn from this depressing picture of the results of Committee rule was far from definite. The Board expressed themselves quite unable to decide whether the regrettable condition of the English settlements was due to the failure of the Committee from want of sufficient powers or to "the fluctuating state of their institution," or to misapplication or embezzlement of supplies by the officers on the coast "whose accounts appear to be very imperfect and unsatisfactory," or to the scantiness of the annual grants made by Parliament. The author of the report considered that further investigation was needed before definite conclusions could be reached on the subject, and the matter was said to be one needing the "mature consideration of the legislature."

Concerning the second part of the subject the Board were more definite, and their investigations were made in greater detail. As in the case of the older possessions the new territory showed that no adequate measures of defence for the settlement had been provided, nor had proper steps for the extension of British influence been taken, and on the contrary two of the most important trading centres of the region had been abandoned. A brief note added by the Board on the French activity and enterprise in developing their remnant of territory at Goree, which they were fortifying both by land and sea, helped to point the moral and adorn the tale. In the case of

this region, unlike that of the old territory, the Board had clear and definite recommendations to make. They emphasised the vital fact of West African history of this period, that the Senegal and Gambia territory differed essentially from that of the Gold Coast, and presented an entirely different problem of government. That problem was made up of a complex native question, an extensive inland commerce, unlike the seaboard traffic of the Gold Coast, and an acute French rivalry, compared with which the Anglo-Dutch friction on the Gold Coast was a very minor matter. Because of the existence of all these factors the Committee of the Company of Merchants was declared to be inadequate as an administrative body, and the Board concluded their report by strongly representing the advisability of removing this region from the hands of the Company of Merchants and placing it under His Majesty's immediate direction, with the establishment of a civil constitution and military force for its protection. The report ended with a suggested scheme of government.

The Board of Trade's report was followed by a reconsideration by Parliament in March, 1765, of the state of the African settlements in a Committee of the whole House.²²

The Committee after deliberation presented three resolutions,²³ all of which endorsed the Board of Trade's views as expressed in their report. The first resolution was that the Senegal and Gambia district should be vested in His Majesty "for the more effectual protection and encouragement of the trade to Africa," the second supported a suggestion which had been made in the report that by putting gum among the enumerated articles the expenses of the new administration might be met, and the third provided that the West African territories, exclusive of the Senegal and Gambia regions, should continue vested in the Company of Merchants. Following these resolutions leave was given for the introduction of a bill to repeal the Act of 1764. The bill went through both houses quickly and on the 25th May, 1765, the royal assent²⁴ was given to an act for divesting the Company of Merchants trading to Africa of its authority over the Senegal and Gambia region, which was vested in His Majesty.²⁵

²² *Commons' Journals*, XXX, 245b, 12 Mar., 1765.

²³ *Ibid.*, 249b, 14 Mar.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 434b, 25 May.

²⁵ 5 Geo. III, c. 44.

Thus in just over a year the policy of 1764 concerning the new West African territories had been reversed. Reasons for the comparatively abrupt change are easy to suggest, but they cannot be conclusive. Neither the Board of Trade papers, nor those of the Company of Merchants suggest that between May, 1764, and May, 1765, any striking alterations of circumstance had taken place in West Africa, and the explanation of this reversal of policy which seems best warranted by available records is that the Act of 1764 was passed without due consideration. Throughout 1763 the Board of Trade was busily occupied with American and West Indian affairs, and gave comparatively little attention to West Africa, as is seen in the apathetic part which they took in the controversy between Mr. Touchett and the Company of Merchants.²⁶ Once their interest had been awakened, as it was in 1764, their inquiries into the conditions of the West African possessions resulted in certain decisive and well-supported conclusions which undoubtedly had effect in Parliament. Mr. Bacon, who was chairman of the committee of the House on the state of the African forts and settlements in March, 1765,²⁷ was also one of the members of the Board of Trade who had signed the report presented in February,²⁸ and of the seven members appointed by the Commons to draw up the bill for vesting the Senegal in His Majesty five beside Mr. Bacon had been signatories of that report. It is therefore probable that it was the preoccupation of the Board of Trade in 1763 and their subsequent zealous investigation that caused the apparent *volte-face* in policy concerning the new West African possessions. The Act of 1765 did not go far in the task of providing the more efficient government for the Senegal and Gambia region that its promoters desired, and it was left to His Majesty's advisers to work out the detail of the civil and military establishment needed for the protection and development of the district.

The Board of Trade had submitted a scheme of administration as part of their report, and this, modified by the Lords

²⁶ *Vide supra*, pp. 59-60.

²⁷ *Commons' Journal*, XXX, 245b, 12 Mar., 1765.

²⁸ Report to the Crown on the British Establishments on the Coast of Africa by the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, 21 Feb., 1765, C.O. 339/31.

of the Committee of the Council for Plantation Affairs, was the basis of the new government. By an order in council of 1st November, 1765, the territory lying between Cape Rouge and Cape Blanco was declared to be the province of "Senegambia" under the immediate authority and direction of His Majesty. It was to have a civil and military establishment, on the lines suggested by the Board of Trade, and modified by the Privy Council Committee, and the Board of Trade was instructed to prepare drafts of a commission and instructions for "such persons as His Majesty shall appoint to be Governor of the Province."²⁹

The constitutional scheme which resulted from the combined wisdom of the Board of Trade and Plantations and that of the Plantation Committee of the Privy Council is to be found in three documents, the order in Council which has already been mentioned, the commission to the first Governor,³⁰ and his instructions.³¹ The framework was outlined in the order in council and the practical details were added in the commission and instructions.

In its form the constitution given in the order in council was deliberately modelled on the type prevalent in the American colonies, "as far as difference of circumstances will permit."³²

The civil constitution consisted of a Governor and Council for the legislative and administrative responsibilities of the province, and a Chief Justice in charge of an elaborate judicial system.

The Governor according to the order in council was to have "like powers and authority in respect to the administration of civil government as are contained in the commissions to the governors of American colonies as far as the differences of circumstance and situation will admit." He was to be "assisted in the administration of government" by a council consisting of four ex-officio members, the chief justice, the commandant of troops, the superintendent of trade, and the secretary of the province, and nine persons appointed by His Majesty "in like manner as the Councils in the American colonies."

²⁹ Order in Council, 1 Nov., 1765, C.O. 267/1.

³⁰ Commission to Charles O'Hara, Letters patent, 6 Geo. III, Pt. I, 13.

³¹ Instructions to Charles O'Hara, 6 Feb., 1766, C.O. 268/2.

³² Order in Council, 1 Nov., 1765, C.O. 267/1.

Together the Governor and Council were empowered to make ordinances and regulations necessary for the province, for the welfare of the inhabitants and for the advancement of trade, with the usual restriction that such ordinances should not be repugnant to the laws of England.

Power to revoke or annul any ordinances so made was expressly reserved to His Majesty in Council.

For matters of procedure and attendance the Council were to be under the same rules "as are prescribed in respect to councils in the American colonies," and they and the Governor were to take "the oaths required to be taken by Governors and Councils in the American colonies."

One subject was reserved as outside the Governor's authority. He was not to make any grants of land without express and particular directions from His Majesty.

For the work of preparing acts and ordinances of the Government and transacting "all such business as does appertain to the office of the Secretary in the American colonies," and for keeping record and register of all public acts and orders, wills and other deeds respecting property, a Secretary of the province was to be appointed, and to facilitate the transaction of affairs with the natives there was also to be a Secretary "conversant in the Moorish language."

A superintendent of trade resident in the Gambia, and a collector to see to the execution of the Navigation Laws and the new law imposing duties on gum³³ completed the list of leading officials in the civil establishment, exclusive of those responsible for the judicial system.

The details of arrangements for the administration of justice were somewhat elaborately worked out, but the main form was simple. A Chief Justice was to be appointed with full power to hear and determine all criminal cases, and all manner of civil pleas in the territory, saving a right of appeal to the Governor in Council in all cases of error in the common law proceedings and in cases of equity, when the cause of the suit should exceed £20, and saving also a further right of appeal to His Majesty in his Privy Council.

To see to the due execution of the civil and criminal processes and to the decrees of the Chief Justice the Governor

³³ 5 Geo. III, c. 37. An act for laying certain duties on Gum Senega.

was to appoint annually a sheriff to act "under the same restrictions, security and privileges imposed on or enjoyed by sheriffs in England, as far as the difference in circumstance will admit."

"For the administration of justice as well civil as criminal of an inferior nature and value" justices of the peace were appointed by the Governor for each of the subordinate departments of government, as well as for the capital of the province, with "all the powers of justices of the peace in England as far as the different circumstances will admit."

For keeping the public peace the justices were to appoint constables with the same powers as those of constables in England.

The judicial system it will be noted, was formed on an English, not an American, model.

To confine the Chief Justice to his proper place of activity it was provided that though he was to have a seat in the Council and to rank next in order to the Governor he was not, in case of the death or absence of the Governor to succeed to the chief command, "it being conceived that the offices of Governor and Chief Justice are incompatible."

The military establishment was to consist of three companies of foot stationed in the province for its protection, the commandant of the whole force being the eldest captain of the three companies, who was to have the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in Africa only.

To guard the coast and prevent gum smuggling and to assist in transporting troops, two or more armed sloops were to be employed, with two flat-bottomed armed vessels to guard the river mouth.

Nothing was said about the functions of the other officers who appear in the list of the proposed establishment, an agent for the affairs of the province, two ministers and a school-master.

Some of the indefinite provisions of this scheme outlined in the order in council were elucidated by the commission and instructions to the Governor, drawn up by the Board of Trade in accordance with royal orders.³⁴

The Governor's position was made clearer; he was

³⁴ Commission and instructions to O'Hara, C.O. 268/2.

appointed "Captain-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over our Province of Senegambia in Africa," and the powers by means of which he was to secure the objects for which he was appointed—the maintenance of order in the province, its defence and the promotion of trade—were expounded. In a case of disagreement between the Governor and Council in making ordinances and regulations for the government of the province it was provided that the Governor was "to have a negative voice."⁸⁵ His power to control the Council was further assisted by the provision that while the appointment of the Council was a matter for His Majesty, the Governor was to choose nine Protestant inhabitants who, with the four ex-officio members, were to compose the Council, and in case of vacancies he might make temporary appointments till His Majesty's pleasure were known.⁸⁶ Further, the Governor might suspend any member of the Council and none of the Council might depart from the province without leave of absence obtained from the Governor, who in his turn might not come to England without express sanction from the Crown.⁸⁷ Membership of the Council was dependent on the taking of certain oaths of allegiance, those in 1 Geo. I, "for the security of His Majesty's person," 28 Car. II, "for preventing danger from Popish recusants" and those "usually taken" by Governors in American colonies "for the due execution of their office and for the impartial administration of justice."⁸⁸

Details of the procedure in framing ordinances and regulations were given in the instructions, of which the most important were that there was to be no "mixing of matters" in an ordinance, but each separate matter was to have a separate ordinance, and every ordinance was to be submitted for His Majesty's approval within three months of its passing.⁸⁹

The Governor's relations with his Council having been expounded, his judicial powers were enumerated as those of erecting courts of judicature, appointing judges, commissions of oyer and terminer, justices of the peace, sheriffs and other necessary officers, with power to pardon criminals until the

⁸⁵ O'Hara's Commission, clause 4.

⁸⁶ O'Hara's Instructions, clauses 6, 10.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11, 12, 45.

⁸⁸ O'Hara's Commission, clause 2.

⁸⁹ O'Hara's Instructions, clause 16.

royal pleasure were known. These powers, with that of sitting in Council in a court of appeal from the decision of the Chief Justice, gave the Governor a controlling influence in judicial as in legislative and administrative matters.⁴⁰

His military powers were those of raising forces, executing martial law and doing everything belonging to a captain-general, while his relations with the commandant of the African troops were made clear by the express provision that he was "superior in whatever concerns the military as well as civil establishments."⁴¹

In addition he was vested with certain strictly limited naval powers. He had authority to appoint captains, lieutenants, masters of ships and other officers, and power to execute martial law in time of war according to 22 Geo. I, "for amending and explaining terms relating to the government of His Majesty's forces by sea," but he was not given any jurisdiction over offences committed on His Majesty's ships on the high seas, or in rivers or creeks in the province. Offences committed in these places were to be tried by Admiralty Commission, though disorders committed on shore by officers of His Majesty's vessels might be tried according to the law of the country.⁴²

Civil, military and naval establishments were all designed to assist in the great object of making the new province a profitable base for trade, and the relations of the Governor and Council to the trading population therefore needed careful definition. Though "Free Trade to Africa" was an established principle to which Board of Trade and Privy Council had expressed their loyalty, unregulated trade in the river had been shown in the months before the royal province was created to have been prejudicial to the best English interest, and the problem of uniting freedom and control was in this, as in any other constitution, no easy one to solve.

The Governor was instructed to do nothing to restrain "that free and open commerce allowed by Parliament to all subjects," except in cases where defence of the settlement was in question.⁴³ At the same time he was authorised to

⁴⁰ O'Hara's Commission, clause 4.

⁴¹ O'Hara's Commission, clause 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, clause 6.

⁴³ O'Hara's Instructions, clause 29.

make regulations of trade, but "only with strict regard to the interest of traders."⁴⁴ His other duties in promoting commerce were those of investigating all possible means of extending it, and of putting down disorders due to the practices of unscrupulous traders.

The Superintendent of Trade was to be strictly subordinate to the Governor, and the particular instructions issued to him⁴⁵ do not add much information as to how this delicate balance between restriction and freedom was to be adjusted. The most practical part of his duties was that he should keep the Board of Trade informed as to the condition of affairs in the province.

On the question whether the officers in the service should or should not be allowed to engage in private trade the designers of the Senegambian constitution did not follow the Company of Merchants and allow it freely, but they recognised that the conditions of the country made a certain amount of commerce necessary even for those who were not trying to make profits from trade, and the officers were therefore allowed to barter goods on the public account for procuring stores, but they were not to carry on "any private trade or traffick whatsoever on their own account further than may be absolutely necessary for the supply of mere personal wants."⁴⁶ Once allowed these two reasons for engaging in trading operations the officers had obvious facilities for breaking the law against private trade.

After the arrangements for administration and defence had been made one other branch of the English establishment remained to be set up. "To the end that the Church of England may be established both in principle and practice" two ministers were to be sent out, and the Governor was instructed to assist in the setting apart of places of worship where the English service should be used, and "God Almighty be devoutly and duly served." The hope was also expressed that "the inhabitants may by degrees be induced to embrace the Protestant religion." While this was to be the official church establishment the subjects in the province were not to

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, clause 31.

⁴⁵ Instructions to Superintendent of Trade, C.O. 268/2.

⁴⁶ O'Hara's Instructions, clause 30.

be restrained from free liberty of conscience or, subject to licence from the Governor, from the exercise of any persuasion "that is not subversive of government." No ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the See of Rome was, however, to be allowed, or any foreign ecclesiastical jurisdiction whatsoever, and no one who should refuse to take the oaths of allegiance should be allowed to remain in the province.⁴⁷

The rest of the Governor's instructions were concerned with restrictions and regulations of all kinds, advice as to the relation of the Governor with his neighbours the French and Moors, and directions about the way in which the forts and property of the Company of Merchants were to be taken into Crown possession.

One important part of the new administration, its financial basis, was not described either in the act of 1765, or in the order in council for the erection of the new province. This was, as in the case of the Company of Merchants, left to be provided by annual grants made in Parliament, though the scale of the provision needed for the province was estimated in the scheme for the civil and military establishment. Salaries to the officers were estimated on a far more generous scale than they had been by the Company of Merchants, the Governor was allowed a salary of £1,200, the chief justice £480, the superintendent of trade and the secretary £200 each, the Moorish secretary £100, the ministers £100 each, and the schoolmaster £50. For the three independent companies subsistence and clothing, provision and contingent expenses were estimated at £6,000 per annum, £500 per annum was to provide for the upkeep of the forts and other contingent expenses, and £1,000 in the first year for the purchase and upkeep of the armed sloop.⁴⁸ There were some variations from the preliminary estimate when the new administration was actually established, the chief being that the £500 allowed for contingent expenses was increased to £2,000 per annum and the £1,000 for the armed sloop remained a fixed annual charge.⁴⁹ The sum required for this scale of expenditure was not granted by Parliament in one annual complete grant, as

⁴⁷ O'Hara's Instructions, clauses 21, 22.

⁴⁸ Appendix to Order in Council, 1 Nov., 1765, C.O. 267/1.

⁴⁹ Estimate of Expenses for Senegambia, 1766, C.O. 268/2.

the expenses of the three companies were met in the national military outlay, while the sum needed for the civil establishment of Senegambia and the fort upkeep was voted separately. The regular annual grant made for the support of the province varied from £5,550 to £6,336 os. 9½*d.*⁵⁰ As in the case of all grants received from the Treasury at this period, about five per cent of every grant disappeared in fees and payments made to those who issued the money.⁵¹ The work of applying for and receiving the grants from the Treasury and sending out the necessary supplies for the coast was given to the agent appointed for the province. In the words of his commission the agent was appointed "for the receiving of all moneys that shall be issued for the service of our Province of Senegambia, in Africa and for the paying over and applying the same in the manner and under the directions hereinafter mentioned, and for transacting the affairs and carrying on the necessary correspondence of our said province."⁵² The directions which followed instructed the agent to obey what orders he might receive from the Lords of the Treasury. Three men received commission as agent for Senegambia, Joseph Bullock, who held the office from 1765-1772,⁵³ Christopher Nesham, whose commission was dated 24th June, 1772, and who presented accounts to 1774,⁵⁴ and Thomas Bullock, whose commission was dated 25th June, 1775, and who presented accounts for 1774-1784.⁵⁵

To estimate the expense of the province it is not enough to add together the accounts of the various agents and of the military charges, as at times the Governor incurred debts for emergency expenses beyond the authorised grants. In the first three years of the royal administration in Senegambia the Governor exceeded the estimate for contingent expenses by £8,000,⁵⁶ and later in eighteen months he exceeded it by £3,500.⁵⁷ A Lieutenant-Governor who followed asserted that

⁵⁰ *Commons' Journal*, XXX, 657*b*; XXXIII, 326*a*.

⁵¹ Audit of Joseph Bullock's account, A.O. 1/1317/584*a*.

⁵² Commission to Joseph Bullock, 1765, E. 403/2480.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, and A.O. 1/1317/584*a*.

⁵⁴ Commission to Christopher Nesham, E. 403/2481, and Nesham's account, C.O. 267/2.

⁵⁵ Commission to Thomas Bullock, E. 403/2481, and Audit Office Declared Accounts, 10 Feb., 1791, A. 1/1317/584*b*.

⁵⁶ O'Hara to the Treasury, Aug., 1768, C.O. 267/14.

⁵⁷ O'Hara to the Treasury, C.O. 267/1.

he was forced to incur heavy debts in carrying out the duties of his office. Such emergency debts make an attempt to draw up a balance sheet for the new province a much more complex undertaking than it would at first sight appear. The Board of Trade and the Treasury had at one time to hold a special conference to explore the mysteries of the first Governor's accounts, which they reported as "so complicated and made out in so unusual a manner that it is impossible to explain them . . . in a letter."⁵⁸

On the whole the financial provision for Senegambia was made on a much more generous scale than that for the rest of the coast, considering that in the territory under the Company of Merchants £13,000 was a usual grant for the upkeep of ten scattered forts, while in Senegambia the basis of the English responsibilities was only two forts. The explanation of the comparatively larger sum was the more elaborate, and therefore more expensive, administration provided for a settlement which was a Crown province.

With the establishment of the Senegambian administration a new period in the history of British West Africa began. For the first time a part of the coast came under direct Crown control and was considered a province instead of being, as that under the Company of Merchants' administration continued to be, an alien territory in which the English had rented certain trading stations. From the erection of the new province in 1766, when the first crown governor entered the province, to its loss during the American War the history of the two parts of the West African coast connected with England was widely separated. Senegambia, a colony under Crown administration, has its place with the American colonies and the West Indies; while the Gold Coast belongs to the group of trading forts ruled by company government. The former territory was subject to the Navigation Laws and the restrictions of a carefully designed civil constitution, the latter was free from the Navigation restrictions, and was only loosely controlled by the merchant committee. A certain link between the two territories is provided by the French rivalry which prevailed in both, but even this made less connection between

⁵⁸ Report of joint conference of the Board of Trade and Plantations and the Treasury, 16 Oct., 1776, C.O. 268/2.

Senegal and the Gold Coast, than between Senegal and the West Indies. It is true that both districts had a West African native problem, but the Moorish problem in Senegambia was entirely different from the native question of the Gold Coast. The fortunes and development of the two districts remained separate till they were relinked after the losses of the American War.

CHAPTER VI

SENEGAMBIA UNDER GOVERNOR CHARLES O'HARA, 1765 TO 1776

THE first Crown Governor appointed for the province of Senegambia was Colonel Charles O'Hara.

His commission as Governor was dated 28th December, 1765,¹ his instructions were signed on 6th February, 1766,² and on the 14th April, 1766, he arrived at the Senegal to take up his new duties.³ A month was spent by him in preparations of various kinds before he summoned his first council on the 13th May and formally inaugurated the new administration.⁴

Charles O'Hara was not a man who has claimed a large place among the biographies of national worthies, and a personal characteristic which brought him into trouble with the Colonial Secretary adds to the difficulty of sketching a full-length portrait of him. He had apparently an overmastering aversion to correspondence, and his dispatches are so spasmodic that they give a very incomplete picture both of his own doings as Governor, and of the fortunes of the province under his rule. There are among the Colonial Office and Board of Trade papers fairly detailed dispatches for the first five months after his arrival, they become infrequent during the next three years, then stop altogether for two years, four rather brief dispatches are all that appear in the following two years, but in 1774 there was a sudden revival of correspondence due to an extremely direct reprimand from Lord Dartmouth, and a period of epistolary virtue set in, marked by one long and detailed dispatch in January, 1774 (after which O'Hara was for some months away from the province), and regular, though brief, correspondence throughout 1775

¹ In Board of Trade and Plantations Entry Book, C.O. 268/2.

² *Ibid.*

³ O'Hara to Conway, 20 April, 1766, C.O. 267/13.

⁴ O'Hara to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 28 May, 1766, C.O. 267/1.

until the end of O'Hara's rule.⁵ A summing up of the situation shows that for ten years there are dispatches covering about eighteen months adequately, but with a great gulf of over eight years between the first five of these months and the last thirteen. Fortunately there are other sources from which to supplement O'Hara's own accounts, and from which the figure of this uncommunicative Governor and his work for the province may be sketched, although the outline will be somewhat faint in parts.

O'Hara had been told in his instructions that there was a threefold object before the new administration, maintenance of order, defence of the province and extension of trade. These three objects he appears to have tried very faithfully to fulfil. The new province was certainly far from being an easy one to administer. There had been no definition of the boundaries of the territory which was ceded by France to England, so that the extent of his responsibilities was not clearly known. The capital of the province was on the island of St. Louis, which lay just within the bar at the mouth of the River Senegal, and on it the French had built a fort, the ruinous condition of which excited O'Hara's military concern immediately on his arrival. Except on the island of St. Louis there was no fortified place on the Senegal, and the nearest English fort was that on James Island in the River Gambia. When O'Hara began his governorship the French were holding the island of Goree, restored to them by the peace, and in spite of the treaty were successfully attempting to push trade in the Gambia from a base at Albreda.⁶

Beyond the fortified stations there were trading posts of various degrees of solidity and importance up the two great rivers of the province and on the sea coast. The terms of the Act of 1765 had vested the sea coast from Sallee in Barbary to Cape Roxo, some fifteen hundred miles, in His Majesty, out of this great extent of territory only that part lying between Cape Blanco and Cape Rouge, a coast line of about five hundred miles, formed the province of Senegambia, the valuable part of the northern district coming within the Mediterranean sphere of influence. Five hundred miles of

⁵ O'Hara's dispatches, C.O. 267/1, 13, 14, 15, 16, and C.O. 268/3.

⁶ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, April, 1764, C.O. 391/71.

coast, two great rivers and undefined borders gave wide enough scope for the most enterprising of governors, if he hoped at all to put into practice the duty of defence and the keeping of order, while the presence of the French as close neighbours and rivals added a reminder that constant vigilance was essential were the English claims to exclusive trade to be asserted. O'Hara's early dispatches give a lugubrious picture of things as they were on his arrival: the fort of St. Louis "very indifferent in strength," its position open to attack, the ammunition in it "quite unfit for use," provisions very scanty and James Fort in the Gambia also in great need of repair.⁷ With all the zest and enthusiasm of the new-comer, O'Hara set himself to the task of remedying this unhappy state of affairs. He plunged into the work of repairing the forts and setting them in a condition of defence, and made suggestions for the building of new forts at strategic points such as near the bar on the Guinea side of the River Senegal, and the establishment of a settlement on the mainland from which the island could be regularly supplied with provisions. After six weeks' experience in the province O'Hara came to the conclusion that his instructions were faulty in certain parts, and he did not hesitate to point out the errors to the Secretary of State. The three companies provided in the establishment, he asserted, were a totally inadequate force for the protection of all the settlements in the Senegal and Gambia, and a suggestion made in his instructions that vacancies in the companies should be filled by the enrolment of blacks (not exceeding one-third of the whole number) he opposed as impolitic, because the white soldiers would consider themselves ill-used if asked to serve with natives, and it would destroy "that subordination to which the negroes submit, and which is essentially necessary in Africa."⁸

Military defence having been the first matter of attention, the extension of English influence and therefore of trading possibilities came next, and on this matter O'Hara also showed his readiness to take the initiative and reform an unsatisfactory state of affairs. When he wrote, English knowledge of the

⁷ O'Hara to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 28 May, 1766, C.O. 267/1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

district stopped four leagues from the coast, but seized, as many other Europeans have been, with the fascination of the interior, he proposed that efforts should be made to increase English knowledge by dispatching "intelligent people," chosen by consuls at Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli and Cairo, to travel with the Moorish caravans and secure the needed information about what lay in the interior.⁹ A more immediate scheme of extension that he proposed was that an English settlement should be founded at the mines of Galam, a great caravan centre, which he considered would make a most valuable trading outpost. The expedition to Galam he offered to lead in person. Concerning the actual conditions of trade within the province O'Hara had again a gloomy picture of present discontents to draw. The trade of the river, owing to the absence of any efficient force, was in great disorder, so great that he heard rumours of certain English merchants bribing the Moors to fire on others.¹⁰

The merchandise used in the unregulated commerce was practically entirely Dutch or French, in spite of the English exclusive trading rights. On parts of the coast where the English could not claim an exclusive trade O'Hara thought that so great was the preference for Dutch and French merchandise that any attempt to prevent English merchants from using those foreign commodities would be impolitic, as the Dutch and French who could not be kept out would be able to undersell them. The greatest hindrance to successful English commerce in O'Hara's eyes was the insidious French influence in the territory which they had surrendered by the treaty. They had broken the treaty by founding since its signature a settlement at Bain, a village on the mainland opposite Goree, also at two important trading places on the coast between the Gambia and the Senegal, Jolly and Portodally, and they persisted in keeping their settlement at Albreda, within the Gambia. These infringements of the treaty meant in O'Hara's eyes the destruction of the colony's prosperity, but as they were matters beyond his powers he submitted them for diplomatic intervention.¹¹

⁹ O'Hara to Conway, 28 May, 1766, C.O. 267/13.

¹⁰ O'Hara to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 28 May, 1766, C.O. 267/1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

While O'Hara from the beginning of his governorship showed great energy and attention in securing the defences of the province, he was not proceeding with equal celerity to establish the constitutional forms that had been arranged for the colony. A month after his arrival the first council met for the formal business of the reading of the royal command and the taking of oaths by the Governor and Councillors.¹² This Council consisted of the Governor, the Commandant and the Secretary, who were the *ex-officio* members, two captains as "ordinary members," and four others whom the Governor "thought fit to add." Nothing beyond the formal business was done at this meeting, and there is no sign of full Council activity under O'Hara's rule. Nor is there any sign of the erection of the judicial system. The second Chief Justice appointed for the province, Chief Justice Morse, stated in some notes on Senegambia, which he submitted to the Secretary of State in 1782, that O'Hara and the first Chief Justice had attempted repeatedly to establish the system, but found it an impossible task owing to the absence of Europeans, there not being twenty white persons, exclusive of the military in the province.¹³ Certainly O'Hara's own dispatches allude neither to council nor to judicial system, and if he had vainly attempted to set the constitutional machinery working he did not think his failure worth recording. The main objects of interest to him, the French rivalry and the need to extend English influence, were not matters in which either council or judicial system could have been of much assistance.

In his attempt to make a reality of the third object of the settlement, the maintenance of order, and to secure the enforcement of the Navigation Laws, O'Hara came into conflict with some of the traders who had thriven under the old unregulated dispensation and who resented his interference with their freedom. A certain Anthony Bacon, of London, merchant, lodged a petition with the Board of Trade against O'Hara, because he had prevented the fulfilling of a contract to supply a foreign vessel with slaves.¹⁴

The petitioner protested that the delivery of slaves bought

¹² O'Hara to Conway, 28 May, 1766, C.O. 267/13.

¹³ Morse to Townshend, 12 August, 1782, C.O. 267/20.

¹⁴ Petition of Anthony Bacon, C.O. 267/13.

by British merchants on the coast of Africa to foreign ships had been constantly practised and was always esteemed licit, and a very advantageous branch of commerce to Great Britain. The Board of Trade, instead of pronouncing on this interpretation of the Navigation Laws, requested O'Hara, in a letter which he considered a rebuke, to defend himself against the charges in the petition. This he did with ability and force,¹⁵ pointing out that the Navigation Acts of 12 Car. II, c. 18, and 7 and 8 W. III, c. 23 prohibited the trading of foreign vessels in British colonies in Africa and also that the acts of 12 Car. II, c. 18, and 15 Car. II, c. 7, compelled masters of vessels arriving in His Majesty's colonies to enter their vessels with the officer of customs. Both provisions had been broken by Anthony Bacon's agent, and as O'Hara pointed out, a collector of customs had been specially appointed for the execution of the laws of trade and navigations, which appointment, O'Hara added, with perhaps unconscious sarcasm, seemed to him to indicate that the Government intended the laws of trade and navigation to be executed in the province. In reply to Bacon's protest that trading with foreign vessels was an established practice in the province, O'Hara answered that the trade was an illicit one, however much it had been practised, and "Mr. Bacon himself a member of Parliament surely believes that every act of Parliament remains in force till it has been repealed." Apart from the legal aspect of the question, the material loss to British commerce by this smuggling trade he estimated at over £200,000 sterling per annum. O'Hara's letter ended in a note almost of despair. The oaths which he had taken on entering office included one required by 7 and 8 W. III that he should do his utmost to see that the Navigation Acts were *bona fide* observed under penalty of loss of office. Having attempted (as bound by oath to do) to see that the acts were enforced, he was reprimanded by the Board of Trade for interfering with the freedom of the trade. He expressed himself at a loss to see how to act, and petitioned for more precise instructions. If a reply was sent to O'Hara's request for definition of his duties in the protection of trade, it is not recorded in the entry books, and the Bacon controversy

¹⁵ O'Hara to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 1 Sept., 1766, C.O. 267/13.

was not the last trouble about the interpretation of the Navigation Acts. The right of English merchants to trade with foreign vessels in the province was again disputed when a Governor of James Fort, Gambia, refused to allow the agent of a Liverpool merchant to put negroes on board a French vessel at Albreda.¹⁶ In answer to a petition from the merchant concerned three of the Board of Trade reported to Lord Shelburne on the subject in an entirely inconclusive manner. They gave it as their opinion that the justice or injustice of the act of the commandant of James Fort depended on the French position at Albreda, on which subject the Board had made representation to His Majesty in 1764. If Great Britain had an exclusive right to the Gambia, then the trade to the river was subject to the restrictions of 7 and 8 W. III, in which case the commandant of James Fort was right in his action, but if the crown of France were in possession of Albreda, then there was no law to prevent His Majesty's subjects from supplying the French vessels with slaves.¹⁷ Again the cautious Board of Trade would not commit themselves, and again the Governor of the province was left to interpret the peace treaty himself, with an almost positive certainty of being found in the wrong whatever he did. After this Navigation Act episode came a period about which neither dispatches nor Board of Trade papers provide much information. O'Hara's correspondence languished, until in October, 1773, an indignant letter from Lord Dartmouth, who had become Secretary for the Colonies in 1772, demanded an explanation of the Governor's negligence.¹⁸ The cause which stirred the Colonial Secretary to inquiry as to the welfare of Senegambia was an account which he received from some English merchants of a successful French *coup* in securing a cargo of gum at Portendic and getting it safely to Le Havre.¹⁹ Lord Dartmouth protested indignantly to O'Hara that such an important incident should have been reported to him by the Governor, and the information chanced to be of especial moment as the Secretary had already been made anxious concerning French activities by rumours of the formation of a new French company for African

¹⁶ Board of Trade and Plantations to Shelburne, 5 March, 1767.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Dartmouth to O'Hara, 27 Oct., 1773, C.O. 268/3.

¹⁹ Dartmouth to O'Hara, 18 Aug., 1773, C.O. 267/16.

trade. The company had prepared an expedition ostensibly for Goree, but from news that Lord Dartmouth had received it appeared that the real object of the Company was to establish trading places at Arguin and Portendic. Unlike his more cautious predecessor, Lord Dartmouth pronounced clearly that any such settlement made by the French would be a violation of His Majesty's rights,²⁰ and he had written to O'Hara in August, 1773, instructing him to take particular care for the security of Arguin and Portendic, and to assert His Majesty's exclusive rights to those places should any aggressive French action be taken.

So serious had the danger of the new French Company been felt to be that Captain Collingwood was expressly sent out to bring the news to the province and to patrol the coast and assist in clearing away marauders. It was very shortly after the dispatch of Captain Collingwood that Lord Dartmouth received the news of the arrival of the cargo of gum at Le Havre about which he was informed by a merchant and not by the Governor. At a time of what appeared to the Secretary to be of such critical moment the Governor's negligence seemed particularly reprehensible, and the dispatch of October, 1773, recalling him to a sense of his duty was not couched in hesitating terms. Lord Dartmouth roundly censured the Governor for culpable neglect of his instructions, by which he had been directed to keep up a regular correspondence with the Colonial Office, and he further suggested that O'Hara had shown no sign of having given active attention to the protection of the gum trade and preservation of the province from foreign intervention. In January, 1774, this censure was received by O'Hara, and his reply was a long and detailed dispatch describing conditions on the coast and attempting to justify and explain his negligence.²¹

For the neglect of dispatch writing O'Hara's defence was that he had corresponded with Lord Dartmouth's predecessor, that he had made personal report at Lord Weymouth's office when he was in England in 1770, and that, therefore, information as to the state of the province had been received in the Secretary of State's office up to that time. For the later period O'Hara

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ O'Hara to Dartmouth, 24 Jan., 1774, C.O. 267/16.

did not attempt to deny his neglect of correspondence, but defended it on the ground that nothing worth reporting had occurred in the province in the last three years. This ingenious reply Lord Dartmouth received graciously in the name of the King, but while accepting the apology he reported that search for the dispatches to the Duke of Richmond and Lord Shelburne to which O'Hara had alluded as giving all necessary information on the state of the province during their respective years of office as Secretary of State, had failed to discover letters containing in detail "any precise return to the many objects of inquiry, examination and report pointed out in your instructions concerning the nature and extent of your government, the state of its trade, produce and inhabitancy and means of improving its commerce or opening new channels."²² O'Hara was therefore requested to remedy this state of ignorance in the Colonial Office as quickly as possible.

On the immediate question of the intrusion of French traders within the English bounds O'Hara made a long and detailed defence,²³ explaining that he had done his utmost to prevent the French from trading at Portendic as soon as he discovered that their real object was not trade at Goree as they had pretended, even going so far as to press a private English vessel for the service. Unhappily the bar and the winds were so unfavourable that the vessel could not get to sea before the French had departed safely with a supply of about two hundred tons of gum. In defending his omission to send information of this attempt earlier, O'Hara pointed out that the first information he received as to the true object of the French vessels was from an unreliable source, and "it would also have been improper to inform the government that there were French ships at Goree which is never without them." When the French vessels were at Portendic O'Hara had written to Lord Dartmouth in a dispatch of 10th May, 1773,²⁴ which he sent by an American vessel as there was no chance of sending straight to England by a British vessel till the following July or August. The dispatch sent on the American vessel failed to reach Lord Dartmouth and it was

²² Dartmouth to O'Hara, 21 March, 1774, C.O. 268/3.

²³ O'Hara to Dartmouth, 24 Jan., 1774, C.O. 267/16.

²⁴ O'Hara to Dartmouth, 10 May, 1773, C.O. 267/16.

not till a duplicate which travelled viâ the West Indies reached England that Lord Dartmouth had the Governor's account of the important news. The evident honesty of this part of Col. O'Hara's defence led to its being accepted, and there was no further criticism of his attention to the defence of trade in the province. O'Hara concluded his apologetic by informing Lord Dartmouth of the steps he had taken to prevent a recurrence of the danger. He had requested Captain Collingwood, of H.M.S. *Rainbow*, to allow the *Weazle*, sloop of war, to remain on the coast till the end of May, by which time the gum season would be nearly over. To this Captain Collingwood had agreed and the safety of the coast seemed for the time secured.

After making his defence O'Hara asked for the sake of his health to be allowed to visit England, whither he went in the course of the year.²⁵ In 1775 he was back in Senegambia and was at once involved again in difficulties with the French. Captain Clarke, who commanded the province in O'Hara's absence, had been in correspondence with the French Governor on the question of the French right to Portendic trade, which showed that the French were by no means prepared to acquiesce in the English assertion of exclusive rights there.²⁶ O'Hara's plan for dealing with the French disregard of English claims was to secure the coast by means of the Royal Navy, and as Captain Cornwallis was on the coast in command of a squadron sent out for its defence, he informed Cornwallis that French aggression was expected and asked him to leave the *Weazle* on the coast to prevent the French from trading at Portendic, thus repeating the successful expedient of 1774.²⁷ However, Cornwallis reported himself unable to comply with O'Hara's request, a refusal which led to an acrimonious correspondence, in the course of which O'Hara became more and more autocratic in his demands that a protecting force should be left on the coast, and Cornwallis proportionately stubborn in declining to order it. In one of his letters on the subject O'Hara suggested that it would be the wish of the Admiralty for Cornwallis to leave the force asked for, to which Cornwallis retorted that although "your Excellency has been

²⁵ O'Hara to Dartmouth, 10 Feb., 1775, C.O. 267/16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

pleased to enter pretty largely into my instructions without ever having seen them" he still regretted his inability to comply with the request. The Royal Navy having failed to offer itself for coast patrol work, O'Hara later in the season sent the *Lord Dartmouth*, armed schooner, to Portendic to drive off intruders.

In the Gambia quarrel there were also developments when James Fort was under the command of a bellicose Lieutenant-Governor, Matthias MacNamara. His fierce assertion of the English claim to the exclusive trade of the rivers, while it appeared to be in accordance with the policy of watchful care of English rights which Lord Dartmouth had pressed upon O'Hara as his duty, led to considerable difficulties. MacNamara, in exercising his office of guardian of English interest in the Gambia, confiscated a French vessel which had attempted to secure wood and water in the river without asking leave of the English fort. So much stir was raised by the incident that on O'Hara's return he ordered Captain Clarke to inquire into the matter, and subsequently sent him to England with reports which were laid before the Secretary of State.²⁸ The incident shows well the narrowness of the line between what might be commended as laudable energy in the protection of national interests and what might be condemned as dangerously violent action in stirring up bad feeling between the English settlements and their neighbours.

The constitutional machinery of the province was not a subject of much interest to O'Hara, but he was forced into making some statement about the position of the Lieutenant-Governor, because rumours reached Lord Dartmouth that the office did not receive the respect due to it. On the original list of the Senegambian establishment there was no mention of a Lieutenant-Governor, and the office was a late creation. O'Hara evidently resented it, and treated its holder, MacNamara, with scant courtesy. Lord Dartmouth reproved O'Hara for his behaviour in the matter, and required explanation. This O'Hara gave with emphasis.²⁹ The grievance was not simply a theoretical objection to the office, though O'Hara

²⁷ O'Hara's correspondence with Cornwallis, in O'Hara's dispatch of 10 Feb., 1775.

²⁸ O'Hara to Dartmouth, 20 June, 1775, C.O. 267/16.

²⁹ O'Hara to Dartmouth, 13 May, 1775, C.O. 267/16.

thought it unnecessary, but to the holder. MacNamara, the youngest lieutenant in the regiment, was appointed Lieutenant-Governor over the heads of officers under whose command he had been and some of whom had served for nearly twenty years, while MacNamara had only served for two years. As the Lieutenant-Governor had the right of succession to the chief command there was matter for much discontent in his appointment.

That in a distant governorship the pen is a far mightier weapon than the sword for carving a great reputation was a maxim which O'Hara never fully learned, and almost up to the end of his service in West Africa he had to contend with Lord Dartmouth's strictures on his failure to write enough to satisfy that dispatch-loving Secretary of State. In April, 1775, Lord Dartmouth complained that O'Hara had written in very general terms of unwarrantable French encroachments without specifying incidents except in two cases, and he added, "if there have been any other attempts you ought to have stated them, if not such general expressions without referring to the facts serve only to exasperate and mislead."⁸⁰ Well might O'Hara consider himself a much tried man. In 1773 he was censured for not sending home a rumour about French trading vessels; in 1775 he was criticised for sending reports that were not sufficiently authenticated. On the subject of the French encroachments he had descanted with great frequency and detail in almost every dispatch he sent home, and as he wrote, with a patience that seemed to be wearing thin, if Lord Dartmouth would trouble himself to refer to dispatches sent to his predecessors he would find many of the details he desired. As a final expression of opinion, O'Hara reiterated his own views, those on which he had acted throughout his governorship, that by the terms of the Treaty of 1763 Goree alone was left to France, and that, therefore, the French were not entitled to any settlement at Albreda, nor to the other factories they had established on this continent, nor had they the right to trade in the creeks and rivers within the limits of the province, as all such were encroachments on His Majesty's exclusive

⁸⁰ Dartmouth to O'Hara, 20 April, 1775, C.O. 268/3.

⁸¹ O'Hara to Dartmouth, 20 June, 1775, C.O. 267/16.

rights. In this O'Hara opposed the views of the French Court, with which the English Ambassador in Paris was inclined to agree, that the French had the right to unarmed trade in the Gambia at their settlement at Albreda. In this last long dispatch, as in his first dispatch, O'Hara expressed the same conviction that anything short of clear exclusion of the French from a share in the trade of the rivers and coasts of the province would fail to secure the object of its founding in the protection of English commerce, as England, he asserted, could not fight French merchandise on equal terms, the French goods being "far superior in quality and consequently much preferred to the English goods by the natives."

In August, 1775, O'Hara wrote his last official dispatch from Senegambia to Lord Dartmouth.³² In September, Lord Dartmouth wrote to O'Hara sending the proclamation for suppressing sedition and for preventing correspondence between England and the vessels of the colonies in arms against His Majesty.³³ Special vigilance was enjoined, as there was reason to suspect that the rebels in North America were largely supplied with gunpowder and arms from ports on the African coast. Before the province had to face the war which followed from the American rebellion, O'Hara had ceased to be Governor of Senegambia. In November, 1775, he left the province and returned to England.

The tale of O'Hara as Governor of Senegambia does not end, however, with his departure from the scene of activities. His successor, the Lieutenant-Governor to whom he had shown his resentment, collected material for charges against him and an investigation into the state of the province and into O'Hara's governorship was by His Majesty's command,³⁴ undertaken by the Board of Trade. In June, 1776, they presented their report.³⁵ They found that five main charges had been preferred against O'Hara :

- (1) That he had governed arbitrarily without the advice and consent of a Council,
- (2) that he had interrupted the inhabitants in their religious observances,

³² O'Hara to Dartmouth, 18 Aug., 1775, C.O. 267/16.

³³ Dartmouth to O'Hara, 1 Sept., 1775, C.O. 268/3.

³⁴ Journal of the Board of Trade and Plantations, 23 April, 1776, C.O. 391/81.

³⁵ Report on Senegambia, 10 June, 1776, C.O. 268/2.

- (3) that he had invaded the property rights of the inhabitants both by compelling their slaves to work for him without pay, and by taking away the lands of several inhabitants against their consent and without advice of the Council,
- (4) that he had distressed the inhabitants for want of fresh provisions by certain prohibitions,
- (5) that he had engaged largely in private trade.

Against this indictment the Board recognised that there was to be set O'Hara's record that in the ten years of his government no complaint had been made against him except those which were being considered, and that in May, 1776, merchants of London trading to the Senegal had sent a memorial to the Board testifying to their satisfaction in his administration.

Yet, allowing these testimonials their place, it appeared to the Board that there were serious grounds for considering O'Hara's conduct open to complaint. The first charge they found fully proved. His neglect of the Council and judicial system was such that his own "will and discretion became the sole law of the province." The second was not substantiated, as the Governor had withdrawn an unpopular order made by him about religion. In answer to the third and fourth charges the Governor had defended himself by showing that the measures he had taken were due to public necessity, but as he acted without the Council the force of his defence was weakened. On the fifth charge it was proved that O'Hara, in partnership with Robert Brown, merchant, of London, entered largely into commercial engagements, having plantations on the island of Dominica, but he had never taken part in the concern as merchant or factor.

In summing up as judges the Board made their pronouncement recommending O'Hara's dismissal on one ground only: that finding obstructions in the way of carrying out his instructions he had failed to report the matter to His Majesty's government. They therefore submitted to His Majesty whether it could be for His Majesty's service, and to the welfare of the province to continue Charles O'Hara in the Government.

The Board of Trade having in this way prepared O'Hara's death warrant as Governor of Senegambia, it remained for

90 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

the Secretary of State for the Colonies to sign it.³⁶ As one of the serious charges against O'Hara was that of failing in regularity and thoroughness in correspondence, there was a touch of irony in the fact that his formal dismissal from office was signed by Lord George Germaine, who succeeded Lord Dartmouth in 1776.

Whatever the justice of the Board of Trade's conclusions on O'Hara's shortcomings as Governor, and those shortcomings were unmistakably evident, Senegambia suffered a severe loss in his removal from office at a most critical time in the history of the province.

³⁶ Germaine to O'Hara, 16 June, 1776, C.O. 268/3.

CHAPTER VII

THE END OF THE CROWN COLONY OF SENEGAMBIA

WHEN O'Hara left Senegambia he was succeeded in the chief command by the Lieutenant-Governor, Lieutenant Matthias MacNamara, whose appointment had caused so much resentment.¹ MacNamara asserted that because of this dislike O'Hara tried to prevent him from taking his rightful position as Acting-Governor by ordering another officer, Captain Wall, to obstruct him.² In spite of opposition, however, MacNamara eventually secured the command in 1775, though in dealing with the garrison, as he himself reported, he "had to take disagreeable measures to bring them to a sense of duty."³

One of the first tasks which MacNamara set himself in his new position was that of investigating into the conduct of his predecessor. A Council was called, and in January, 1776, the Governor and Council took into consideration complaints against O'Hara.⁴ The results of this inquiry were sent home and formed part of the indictment about which the Board of Trade held their investigation of 1776.⁵ In the province the result was the passing of an act in the Council to redress the wrongs of the dispossessed inhabitants.⁶ In addition to collecting direct charges against his predecessor MacNamara devoted a considerable correspondence to describing to Lord Dartmouth the wrecked condition in which O'Hara had left the province: the chief fort dilapidated, except for buildings prepared for the Governor's own convenience, no money or merchandise to the public credit, provisions in a putrid condition, no wine or spirits, the natives in a state of great

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 871.

² MacNamara to Dartmouth, 8 June, 1775, C.O. 267/16.

³ *Ibid.*, 26 Jan., 1776.

⁴ MacNamara to Dartmouth, 29 Jan., 1776, C.O. 267/1.

⁵ *Vide supra*, pp. 88-9.

⁶ Minutes of Council at Ft. Louis, Senegal, 28 Nov., 1776, C.O. 270/1.

hostility, the troops on the verge of mutiny, and general distress prevalent.⁷ The failure to establish a branch of the Protestant Church in the province was pointed out as a grave failure which led to even the children of the members of the Council being bred "to the Popish faith," and therefore to loyalties outside the English province. Of O'Hara's other sins and weaknesses MacNamara complained that he had done everything possible to make his successor's task a difficult one, and had taken away the great seal and the public letters, leaving only a few extracts from His Majesty's instructions. MacNamara's own activities in the command were reported as those of pacifying the natives, redressing wrongs, and repairing the dilapidated fort, especially the barracks and hospital. He did not have very long in which to practice reform and redress of complaints, as in September, 1776, the commission of Governor of Senegambia was given to John Clarke, who was sent out to supersede him.⁸ The reason for the supersession of the Acting-Governor concerned the Anglo-French relations. Letters had been received at St. James's from the French Court complaining of the high-handed behaviour of MacNamara to a certain French vessel, *La Grue*, which was found trading at Portudal and which had been seized by MacNamara's orders.⁹ Besides this trouble with France, Lord George Germaine had received other complaints of the disorder of the province and the many irregularities committed, while public tranquillity was endangered by "the rash and intemperate conduct of those entrusted with authority."¹⁰ MacNamara was therefore not considered a man to be entrusted with the royal commission as Governor-in-Chief, and in April, 1777, John Clarke arrived to take command of the province.

The commission which Clarke received as Governor-General was similar to that given to his predecessor, except that he had, for some obscure reason, the additional power of issuing commissions for the care and custody of idiots and lunatics.¹¹ His instructions varied in certain particulars from O'Hara's,

⁷ MacNamara to Dartmouth, 26 and 29 Jan., 1776, C.O. 267/1.

⁸ Commission to John Clarke, 18 Sept., 1776, C.O. 268/2.

⁹ Correspondence, June, 1776, to Jan., 1777, in dispatch of Germaine to Clarke, 5 Feb., 1777, C.O. 268/3.

¹⁰ Germaine to Clarke, 5 Feb., 1777 (enclosures), C.O. 268/3.

¹¹ Board of Trade and Plantations to His Majesty, 18 Sept., 1776, C.O. 268/2.

the main difference being that the orders concerning ¹⁸ correspondence between the Governor and the Home Government contain the recurring phrase "by one of our principal Secretaries of State,"¹² indicating the change in the Secretariat that had taken place between the time of O'Hara's instructions in 1765 and those of 1776. With his instructions Clarke received orders from Lord George Germaine telling him to make immediate inquiry into the complaints which the French Court had proffered against MacNamara.¹³

Clarke's account of the condition of the province, which he reached on 5th April, 1777,¹⁴ is even more gloomy than that given by MacNamara on his assumption of the command in November, 1775, or by O'Hara when he relieved the officers of the Company of Merchants in 1765. He found not merely dilapidation but "a very complicated scene of public fraud, embezzlement and perjury." The garrison was undisciplined, disorder reigned in every department, and far from MacNamara's having redeemed his predecessor's failure to put the constitutional machinery in complete working, Clarke reported that he had neglected every necessary civil as well as military institution.

Having been exhorted to reform the condition of the province, Clarke's initial work was the remedying of O'Hara's failure to establish the judicial system. With the assistance of the chief justice, Edward Morse, and the Council, he spent the month of April in setting up a general court of pleas, a court of oyer and terminer, and a court of Admiralty.¹⁵ One of the greatest difficulties in the way of setting up the judicial system was the lack of white inhabitants. When the courts were opened and processes began in them only twenty-two persons from whom the jury of twelve could be chosen were found, and the chief justice sat on the bench without a single officer of any kind in court except a boy who was used as clerk.¹⁶ Morse's description of the new judicature was that it served to impress the natives, but that the proceedings taken

¹² Note on Clarke's Instructions, 15 Jan., 1777, C.O. 268/2.

¹³ Germaine to Clarke, 5 Feb., 1777, C.O. 268/3.

¹⁴ Dispatches from Clarke, 4 and 26 July, 1777, C.O. 268/4.

¹⁵ Minutes of Council at Ft. Louis, Senegal, April, 1777, *passim*, C.O. 270/1.

¹⁶ Morse to Townshend, 12 Aug., 1782, C.O. 267/20.

could not be considered strictly legal. However, in spite of the chief justice's doubts the Governor was insistent that the courts should be set working, and as soon as they opened several suits were begun against MacNamara and others. All the important trials begun in these courts were continued in superior courts in England. MacNamara, after a protracted quarrel with the Governor and Council,¹⁷ was sent home to England in custody¹⁸ and had to stand trial there. Against three others true bills were found by a body which Morse described as "something like a Grand Jury," and they then were sent home, where on their arrival at Plymouth each was discharged on a writ of Habeas Corpus.¹⁹ Far from the courts providing a strengthening force to the administration, the legality of the Governor's action in sending MacNamara home a prisoner was questioned by Lord George Germaine, and the chief justice himself was charged with maladministration as the result of his judicial efforts.²⁰ On being heard, however, he was acquitted. Beyond the difficulty of securing the right and proper legal proceedings the judicature was further hampered by local conditions, as is seen in Clarke's granting leave to the chief justice to return to England in the autumn of 1777, because nothing could be done in the courts till February of the next year, as they would have to be closed during the absence of the merchants and traders.²¹ On the whole the experience of the working of the courts of judicature during Governor Clarke's rule tends to support O'Hara's view that this judicial system was unsuited to the particular circumstances of the province and could not satisfactorily be set working there.

Besides this attempt to establish the courts, Clarke investigated Anglo-French relations and, like O'Hara, came to the conclusion that strong measures were needed to check the French extension. Clarke's particular contribution to the question of the best method of dealing with this rivalry was the urgent proposal that Goree should be made an objective in the next war between the countries, since he considered it

¹⁷ Minutes of Council at Ft. Louis, Senegal, 1777, C.O. 270/1.

¹⁸ Germaine to Clark, 28 Aug., 1778.

¹⁹ Morse to Townshend, 12 Aug., 1782, C.O. 267/20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Dispatch from Clarke, 12 Sept., 1777, C.O. 268/4.

dangerous not only as a trading and military base, but also as a proselytising centre from which the French secured control over the inhabitants of Senegambia through the priests. He suggested that part of the remedy against this influence would be that "our religion, a very excellent political engine in such a case" should be established in the province.²²

While Clarke was struggling with attempts to repair the ravages of his predecessor in the command, the Board of Trade had under their consideration the charges that had been made against MacNamara, and in March, 1778, they presented their report.²³ There were three principal charges:

- (1) that he had assumed a power of raising money from the inhabitants and levied heavy fines from one who refused to pay a tax so imposed,
- (2) that he cruelly treated several masters of vessels and men of respectable character engaged in trade in Senegambia,
- (3) that he engaged largely in private trade on his own account, monopolising the trade of the island of St. Louis and trading with the French at Albreda.

The first charge was not proved, as the raising of money was by the Governor and Council; the second was proved and MacNamara's conduct was shown to be such as deterred masters of vessels and traders from having personal intercourse with him; the third was proved to some extent, it having been shown that MacNamara had shipped off one hundred negroes to the West Indies, but the monopoly was not proved, only a claim of the Governor to the right of pre-emption. The conclusion of the Board of Trade was that in view of the way in which freedom of trade had suffered from the interference of Governors or Commanders-in-Chief in private trade they submitted to His Majesty whether it could be for the royal service or for the welfare of the province to continue MacNamara as Lieutenant-Governor. This finding, which amounted to a recommendation for dismissal, was protested against by MacNamara, who appealed to the Privy Council, but the Committee of the Privy Council for Plantation Affairs saw no reason for differing from the Board of Trade

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Report on charges against MacNamara, 31 March, 1778, C.O. 268/2.

and the appeal was dismissed.²⁴ After this decision Lord George Germaine in August, 1778, informed MacNamara that His Majesty had no further need of his services as Lieutenant-Governor or superintendent of trade.²⁵ The matter which had first brought MacNamara into unfavourable prominence, the seizure of the French vessel *La Grue*, was not made part of his indictment, as the withdrawal of the French ambassador from London closed the incident.²⁶

So ended the official career of Lieutenant Matthias MacNamara in Senegambia. He was described by a contemporary enemy, Chief Justice Morse, as "a man without education, extremely brutal, vulgar and avaricious, but possessed of an uncommon share of natural parts."²⁷ His brutality and his capacity for trading both appear in the Board of Trade investigation, as does "his uncommon share of natural parts," which enabled him to put up a very good defence against what might have led to a far more damaging report.

The life of a Senegambian Governor seemed destined to come under the clouds of censure. When Clarke had been in command for just a year the Board of Trade informed him that certain charges had been brought against him, and that he should prepare to defend himself.²⁸ Most of the charges were made by MacNamara and those associated with him, and might, therefore, have received only the attention due to an attempt at revenge for Clarke's share in bringing about MacNamara's dismissal, had it not been for the debate on the doings of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading in Africa which took place in the Commons in 1777, and in the course of which the Government in Senegambia was criticised.²⁹ Though Lord North parried the attack, investigation was only deferred, not quashed, and the Colonial Secretary wrote to Clarke in August, 1778, telling him that the condition of the province was to come under Parliamentary consideration in

²⁴ Order in Council, 19 Aug., 1778, C.O. 267/6.

²⁵ Germaine to MacNamara, 28 Aug., 1778, C.O. 268/3.

²⁶ Germaine to Clarke, 28 Aug., 1778, C.O. 267/17.

²⁷ Morse to Townshend, 12 Aug., 1782, C.O. 267/20.

²⁸ Board of Trade and Plantations to Clarke, 7 April, 1778, C.O. 268/2.

²⁹ *Parl. Hist.*, XIX, 312.

the following session.³⁰ To enable Lord George Germaine to have a thorough knowledge of the subject an elaborate questionnaire was sent out to which Clarke was instructed to supply the answers. The questionnaire had been sent to O'Hara, but he had made no reply to it. Lord George Germaine's letters at this period give no impression of serious personal criticism of Clarke himself by the Home Government, but suggest rather that the Government was not in a happy position faced with Parliamentary inquiry, and was anxious to be able to make a good defence of the Crown administration in West Africa.

In 1778 an attempt was made by additional instructions to provide a remedy for some of the defects in the provincial administration, and very careful investigation was made into the activities of the Governor and Council. The ordinances passed during MacNamara's administration for reversing dispossessions made by O'Hara were reported on unfavourably by the Board of Trade and were disallowed in 1778, but at the same time the procedure of Clarke's administration in suspending these ordinances by a simple resolution instead of by ordinance was criticised as unconstitutional. An ordinance passed in Clarke's administration regulating the export of negroes was on appeal, made by the merchants, also disallowed because of a point of law. At the same time Lord George Germaine expressed the hope that the measure would be reintroduced in legal form, 'as the policy of the act was approved.'³¹ An attempt to remedy the defects due to want of education, and to carry out the provision about the Church brought to light further complexities on the condition of the Senegambian establishment. Clarke complained to the Secretary of State that the non-residence of the ministers appointed for the province was a serious drawback. In reply Lord George Germaine said that he regretted that one of the ministers could not well be ordered to the province because the climate might cause his death and therefore the ruin of a large family, but that the resignation of the other, who also had never been in the province, had been secured, and it was hoped to be able to find and send out a substitute. This was

³⁰ Germaine to Clarke, 28 Aug., 1778, C.O. 267/17.

³¹ *Ibid.*

written in August and by October the desired minister was still unfound.³²

Among the unsatisfactory conditions that were reformed was that of the position of Lieutenant-Governor. After MacNamara's dismissal His Majesty's government submitted to the demands of the officers of the garrison and appointed Captain Wall in his place, but at the same time warned the Governor that the appointment of the most senior military officer to the Lieutenant-Governorship must not be thought to have created a precedent.³³

In the autumn of 1778 Lord George Germaine reported that the various departments of His Majesty's government concerned with Senegambia had been giving the state of the province their careful consideration, and the result, an economical scheme for the protection of the province, was forwarded to Clarke.³⁴ The most striking feature of the scheme was the order for the purchase of seventy slaves who were to be kept for the work of the island of St. Louis, and for James Fort, Gambia, and who were to be subsisted according to the methods of the Company of Merchants, whose practices were quoted as sound and economical. These slaves were not to be a substitute for the three companies, but for free black labour, which constantly appeared as a very heavy item in the Governor's expenses and one which it was extremely hard for authorities in England to check. Accompanying it was a list of the Europeans allowed for the Senegambian service and of the number of rations to be allowed daily. It was hoped in this way to check the Governor's expenditure.

In the midst of Lord George Germaine's schemes for reform and economy Governor Clarke died, a victim to one of the epidemics which frequently swept the West African forts, on 18th August, 1778.³⁵ Unfortunately for his reputation as Governor there was in his time of office a heavier toll than usual in the number of dispatches captured on the way from the coast. In October, 1778, Lord George Germaine wrote that the last dispatches from Senegambia had been captured, and that nothing had reached England since September of the

³² Germaine to Clarke, 10 Oct., 1778, C.O. 267/17.

³³ Germaine to Clarke, 28 Aug., 1778, C.O. 267/17.

³⁴ Germaine to Clarke, 16 Oct., 1778, C.O. 268/3.

³⁵ List of deaths in Ft. Louis, Senegal, C.O. 267/18.

previous year.⁸⁶ Evidently, however, Clarke's sixteen months of work as Governor were not a failure, as the Colonial Secretary wrote that he had heard good accounts of the trade of the province and of the condition of the garrisons from merchants who had made a safe voyage.⁸⁷

Clarke's sudden death was not only regrettable because it was the loss of a good administrator, but also because it came just at the time of the outbreak of hostilities between France and England, and provided an opportunity for an unfortunate quarrel as to his successor.⁸⁸ Immediately on Clarke's death Ensign Fall took up the chief command and sent a message to Lieutenant Lacy, who was in charge of James Fort, Gambia, where the Lieutenant Governor had resided, as Captain Wall had not by that time been sent out to the Lieutenant-Governorship. The message, owing to a series of mischances, took some time to reach the Gambia, and when it did Lacy ordered Fall to give up the command to Lieutenant Stanton, which Fall refused to do. In January, 1779, Fall came into conflict with some of the garrison, and they, seizing an opportunity afforded them, shut him out of the fort, whereupon Stanton assumed the coveted command. The result was a small war, during the progress of which a French fleet appeared and ended the quarrel by taking command of the fort themselves, and in this discreditable fashion Fort Louis returned to French possession, the terms of capitulation being surrender at discretion.

From March, 1779 to 1782, France and England fought for Senegambia. The French capture of Fort St. Louis in March, 1779, was answered by an English expedition to the coast under Lord MacLeod, who was successful in taking Goree in May, 1779, after which that island was made the English headquarters in place of Fort St. Louis.⁸⁹ But the days of civil administration were over, and the last phase of Crown government in Senegambia was that of military rule. The position was made clear in a dispatch from Lord George Germaine to Commandant Wall, who was in command at Goree. A quarrel had arisen, among the officers there, and Lord George Germaine, in giving judgment on the case and

⁸⁶ Germaine to Clarke, 10 Oct., 1778, C.O. 267/17.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Letter from Schotte, 29 March, 1779, C.O. 267/20.

⁸⁹ Macleod to Germaine, 10 May, 1779, C.O. 267/18.

supporting Commandant Wall in the command, wrote, "The whole is put under your management, for no staff or civil officers will be allowed, therefore those you found or have appointed must be struck off, nor will they be allowed either rations or pay since their appointment. You must banish all notions of a government or civil establishment, and think only of what is fitting for a garrison consisting of two hundred men."⁴⁰ On these lines the English administration continued in Senegambia until peace was made in 1783.

In the negotiations that preceded the Treaty of Versailles the Senegal and Gambia region received serious attention.⁴¹ No thought seems to have been entertained of securing a restitution of the English authority over what had been the province of Senegambia, but a general division by which the Senegal was to be restored to France, while England retained the Gambia was the basis of discussion. Matters for dispute arose concerning the conditions on which these rivers were held, and the conditions under which the gum trade was to be carried on. The English Foreign Office tried to secure an admission by France of England's exclusive right to the Gambia, and as a consequence the abandonment of a French settlement on the river at Albreda.⁴² To this Vergennes offered so firm an opposition that FitzHerbert, the English representative, ceded the point and wrote in explanation of his action, "Perhaps a disposition on our part to oblige France in this article may give us a claim to a like facility on her part as to the establishment of any factories which we may find it expedient to erect on the Gum Coast."⁴³ The final terms arranged and accepted in the Definitive Treaty of 3rd September, 1783, were that the Senegal with its dependencies and Goree should be restored to France, while England retained possession of the Gambia.⁴⁴ In neither clause was there any mention of exclusive rights. For the settlement of boundary disputes commissioners were to be appointed by

⁴⁰ Germaine to Wall, 30 May, 1781, C.O. 267/20.

⁴¹ Dispatches from the English representatives at Paris, F.O. 27/3, 5, and F.O. 148/1, 2.

⁴² Dispatch from FitzHerbert, 9 Jan., 1783, F.O. 27/5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Definitive Treaty signed at Versailles, 3 Sept., 1783, F.O. 93/15-2, France, clauses 9, 10.

the two powers,⁴⁵ and England's right to share in the gum trade was admitted.⁴⁶ The English position after the peace was therefore practically the same as that before the Seven Years' War, with the addition of an admitted right to share in the gum trade which the French had tried to keep as their own monopoly.

With the restoration of peace came a revival of the problem of administration in the Gambia region. The matter does not appear to have excited much interest, and though there was still the menace of French rivalry, the complex native question and the other conditions that in 1765 had led to the Board of Trade recommendation of Crown control⁴⁷ no attempt was made in 1783 to re-establish a form of civil administration under the Crown. Economy rather than power was the watchword of the moment, and the Company of Merchants trading to Africa who had during the period of Crown administration in Senegambia been securing for themselves a reputation for economical management,⁴⁸ reaped benefit from this reputed virtue. In 1783 an act was passed by which the Gambia was once more entrusted to the control of the Committee of the Company of Merchants.⁴⁹

The revesting of what remained of the Province of Senegambia in the much-criticised Company of Merchants is in itself something of a commentary on the experiment of the first Crown colony in West Africa. The scheme prepared in 1765 had not in practice proved a device suited to the particular circumstances of the country for which it was framed, "As in the American colonies" had not been a satisfactory constitutional guide in administration making for tropical Africa. The whole machinery had been too cumbersome and elaborate for a province where the white population was scanty and fluctuating. A Governor was almost forced to choose either, as O'Hara did, to disregard his instructions as impracticable, or, as Clarke did, to attempt to carry them out fully and run the risk of being charged with deviation from

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, clause 11.

⁴⁶ *Vide supra*, p. 57.

⁴⁷ *Vide supra*, p. 64.

⁴⁸ Germaine to Wall, 30 May, 1781, C.O., 267/20.

⁴⁹ 23 Geo. III, c. 65.

strict legality by so doing. The judicial system was too elaborate for a population entirely unaccustomed to the English methods of trial by jury, and there were not enough Europeans in the colony to carry it on without the natives. The same difficulty affected the most important part of the civil administration, the Council. As the garrison were the only permanent English residents in the colony apart from such officials as the chief justice, the Council could be little more than a board of military officers, since there was no thought of admitting natives. A scheme which the Board of Trade had suggested, but which had been over-ruled by the Lords of the Privy Council for Trade and Plantations, that all merchants trading to the island of St. Louis to the value of not less than £400 should be allowed to sit in the Council and vote, had, considering the conditions of the province, many points in its favour, and certainly would have been an interesting experiment.⁵⁰

After the failure of the Crown colony, and the passing of the Act of 1783, by which the Gambia was entrusted once more to the management of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, the administrative interest of the district wanes. The Committee did not indulge in experiments, and the Gambia was ruled very much as it had been before 1765, a subordinate administration to that at Cape Coast Castle. The Gambia remained vested in the Company of Merchants trading to Africa until their dissolution in 1821.

⁵⁰ Report to the Crown on the British Establishments on the Coast of Africa, 21 Feb., 1765, C.O. 391/31.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COLONY BY THE SIERRA LEONE COMPANY

BETWEEN the Peace of Versailles and the close of the century there came a time of striking change in British relations with West Africa, in which the traditional view that European relations with the African coast were and would remain simply those of the exploiting slave trade was, if not broken, at least seriously shaken. While the phrase "new age" is seldom found to be an accurate title for any period unless it be applied to all periods, even the most cautious writer on West African history would be tempted to use some such name for the last fifteen years of the eighteenth century, as in those years there was made an attempt at humane commerce and colonising within the slave trade area. Unfortunately for the history of this period so much partizan literature has been written that the variety and complexity of the elements which brought about the changes of the time have been obscured by writers who have wished to see the story as one of a band of saints warring against the forces of unrelieved evil, or those who in a later age have wished the world to believe that the abolition of the slave trade and alteration of English commercial relations with West Africa were purely a matter of inevitable economic change. But while motives are elusive, the practical changes which came about in West Africa in these years can be outlined from available material and an account of them may form a useful foundation for the wider question of the movement of human thought.

Among the minor legacies of the conflict with the American colonies was the question as to what should be done with the negroes who had enlisted in the English forces and fought with them during that war, and for whom, when the war ended, the territory of the United States was as inhospitable

as it was for others who had been on the losing side. The English government, responsible for the fate of these loyalists, found settling ground for them in various places. Some were sent to the Bahamas, some were offered settlement in Nova Scotia, and others were brought to England. Those who reached England soon presented a serious destitution problem. As in the seventeen-eighties an important section of society was expressing with increasing clearness a detestation of some of the grossest forms of cruelty of the day, and an interest in the welfare of certain classes of the destitute and unfortunate, the condition of the homeless negroes aroused sympathy. A group of philanthropists formed a "Committee for Relieving the Black Poor" and various ways of providing for these destitutes were explored. The interest awakened in the subject led to the preparation of plans for the establishment of a settlement in West Africa for free "Blacks and People of Colour." Dr. Smeathman, the naturalist, drew up a memorandum expounding the desirability of the Sierra Leone region for this colony, and a scheme¹ of settlement was designed in which he was to conduct the emigrants to their new home. The Government, anxious to be rid of a public nuisance, agreed to pay for the transport of the negroes, and the project seemed in a fair way to success when Dr. Smeathman died.² The expedition, however, was not completely wrecked by the loss, as the Government then took more active steps, providing a leader, Captain Thompson of the Royal Navy, transport and necessaries for six or seven months. The settlers sailed on the 8th April, 1787.³ The strange company who went out gives evidence of the Government's attitude to the expedition as a means of ridding the country of undesirable citizens, as well as of the philanthropic motive of those who had designed the scheme. In addition to about four hundred blacks there were sent "sixty Whites chiefly women of the lowest sort in ill health and of bad character." While it would evidently be unjust to Granville Sharp to consider him responsible for this motley company of settlers, there is no sign in his memoirs that he protested against the plan, and

¹ Smeathman, H., *Plan of a Settlement to be made near Sierra Leona* (London, 1786).

² Hoare, P., *Memoirs of Granville Sharp* (London, 1820), p. 268.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company wrote in 1791 of it as designed partly for the benefit of the women themselves that "the necessity of their situation might bring them into some tolerable habits of industry and good order."⁴

Captain Thompson convoyed the settlers safely to Africa, where they arrived on 9th May, 1787. He immediately took steps to secure the land for the new colony by purchasing from a native chief, King Tom, twenty square miles, described by Granville Sharp as "a fine track of mountainous country covered with beautiful trees of all kinds" lying between the Sherbro River and the Sierra Leone River, which "situation between two great rivers renders the air particularly temperate for that climate; and the advantages for trade will certainly be very great."⁵ The purchase was rapidly completed and six days after their arrival the settlers went on shore to cut a passage to the hill which Captain Thompson chose as the site of the first township. The early months of the new colony were a time of disillusionment and discomfort for the settlers. They arrived at the worst possible season just when the rains were beginning, and as house-building was impossible at such a time they had to make shift with improvised tents which the rain beat down. The inevitable result was very heavy mortality. Before the expedition reached Africa the members had been reduced by nearly a hundred, and within the first four months after the arrival eighty-six died.⁶ After the first year this appalling death-rate diminished, and though it was explained as being due to causes other than the climate, it had none the less a depressing effect upon the colony. The rains made any cultivation an impossible task and Gildas himself could hardly have outdone the settlers in lamentations. So miserable and disheartened were they that numbers deserted the colony and found refuge and employment in trading for slaves and working in slave factories.⁷ Against this background of unrelieved gloom there stand out in strong relief the few encouraging facts about the settlement. The land purchased for the settlement was confirmed by King Tom's superior, King Naimbanna, which gave greater security

⁴ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1791, p. 3.*

⁵ Sharp to Lettson, 13 Oct., 1788, Hoare, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

⁶ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1791, p. 5.*

⁷ Weaver to Sharp, 23 April, 1788, Hoare, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

to the position of the settlers, and the work of dividing the township into lots, and distributing them was accomplished rapidly, so that the enterprising colonists might be able to begin cultivation and building without hindrance.⁸ This advantage was, however, largely neutralized by the rains, which checked both activities.

More important still for the future of the colony were the beginnings made of a new experiment in colonial self-government. Granville Sharp had declared that Sierra Leone was to be a "free settlement," and he explained the phrase as meaning, a place where "the ancient English frank pledge" was the basis of all regulations. To Granville Sharp this was the touchstone for freedom, he "being thoroughly persuaded that every place must of course be a free settlement where frank pledge—and more especially that most essential branch of it, a constant watch and ward, by regular rotation, of all the males from sixteen to sixty, with their own arms in their own hands (*arma pacis et defensionis*)—is maintained; and that colonies, or even kingdoms and monarchies, may be rendered perfectly free and happy by this glorious Patriarchal system; which is the only effectual antidote to unlimited or illegal government of any kind, whether under monarchic, aristocratical or democratical forms; for by this, such effectual balance of power may be certainly maintained, that the whole can act as one man, though every separate family shall still enjoy its due share of powers, as far as is consistent with the rights and sentiments of the majority."⁹ In pursuance of Sharp's views no Governor was appointed for this self-governing colony. Captain Thompson was merely a naval officer chosen to transport and settle the emigrants, and he left the colony after four months. Instead of a governor the settlers were to have the benefit of the advice and guidance of an "agent conductor." He died soon after arrival, and when Captain Thompson departed the settlers were left dependent on the leadership of one of their own number whom they elected at a public meeting.¹⁰ This complete self-government, only restricted by regulations which Granville

⁸ Sharp to Lettson, 13 Oct., 1788, *ibid.*, p. 317.

⁹ Sharp to Lettson, 13 Oct., 1788, *ibid.*, p. 320.

¹⁰ Weaver to Sharp, 23 April, 1788, *ibid.*, p. 321.

Sharp had provided, did not prove an inspiring form of government in the early depressing days, and was powerless to prevent the continual desertions that went on from the colony. The gloom of the second year was suddenly lightened by Granville Sharp's dispatch of a vessel with colonists and supplies provided partly at his own expense, partly by gift from others and partly by a small government allowance.¹¹ These reinforcements put new heart into the remaining settlers, and they expressed the most unbounded gratitude for Sharp's care and attention. Among the smaller favours yet to come for which they asked when expressing their thanks was "may it please your honourable goodness to let us have a town bell, as we find it very ill-convenient to call the people to prayers."¹² After reinforcements Sharp sent a most indignant denunciation of those of the colony who had joined in the forbidden trade. The freest settlement has its intolrances, and in Sierra Leone those who touched the accursed trade were to be shown no mercy. Sharp wrote sternly on the subject, "I could not have conceived that men who were well aware of the wickedness of slave-dealing, and had themselves been sufferers (or at least many of them) under the galling yoke of bondage to slaveholders, some in the West Indies and others in America, should become so basely depraved as to yield themselves instruments to promote and extend the same detestable oppression over their brethren. I hope you will make an order in council, that none of the deserters who have had any concern in the Slave Trade since the settlement of the new colony, shall be re-admitted into the community, but that their lots and shares in the settlement, and their houses, and whatever property they may have left, shall be deemed forfeited to the public bank, for the benefit of the whole community; and that the same forfeiture and disinheritance shall be incurred also by every person that shall at any time hereafter be convicted of selling a slave, or being in any way accessory to the sale or bondage of a human being! And this I earnestly recommend to be enacted for a perpetual constitutional law of the settlement."¹³

¹¹ Sharp to settlers at Sierra Leone, 16 May, 1788, *ibid.*, p. 324.

¹² Settlers at Sierra Leone to Sharp, 3 Sept., 1788, *ibid.*, p. 333.

¹³ Sharp to settlers at Sierra Leone, 4 Sept., 1788, *ibid.*, p. 329.

The slow progress of the colony and the evident possibility that a recurrence of illness or any severe discouragement might lead to complete desertion, induced its promoter to attempt to engage stronger interests in the colony than those of a small group of philanthropists. An idea expressed by Sharp had revolutionary effects on the English relations with West Africa. He proposed a scheme "to engage several respectable merchants and gentlemen to form a Company in order to carry on an honourable trade with the coast of Africa."¹⁴ The inducement offered to those who were approached was that the rich natural resources of West Africa would provide valuable commodities from which profit to the adventurer might be secured, while Africa would benefit by the civilizing effects of the "honourable trade." The nineteenth century shows so many cases of exploitation under the guise of honourable trade that it is difficult to give due weight to the originality and revolutionary nature of this project. For over a century the slave trade had been the great source of profit in European commerce with Africa, and, while voices had been raised against its inhumanity, the possibility of providing a rival profitable trade within the slave market area had not been seriously attempted.

Early in 1790 Sharp gave public notice of his proposal for the formation of "a Company of Merchants for the trade of Sierra Leone . . . a measure which may hereafter prove of great national importance to the manufactories and other trading interests of this kingdom."¹⁵ The scheme was taken up and a group of adventurers uniting under the name of the "St. George's Bay Company" tried to secure a charter. The main barrier to their scheme was the position of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa in whom the forts and settlements on the African Coast from Sallee to the Cape of Good Hope had been reinvested after the peace of 1783. To remove any difficulties with this company the Secretary of the new adventurers, Mr. Williams, wrote to their Committee in April, 1790, explaining the intention of his associates "of asking for an act of Parliament for incorporation as the St. George's Bay Company with a grant of exclusive right of export and import

¹⁴ Sharp to inhabitants of Granville Town, 11 Nov., 1789, *ibid.*, p. 347

¹⁵ Memorandum by Sharp, *ibid.*, p. 348.

trade to and from Sierra Leone." Mr. Williams trusted that this would not lead to any differences "with so respectable a body as the African Company."¹⁶ In spite of the optimism of the St. George's Bay adventurers the project met with very decided opposition from the African company, who pointed out that it was contrary to the act of 1750 to allow any trading monopoly within the boundaries assigned to them and they laid the matter before Lord Hawkesbury, President of the Board of Trade.¹⁷

In the very month of this correspondence with the Company of Merchants news reached England that the Sierra Leone settlement had been burned and the settlers dispersed by a neighbouring chief.¹⁸ The cause of this calamity was apparently not attributable in any way to the settlers themselves, but it was a native method of retaliation for certain injuries done by an American vessel, one white man being as good as another for purposes of revenge. The scattered settlers were given temporary assistance by the agents of neighbouring slave factories. As soon as Sharp received the news he wrote to Pitt asking for government assistance and for the incorporation of the proposed Company, but a succession of letters from April to August received no reply,¹⁹ and the hope of rebuilding the settlement by government aid and the capital of an incorporated company was wrecked, and as Sharp rather bitterly wrote to Pitt, "all the public advantages which might in time, with a little more encouragement, have been fairly expected from this settlement, must now be given up, probably for ever. If a Charter, even without any exclusive privileges whatsoever, except that of securing the private fortunes of the members from any demands beyond the amount of their subscription had been obtained, the Company would probably have subscribed very liberally and amply for the recovery and support of the settlement; but the opposition of the Attorney-General to their very reasonable proposal of a limited Charter without any exclusive privileges, has entirely damped their zeal for promoting this most charitable and beneficial public undertaking; and unless Administration will effectually

¹⁶ Williams to Shoolbred, 23 April, 1790, B.T. 6/8.

¹⁷ Shoolbred to Hawkesbury, 28 April, 1790, B.T. 6/8.

¹⁸ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1791*, p. 6.

¹⁹ Sharp to Pitt, April to Aug., 1790, *ibid.*, pp. 351 to 357.

encourage an application to Parliament for such an unexceptionable Charter, all hopes of further proceedings must cease."²⁰ Disappointed though Sharp was, he and others acting with him did not entirely abandon hope of getting the Government's ear some time, and began the preparation of a small vessel to carry out about £150 worth of provisions for the temporary relief of the settlers. Before the vessel sailed the Government's attention had been secured and an agent, Mr. Falconbridge, was sent out on the relief vessel, appointed not only to negotiate for the restoration of the land to the colonists and to distribute the relief, but also to explore the commercial advantages of the district for the company.²¹ The vessel sailed in January, 1791, and in February a petition of the St. George's Bay Company was received in the Commons.²² The requests of the adventurers had undergone modification since the time when they made their proposal to the Company of Merchants. The desired trading monopoly had been so clearly shown to be contrary to existing laws that it was omitted from the petition of 1791. In setting forth their aims the adventurers made no profession of philanthropic intentions at all, but asserted that they wished to establish "a general trade and commerce to and with the West Coasts of Africa and from thence to and with the several interior kingdoms and countries of that country," which they believed would be highly beneficial not only to the persons directly engaging in it, but also to the manufacturers of the kingdom. Their petition for land was that they should be allowed the sole use and possession of a tract on which they might erect houses and places of security, and as part of the peninsula of Sierra Leone "hath lately been purchased of princes of Africa for the use of His Majesty" they asked that His Majesty might be enabled to grant some of this district to them. The presentation of the petition led to the appointment of a committee of the whole House to consider it, and on their resolution leave was given for the introduction of a bill embodying the terms that had been asked and on 12th April the bill passed its first reading.²³ At this point the opposition to the

²⁰ Sharp to Pitt, 28 Aug., 1790, *ibid.*, pp. 355, 356.

²¹ Sharp to settlers at Sierra Leone, 22 Jan., 1791, *ibid.*, p. 359.

²² *Commons' Journal*, XLVI, 245b, 28 Feb., 1791.

²³ *Ibid.*, 405b, 12 April, 1791.

project expressed itself in a series of counter petitions. The merchants of Lancaster trading to Africa and the West Indies,²⁴ the merchants of Liverpool,²⁵ the merchants of London,²⁶ and the Masters, Wardens and Commonalty of the Merchant Adventurers of Bristol²⁷ all raised protests. The chief argument against the bill was that the grant of land would give the new Company a privileged position in trade, as their possession of the Sierra Leone territory would carry with it the power to exclude other merchants from "the only Port in a Range of at least Sixteen Hundred Miles of Coast, where Vessels exceeding the Size of a Long Boat, can enter at all Times without a Pilot."²⁸ Such a privileged position the Merchants of Lancaster declared was "utterly repugnant to the spirit of commercial freedom" which was the rule in the African trade.

The opponents of the bill were heard in defence of their position after the second reading, and certain amendments were introduced, the most important of which was that nothing in the bill should interfere with the rights of any other British subjects, or obstruct vessels from anchoring in the district affected by the act.²⁹

On May 30th the bill passed its third reading and Mr. Henry Thornton, one of the leading adventurers, was instructed to carry it to the Lords,³⁰ where it passed rapidly, and on 6th June the royal assent was given.³¹

In its final form the act³² provided for the incorporation of the adventurers as a joint-stock trading company, not under the title of the "St. George's Bay Company," but as "The Sierra Leone Company." The major part of the act is occupied with provisions concerning the internal government of the Company, the powers and duties of the Board of Directors and Court of Proprietors and their mutual relations. There is nothing striking in these provisions, which are very

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 414a, 15 April.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 442b, 20 April.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 454a, 3 May.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 457b, 4 May.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 414a, Merchants of Lancaster's petition.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 630b, 23 May.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 663a, 30 May.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 687a, 6 June.

³² 31 Geo. III, c. 55.

like those of any other joint-stock trading company. Where the act was extremely inconclusive was in the clauses relating to the company's territorial rights. In the preamble it was stated that sole and absolute possession of some district of land was necessary to the company's enterprise, and the company were empowered to receive from His Majesty "so much of the peninsula of Sierra Leone as has become vested in His Majesty, on such terms as His Majesty shall judge expedient."³³ This absolute possession did not, however, bring with it the right to exclude any others from trade within the company's borders. No British vessels might be prevented from anchoring in the Sierra Leone and Caramanza rivers or the bays of the province, or from erecting temporary huts on the shores of the peninsula, nor from buying ivory, wax, tanwood or provisions, or procuring firewood and water as they had previously done.³⁴ The Company, but no one else, was prohibited from engaging in the slave trade.³⁵ The national benefit that was expected to follow this act was the opening up of trade with the interior countries of the African continent. "Whereas the interior kingdoms and countries of the said continent have not hitherto been explored by Europeans, nor hath any regular trade ever been carried on there-with from these kingdoms, nor can such undertakings be conveniently carried on or supported unless a considerable capital joint stock is raised for that purpose."³⁶

With this act another experiment in colonial administration began. It was in some ways a reversion to seventeenth-century practice when the joint-stock company was the most familiar organisation for control of distant settlements, but it was a joint-stock company without either trading monopoly, or effective exclusive possession of territory. Unlike its older contemporary, the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, the Sierra Leone Company was not under specific government control, but was left a private venture in which the Government had no direct concern. To balance this independence the Sierra Leone Company differed from the Company of Merchants trading to Africa in not being supported by an annual allowance

³³ 31 Geo. III, c. 55, clause 44.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, clause 45.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, clause 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, preamble.

from the Government, but being left dependent for financial support on the capital subscribed by its members.

The first Board of Directors chosen by the Proprietors showed the dual element in the company, trading and philanthropic. It consisted of Henry Thornton, Philip Sanson, Sir C. Middleton, Sir G. Young, W. Wilberforce, Rev. T. Clarkson, Joseph Hardcastle, John Kingston, S. Parker, Granville Sharp, W. Sandford, Vickeris Taylor and George Wolff.³⁷ The office of chairman was not given to Granville Sharp, though he had been the leading spirit in the earlier organisation of the company, but to Henry Thornton, who most admirably represented the union of keen business ability with philanthropy. In the act of incorporation the professional position of the various directors is added after their names in most cases, and following that guide, the directorate consisted of five merchants so designated, one clerk in Holy Orders, one baronet, one knight, and four "esquires." The list does not make it possible to give a clear division between the two interests as some of the "esquires" may have been looking for a return on their capital, while there is no reason to suggest that the merchant members included no philanthropists among their number, but roughly the balance seems to have been preserved between profit-seeking and philanthropy.

The first report of the Directors to the Proprietors shows that they were under no illusion that there would be an immediate financial return. "The Directors are endeavouring in the outset rather to lay the foundation of happiness to Africa, and of future prosperity to the Company, than to grasp at any premature advantages. They trust, however, that they are not indulging too sanguine a prospect in looking forward to considerable and growing profits, directly resulting from and intimately connected with the general and increasing prosperity of the country, subject to their jurisdiction."³⁸ The immediate work before the Directors was that of establishing their settlement at Sierra Leone. Mr. Falconbridge, who had been sent out in the relief vessel in the previous year, returned to England in September, 1791, with encouraging news.³⁹ He had been

³⁷ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1791.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³⁹ Hoare, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

successful in repurchasing the land of the first settlement from King Naimbanna, for £30, and as a pledge that the agreement should be lasting the King's eldest son was sent to England for education. He had also found sixty-four of the old settlers, and established a new colony for them about one and a half miles from the former town, and he had left them furnished with arms and some provisions. The mixed element in the colony persisted, as six white women were included in the number of restored settlers. Their terrible condition is one of the miserable pages in the history of this settlement.⁴⁰

Mr. Falconbridge gave such inspiring accounts of the commercial possibilities of the province that the Directors appointed him commercial agent to the Sierra Leone Company, and requested him to return to the coast as they proposed to inaugurate their official settlement. The plans of the Directors for their colony were that it should be recruited by three types of colonists: (1) servants of the company with regular and permanent salaries, the chief of whom should form a small council, (2) artificers and others who should receive support for a limited time, (3) settlers on their own account, to whom grants of land would be made on certain specified terms.

As they recognised that a small attempt would be of little good, they proposed an immediate expenditure of £15,000 in sending out three vessels laden with supplies and commodities of all kinds; and they estimated that the financial responsibilities of the settlement would necessitate the subscription of a capital of £100,000.

In return for this expenditure the Directors were hopeful of future profits to be derived from a land revenue by quit rents, and a tax on the produce of the country, from profits from land reserved to the company, and from profits on trade with Sierra Leone and the interior.

But before the expedition on these lines was sent out the Company's plans were given a new direction by a request they received asking them to take into their colony a number of black settlers from Nova Scotia. These "Nova Scotians" were coloured people who had been settled there as a reward

⁴⁰ Falconbridge, A. M., *Narrative of two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone* (London, 1802), p. 64.

for their services on the English side in the American War. Hearing of the Sierra Leone project and disliking the Nova Scotian climate they applied for admission to the new African colony. The Directors considered this "an opportunity of rendering, as they conceived, a very important service to the colony, by the acquisition of an additional number of free black colonists, acquainted with the English language, and accustomed to labour in hot climates,"⁴¹ assented to the Nova Scotian request, and supported their application to the Government for a passage to the colony.⁴² The Government agreed to the request, and Lieutenant Clarkson was sent out to Nova Scotia to collect and transport such of the black settlers as should desire to move and would accept the terms offered them by the Company. Recognising that, though they considered the new settlers beneficial to the ultimate prosperity of the colony, they might add a temporary financial strain, the Company's capital was raised to £235,280. While Lieutenant Clarkson was pursuing his Nova Scotian quest the Directors dispatched three vessels to Sierra Leone, sending out over one hundred white persons to establish their colony. Of them only ten ranked as "settlers," forty being "Company's servants," sixteen soldiers and the rest women and children whom the Directors did not divide among the three previous categories. The first vessel from England reached Sierra Leone in February, 1792, and a fortnight later Lieutenant Clarkson appeared with over twelve hundred negroes from Nova Scotia.

With the arrival of these vessels the Sierra Leone Company began their attempt at governing a colony in West Africa. As the Directors had been given no express powers for the administration of government in Sierra Leone by the act of incorporation they considered "that the British constitution, as far as it is applicable to the circumstances of the place, is of course transferred thither" and the administration they designed for the colony was an attempt to adapt the British constitution of the late eighteenth century to a settlement consisting of about twelve hundred free blacks and some one hundred white people, in which settlement "the blacks and

⁴¹ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794, p. 4.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

whites living in the colony have an equal right to the privileges of British subjects."⁴³ While this expression of adherence to the idea of a free colony was made by the Directors, there was introduced a radical change in the position of the settlers, dating from the time when the St. George's Bay Company's agent brought back from King Naimbanna, the land of the earlier settlement. Granville Sharp, in writing to a friend concerning applications from blacks in New York and Rhode Island for admission to Sierra Leone, described the change that had taken place: "I suppose the accounts they have since heard of the many disadvantages that the poor settlers have laboured under for want of pecuniary assistance, and their subsequent misfortunes, may probably have prevented any further application from these gentlemen; and the inducements to go thither are still further curtailed (at least I apprehend they will be deemed so in your esteem) by the new Act of Parliament in favour of the Sierra Leone Company; because the community of settlers, though they are now restored to their actual possessions in the settlement, are no longer proprietors of the whole district as before, as the land has been granted, since they were driven out, to the Sierra Leone Company; so that they can no longer enjoy the privileges of granting land of the free vote of their own Common Council, as before, nor the benefits of their former Agrarian Law, nor the choice of their own Governor and other officers, nor any other circumstances of perfect freedom proposed in the Regulations: all these privileges are now submitted to the appointment and control of the Company and no settler can trade independently of it. I am very sure that such restraints cannot accord with your ideas of liberty and justice. But I could not prevent this humiliating change: the settlement must have remained desolate, if I had not thus far submitted to the opinions of the associated subscribers. . . . To yourself I mention these very disagreeable circumstances."⁴⁴

Sharp's lamentations about the "humiliating change" were exaggerated by his disappointment at the departure from his own ideas in the management of the colony which he had previously called his "poor little, ill-thriven, swarthy

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Sharp to a friend, 5 Oct., 1791, Hoare, *op. cit.*, pp. 262, 263.

daughter, the unfortunate colony of Sierra Leone,"⁴⁵ but he had shown a danger point in the Company's settlement. The idea of Sierra Leone as the "Province of Freedom" was becoming more and more widely known in America, where it was a lure to discontented negroes, and in spite of Sharp's honest warnings the change in the status of settlers under the Company was not fully realised, with the inevitable result of disappointment and misunderstanding which finally led to a conflict between the settlers and the Company's officers.

In the form of administration set up in Sierra Leone a Governor or Superintendent and a Council of eight were appointed to represent the Directors and to carry out their instructions in all matters.⁴⁶ The long line of Governors of Sierra Leone was begun by Lieutenant Clarkson, who acted from February, 1792, when he arrived, till December of the same year. He seems to have been a man admirably fitted in many ways for the position and his appointment gave a good beginning to the office. Before reaching Africa he had already secured the loyalty and affection of the Nova Scotians to such a degree that he was described as able "by lifting his finger (as he expresses it) to do what he pleases with them,"⁴⁷ and his "winning manner," frankness and lack of ostentation made him popular among a section at least of the European colony. His tenure of office covered the difficult period of settling in, and it is no small tribute to his tact and personality that the colony survived the year 1792.

The council of eight chosen to advise the Governor, and without whose approval he could not act, proved a disastrous device, its only success being the unfortunate skill with which its members contrived to thwart the Governor's plans. The Directors, in commenting on this failure, suggested that it might either be ascribed to the mistake of dividing authority between eight men, or to the character of those chosen, but they did not enter into a discussion as to which explanation was the more correct. The fact of the failure was uncompromisingly evident, and was summed up by the Directors in a sentence, "Confusion in the accounts, in the stores, in the

⁴⁵ Sharp to Dr. J. Sharp, 31 Oct., 1787, Hoare, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

⁴⁶ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Falconbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

government, in the information sent home and in the operations of every kind prevailed."⁴⁸

Mrs. Falconbridge, wife of the Company's commercial agent, published a series of letters from Sierra Leone which provides an account of life in the colony in those days with all the piquancy of the unfriendly critic. She quarrelled with the Directors and considered herself very badly used by them, so that her letters cannot be taken as a reliable source from which to get material for their portraits, but on less controversial subjects her accounts are valuable. The Council were admirable matter for her pen, and she pilloried "these opiniated upstarts" without mercy. "Are men, whose heads are too shallow to support a little vicissitude and unexpected imaginary aggrandisement, 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 execution of a theory which can only be put in practice by wise and judicious methods? Certainly not: yet of this description are the greater part who guide and direct our colony . . . intoxicated with false ideas of their authority."⁴⁹ "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 showing their authority."⁵⁰ "Their absurd behaviour make them the laughing stock 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."⁵¹

The Governor, finding himself made powerless by the Council, wrote to the Directors asking for further orders. The Directors in reply, being thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the colony, sent out orders that the Governor should "assume the whole power," and act without the Council.⁵² This monarchic rule was to be only a temporary expedient to give the Directors

⁴⁸ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794, p. 10.*

⁴⁹ Falconbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 140, note.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 141.

⁵² *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794, p. 10.*

time to devise a new and better scheme. As an expedient it worked well and resulted in great improvement in the order and harmony of the colony.⁵³ The result of the Directors' contemplation was a very considerable change in the administration. Instead of the old Council of eight, two councillors were appointed and the Governor and this Council were given the management of all civil, military and commercial affairs. The two men appointed to the Council were William Dawes and Zachary Macaulay,⁵⁴ each of whom later became in turn Governor of the Colony. The Directors described these men as qualified for the Council because they were "gentlemen of considerable experience, the one used to a new colony, the other to a tropical climate." The experience alluded to was that of Dawes as a subaltern in the Marines at Botany Bay, and of Macaulay as a planter's factor in the West Indies. The choice of an ex-convict commander, and an ex-plantation overseer to rule in a colony of free negroes gave an opportunity for enemies of the colony to make capital from the apparent incongruity of the appointments, though as events proved, the varied experience of the two members of council was of great value in administration.

During the period of the mismanagement of the first Sierra Leone Council, February to November, 1792, the work of settling was being carried on. The division of the land was to become one of the vexed questions in the colony and to lead to serious misunderstandings. The Directors from the first considered themselves the owners of the land by reason of the purchase from King Naimbanna, as is witnessed both by Granville Sharp's letter of regrets,⁵⁵ and by their own statement in their first report, in which they announced that the "profits of a land revenue" were to be one of their sources of income.⁵⁶ Acting on this assumption it was for the Company's officers to distribute the lands to the settlers, reserving the necessary districts for public and official purposes. In the distribution the Company were limited by their own promises to the settlers. In the terms which Lieutenant Clarkson was

⁵³ Falconbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, 29 Nov. and 31 Dec., 1792, C.O. 270/2.

⁵⁵ *Vide supra*, p. 116.

⁵⁶ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1791*, p. 53.

commissioned to offer to the Nova Scotians who wished to join the colony, each settler was to receive twenty acres of land for himself, ten for his wife and five for every child. When the twelve hundred Nova Scotians arrived the full extent of the territory purchased from King Naimbanna, twenty square miles, would not have proved sufficient if that promise had been literally fulfilled. The problem of full distribution did not immediately arise, as the settlers preferred to remain at the headquarters rather than receive plantations at a distance from protection and provisions. The work of surveying was, however, an essential preliminary before even the town could be built, but the surveyor, according to Mrs. Falconbridge, was "of too much consequence to attend to the servile duty of surveying," being a member of the council,⁵⁷ and the conclusion of the matter in the planning of the town was found to be a great trouble by the second Governor.

Closely associated in importance to the infant colony with the work of surveying was that of developing the trade and cultivation by means of which the colony was to make its livelihood. The supervision of this had been given to Falconbridge, whose duties were the organisation and development of commercial relations with the surrounding countries. Partly owing to misfortune and partly to his own weakness for strong waters, partly to his lack of suitable training, having been "bred to physic," and partly to lack of assistance from the Governor and Council, Falconbridge did not have much success in his duties and he was dismissed for incompetence within a year, which gave his wife great cause for complaint against the Directors.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Falconbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 167 to 169.

CHAPTER IX

CONSTITUTIONAL DIFFICULTIES AND CHANGES IN SIERRA LEONE

AFTER the settling of the colony had been proceeding for about ten months the arrival of the new members of council, already alluded to,¹ brought into prominence the question of the constitution of the colony.

The council of three, in whom the control of the colony was vested by the Directors, was entirely unrepresentative of anybody except the Directors and their constituents in England, and had they imposed their rule upon the settlers Sierra Leone would have been a true company-controlled colony. But in spite of the appearance of autocratic rule suggested by the small council self-government was introduced to a remarkable extent. The definition and organisation of arrangements for police and judicial control were made in the reform period which followed the inauguration of the small council. In a council of two over which Lieutenant Clarkson presided in December, 1792, Dawes made proposals for securing the maintenance of law and order in the colony. "He thought it most expedient that for distributing of justice the inferior magistrates should be appointed from among the settlers, viz., every ten families in the colony elect a tythingman, whose duty should be to keep the peace and decide causes of less importance, every ten of these tythingmen to choose from among themselves a hundredor to be appealed to from the tythingmen, and appeal made from them by the party discontented to the justices of the peace."² These hundredors and tithingmen were the most characteristic features of the system of self-government that was developed in the colony. The record just quoted of their appointment shows that in

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 117.

² Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, 12 Dec., 1792, C.O. 270/2.

origin the intention was that they should be guardians of law and order among the settlers, but in course of time they came to claim a very different place in the Sierra Leone constitution. Considering them as part of the judicial system it will be noted that they were only to decide cases of "less importance." For more serious cases there were courts presided over by one of the Company's chief servants, in which a simple procedure of trial by jury was used and black as well as white settlers might sit as jurymen. The Directors' report on this experiment was that "the Nova Scotians have served on the juries in a manner that sufficiently proves the propriety and prudence of extending to them a privilege which they so much value."³ Among the colonists themselves this type of trial worked well for a time, but the absence of any definite authority for the setting up of courts made it ineffective where persons outside the colony were concerned.

For policing the colony the system of control through family groupings also worked well for a time, and until the French war became a grim reality the defence of the colony was based on the same system.

Beside having a share in police, defence and judicial work the hundredors and tithingmen became the link between the Directors' representative—the council—and the settlers. Their position as a consultative body with certain legislative powers developed gradually out of their original functions. The police work involved the making of a variety of regulations for the promotion of order which came to be considered as "laws." In the council records for May, 1793, there is an entry that "according to a law proposed by the hundredors and tythingmen of this town and agreed to by Mr. William Dawes acting Governor . . ." the owners of sheep and goats were to keep them shut up,⁴ and in June, by "a law proposed by the hundredors and tythingmen of the town and approved of by William Dawes Esq. Acting Governor," the price of beef was regulated.⁵ In this way the hundredors and tithingmen came to assume a measure of legislative power. From another side this power was also developed. In their 1794

³ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794*, pp. 57, 57.

⁴ *Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, 27 May, 1793, C.O. 270/2.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 June, 1793.

report the Directors described the relation of the Governor and Council to the hundredors and tithingmen as one where "on such occasions as concern the general interests of the Nova Scotians the Governor should consult the hundredors."⁶ The force of this consultation depended inevitably on the respective personalities of Governor and hundredors, and it was variously interpreted. A period in which the practice seems to have developed greatly was from March, 1794, to May, 1795, when Zachary Macaulay was acting-Governor. In May, 1794, certain regulations were read in the Council by him, and he reported that they had been laid before the hundredors and tithingmen, who "had signified their hearty acquiescence," and he "therefore moved that the said regulations be now passed into a law" and considered such until the pleasure of the court of Directors should be known.⁷ When later it became necessary to make special arrangements for defence Macaulay put his proposals before the meeting of the hundredors and tithingmen, where "to these proposals a ready assent was given."⁸

Considering the position of the settlers in this régime it will be seen that they had a large share in self-government, and by their elected representatives, the hundredors and tithingmen, could both put their own projects before the Governor, and express their opinion on measures suggested by him.

This establishment, with certain modifications made in the course of time, served the colony till 1799, in which year great changes were made. During this first period up to 1799 the colony underwent many vicissitudes which can have no place in this administrative sketch. The discomforts and discouragements of the early days, the very heavy mortality, so great that it was decided by the Council that the custom of hoisting flags at half-mast on all vessels in the Sierra Leone river in case of death on one of them should be discontinued "as tending to discourage many persons seeing it,"⁹ the disillusionment of many who had come hoping for a land of

⁶ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794*, p. 56.

⁷ *Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, 1 May, 1793, C.O. 270/2.*

⁸ *Macaulay's Journal, 19 Nov., 1796, Holland, M. J., Life and Letters of Zachary Macaulay (London, 1900), p. 156.*

⁹ *Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, 6 March, 1792, C.O. 270/2.*

milk and honey, provide material for a part of the history of everyday life in pioneer colonies which has yet to be written. The miseries and discontents and quarrels, and the dogged perseverance which pulled the colony through, find parallels in many other settlements, but they lose none of their interest by their lack of originality. While the history of administrative experiments may grow stale, the intriguing variety of Sierra Leone life with carefully planned dinner-parties and entertainments at one moment,¹⁰ groans that an expected supply of necessaries turned out to be a cargo of garden watering pots at another,¹¹ rumours of a threatened native attack on the practically defenceless colony at another, and constant tales of illness and death, generosity and pettiness among the settlers, makes a fascinating study in its bewildering inconsequence. But Mrs. Falconbridge, with her dinner parties and excursions and her care for the sick, Zachary Macaulay with his concerns about the chaplain's rhetoric and with his straightforward attempts to convert slave traders, whom in spite of his views of their trade he entertained constantly,¹² Mr. Afzelius, the Swedish botanist, with his garden of acclimatization, his books, papers, pets and experiments,¹³ Missionary Grigg, who having come to Africa to convert the heathen to Christianity left the colony to become a slave trader himself,¹⁴ Mr. Tilley, in charge of a neighbouring slave factory, who became closely acquainted with Macaulay and his officers and who co-operated with them in times of danger,¹⁵ all help to provide the sanity of the Sierra Leone story and to show the inaccuracy of attempts to interpret it solely as a colony of either saints or of hypocrites. Sierra Leone contained all sorts and conditions of men, some came to make a living, others to civilize the Africans, some to attempt both, and some were efficient, others hopelessly inefficient. In short it was a colony of ordinary human beings with the guidance of governors, who were as a rule men of outstanding force of character, but who were none the less liable to make mistakes in carrying out their onerous duties.

¹⁰ Falconbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹² Macaulay's Journal, *passim*, Holland, *op. cit.*

¹³ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁴ Macaulay's Journal, 30 Nov., 1796, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

¹⁵ Macaulay's Journal, 24 July, 1793, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

Between 1791 and 1799 a series of events took place which convinced the Directors that the powers granted to them in the act of incorporation were not enough to meet the responsibilities they had incurred.

Lieutenant Clarkson left Sierra Leone in December, 1796, and Dawes, who took his place, had the difficult task of succeeding a most popular governor. Almost immediately on his assumption of office Dawes became involved in a dispute with the Nova Scotians. The matter at issue was the distribution of land. Under Clarkson only temporary arrangements had been made and the colonists were to be moved into permanent lots when the surveyor's work was done. This distribution of permanent lots it fell to Dawes to carry out, and at a meeting of the settlers before whom the plans were laid, a protest was made against the survey on the ground that the seaboard was lined with public buildings and the settlers were kept without free access to it. They therefore protested that they would not move from their temporary buildings, and urged in defence of their attitude that the company had already broken their promises to the settlers by not providing them with the territory promised.¹⁶

In the course of this dispute the settlers adopted an attitude of definite questioning of the Governor's authority which foreshadowed later difficulties.

While this murmuring concerning the land division was troubling the internal quiet of the settlement, the declaration of war between England and France was made. It was hoped that the outbreak of hostilities would not affect the colony, as it was rumoured that the French National Convention offered protection to all the Company's ships as a testimony to their regard for the principles on which the Colony was founded, and "as two of the Directors were sometime since nominated members of the Convention."¹⁷ This hope was rudely shattered in September, 1794, when a French fleet arrived at Sierra Leone and immediately fired on the town. Macaulay, who had succeeded Dawes in the command, did all in his power to secure the colony from complete destruction by pleading its philanthropic origin, and the danger to the

¹⁶ Falconbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 205, 7 Feb., 1793.

¹⁷ Falconbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

lives and liberties of the free negroes living in its shelter. The only reply was "Citoyen, cela peut bien être, mais encore vous êtes anglais";¹⁸ and between the arrival of the French on 28th September, and their departure on the 13th October a very complete pillaging and destruction of the colony took place.¹⁹ The loss of human life was small as the inhabitants fled from the town, but animals, buildings, gardens, stores of all kinds, books, records, scientific collections were ruthlessly destroyed. The chaplain was left lamenting the destruction of his library, the botanist his laboratory, and the Governor's office was ransacked for papers and records which were totally destroyed. The financial loss was estimated by the Directors at £52,000,²⁰ a heavy blow at a time when the Company expected to begin to secure a return on their invested capital. The disaster made a review of the Company's financial situation necessary. The Directors had warned the proprietors that a large capital would be needed and that an immediate return on their investments was not to be expected.²¹ £235,280 had been subscribed, of which over £100,000 had been spent in Sierra Leone and in preparations for the colony, between £20,000 and £30,000 had been invested in African trade and the remaining £100,000 was invested in various securities.²² The French invasion reduced what remained of the Company's capital to about £85,000.²³ The 1794 disaster did not decide the Directors to abandon the shattered colony because there was hope that the period of heavy expenditure with no returns was about to come to an end as the colony became more firmly established and experienced in trade. They therefore decided to send out two relief vessels as soon as possible with provisions and necessities to tide the colony over the period of reconstruction.

Macaulay, the Acting-Governor, in spite of his grief at the destruction of Freetown, the capital of the colony, had taken it for granted that the settlers should return to the town and set to work to rebuild as soon as possible. The day following

¹⁸ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1795, p. 6.*

¹⁹ Macaulay's Journal, 28 Sept. to 13 Oct., 1794, Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 64 to 77.

²⁰ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1795, p. 18.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1791, pp. 42, 54.

²² *Ibid.*, 1794, pp. 29 to 32.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1795, p. 19.

the departure of the French he summoned the hundredors and tithingmen and some of the principal inhabitants and explained the situation to them, urging on them the need of farming to restore the colony's food supply.²⁴ Unhappily at this meeting of hundredors and tithingmen some friction was felt between the settlers and the Governor about salvaged property. Settlers who had been successful in carrying away and hiding from French eyes any part of the property of the colony looked upon it as their private possession and were most unwilling to accept the Governor's ruling that all such government property must be restored by the finders, who should receive 4/- in the £ as a salvage fee. This friction did not become serious fortunately, and the Directors reported on the condition in the colony in 1795 and most of 1796, as peaceful.²⁵ Towards the end of 1796, however, Macaulay was troubled by noticing an unruly spirit abroad among the Nova Scotians. In May he had to explain to the settlers the nature of public works, against which they had protested. He "showed them how in many other countries the people bear the whole expense of public work, of armies and of navies," and succeeded in getting "even those who from their uniform opposition to every salutary regulation have gained the street in which they live the name of 'Discontented Row'" to comply with his wishes,²⁶ and harmony was for a time restored. But towards the end of the year serious trouble began through the agency of two Europeans who attempted to stir up disaffection among the Nova Scotians. The occasion chosen by those agitators was the time of the election of the hundredors and tithingmen, when they urged the settlers not to choose white men for their representatives and even to prevent white men from voting. The feeling on which they tried to work was that of revenge, preaching that it was time that Europeans should suffer oppression such as that they had formerly inflicted on Africans. Macaulay was nonplussed by the news. "There was something so unique in making a white face a civil disqualification that it really provoked one to laughter."²⁷ Laughable though the idea may have appeared, the agitators

²⁴ Macaulay's Journal, 14 Oct., 1794, Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 77, 78.

²⁵ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 1801, p. 3.

²⁶ Macaulay's Journal, 4 May, 1796, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 Dec., 1796, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

were successful and the result of the election showed that no European had been chosen as hundredor or tithingman. Macaulay's comment on the election was: "You see we have just the same passions in Freetown as in London and in miniature the same effects resulting from them."²⁸ From the time when these new hundredors and tithingmen came into office the internal harmony of the colony was at an end. The first attack was made against quitrents, the payment of which was refused on the ground that they were a "badge of Slavery" and any contribution in labour or money to public services were refused.²⁹ This taken in conjunction with the settlers' earlier assertion that the company had broken their contract by the failure to provide the amount of land promised them shows the direction of the agitators' argument. They wished to get rid entirely of the Company's authority and to secure the complete control of the colony for themselves. Macaulay seems to have been slow to realise the full significance of the movement, but its seriousness soon became evident. Having opposed the Company's right to quitrents the hundredors and tithingmen carried their protests to a constitutional issue. They asserted their right to be considered the legislative body of the colony in conjunction with the Governor. The practice of the governorship under Macaulay³⁰ made this aim seem realised until the Governor's veto was used. That veto the agitators then protested against because "he being an individual ought only to have an individual suffrage." From this their next step was to deny that they were subject to the laws of England, or to any laws which they had not framed themselves, then to insist that the judges should be appointed by them and finally to become persuaded that the demolition of the existing establishment was necessary.³¹ Their demands show the chaotic constitutional aims put forward by the malcontents. They did not represent the views of the majority of the settlers, but of a small section only, and Macaulay, through the three anxious years in which the agitators were at work, never lost his faith in the loyalty of the colony as a whole, though the reluctance of individuals to give clear

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 Dec., 1796, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

²⁹ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 1801, p. 4.

³⁰ *Vide supra*, p. 123.

³¹ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 1801, p. 5.

expression to their support made his position extremely difficult. In the autumn of 1797 a concert of rumours that the disaffected settlers were negotiating with a neighbouring chief for his help in establishing a native-ruled colony from which the Europeans should be ejected grew so loud that Macaulay decided "it would be faulty supineness to defer the measures necessary for preventing a surprise,"³² and made arrangements for the defence of the colony by the loyal negro settlers and the Europeans. He then gave public notice of the rumours he had heard, and of his determination to punish with the utmost rigour any who should attempt violence against the colony, an announcement which was given additional force by his assertion that though capital punishment had not hitherto been inflicted in the colony he was prepared to have it enforced if necessary.³³ The result of the Governor's determined speech was in his own words that "a face of loyalty was spread over the place for a few days," and those who had been noisily threatening declared that they had spoken in jest.

Through 1798 the face of loyalty was maintained fairly constantly. Macaulay was prepared to accede to reasonable demands, and in June, 1798, he gave his assent to resolutions submitted to him by the hundredors and tithingmen for the creation of two chambers, one of the hundredors, and the other of the tithingmen, and of a body of six, two hundredors and four tithingmen, whose duty was to be "to wait upon the Governor for the purpose of forming rules and regulations for the use of the colony."³⁴ This erection of two legislative chambers and a committee for consultation with the Governor seems to have passed with little comment from Macaulay, who possibly looked on it as merely a more definite organisation of a practice that had been in use for several years.

The evidence of disaffection among the settlers showed the Directors certain serious weaknesses in their position. The attack on quitrents raised a rather delicate question. The Company had asserted that the re-purchase of land from King Naimbanna had given them proprietary rights over the

³² Macaulay's Journal, 30 Sept., 1797, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2 Oct., 1797, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

³⁴ Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, 29 Jan., 1798, C.O. 270/4.

territory and entitled them to land revenue. The act of 1791, however, implied the possession of the peninsula of Sierra Leone by His Majesty, and provided that the Crown might be enabled, to make a grant of it to the Company subject to certain limitations.³⁵ This royal grant had never been made, and there was therefore some reason to doubt the entire legality of the Company's position.

Another point of weakness was shown by the attack on the judicial system. Those who acted as judges in Sierra Leone were simply officers in the Company's service with no royal warrant of any kind, and as they were at the same time administrative officers in some capacity, their position was extremely irregular, and easily open to question. Mrs. Falconbridge described an incident in which three sailors from a vessel chartered by the Company were tried for killing a duck belonging to one of the settlers. The form of trial was by a jury of twelve blacks with Macaulay sitting as judge. It resulted in the award of a punishment of thirty-nine lashes for one and fines for the other two culprits. The master of the vessel made complaint to a naval captain on the coast, and he demanded from Macaulay his authority for trying white men by a black jury. Macaulay declared his authority to be the incorporating act of 1791, but the captain, on reading the act, could find no such warrant in it, and pronounced the court to be a mockery of law and justice.³⁶ What was protested against in this case was just the part of the judicial arrangements of which the settlers approved, but their diverse attacks joined to show the instability of its foundation.

The third serious weakness to which attention was drawn was that of defence. In Macaulay's anxious times during rumours of risings he had to trust that a major part of the settlers would prove loyal, as the only means of quelling insurrection was by the force of those who could be kept from joining the insurrectionaries, and a distribution of arms was bound to lead to the placing of weapons in the hands of some who would oppose the Governor. There was no military force except that of the able-bodied settlers on which the Governor could call.

³⁵ 31 Geo. III, c. 55, clause 44.

³⁶ Falconbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

The dangers arising from these three weaknesses were clearly seen between 1796 and 1799, and the Directors decided to apply "for a Charter of Government which should convey to them a clear, formal, well-grounded authority, to maintain the peace of the settlement, and to execute the laws within the Company's territory."³⁷

The application for this charter was made in July, 1799, but it did not receive His Majesty's sanction till July of the following year. In the intervening time the difficulties of the Governor at Sierra Leone increased. Conscious that his authority was insufficient for the demands made on it for the keeping of peace and order, his endeavour was to temporise until he got fuller powers, a task which both Macaulay and Ludlam, his successor, accomplished with amazing patience and self-control. The Directors afterwards stated that they considered it "chiefly owing, under Providence, to their firm, prudent, and moderate conduct, that the dangers which threatened the Company's property, and to the lives and property of their servants, and of all the loyal settlers were so long averted."³⁸

In April, 1798, Ludlam arrived at Sierra Leone, having been sent out to succeed Macaulay, who had been ill. Shortly after Ludlam's arrival Macaulay wrote that he felt it his duty to remain in Sierra Leone till October to give his successor a chance of becoming acquainted with the ways of the colony and the climate.³⁹ By June Macaulay was beginning to relinquish the details of administration to Ludlam, but he did not leave till April of the following year and there were alarming rumours of an intended attack on the settlement by some of the neighbouring natives.⁴⁰ As the news of the Directors' application for fuller powers became known, the hottest heads in the disaffected party tried to bring about a formidable rising in the colony. In February, 1800, the settlers gave open expression to their defiance of the Governor's authority in a palaver about a quarrel between a slave-trading captain and King Tom, in which the Governor had tried to adjudicate. The settlers, in the course of the trial, deliberately insulted

³⁷ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 1801, p. 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁹ Macaulay to Miss Mills, 5 May, 1798, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

⁴⁰ Macaulay's Journal, 4 Feb., 1799, Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

the Governor's authority, but as he was anxious to postpone the inevitable conflict till his position was fortified by the charter, the arrival of which was anxiously expected, he refrained from angry protest against this act of defiance.⁴¹ Aggressive action that could not be ignored unless the Governor and Council were to forfeit all claim to government came in September, by which time the agitators had secured the support of nearly half of the heads of families. On the 10th of September a handbill was published, signed by three hundredors, stating that the new constitution for the colony was to have effect from the 25th of September and making themselves the ruling authority. The new constitution, which duly appeared on 25th September, was a clear declaration of rebellion. By the fifth clause the Governor and Council were stated to have no authority in the colony, by the fourth clause no summons or warrant might be served without orders from the hundredors and tithingmen, whose authority was also expressed in the third forbidding the payment of debts to the Company till the hundredors and tithingmen had examined the matter. The first two clauses provided regulations of the price of food, and punishments for certain crimes.

The effect of this document was fortunate for the Governor. By its attempts completely to annihilate the existing establishment, it showed the waverers that an immediate decision must be made between supporting the Company's Governor and Council, and letting the colony pass into the control of a small group of their own number. The result was such an accession of strength to the Governor's side that he was able to take steps for the arrest of those who had signed the seditious documents. Two of them were captured and one escaped. Preparations were then made on both sides for the struggle. Though the loyal settlers had been stirred to activity the Governor's position was by no means secure. There was a possibility that some of the declared loyalists would join the rebels, and there was the still more serious fear that the neighbouring natives would join forces with them, in which case the Governor's side would have little chance of success.

At this point of intense strain the situation was suddenly transformed by the arrival of a vessel from England bringing

⁴¹ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1801, p. 11.*

a detachment of soldiers and a company of new settlers.⁴² The settlers were about five hundred Maroons from Nova Scotia, whom the Directors had agreed to admit to the colony in answer to pressure from Lord Portland.⁴³ On their arrival at this critical moment they were welcomed as an addition to the Governor's side, and terms and conditions of settlement were quickly arranged with them.⁴⁴

With this reinforcement the Governor's anxieties for the security of the colony ended. A further attempt was made to negotiate with the rebels, as the Governor was anxious to avoid bloodshed, but on its rejection a brief and decisive attack was made. The stand for liberty in the face of forty-five regular soldiers was brief and at the first onset the insurgents were routed. To adjudicate on the rebellion the military and naval officers present in the colony were asked by the Governor to sit as a Court of Inquiry to investigate the complaints of the rebels and the charges brought against them by the Governor. The finding of the Court was that the settlers were guilty of the crimes of which they were accused. Banishment from the colony for life was the punishment awarded to thirty-two, transportation for ten and five years respectively to two others, and two of the leaders of the rebellion, after trial at quarter sessions, were hanged. The charges for which the death penalty was imposed were typical of early nineteenth-century justice; one was hanged for "sending an anonymous and threatening letter to the Governor" and the other for "feloniously taking and carrying away a gun."⁴⁵ Behind these formal charges was the real reason for their condemnation; that they had constantly laboured to stir up rebellion in the colony and to overturn the Government.

The end of the rebellion coincided with the arrival of the royal charter,⁴⁶ which had been sanctioned on the 5th July, 1800, and with it the establishment of the Company's authority on a firm basis. Great pomp attended this event. It is recorded in the minutes of the Sierra Leone Council for November 6th,

⁴² Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, 31 Sept., 1800, C.O. 270/5.

⁴³ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 1804, p. 10.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, Appendix to the Year 1800, C.O. 270/5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Council at Sierra Leone, 6 Nov., 1800, C.O. 270/5.

1800, that "The Royal Charter of Justice was landed this day and solemnly delivered by J. Watts Esq., Commander of the *Osprey* Sloop of War into the hands of Thos. Ludlam Esq., Governor of the Colony under a royal salute of a cannon from the *Osprey* and the Batteries ashore. The officers of the *Osprey* with a detachment of Marines attended Captain Watts."

The document⁴⁷ that was received with so much ceremony and which had been in anticipation so much feared by the settlers made certain great changes in the position of the Directors and their representatives in Sierra Leone. It had two distinct parts, the first of which made provision concerning the Company's land tenure rights, which had been disputed, and the second gave the Court of Directors specific power for the government of this territory. In the land provisions His Majesty "being desirous to afford all fitting encouragement to the Sierra Leone Company and to the colony in Sierra Leone" granted to the Company "so much of the peninsula as is vested in him," and power to purchase additional territory. The lands so granted were created "one independent colony by the name of the Peninsula of Sierra Leone." The rest of the charter gave the Directors "a clear, formal, well-grounded authority, to maintain the peace of the settlement, and to execute the laws within the Company's territory."⁴⁸

This well-grounded authority was expressed in the provisions by which the Directors were given power to make laws for the good of the colony, and to impose reasonable penalties on any who should break those laws, and to appoint "a Governor and three Council" for the Government of the Colony with power to make laws subject to the Directors' approval. For the administration of justice in the Colony provision was made for the erection of courts of judicature with royal sanction. As the colony had enjoyed a system of trial by jury under the Company's authority the main effect of the charter was to make more formal a practice which already existed. The biggest change was the strengthening of the position of the judges. Freetown was given a mayor and aldermen, and mayor's court.

Though securing the Charter of Justice and land grant gave

⁴⁷ Sierra Leone Charter, Letters Patent 40 Geo. III, Pt. 13, 5.

⁴⁸ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1801, p. 9.*

the Directors a new security and dignity it was a privilege for which a heavy bill had to be paid. The expense of securing the charter was about £1,500,⁴⁹ and the burden of the elaborate administration was a severe drain on the Company's resources. At the same time the struggle to secure the abolition of the slave trade was being fought and the Directors of the Company, urged by a dual motive, thought it advisable to take part on the side of the abolitionists. They were moved to do so for both philanthropic and economic reasons. A large number of the Directors were ardent abolitionists whose philanthropy drove them to the course, but a motive which affected the Company in its commercial capacity was that "honourable trade" could not make large profits so long as it had to compete with the slave trade. While English commodities could be purchased in large quantities by the simple methods of the slave trade, the sale of African vegetable and mineral products would be little developed, involving, as it did, a greater degree of labour and smaller profits. Ten years' trade had shown the Company how crippling this rivalry was. In reviewing their position later the Directors added that their original anticipation of successful commerce had been grounded on the belief that the abolition of the slave trade was imminent in 1791. The defeat of the abolitionists in Parliament in 1799 was a heavy blow to the prospects of the Company. The somewhat gloomy financial prospect of 1800—increased burdens and profits still only a future possibility—was lightened very materially by a Parliamentary grant allowed to the Company in 1800 of £4,000 "for defraying the Charge of the Civil Establishment at Sierra Leone for One Year."⁵⁰ Though no promise was given as to its repetition the Directors reported to the Proprietors that there was reason to hope that it would be continued annually and that therefore in future the Company's profits would be relieved in part, if not entirely, from the burden of maintaining the civil establishment of the colony.

Further grounds for optimism about the future were to be found in the repayment to the Company of part of the money they had expended in the first settling of the Nova Scotians.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵⁰ *Commons' Journals*, LV, 768b.

For this purpose they received £10,000, and to improve the defensive position of the colony £7,000 was granted to them for a fort. Another burden on the profits was removed by the creation of the "Society for the Education of Africans" in 1799, which undertook the payment of a schoolmaster who had hitherto been on the Company's establishment.⁶¹

While the Directors were contemplating the possibility of keeping the trading profits free from absorption in administrative expenses, the condition in Sierra Leone became serious once more, not through any breakdown in the new legal and judicial authority, but owing to native politics. In November, 1801, an attack on the Colony was made by the Temnes (or Timmanys), the neighbouring native people from whom the Company had bought their land.⁶² No reason was given for warring against the Colony, but the attack was led by two of the Nova Scotian rebels who had escaped when the 1800 rising was put down and who desired revenge. Rumours of the coming invasion reached the Governor in time to allow of hasty preparations. The military weakness of the colony had been made evident in the days of the Nova Scotian insurrection, when the settlement was divided against itself, and the Directors had applied to the government for assistance. The answer to the request was the grant of £7,000 for the erection of fortifications. When the Temne surprise came these fortifications were not complete, and therefore the defence of the colony gave considerable anxiety to the Governor. The war, however, was brief. After two hours' sharp fighting the Temne were repulsed. A reply to the invasion was made a few days later, when a force from the colony attacked the neighbouring native town. A second Temne attack took place in April, 1802, by which time the fortifications had been pressed on and a stone wall and strong brick house provided more solid protection for the colony. A military detachment from Goree under Captain Lloyd "bravely seconded by the Company's servants and the other settlers, defeated a native force of some four hundred men in an action of about twenty minutes."⁶³ These Temne invasions seriously affected the

⁶¹ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1801, p. 49.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1804, p. 10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

progress of the colony. They involved loss of life, they added to the financial burdens, but their most serious effect was that they discouraged the settlers from cultivating their farms.⁵⁴ A spirit of depression and a natural disinclination to occupy land far from the forts were great hindrances to the progress of the colony from 1802.

About this time, though it would be impossible to fix the date exactly, the idea that they had accepted responsibilities greater than they could bear seems to have been borne in upon the Directors. They had received from Parliament £4,000 for the upkeep of the government in Sierra Leone in 1800 and in 1801, and in 1802 they had applied for an increase of the sum on the grounds of increased expenses, and the value of the colony to the nation, about the future of which they spoke in hopeful terms.⁵⁵ Their petition was referred to a committee who in reporting to the House substantiated the Director's petition, declaring that the sum of £4,000 was inadequate to give security to the settlement and that unless Parliament were to grant additional funds the colony would have to be relinquished.⁵⁶ This they pointed out would have serious results for Parliament to consider, as it would mean the problem of providing for the Maroons and Nova Scotians, whom the Government were in honour bound to support. The Committee gave it as their opinion that there was no insuperable barrier to the attainment of the objects of the colony in the future, and they expressed great satisfaction with the progress of education among the natives. This report had resulted in an increase of the parliamentary allowance from £4,000 to £10,000.⁵⁷ Very shortly after the making of this enlarged grant the possibility of ending the Company rule in Sierra Leone was contemplated. The Directors reported the idea as having been first entertained by Lord Hobart, who on February 2nd, 1803, intimated to them an idea "of the expediency of transferring to Government both the military and civil power of the colony of Sierra Leone," leaving the Company to the pursuits of commerce, cultivation and civiliza-

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Report from the Committee on the Petition of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1801-2, II, p. 341.

⁵⁷ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 1804, p. 40.

tion. The Directors expressed themselves not adverse to the suggestion, provided that security was given that the colony would not be made subservient to the slave trade. The renewal of the French war absorbed Lord Hobart's attention elsewhere before the suggestion had taken practical form, and the Directors were left in a position of great uncertainty. A Captain Hallowell, who had been sent by the Admiralty to visit and report on the state of the colony returned a very adverse account of its conditions and prospects, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Addington, therefore declined to recommend the Company's petition for a Parliamentary grant in 1803.⁵⁸ The result was a most anxious and embarrassing position for the Directors, deprived of what they had come to regard as their regular income. It was impossible for them, without ruining the colony, to end their expenditure, but they could not proceed on their usual scale without a prospect of bankruptcy. Indecision of policy therefore marked the next months, but in 1804 the tension was relieved by the publication of another Parliamentary report on the colony.⁵⁹ This report gave formal expression to the idea that a transfer of the civil and military authority in the colony to the Crown would be desirable on the ground that "the objects for which the colony was instituted may be more easily and effectually attained" by such means, but the report was still more emphatic that until such a transfer should be made "there does not appear to your committee to be any better means of discharging the obligations of government towards the Nova Scotians and the Maroons or of obtaining the other beneficial purposes proposed by the institutions of the colony than by supporting the Company's government as now established." In detail the report was very favourable to the Company, and the proposal to transfer government to the Crown was on the practical ground that the Company's finance could not stand the drain of administration, and that to proceed by an uncertain system of grants was injurious to progress. The report was followed by a grant of £28,000 to the Company for two years' support at £10,000, and £8,000 for defence works.⁶⁰ Supported by

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵⁹ Report from the Committee on the Petition of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1804, V.

⁶⁰ *Commons' Journal*, LIX, 402b.

this finding the Directors renewed their efforts for the administration of the colony. Annual grants of £10,000 for the upkeep, with extra grants for fortifications, were made up to and including 1807.

The suggestion to transfer the government from the Company to the Crown which had been proposed in the report of 1804 was not followed up by government action, and it remained for the Directors to take the initiative in securing this change.

They did so in 1806. In September of that year the Directors approached Lord Auckland and submitted to him "Reasons for proposing an early transfer of civil and military authority from the Sierra Leone Company to the Government,"⁶¹ and offered terms on which they were willing to make such a transfer. The Directors appear anxious in these negotiations to make it clear that they were not trying to shuffle out of their responsibilities, but were actuated simply by a desire to do the best for the colony.⁶² The reason assigned for their proposal was the uncertainty of the financial position of the colony. They had no guarantee that the Parliamentary grant would be continued regularly and without some such guarantee they could neither make plans for the future with any confidence, nor could there be in the colony the idea of permanency essential to its progress. The rude shock of Addington's unstatesmanlike refusal of supplies in 1803 had left a permanent impression on the Company. The proposal offered by the Directors for the transfer was that the charter, fortifications, ordnance and buildings paid for with public money should be surrendered to the Government without compensation. The Company were not, however, prepared to cede the land, or to part with buildings erected by the Company's funds unless Government requested the transfer of them, in which case the Company would expect compensation.⁶³ Following on the Directors' proposal, which received support from the Proprietors,⁶³ the legal position of the Company and its claims were investigated and reported on by the Attorney-General and by the Solicitor-General, who were of opinion that the changes proposed could only be

⁶¹ Macaulay to Auckland, 2 Sept., 1806, B.T. 6/70.

⁶² Thornton to Fawkener, 4 Oct., 1806, B.T. 6/70.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶³ Thornton to Fawkener, 17 Nov., 1806, B.T. 6/70.

properly made with Parliamentary authority expressed in an act of Parliament.⁶⁴ This legal advice led to procedure by petition in the Commons, and on 20th January, 1807, the Sierra Leone Company formally petitioned the Commons for leave to bring in a bill for re-vesting in His Majesty the lands and possessions of the Sierra Leone Company.⁶⁵ The petition was referred to a committee, on whose report on the 3rd February,⁶⁶ leave was given to bring in a bill for the desired purpose. Amendments proposed by the Lords wrecked the measure, and a new bill was introduced on 26th March.⁶⁷ This bill, after three readings in the Commons, found a tomb in the Lords.⁶⁸ After two months the subject was revived in the Commons and a third bill⁶⁹ was introduced which passed both Houses successfully, receiving the royal assent on 8th August, 1807.⁷⁰ The passage of the bill provided an opportunity for discussions on the position and work of the Sierra Leone Company, which give some indication of the way it was regarded by contemporaries. A heavy attack was made on the Directors by a Mr. Dent,⁷¹ who demanded in loud tones that the sums which Parliament had granted for Sierra Leone should be refunded because the Company had failed in its object, and "he did not think that Parliament should be made to pay for the fanciful notions of any set of men." Another speaker alluded to the flagrant waste of public money that had been spent entirely with a view to conciliate support among a certain description of gentlemen within these walls, and that they, "wealthy bankers and merchants," should be made to reimburse the sums they had been granted.

Throughout the debate the failure of the Company was taken as a recognised fact by both sides. Wilberforce gave reasons for the failure, and Henry Thornton admitted it. Nothing in the debate indicates that the House considered the Directors and Proprietors to have been philanthropists in any way, and it was only by a serious financial reckoning that the Company

⁶⁴ Piggott and Romilly to Fawkener, 1 Dec., 1806, B.T. 6/70.

⁶⁵ *Commons' Journal*, LXII, 71b.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 96 seq.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 304a.

⁶⁸ *Commons' Journal*, Index, "Not returned from the Lords."

⁶⁹ *Commons' Journal*, LXII, 647a, 7 July, 1807.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 830b, 8 August, 1807.

⁷¹ *Parl. Hist.*, IX, 1001.

was saved from being charged with a bill for the sum of the annual grants made to them. One speaker pointed out that if the Company were to refund the grants they would be entitled to present a bill to Government for the support of the Nova Scotians and Maroons, which at the rate of about £26,000 a year would more than balance their alleged debt.⁷² This argument was effective, and the projects for making the Directors refund the money they had received were dropped.

The bill in the form in which it passed was not in all details what the Directors had desired.⁷³ The greatest difference between the terms of the Act of 1807 and those prepared by the Directors was in the disposal of the land and buildings. In their proposals the Directors had expressed willingness to hand over all buildings raised with public funds, but had made it clear that they would expect compensation if land and company-built houses were asked for. This they later modified, only appealing to have some buildings left to them. In spite of these views the act as it passed provided for the transfer of all buildings to the Crown without compensation.⁷⁴

By the terms of the act the Sierra Leone Company was divested of the power and responsibility of carrying on the government in Sierra Leone, the land and buildings were transferred to His Majesty, while the Company was left the right to continue to trade for seven years, at the end of which time they should cease to be a body corporate.⁷⁵ The reason given for the passing of the act was simply that the Company had been convinced of the expediency of relinquishing the government in Sierra Leone, and had asked the Crown to accept its surrender.

The actual surrender of the colony to the Crown took place on 1st January, 1808.⁷⁶ Governor Ludlam, the last of the Company's Governors, remained in his post to become the first Governor in Sierra Leone under the Crown and to direct the carrying through of such local changes as the abdication of the Company necessitated. On the coast the change at

⁷² *Ibid.*, Mr. Sheridan.

⁷³ Correspondence of the Sierra Leone Company with Lord Auckland's office, 1806-7, B.T. 6/70.

⁷⁴ 47 Geo. III, sess. 2, c. 44, clause 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, clause 2.

⁷⁶ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1808, p. 15.*

first made little difference. With Governor Ludlam there were also continued in office "all the Company's officers in their several situations and duties." Governor Ludlam had for a time a dual position; as the official Crown Governor he was responsible for the government of the colony, and he was also the agent of the Sierra Leone Company entrusted by them with the work of bringing all the Company's affairs at Sierra Leone to a conclusive settlement, realising their property, sending it to England, paying their debts and receiving any payments due to them.⁷⁷ From the accomplishment of this winding up, trade and government were to be separated in Sierra Leone. The right to trade as a corporation had not been withdrawn from the Company by the act, which expressly provided that it might continue for seven years, but the commercial career of the Sierra Leone adventurers ended before that date. As the epitaph of the Sierra Leone Company's trading ventures "failure" is uncompromisingly written both by enemies and friends. Clarkson in his *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, speaks of the commercial side of the Company's activities as ruin,⁷⁸ the Directors in reporting to their constituents made elaborate explanations of this failure,⁷⁹ and in a defence of the Company published in 1807 it was stated, "If commercial gain were expected by any of the Proprietors their object has certainly been lost, even the capital itself has been sunk without having yielded any interest to the subscribers."⁸⁰ The lack of profits in trade had been explained by the Directors as largely due to the competition of the slave trade, and the burden of government. In 1807 both these barriers were removed, and the trade was therefore free to prosper unhampered. Yet this freedom was not followed by a revival of commercial activity. Instead the Directors gave orders for the winding up of their "honourable trade." It seems possible that the keen traders in the Company had realised that their prospects would be better divorced entirely from the aims of the philanthropic party, and to the philanthropists the fifteen years had shown that

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Clarkson, T., *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London, 1808), p. 482.

⁷⁹ *Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 1793 onwards.*

⁸⁰ Report of the African Institution (London, 1807).

the civilisation introduced into Africa during their régime had been distinct from the trading activities. The dual aim had proved too difficult of accomplishment.

The philanthropist element of the Company proposed to continue their work through the "African Institution," which was founded in 1807 to promote the civilisation of Africa, and by this association of former members of the Sierra Leone Company the knowledge and experience gained during the Company's experiment were used as a basis for further effort in different conditions and by different methods.⁸¹

With the transfer of the administration of Sierra Leone to the Crown another experiment in government in West Africa ended. Though in form a commercial undertaking, the Sierra Leone enterprise was marked right through the Company's career by a policy entirely different from that of other companies, as the trading interest was made subservient to the welfare of the settlers in the colony. That the Sierra Leone Company was adjudged a commercial failure has already been noted. The question which is of greater importance for this sketch is to what extent the Directors were successful in their efforts to secure the welfare and civilisation of the settlers.

The degree of success in government is not to be estimated from the moments when it was under discussion, at which times every creaking joint called for attention, but from evidence of its working right through the period in which this self-government was put into practice. On the whole the fifteen years show a striking and original success. In no other colony of coloured people in the British possessions at the time was so large a measure of self-government attempted as that which has been described in Sierra Leone. Moreover, such a degree of self-government was not attempted in the Empire at large in colonies of coloured people for many generations after. The settlers proved to the satisfaction of those in authority in the colony that they could understand and play a full and intelligent part in the system of trial by jury. Police control by hundredors and tithingmen elected by the colonists themselves worked well until the days of agitators, and the success of the agitators was due in considerable measure to

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

144 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

the lack of authority of the central government in judicial affairs, and to the uncertainty as to their land rights, neither of which conditions was a necessary problem in a self-governing colony, and both of which made it difficult for the administration to act with the promptness and firmness needed in the early stages of the unrest. This government of a colony of some fifteen hundred inhabitants, both white and black, by a system in which colour distinction was no bar to full political rights, and in which the Governor had no coercive powers, was an administrative experiment amazingly successful for the slave-trade period, and claiming a high place among the experiments in the government of tropical dependencies in any period.

CHAPTER X

THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS UNIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT ON THE WEST AFRICAN COAST, 1807 TO 1821

It has been pointed out earlier in this sketch that in the late eighteenth century the West African holdings cannot be considered a unity, whether in government or interests, and something has been indicated in the previous chapters of three forms of administration by which parts of the coast were governed in the period. In the early nineteenth century this individualism gave place to a movement towards unification, which resulted in 1821 in the establishment of a single authority on the coast representing the Crown and responsible for all the British West African settlements. In the story of this transition a great variety of factors played a part, of which some are to be found in Africa and some in Europe. The essential factor, to which all others were subsidiary, was the movement for the abolition of the slave trade, and the year 1807, when the slave trade abolition act was passed, may be taken as the starting-point of the progress towards the unifying of coast control.

At the turn of the century two of the administrations described in previous chapters were in command in West Africa, the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, and the Sierra Leone Company, and in discussing the period 1807-1821 the development in the two regions must to some extent be treated separately.

The history of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa at the time shows two conflicting lines of development. On the part of the Committee there were attempts to advance with the times, and, by accepting the new shibboleths of the early nineteenth century, to maintain their position in an age which had declared unlawful the pursuit of the object that

the Company had been created to promote. The opposing line of development in the same region was the steady and persistent demonstration that the Company of Merchants, in spite of its adaptability, belonged to a past age, and was not a suitable instrument for nineteenth-century administrative purposes. The second development triumphed, but the full significance of that victory can only be appreciated if the strength of the counter movement is recognised. The Committee's view of the situation created by the passing of the slave trade abolition act was expressed by their secretary in a letter to Lord Castlereagh's office in 1808, "The Committee are aware that it is their peculiar duty, and they feel it equally their inclination to promote by all means in their power the commercial interests of this country with Africa, upon such principles as the legislature shall sanction, and in such manner as the government may direct."¹ This assumption that the Committee existed to carry out the wishes of the legislature on African administration, whatever at any moment they might chance to be, and that the change in object in African commerce was a negligible consideration, accounts for the Company's longevity. True to this principle, when the twenty years' conflict began as to whether the slave trade should or should not be abolished, the Committee, while fighting against the measure, at the same time kept a watchful eye on the progress of opinion as expressed in the Commons, and in the period when the trade was not abolished but when the methods of the conduct were constantly criticised, the Committee attempted to prove themselves as enlightened as others of their day by reforming some of the weaknesses of their position. It had been accepted in the early days of the Company's administration that they had no concern with the civilisation of Africa, but in 1788 in an inquiry ordered by Parliament the Lords of Trade had been instructed to investigate the effects of the slave trade on Africa.² The Committee, called upon to supply an answer to the question, had written in general terms that Africa's benefits were "equal to her state," and going further into detail had added that the greatest was "being paid for what has been a burthen to other countries,

¹ Cocks to Lord Castlereagh's office, 20 Sept., 1808, T. 70/73.

² Order in Council, 11 Feb., 1788, P.C. 1/62.

the refuse and offscourings of her population.”³ Taking their cue from this inquiry as to native welfare the Committee a few months later gave warm approval to an “educational experiment made by some of their officers among the coloured population.”⁴ As further proofs of this enlightenment they expressed willingness to assist in a proposed expedition to the interior by Major Houghton, under the auspices of the “Association for promoting the discovery of the interior parts of Africa” in 1794.⁵ In the inquiry from 1788 onwards into the practice of the slave trade there was also considerable investigation into the conditions of Europeans employed in it, and the Committee therefore made efforts to reform and improve their coast services. In 1790 they considered plans for a hospital for Cape Coast Castle,⁶ and in 1804 they prepared a general reorganisation scheme, which was designed to improve the discipline and reputation of the service. The man chosen to inaugurate the reform era was a certain George Torrane, who had previously served for seven years in the forts and had resigned owing to a promotion quarrel.⁷ The Committee’s papers suggest that Torrane made his own appointment to a great extent, as previous to the adoption of this reform policy the Committee received a series of letters from him pointing out the defects in the existing government of the coast.⁸ With his appointment in October, 1804, a period of coast administration began in which “respectability” was aimed at. The new Governor was given military rank—“Colonel Torrane”—and was provided with a long and detailed list of instructions about his powers and duties.⁹ The instructions suggest that the Committee who prepared them had studied those given to colonial governors elsewhere, and had adapted them to West African conditions. The most

³ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Lords of Trade, 19 Feb., 1788, T. 70/146.

⁴ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, March, 1789, T. 70/146.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 May, 1790.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 Feb., 1791.

⁷ Torrane to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 10 Sept., 1804, T. 70/1581.

⁸ Torrane to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, May, Aug., Sept., 1804, T. 70/34.

⁹ Minutes of the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 31 Nov., 1804, T. 70/148.

notable of the provisions concerned the Governor, and his relations with the council. He was given greatly increased powers and made practically independent of the council, which was to be convened as often as the Governor should think fit, and whose opinion he might neglect on his own responsibility in case of disagreement.¹⁰ The Governor was also given powers to make appointments in the service without consulting the council,¹¹ and nothing was said of the old rule of promotion by seniority. The usual provision that officers might not absent themselves from their commands without the Governor's leave, was also added.¹² A list of the officers and servants was given for the Governor's guidance and he was instructed to keep to it.¹³ For the promotion of discipline regular office hours were appointed.¹⁴ With the new emphasis on the respectability of the service it was made an instruction to the Governor that the officers were to appear on all public occasions wearing regimentals and side-arms.¹⁵ For the rest the instructions dealt with account keeping.¹⁶

Torrane reached Cape Coast Castle on 7th February, 1805, and began the work of reform.¹⁷ He reported the prevalence of great incompetence among the officers and rebuked the Committee for their lack of care in choosing applicants for the service. "Really, gentlemen, you should know something, or have strong testimonials of the abilities of any person ere you appoint him."¹⁸ He evidently found the coast custom of promotion by seniority too well established to be disregarded even in the interests of efficiency, and he wrote to the Committee suggesting that it would be well if there were deviations from it. The need for an active chaplain was pointed out by him, not from any missionary zeal, but because "Cape Coast Castle is too respectable a garrison to be without a chaplain."¹⁹ In asking the Committee to try to secure a Vice-Admiralty

¹⁰ Instructions to Torrane, 30 Nov., 1804, clause 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, clause 17.

¹² *Ibid.*, clause 16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, clause 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, clause 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, clause 18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, clauses 1-8, 10, 13.

¹⁷ Torrane to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 11 April, 1805, T. 70/34.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9 May, 1805.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25 July, 1805.

court for the coast, which they had for long tried in vain to do. Torrane, in a sentence, suggests the continuance of the antagonism between the Company of Merchants trading to Africa and the Sierra Leone Company that had been seen in 1791. After pressing the need for the court, he added, "Is the Sierra Leone Company to hold such extensive powers and we to wear the curb?"²⁰

The new Governor's vigour in attempting to reform the service, while desirable for the Committee's position, did not make him popular, and one of the Company's officers presented a list of charges against him. The main charge was a personal grievance, but a general criticism of his rule was added: "His oppressive conduct has made his government unsupportable to officers and servants, contemptible to Europeans in the neighbourhood, and odious to the natives."²¹ He was also charged with attempting to monopolize the whole coast trade himself. The Committee, in answer to these complaints, dealt gently with Torrane, to whom they wrote expressing appreciation of his work, but suggesting that he should be more cautious and controlled in his methods. "Firmness we know you possess, add to it moderation and a restraint upon yourself from too hastily adopting means till you have well weighed the probable effects."²² Torrane, in reply to the mild censure of the Committee's letter, expressed great grief at having incurred their displeasure, but argued in his own defence that his actions had all been for the good of the service which he had laboured hard to bring to its "present state of respectability."²³ Another officer, the second-in-command who served under him, paid a tribute to the force and vigour of his rule. When writing to the Committee to inform them of Torrane's death in 1807, he wrote, "By this very severe loss, Gentlemen, your service is left in a delicate situation, a person of abilities similar to those possessed by Colonel Torrane is wanting to succeed to the chair. I am sorry to say there is none such in your service."²⁴

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18 July, 1805.

²¹ Dawson to Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa 26 July, 1806.

²² Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to Torrane, T. 70/72.

²³ Torrane to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 27 June, 1806, T. 70/35.

²⁴ White to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 25 Dec., 1807, T. 70/1586.2.

Torrane's governorship, which illustrates the Committee's attempt to advance with the times and to prove the respectability of their African service was also momentous because it included two events which were of great force in proving that the whole system of administration by the Company of Merchants trading to Africa was becoming inadequate to the conditions of the time. These were the passing in the English Parliament of the act for the abolition of the slave trade, and the Ashanti descent upon the Gold Coast. The passing of the abolition act caused at the time strikingly little stir either in the administration of the Company of Merchants, or on the Gold Coast. The Committee's apparent tranquillity has already been explained in their view that they existed to interpret the wishes of the legislature.²⁵ The one matter on which they expressed concern was the effect of the measure on the position of their officers and servants on the coast. In October, 1807, the Committee wrote to Lord Castlereagh to point out to him that the abolition had seriously affected the finance of the service, as during the continuance of the slave trade the Committee had been able to get competent officers "at salaries greatly inadequate to the service" because of the commercial advantages they could derive from intercourse with slave trade vessels. When these advantages ceased the Committee were afraid that the officers would not have sufficient inducement to remain in Africa, and they therefore asked for an additional £5,000 a year so that salaries in the service might be raised.²⁶ The Committee in making this request had solid grounds for their view of the effects of the withdrawal of the chief trading advantages enjoyed by officers in the service, as they had received notice from one of those who stood security for Torrane that he wished to withdraw from that responsibility because the abolition of slave trading opportunities made the Governor's financial situation dangerously unsound.²⁷

The request for an additional grant for salaries received a satisfactory reply, and in February, 1808, the Council at Cape Coast Castle passed a resolution of thanks to the Committee

²⁵ *Vide supra*, p. 15.

²⁶ Parr to Castlereagh, 14 Oct., 1807, T. 70/72.

²⁷ Swanzy to Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 12 Aug., 1807, T. 70/1586.1.

“ for the liberal increase of pay that they have been pleased to allow in consequence of the abolition of the slave trade.”²⁸

On the coast the abolition did not immediately cause much stir because it coincided with the outbreak of a serious war between the Ashantis and the Fantis. There had been rumours of coming hostilities between those two peoples for over forty years,²⁹ and in 1807 the dreaded invasion took place. In July, 1807, Torrane wrote to the Committee that the coast was involved in a serious war as “ the king of Ashantee with a most powerful army has invaded the country ” and “ cut his way through the heart of the Fantee country.”³⁰ It had been the policy of the Committee to keep as far as possible clear of entanglements in native quarrels, and they had not entered into alliances with native powers. The only agreements that bound them were those for the payment of rent for the forts to a large number of small native countries. In the Ashanti and Fanti quarrel the Company was not bound to either side, as the Committee’s cautious policy had kept the English forts free from the power and responsibility of domination in native affairs. Against this freedom the long years of English tenancy in the Fanti country had created the tradition of a connection that could not be entirely disregarded. The Ashanti invasion in July, 1807, forced the English officers in the African service to decide which side they would support. The Ashanti troops rapidly pushed back the Fantis until they had reached the sea coast, where they menaced the English fort at Annamaboe. The officer in command of Annamaboe had to decide whether the English would attempt to negotiate with Ashanti forces or would support the Fantis. Mr. Edward White, on whom the making of the decision fell, offered what shelter and protection were at his disposal to the natives of the neighbourhood, and prepared the fort for defence.³¹ A short siege, in which the English garrison of three officers and twenty men held the fort against the Ashanti army, ended in the

²⁸ Minutes of Council at Cape Coast Castle, 1 Feb., 1808, T. 70/1586.1.

²⁹ *Vide supra*, p. 54.

³⁰ Torrance to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 12 July, 1807, T. 70/1586.2.

³¹ Torrane to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 1807, T. 70/1586.2.

withdrawal of the invaders, leaving a ghastly wreckage round the fort, which had not been able to protect those for whom there was not room within the walls. Following the siege of Annamaboe, Torrane as Governor-in-Chief, sent messages to the Ashanti king, and a meeting was arranged for making terms between the English and the Ashantis. With this incident the English policy of non-intervention in native affairs was brought to an end, and from 1807 onwards a more active policy had to be adopted.

The Ashanti war was followed by a time of violent unrest on the coast. The defeated Fantis wreaked their vengeance on neighbouring countries which had remained neutral in the war, and a formidable condition of turbulence and lawlessness reigned on the coast. The Ashanti invasion was not the only cause of the unrest of the time as the English abolition of the slave trade added to the general native discontent. Though the measure had not caused an immediate stir on the coast all interest at the time being absorbed in the native war, it did not fail afterwards to lead to very considerable unrest. The native population round the European forts lived mainly by a middleman trade in slaves, and also by providing wood and water and other necessaries for the slavers who came to the coast. The abolition of the trade was in a large measure the ruin of their most profitable employment. That the native population with which the English came into contact did not appreciate the philanthropy of the abolition act was a fact that the Committee found it necessary to explain carefully to the Government. In answer to a criticism some years later of their failure to suppress the slave trade, a measure so obviously, to the critic, for the advantage of the inhabitants, they wrote, "Can the wildest theorist expect that a mere act of the British legislature should in a moment inspire with wisdom and refinement the unenlightened natives of the vast continent of Africa, and persuade them, nay more, make them practically believe and feel that it is for their interest to contribute to, or even to acquiesce in, the destruction of a trade not inconsistent with their prejudices, their laws, or their notions of morality and religion and by which alone they have been hitherto accustomed to acquire wealth and to purchase

all the foreign luxuries and conveniences of life? ”³² Local native resentment caused by the measure added considerably to the anxieties of English officers. So serious was the unrest that in 1812, Mr. Meredith, Commander of Annamaboe fort, one of the most enlightened men in the service, and most zealous in attempts to promote native cultivation, was very cruelly murdered by the natives.³³

While the Governor and Council were facing these difficulties on the coast the Committee in London were on the defensive against a series of criticisms of their administration. That the Committee realised the need for some explanation of their position after the abolition, may be seen in their correspondence with Lord Castlereagh, to whom they wrote in 1807 begging to offer their services for promoting “such political and commercial objects as His Majesty’s government may now, or at any future period entertain.”³⁴ Lord Castlereagh’s office hesitated to express an immediate opinion about schemes for the coast and its disposal, and prepared to make detailed inquiries into coast conditions before offering suggestions as to its future management.³⁵ These inquiries were made partly through the Committee of the Company of Merchants itself, and partly through specially chosen commissioners who were appointed to investigate the condition of the forts and settlements on the coast and to report on possible improvements there. The opinions which the Committee tendered in reply were designed to prove the value of the forts as trading centres for a new commerce, and the value of themselves as administrative machinery for carrying out the new aims of the government. For the commercial future of the coast they expressed a belief that a trade might be built up in rice, indian corn, indigo, palm oil, and timber in addition to the development of that in gold and ivory.³⁶ If those new branches of trade were to be pursued the Committee considered that the

³² Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Treasury, 9 April, 1812, T. 70/73.

³³ Report from the Committee on Papers relating to the African Forts, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1816, VII, 2, p. 47.

³⁴ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to Castlereagh, 14 Oct., 1807, T. 70/72.

³⁵ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Governor and Council at Cape Coast Castle, 20 Sept., 1803, T. 70/73.

³⁶ Cocks to Lord Castlereagh’s office, 26 Sept., 1808.

forts would be necessary, and they believed that the forts would also be essential to the furtherance of "the humane intentions of His Majesty's government." Other general suggestions were made, but the opinion they expressed most fervently was that for success in the future administrative arrangements of the coast, Sierra Leone and the settlements under the Committee's rule should be kept separate, as they were convinced of "the impossibility of connecting that settlement (Sierra Leone) with any plan embracing those parts of the coast which are under their (the Committee's) management." Holding this opinion the Committee were to fight for thirteen years against a tide that was steadily sweeping in the opposite direction. The commissioners who had been appointed to investigate conditions³⁷ on the coast presented to the government in 1810 a bulky volume of information as a result of their work³⁸ and in a paper which was laid before Parliament, they made a number of recommendations for the future administration of the settlements.³⁹ The commissioners reported on the whole range of the English holdings, the Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, considering them as a group, and not as a series of separate entities. They were reported on from a definite standpoint, that of their value for the suppression of the slave trade. The general summing up was that for this purpose the district most worthy of attention was Sierra Leone. In going into detail about the Gold Coast the commissioners made a very damaging report on the holdings under the Company of Merchants, stating that only three of the forts were of any strength, that they were of no use to the traders, of no use to shipping, and of no use in suppressing the slave trade. They therefore recommended a drastic reduction in the number of the forts, and proposed that six should be given up, which would, the commissioners considered, leave "sufficient to ensure as much influence to the British name as can be turned to any advantageous account." After making suggestions concerning the relations with the Dutch, to which further reference will be made later, the commissioners added a note

³⁷ *Vide supra*, p. 153.

³⁸ "State of the West African Settlements," 1810, C.O. 267/29.

³⁹ Report of the Commissioners appointed to examine the African Forts, 1811, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1816, VII, 2, Appendix 22.

on the "home direction" of the Gold Coast settlements, pointing out that "whilst the great business of the Gold Coast was the Slave Trade, the choice of the Committee by the three ports from which it was principally carried on (Liverpool, Bristol, and London), might be very suitable; but now that a total change has taken place in the trade of that Coast, some change also might with propriety be made in the direction of its concerns. London, Liverpool, and Bristol might be limited to a smaller number, and the deficiency be supplied by other Gentlemen, whose long and public hostility to the Slave Trade had clearly proved their sincere desire to ameliorate the state of Africa."⁴⁰

In contrast with the criticism of the Committee as a body that was out of harmony with the times, the description of Sierra Leone was very favourable. From 1807 when the Sierra Leone Company relinquished their charter,⁴¹ the territory there had been under Crown government, but the passing from Company to Crown had not made much change in the local administration of the colony. When the Commissioners drew up their report they found the Sierra Leone constitution on "a very liberal footing," providing great freedom in self-government, but with an executive lacking in strength. They made a number of suggestions to remedy this weakness, because they considered that Sierra Leone was the best place on the Coast from which the arduous task of attempting to put down the slave trade could be carried on. For that work a strong executive authority on the coast was needed and the Commissioners believed that "there is no place on the whole coast which could in any degree be rendered so efficient for this most desirable purpose as Sierra Leone." To strengthen the executive the commissioners recommended that the Governor should be allowed greater independence of his council.⁴²

The general finding of the 1810 report was that for promoting the national aims of the day in West Africa the administration by the Committee of the Company of Merchants

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴¹ *Vide supra*, p. 140.

⁴² Report of the Commissioners appointed to examine the African Forts, 1811, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1816, VII, 2, Appendix 22, section on Sierra Leone.

trading to Africa was unsatisfactory and needed reform, and that Sierra Leone with a slightly modified administration was the only place "from whence will probably emanate any degree of civilization which may be attained by the adjacent parts of Africa."⁴³

The commissioners' finding was transmitted to the Committee of the Company of Merchants for their comments, which they expressed in a long and emphatic letter to the Treasury in April, 1812.⁴⁴ They protested that the commissioners had quite failed to appreciate the value of the forts and settlements, and they reasserted the old view that forts were essential, both as marks of possession conferring the right to trade on the holders, and as the only "medium through which trade can be safely and advantageously carried on." Lest their arguments should be considered negligible because they were founded on slave trade conditions the Committee descanted, as they had done in 1808,⁴⁵ on the great opportunities of development which the country possessed, to secure a share of which the retention of the settlements would be necessary. Each of the forts recommended for abandonment made, the Committee considered, some particular contribution to the welfare of the English position. One was recommended as having a good landing, another useful for the supply of provisions and canoes, another essential for communication. In explanation of the past failure to use the natural advantages of the country the Committee pointed out with justice that the policy hitherto adopted by the Government had been one of consistently sacrificing African development to that of the West Indies. "Hence commerce has been confined to a trade which seemed to preclude all advancement in civilization; her cultivators have been sold to labour in lands not their own; while all endeavours to promote cultivation and improvement in Agriculture have been discouraged by the Government of this country lest her products should interfere with those of the more favoured colonies."⁴⁶ Once these

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁴ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Treasury, 9 April, 1812, T. 70/73.

⁴⁵ *Vide supra*, p. 153.

⁴⁶ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Treasury, 9 April, 1812, T. 70/73.

barriers had been removed the Committee saw no reason why African commerce should not advance rapidly. The criticism that the Committee had failed to check the slave trade outside the forts was met with a recital of the coast conditions, so well known to the Committee, but so often forgotten in the debates of the time, that the Governor and Council on the coast had no authority over the natives round the forts, they were tenants, not rulers, and right up to the fort gates the natives were free to carry on what trade they chose, by what methods they chose. The general criticism that the forts had not succeeded to any extent in putting down the slave trade in Africa called forth the declaration that has already been quoted,⁴⁷ on the subject of the attitude of the native population to the abolition, showing that the old Adam of dislike of the philanthropic theorist was not dead, though the previous twenty years had changed his modes of speech. On the subject of the suggestions for changes in the administration under the Committee the animus between the representatives of the old régime and the philanthropist party was seen again when the Committee refused to comment on the commissioners' findings on the matter as "we have not understood that the expediency of altering the constitution of the African company was submitted to their consideration, nor could it have been necessary to send three governors of Sierra Leone to the Gold Coast to ascertain the propriety according to their opinion of transferring the direction of the settlements on that coast to themselves and their friends."

The presentation of the Commissioners' report was not immediately followed by action on its recommendations as the Napoleonic war was occupying the attention of His Majesty's Government, but at the conferences which followed the war, England, represented by Lord Castlereagh, took so definite a stand on the slave trade abolition question that in the years after the conclusion of peace the movement towards the unification of West African government proceeded with greatly increased rapidity.

In the period from 1815 to 1821 there are two threads to be followed, one of developments in Africa, and the other of events in England.

⁴⁷ *Vide supra*, p. 152.

In Africa the most urgent problem on the Gold Coast was that of relations with Ashanti, and it was in their attempts to deal with that question that the Committee finally proved the unsuitability of their administration to nineteenth century conditions. After 1808 the Ashantis continued to make war on parts of the Gold Coast, a proceeding which caused considerable anxiety in the Company's forts, though the invaders showed a general readiness to keep on good terms with the English. The English non-intervention policy had to be abandoned finally when the smaller countries in which the Company held their forts were gradually absorbed by the Ashantis, who then claimed the rent payments for the forts, and thus indirectly claimed landlord rights over the English.⁴⁷ Negotiations with Ashanti were also made desirable when the Committee realised the need to prove their own contention that the Gold Coast was an admirable base from which to pursue "honourable trade" with the interior. If regular communication could be established with the Ashanti capital it was believed that an immensely valuable commerce might be built up. Owing to the continuance of the Ashanti campaign negotiations were not seriously begun till 1817, in which year the first mission to the Ashanti court at Coomassie was set on foot under the Committee's authority. The object of the mission as stated in the instructions prepared for its leader was that it should be a general "exploratory mission into the dominions of the King of Ashantee,"⁴⁸ and those who undertook it were to make full reports on the condition of the country, its climate, products, trade and such matters. In negotiating with the king they were to inform him that the English had three objects in view in sending the mission, the extension of trade, the maintenance of free communication between the interior and the sea coast, and the promotion of education. In April, 1817, the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, John Hope Smith, organised the mission.⁴⁹ Frederick James, the Governor of Accra, was appointed to conduct the embassy, and two writers and an assistant surgeon were appointed to go with him. The mission had an unquiet history. The conductor,

⁴⁷ *Vide supra*, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Bowdich, T. E., *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London, 1819), Instructions for the conduct of the mission.

⁴⁹ Smith to James, 19 April, 1817, T. 70/1602.

Mr. James, was charged with mismanaging the undertaking,⁵⁰ the leadership of which was assumed by one of the writers, Mr. T. E. Bowdich, who described his own part as that of rescuing the mission "from the Consequences of Mr. James's imbecility."⁵¹ The Council at Cape Coast Castle found James guilty of the charge preferred against him, and declared that his "conduct cannot be too severely censured, but in consideration of his long service and the feeble state of his frame at the time" they were "unwilling to proceed to those extremities which circumstances would fully justify."⁵²

A reading of Bowdich's part variant from that which he himself gave was provided by a writer in the *Quarterly Review* in 1820, who, describing the scene, wrote, "Mr. Bowdich, full of self-importance . . . unceremoniously shoved aside his superior officer and demanded to be heard."⁵³ Whatever the truth of the various assertions concerning the conduct of the mission, Bowdich did succeed in making a treaty with the king of Ashanti,⁵⁴ in which the three objects of the mission were granted; the encouragement of trade between Cape Coast Castle and Ashanti was promised, the king expressed willingness to accept the presence of a British officer at his court for the purpose of preserving regular communication with the Governor at Cape Coast Castle, and he agreed to send his children to be educated there.⁵⁵

The effects of this mission were not entirely those expected by the Committee who dispatched it. One was that Ashanti became an object of curiosity and speculation to the intelligentsia of the day. The region was considered a veritable Eldorado, as immense supplies of gold were believed to abound, if not in Ashanti itself, at least in the region of Timbuktu, which was to be reached through Ashanti. Not only commercial but scientific interest was aroused in the country to such an extent that the appointment of a consul with a royal commission was considered, and supported by Lord Bathurst, who was "ever ready to forward such views as have for their

⁵⁰ James's reply to charges, 22 May, 1817, T. 70/1602.

⁵¹ Bowdich, T. E., *The African Committee* (London, 1819).

⁵² Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle, 17 Nov., 1817, T. 70/1602.

⁵³ *Quarterly Review*, XXII, p. 282.

⁵⁴ Treaty at Coomassie, 7 Sept., 1817, T. 70/1602.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, clauses 5, 6, 9.

object the promotion of science and general knowledge."⁵⁶

In this way, the opening up of communications with Ashanti instead of strengthening the position of the Committee of the Company of Merchants as they had hoped introduced the authority of a Secretary of State into coast affairs to an extent that it had never been known there before.

The next mission followed hard upon that of the Bowdich treaty. In January, 1818, Joseph Dupuis received a royal commission as consul at Coomassie. His commission stated that he was appointed for the promoting of peace and a good correspondence between England and Ashanti and "for the greater benefit and the good and more orderly government of our English merchants and other our subjects trading thereto."⁵⁷ Though the Crown granted the commission to Dupuis the arrangement of the practical details of the mission fell to the Committee, who were also to bear its expense.⁵⁸

The papers of the Dupuis mission⁵⁹ suggest that the Governor and Council at Cape Coast Castle did not welcome the arrival of a consul who had direct relations with His Majesty's government, as they wrote to Dupuis before he had begun his embassy urging on him the importance of his appearing to the natives as one of the Company's officers and "wholly dependent on the Governor and Council." The reason given for this advice was the singularly unconvincing argument that if Dupuis were known to be independent of the Company he would be "tormented with numerous applications of various kinds," while if he were thought to be dependent on the Governor and Council in a case of difficulty he could make delays by sending to Cape Coast Castle for advice.⁶⁰ In view of other actions of the Governor and Council it seems more likely that they wished as far as possible to check the consul's independence, and Dupuis accused them of trying to prevent his mission from taking place.⁶¹ The Governor and Council

⁵⁶ *Quarterly Review*, XXII, p. 284.

⁵⁷ Commission to Joseph Dupuis, 26 Jan., 1818, C.O. 268/19.

⁵⁸ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to Dupuis, 31 Oct., 1818, C.O. 2/11.

⁵⁹ Dupuis's correspondence with Lord Bathurst and the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, C.O. 2/11.

⁶⁰ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to Dupuis, 31 Oct., 1818, C.O. 2/11.

⁶¹ Dupuis to Bathurst, 10 Jan., 1820, C.O. 2/11.

in their turn reported to the Committee that the treaty which Dupuis finally negotiated met with the "unequivocal condemnation" of "every man acquainted with the country."⁶² The rights and wrongs of the Coomassie mission disputes would have little to do with the development of the unified administration on the coast had it not been for the quarrelling of the Governor and Council with the Crown-appointed consul. Those who held the consular authority communicated directly with the Secretary of State, and the reception which Dupuis had been given at Cape Coast Castle, did not encourage him to write flattering accounts of the coast administration to Lord Bathurst. Instead he wrote of the "overgrown tyranny and oppression of the Governor and Vicē President" and of their "unjust expenditure."⁶³ His successor wrote of the "glaring impositions that have been practised by those persons (Governors of forts) upon the public for many years past"⁶⁴; and a third holder of the office reinforced with great emphasis the opinion of his predecessors.⁶⁵

The main result of the Ashanti missions was that, instead of proving the value of the Company's administration they made clear its weaknesses on all sides, and in spite of the Committee's effort to show themselves enlightened rulers by their attempts to open up the interior their unsuitability as a governing body was made increasingly clear.

While the Ashanti missions were failing to improve the Committee's position in Africa the general state of their administration was being investigated by a Parliamentary Committee which was appointed in 1816. The committee collected information, but contented themselves with a report of a few lines in which they regretted that owing to the lateness of their appointment they were unable to make any recommendations. They therefore laid the evidence they had collected before the House, and suggested that a committee should be appointed in the next session to reconsider the matter.⁶⁶ The committee which was duly appointed in the

⁶² Governor and Council at Cape Coast Castle to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 18 May, 1820, T. 70/1606.

⁶³ Dupuis to Bathurst, 10 Jan., 1820, C.O. 2/11.

⁶⁴ Hutton to Bathurst, 16 May, 1820, C.O. 2/11.

⁶⁵ Robertson to Bathurst, 2 Sept., 1820, C.O. 2/11.

⁶⁶ Report of the Committee on Papers relating to the African Forts, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1816, VII. 2.

next year presented a report to the House on the 25th June, 1817.⁶⁷

In this report the select committee laid before the House their considered opinion as to past and existing conditions on the coast, the possibilities of future development, and some suggestions for the future administration. The finding on existing conditions was that the state of the forts and settlements was far from satisfactory in that they were not adequate for defence even against native attack, and that the security derived from them was rather due to the interest which the natives had in trading with them than to their intrinsic strength. As to whether the Gold Coast forts would prove a good trading centre for legal commerce the Committee were "unable to offer a confident opinion," though they thought "there was reason to believe" that trade in gold, ivory, palm oil and dye woods had increased.

The condition of the natives was, however, depressing, as the most evident effect of the English abolition of the slave trade had been an increase in the trade by Spanish and Portuguese vessels. The international aspect of the abolition question had been alluded to in all the previous reports on the Gold Coast, in the suggestion from the Committee of the Company of Merchants to Lord Castlereagh in 1808, in the Commissioners' report of 1810, in the comments on that report, and in the information collected by the Parliamentary committee of 1816. The opinion of all those reports, in which the Company of Merchants and the philanthropist were alike agreed, was that the English abolition act would be mere futility without some security that the other European nations would not develop the trade that England abandoned. The Commissioners of 1810 suggested the importance of reducing the Dutch power,⁶⁸ as did the Committee of the Company of Merchants in 1812.⁶⁹ At Vienna and Paris, Castlereagh made great efforts to secure from the representatives of the assembled powers an undertaking that they would join England in the new crusade, which as Prof. Webster describes it, had "captured the imagination of the nation."⁷⁰ The results of

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1817, VI.

⁶⁸ *Parliamentary Papers*, 1816, VII, 2, Appendix 22, pp. 136, 137.

⁶⁹ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa to the Treasury, 9 April, 1812, T. 70/73.

⁷⁰ *Cambridge History of Foreign Policy*, I, p. 451.

Castlereagh's efforts were, however, somewhat meagre, little more being attained than the general declaration against the slave trade which was made in the additional articles of the Treaty of Paris in November, 1815.⁷¹

Finding Europe slow to be led into virtuous ways by England's example and exhortation, those who were greatly determined to see the trade abolished in practice turned attention to two methods of attaining the object; one by consolidating the English holdings so as to form large tracts where the slave trade should be totally abolished, and the other by developing the use of naval power to guard the coast and prevent smuggling. In the 1817 report the international aspect of the question prevented the select Committee from recommending the entire abandonment of the English Gold Coast forts, which for other reasons they seriously contemplated. On the disputed subject of the administration of the Committee of the Company of Merchants the finding was cautious. The advantages of committee rule were "reported to be" economy, and the local experience of the Governors under the Committee owing to the practice of advancement by seniority in the service. For the future administration the report suggested certain definite changes. The Governor-in-Chief should be appointed by the Government, the Committee should be reduced in number to six, the inferior officers in the service should be retained on the existing footing, but subject to the control of the Governor-in-Chief. The main conclusion from the report was clear, that in view of the altered conception of English relations with the African coast the control and management of the Gold Coast and Gambia forts should no longer be left to the representatives of trade in these parts, but should be entrusted to men appointed and directed by His Majesty's Government. Till a full scheme could be devised the report recommended the continuance of the annual grant to the Committee of the Company of Merchants.

In spite of these recommendations a bill "For the better regulation of the African Company" was not introduced till 1819, when it was presented to the Commons. The bill embodied most of the suggestions of 1817, reduced the number of the Committee to six, leaving them representative of London,

⁷¹ Treaty of Paris, Additional Articles, No. 1, 20 Nov., 1815.

Bristol and Liverpool as before. It provided for the appointment of the Governor-in-Chief to be made by the Committee for a time, but the appointment was to be confirmed by the Secretary of State. Power was given in the bill to the Committee to purchase land from the natives with the consent of the Commissioners of the Treasury, and both the Governor-in-Chief and the Committee were prohibited from trade. There was little further history of the bill. It was ordered to be printed on 25th June, 1819,⁷² and in October the Treasury wrote to the Committee of the Company enclosing a copy of the bill and warning them not to make any new appointments,⁷³ but the epitaph of the bill is "not proceeded with."⁷⁴

While the bulk of the reports and information which were presented to His Majesty's ministers and to Parliament tended to suggest the same negative conclusion, that the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa should either be altered or abolished as a form of administration in West Africa, similar opinion was being expressed in other places. A writer in the *Quarterly Review* in 1820, in reviewing an account of the mission to Ashanti which Bowdich had written and a fierce attack made by him on the African Committee, while showing no inclination to accept Bowdich's opinions added a comment on the condition of the English settlements under the Company. "It appears therefore pretty obvious that these establishments of the African Company are neither calculated to prevent or even to check the slave trade, to improve the character or condition of the natives, nor to inspire them with any degree of respect for the British name."⁷⁵

In face of the steady adverse criticism which they received the astonishing fact about the African Committee is not that they succumbed in 1821, but that they survived till then. They had, however, always been an admirable fighting organisation, and masters in the art of managing Parliament, and their defeat was not a foregone conclusion even at the beginning of 1821.

⁷² *Parliamentary Papers*, 1819, I.B.

⁷³ Treasury to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 27 Oct., 1819, T. 70/1605.

⁷⁴ *Commons' Journal*, Index.

⁷⁵ *Quarterly Review*, XX, p. 300.

Early in 1821 the question of the Committee's administration was once more introduced in the Commons, when Goulburn moved for leave to bring in a bill to abolish the African Company and to transfer to His Majesty all the forts and possessions belonging to them.⁷⁶ In the debate that followed the Committee was well defended. Mr. Marryat could not see "why a Company which was acknowledged on all hands to have acted meritoriously should be abolished."⁷⁷ He used the bill of 1819 as a proof of the good reputation of the Company, pointing out that this had only recommended that certain changes should be made in the Company and not that it should be abolished. As the bill followed the recommendation of the select committee of 1817 he held that it represented the views of that committee. This interpretation of the opinions of the select committee was opposed by another speaker,⁷⁸ who, having been a member of the select committee himself, said that their reason for abstaining from recommending the dissolution of the Company had been the difficulty of knowing how to avoid the many evils which any other system of government was certain to introduce, and did not imply that they considered the African Committee a desirable form of administration. Since 1817 His Majesty's ministers had reconsidered measures for the management of the coast and had discussed many plans before they finally determined to take the settlements under their own control. The old bugbear of increased ministerial patronage, which had been used successfully by Burke in earlier debates,⁷⁹ he dismissed on the grounds that none "of the candidates for office" would wish to go out to be Governor at Cape Coast Castle, nor would the "aspirants in diplomacy" want to live as residents at the capital of the king of Ashanti. On the question of injustice to the African Company he reminded the House that the Company had been incorporated for the support of the slave trade, and that the abolition of that trade might be expected to involve the abolition of the Company also. His final reason for supporting the measure was that of economy.

The bill proceeded to the committee stage without further

⁷⁶ *Commons' Journal*, LXXVI, 93a, 20 Feb., 1821.

⁷⁷ *Hansard*, N.S., Vol. IV, p. 823.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 824.

⁷⁹ *Vide supra*, pp. 19-20.

serious difficulty, but then an attack upon it was made from a new angle. It was criticised because of the clause permitting His Majesty's ministers to grant allowances to discharged servants of the Company. Mr. Bennet could see no reason why they should be compensated at all,⁸⁰ and once more the King Charles's head of increased ministerial patronage appeared, and the immense possibilities of abuse of power provided to His Majesty's ministers were expounded.⁸¹

In earlier periods of attack on the Company of Merchants the Committee had been able to defeat the proposals for reform by their ingenious arguments and by the power of the vested interests which they represented, but in 1821 they failed. The abolitionists had to a great extent learned the tactics of their opponents and beaten them at their own game, having secured money, organisation, the ear of the Government and considerable popular support. After one deferring of the bill owing to amendments, in May, 1821, the royal assent was given to "An Act for abolishing the African Company and transferring to and vesting in His Majesty all the forts, possessions and property belonging to or held by them."⁸² The preamble to the act gave no expression of policy and merely declared it to be "expedient that the Company of Merchants trading to Africa should relinquish the government of the forts," after which in four brief clauses provision was made for the abolition of the Company on July 3rd, 1821,⁸³ the vesting of their possessions in His Majesty, who was given power to make compensation to officers discharged from the service,⁸⁴ and for making Sierra Leone the headquarters of the English settlements on the coast.⁸⁵

With the passing of this act the hardest of all the African companies came to an end, and the Crown was left in direct control of all the British West African settlements.

⁸⁰ *Hansard*, N.S., Vol. V, p. 90.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² 1 and 2 Geo. IV, c. 28.

⁸³ 1 and 2 Geo. IV, c. 28, clause 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, clause 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, clause 3.

NOTE ON SOURCES

THE sources for this subject as a whole are very varied in quality and accessibility. For some parts there has been a great wealth of documentary material, presenting to the writer only the problem of selection, but for others long search has not resulted in tracing all the original records which would be valuable.

One example of fruitless searching may be given. Bamber Gascoyne, one of the eighteenth-century Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, stated in Parliament that African affairs were a special matter of interest to him, and that he had collected many papers on the subject. In the *Dictionary of National Biography* Mr. Welch states that Bamber Gascoyne's granddaughter was heiress to his estate after her father's death. She married the second Marquis of Salisbury and many of Bamber Gascoyne's papers are in the Hatfield Collection. Some delightful mornings of search at Hatfield House with the kind assistance of the librarian, Mr. Lovell, did not result in the discovery of Gascoyne's African papers. It is, of course, the common fortune of all seekers after manuscripts that the longest search often has no result and it would be of little profit to give a list of other fruitless searches that have been made for material for this subject.

The material used may be classified under the following heads:—

- I. Sources.
- II. Contemporary Writers.
- III. Later works.

I. SOURCES

The papers of the various departments of His Majesty's Government provide the largest part of the documentary material for this study.

I. PARLIAMENT.

As the history of the administrative experiments was marked at every stage by Parliamentary intervention the records of the two Houses are of essential importance throughout the period.

168 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

i. Journals of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons.
The period is covered by Lords' Journals XXVII to LIV.

" " Commons' " XXV to LXXVI.

ii. Statutes.

iii. Debates.

The Parliamentary history and its successor, Hansard's Debates, supply accounts of the debates during the period.

Parliamentary History, Vols. XIV to XXXVI.

" Debates, Vols. I to XLII.

" " N.S. I to V.

iv. Reports of Select Committees.

This source grows steadily in importance during the period. The procedure of investigation by means of Select Committees was frequent in the early nineteenth century though not in the eighteenth.

The following are leading reports made by Select Committees to the Commons on African affairs:—

Parliamentary Papers, 1801-2, Vol. 2 on Sierra Leone.

" " 1806-7, Vol. 2 " "

" " 1816, Vols. 4 & 7 on the Company of Merchants trading to Africa.

" " 1817, Vol. 6 on the Company of Merchants trading to Africa.

Not strictly contemporary but valuable for the subject.

Parliamentary papers, 1830, Vol. 10 on Sierra Leone.

" " 1842, Vol. 11 on The British possessions in West Africa.

Among the series of Accounts and Papers there are some collections of information bearing on the subject.

Parliamentary Papers, 1814-5, Vol. 7, Account of Expenditure by the Company of Merchants trading to Africa.

" " " " Papers relating to the Company.

All the above sources are printed and easily accessible.

2. PRIVY COUNCIL.

For formal Crown decisions on various matters concerning the settlements the Privy Council papers in the Public Record Office provide the necessary records.

i. THE REGISTER OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL of which there are 102 volumes to cover this period, P.C. 2/101-203, provides the record of what was passed in full Council and also what was done by the Lords of the Privy Council for Trade and Plantations.

ii. THE PAPERS OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL have also valuable material. For the purpose of this sketch the calendar of the Acts of the Privy Council Colonial is useless, as the most important Privy Council action taken concerning Africa in this period, the erection of the Province of Senegambia, receives no mention at all in the calendar, and the original papers in the Public Record Office must be consulted. P.C. 1/59 contains important material for Senegambia.

3. THE BOARD OF TRADE AND PLANTATIONS.

To the time of its dissolution in 1782 the records of this Board provide more important material than those of any other department of Government. Its records have been consulted throughout the period. The following volumes are in the Public Record Office:—

- i. *Minutes.* Vol. C.O. 389/55 to 89.
- ii. *Correspondence.* C.O. 388/45 to 74.
C.O. 267/1 to 4.
- iii. *Entry Books.* C.O. 389/30 to 34 and 49 to 53.

After 1782 there is a gap in the records which must be filled by the Privy Council Register and Papers till the establishment of the specially commissioned committee of the Privy Council in 1784 which was reorganised in 1786 and became known as the Board of Trade. The records of this body relevant to the present subject are:—

- i. *Minutes.* B.T. 5/1-30. 1784-1821.
- ii. *Correspondence.*
 - In letters B.T. 1/1-160. 1791-1821.
 - Out letters B.T. 3/1-16. 1786-1821.
 - Reference Books for In letters B.T. 4/1-3.

There is also a collection of correspondence labelled Board of Trade Miscellanea B.T. 6/1 to 17 which is of special importance.

4. SECRETARIES OF STATE.

The correspondence of the Secretaries of State for the period is of essential importance, though only in part easily accessible. The Public Record Office has certain series of volumes of correspondence of and to the Secretaries of State, a series in no way affected by the creation of the third Secretariat in 1768. The correspondence concerning West Africa has been classified in the Public Record Office Index under the heading of "Sierra Leone" to which a footnote is added to explain that the Gold Coast, Senegal, Gambia and Goree are all included under the title. This indiscriminate

170 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

arrangement, it must be supposed, was made in the light of nineteenth-century administrative grouping, but it is misleading for the eighteenth century. Many of the volumes under this heading have no mention of Sierra Leone at all. The series as a whole is of great value.

Original Correspondence, Secretary of State, Sierra Leone, C.O. 267/5 to 55.

Entry Books, C.O. 268/2 to 8, and 18 and 19.

In the British Museum there are some scattered papers among the Additional and Egerton Manuscripts which bear on the work of the Secretaries of the period, but they do not add much to this subject.

The Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports are also disappointing. Though the papers of leading Secretaries of State for this period have been reported on, such as those of Lord Dartmouth, Lord George Germaine, Lord Shelburne and Lord Bathurst, there are only a few references to Africa. In the report on Lord Shelburne's papers (3rd and 5th Reports), which are in the Library of the University of Michigan, there is a note of papers on Africa, but no indication of their contents.

5. VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

The papers of the Admiralty, Exchequer and Foreign Office have all been consulted at different periods for special matters.

The above sources are common to all parts of the subject, but there are in addition special sources for separate parts of the subject.

THE COMPANY OF MERCHANTS TRADING TO AFRICA.

The papers of the English African Companies are among the Treasury papers in the Public Record Office. They passed into the custody of the Treasury in 1821 when the Company was divested of its property on the coast, and were deposited in the Public Record Office in 1846. For the Company which was established in 1750 there is a large collection of material. The papers produced by this Company in the course of their activities when responsible for the management of the African forts are the main source of information as to the organisation of the African establishments under their rule. They consist of the usual classes of records produced by organisations of the Company type, minutes, letters, accounts and miscellanea.

i. *Minutes of the London Committee.*

1750-1762. Vols. T. 70/143-4.

1780-1817. „ T. 70/146 to 150.

There is a gap in the Minutes from 1762 to 1780.

Minutes of the Council at Cape Coast Castle.

1750. Vols. T. 70/151.

1770 to 1818. Vols. T. 70/152 to 154.

There is a gap from 1750 to 1770.

ii. *Correspondence.*

In letters, 1751 to 1818, T. 70/29 to 3

Out letters, 1751 to 1818, T. 70/29 and 30 and 69 to 74.

iii. *Registers.*

The Company's registers include the lists of Freemen of the Company and of those employed by the Company.

Lists of Freemen, T. 70/1508 to 1510.

Lists of Officers and Servants, T. 70/1454 to 1456.

iv. *Detached Papers.*

In addition to the Minutes and Letter Books there are a large number of unbound papers which have been arranged chronologically. They consist chiefly of correspondence from the coast, English correspondence, accounts, contracts and every variety of miscellaneous material. For this period there are the following volumes :

T. 70/1516-1606.

v. *Accounts.*

The accounts of the Company make up the largest bulk of records produced in Africa. Their special importance is the light they throw on life in the service, and of all the records produced on the coast they are by far the most valuable, being the most trustworthy guides for all questions of coast life. The main classes of coast accounts are journals, ledgers, and day books for the various forts. The Committee's own accounts, kept in London and submitted to the Exchequer for audit, are also a valuable source.

SENEGAMBIA.

As this province was under Crown control the chief material concerning it is to be found in the Colonial Department papers in the Public Record Office and in the papers of the Privy Council. These papers have already been alluded to in the note on the Secretaries of State. One volume should be added. C.O. 270/1 is a volume of Council Records for Senegambia.

SIERRA LEONE.

Only part of the records of the Sierra Leone Company have been found. Among the Colonial Department papers in the Public Record Office the series of Sessional Papers, Sierra Leone (reference C.O. 270), are the records of Councils held at Sierra Leone from 1792 onwards. This series is an invaluable source of information concerning the administration of the Colony both under the Sierra Leone Company and under the Crown. These papers are at present at Cambridge.

The original papers of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company have not been found, and instead a series of printed reports under the heading "Substance of Reports of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company" has been used. They cover the years 1791 to 1805. To add to this source there are two books to which reference must be made here, Prince Hoare's *Memoirs of Granville Sharp* and Viscountess Knutsford's *Life and Letters of Zachary Macaulay*. In both of these very full verbatim extracts from journals, correspondence and other papers are given. The whereabouts of the originals from which these memoirs have been compiled is not indicated in either book, and for these sources the writer is still searching. Of the papers of other leading men concerned in the Sierra Leone adventure there are a few scattered letters in the British Museum, Addl. Manuscripts, but not enough to be of any great value.

II. CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

Contemporary writings bearing on this subject consist mainly of descriptions of voyages to the coast and pamphlets. The pamphlet writing changes in object during the period, beginning with rival views of the best ways of carrying on the slave trade and passing, after a period of comparative silence, to a pamphlet warfare on the subject of the slave trade abolition. The valuable arguments from the pamphlet literature are, however, repeated in the evidence given in the inquiries made by Parliament or the Board of Trade. The eighteenth-century writers on commerce, such as Adam Smith, Macpherson and Postlethwayt, are the most accurate and illuminating for descriptions of the activity and organisation of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa. Descriptions of voyages to Africa are extremely numerous, but not of much value for the subject of administration.

ANDERSON, A.	An historical and chronological deduction of the origin of commerce.	1764
--------------	--	------

NOTE ON SOURCES

173

BARBOT, J.	A description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea. (Churchill's Voyages, Vol. 5.)	1746
BOSMAN, W.	A New Description of the Coast of Guinea.	1705
BOWDICH, T. E.	Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee.	1819
DALZEL, A.	The History of Dahomey from authentic memoirs.	1793
DUPUIS, J.	Journal of a residence in Ashantee.	1824
EDWARDS, B.	The History, civil and commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies	1793
FALCONBRIDGE, A. M.	Narrative of two voyages to the River Sierra Leone.	1794
LABAT, J. B.	Nouvelle Relation de l'Afrique occidentale (Paris.)	1728
MACPHERSON, D.	Annals of Commerce.	1805
MATTHEWS, J.	A Voyage to the River Sierra Leone.	1788
MEREDITH, H.	An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa.	1812
PARK, MUNGO	Travels in the interior districts of Africa.	1799
" "	The Journal of a Mission to the Interior of Africa in the year 1805.	1815
POSTLETHWAYT, M.	The Universal Dictionary of Trade.	1774
SAVARY DES BRUSLONS, J.	Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce. (Paris.)	1742
SMEATHMAN, H.	Plan of a settlement to be made near Sierra Leone.	1786
SMITH, ADAM.	An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.	1776
WADSTROM, C. B.	An essay on colonisation.	1794
WINTERBOTTOM, T.	An Account of the native Africans in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone.	1803

Tracts and Pamphlets.

ANON.	The African Trade the great Pillar and Support of the British Plantation Trade in America.	1745
-------	--	------

174 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

ANON.	The National and Private Advantages of the African trade.	1746
"	The Alarm Bell: or Considerations on the present dangerous state of the Sugar Colonies.	1749
"	Considerations on the Present Peace as far as it is relative to the Colonies and the African Trade.	1763
"	Treatise upon the Trade of Great Britain to Africa.	1772
BOWDICH, T. E.	The African Committee.	1819
"	A Reply to the <i>Quarterly Review</i> .	1820
HIPPISLEY, J.	Essays.	1764
HUTTON, A. C.	British Justice in Africa.	1816
MACAULAY, Z.	Letter to the Duke of Gloucester.	1815
POSTLETHWAYT, M.	In honour of the Administration.	1758
ROBERTS, J.	State of the British Forts on the Gold Coast.	1778
"	Cursory observations on the African trade.	1778
THORPE, R.	A Letter to William Wilberforce containing remarks on the Reports of the Sierra Leone Company.	1815

Periodicals.

Contemporary periodical literature is of considerable value: the *Annual Register*, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Contemporary Review*, and various newspapers have been consulted.

Maps.

ANON.	Afrika entworfen in 1794 (Schneider und Weigel).	1794
ANVILLE, J. B. d'	Carte particulière de la partie principale de la Guinée.	1729
"	Carte particulière des Royaumes d'Angola, de Matambo et de Benguela.	1731
"	Guinée entre Serre Lione et la passage de la Ligne.	1775
BENNETT, R.	Africa according to the Sieur Danville.	1760
SMITH, W.	New and correct map of the Coast of Africa.	1744

176 BRITISH WEST AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS

Histories and Other Works.

ATCHLEY, C.	The West Indies.	1905
BEER, G. L.	The Old Colonial System.	1912
" "	British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765	1922
CLARIDGE, W.	A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti.	1915
COLQUHOUN, J. C.	William Wilberforce: his friends and his times.	1866
COUPLAND, R.	Wilberforce.	1923
CRUICKSHANK, B.	Eighteen Years in the Gold Coast.	1863
DAUBIGNY, E.	Choiseul et la France d'outremer. (Paris.)	1892
EGERTON, H. E.	A Short History of British Colonial Policy.	1913
ELLIS, A. B.	History of the Gold Coast.	1893
FITZMAURICE, E. G. P.	Life of William, Earl of Shelburne.	1912
GEORGE, C.	Rise of British West Africa.	1903
HERTZ, G. B.	The Old Colonial System.	1905
" "	British Imperialism in the Eighteenth century.	1908
HOTBLACK, K.	Chatham's Colonial Policy.	1917
JOHNSTON, H.	The Colonisation of Africa by Alien Races.	1913
KELTIE, J. S.	The Partition of Africa.	1895
LANNOY, C. DE AND LINDEN, H. VAN DER	Histoire de l'expansion coloniale des peuples européens. (Bruxelles.)	1907-11
LEROY-BEAULIEU, P.	De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes. (Paris.)	1891
LUCAS, C. P.	West Africa.	1913
" "	The Partition and Colonization of Africa.	1922
LUKE, H.	Bibliography of Sierra Leone.	1925
MOCKLER-FERRYMAN, A. F.	British West Africa.	1893
PAULITSCHKE, P.	Die geographische Erforschung des afrikanischen Continents. (Wien.)	1880
PEYTRAUD, L.	L'Esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789. (Paris.)	1897
PITMAN, F.	The Development of the British West Indies, 1700-1763. (Yale Historical Publications.)	1917

NOTE ON SOURCES

	177
ROSE, J. H.	1923
THACKERAY, F.	1827
WARD, A. W. and GOOCH, G. P.	1922
WILLIAMS, A. F. B.	1913
ZIMMERMANN, A.	1896
	(Berlin.)

Among modern periodicals the *Journal of the African Society* has been found most useful for this subject.

INDEX

- ACCRA, English post on Gold Coast, 5, 32, 35, 37, 38
- Acts of Parliament :
- 1750, Company of Merchants established, 9-10
 - 1752, Royal African Company divested of Charter, 13
 - 1764, Senegal vested in Company of Merchants, 61
 - 1765, Senegambia made a Crown Colony, 64-65
 - 1783, Gambia restored to Company of Merchants, 101
 - 1791, grant of land to Sierra Leone Company, 110-112
 - 1807, Sierra Leone re-vested in Crown, 140, 141
 - 1821, Company of Merchants abolished, 163-166
- Addington, Henry, Chancellor of Exchequer, grant refused to Sierra Leone Company, 138, 139
- Admiralty, relations to Company of Merchants, 12, 28
- Afzelius, Adam, Swedish botanist in Sierra Leone, 124
- Albreda, French settling rights dispute, 77, 79, 82, 87-88
- African Institution, establishment and objects, 143
- African Trade the Pillar of British Trade in America*, pamphlet, 2
- Ammoniah, territory ceded by, for fort, 49
- "An African Merchant," on treatment of soldiers, 38
- Angola, Portuguese slave trade base, 6
- Annamaboe :
- Omission from list of forts, reason, 6
 - Importance to English, 33, 34, 35
 - Rebuilding grants, 17, 18, 25
 - Siege by Ashantis, 151-152
- Anti-Slave Trade agitation ; *see* Slave Trade : Abolition
- Appolonia, fort built, 17, 49
- Arguin, French designs for post, 5, 83
- Ashanti :
- Exploratory missions under James and Dupuis, 158-160
 - Treaties with Company of Merchants, 159, 161
- Ashanti, King of ; forts rented from, 49
- Ashanti War (1807) :
- Invasions of Gold Coast, 54, 151-152, 158
 - Terms arranged between England and Ashanti, 152
- Bacon, Anthony, petition against O'Hara, 80-81
- Bain, French trading post, 79
- Barter system, 44
- Bathurst, Henry, third Earl, correspondence with Company of Merchants, 161
- Board of Trade ; *see* Trade and Plantations, Board of
- Bosman, William, on native hostility, 51
- Bowdich, T. E., Mission to Ashanti, 159
- Bristol merchants :
- Representation on Company of Merchants, 30
 - Views on African trade, 9, 111
- Brown, Robert, partner of O'Hara in trade, 89
- Buchanan, fort chief, cruelty, 38
- Buchanan, surgeon, incompetence, 41
- Bullock, Joseph, agent for Senegambia, 73
- Bullock, Thomas, agent for Senegambia, 73
- Burke, Edmund, defence of Company of Merchants, 19, 20
- CAPE Coast Castle :
- English headquarters, 5, 15, 32
 - Rent for, 48
 - Repairing grant, 17
- Castlereagh, Robert Stewart, second Marquis :
- Advocacy of Slave Trade abolition, 157, 162
 - Correspondence with Company of Merchants, 40, 146, 150, 153

- Chaplains :
 To Company of Merchants, 42, 148
 In Senegambia, 97-98
- Clarke, John, Governor of Senegambia :
 Appointment and terms of commission, 92
 Charges against, 96-97
 Death, 98-99
- Clarke, Capt., Deputy Governor for O'Hara, 85
- Clarkson, Lieutenant William, First Governor of Sierra Leone :
 Appointment and character, 117
 Nova Scotians transported to Sierra Leone, 115
 Retirement, 125
- Clarkson, Rev. T., 113, 142
- Coast Council :
 Accountant, duties, 42
 Establishment and composition, 33-35
 Functions, 35-37, 42
 Relation to London Committee of Company of Merchants, 35-36, 37
 Secretary, duties, 42
 Suspension on charges by Commons, 1779, 34
- Cockburn, John, rise in African service, 39
- Collingwood, Captain, enquiry on Senegambia Coast, 83
- Colonial Secretaries, relations with Company of Merchants, 21-24
- Commenda, English fort, 33, 49, 54
- Commissioners on African Forts, 1810, findings and replies, 153-157
- Committee for Relieving the Black Poor, 104
- Compagnie de Sénégal, attempts to settle on Gold Coast, 34
- Company of Merchants Trading to Africa :
 Abolition of slave trade, attitude, 146-147, 152
 Administration :
 Government enquiries and debates, 18, 21, 96, 155-156, 162
 Report of Board of Trade, 1765, 62-63
 Vote of confidence in Commons, 1758, 18
 Weakness, 55-56
 Commissioners appointed by, to examine coast government, 26
- Committee :
 Duties and powers, 11, 12, 30-31
 Election, charges of corruption, 19-20, 30, 155
 Names, 14
 Number reduced, 163
 Personnel, 10-11, 29-30, 155
 Constitution and Powers, 10-12, 15
 Emergency Council to examine abuses, 34
 Expenditure, objects, 44-46
 Finance :
 Control by Exchequer, 12, 19, 44
 General regulations, 10-12
 Forts taken over from Royal African Company, 6
 Grants from Exchequer, amount and conditions, 17-18, 21, 44
 Incorporation, 9-10
 Military forces, 36
 Monopoly charge by Luttrell, 20
 Native policy, summary, 54-55
 Officials in Africa :
 Changes after end of Royal African Company, 32-33
 Compensation on winding up, 166
 Governor; *see* Gold Coast, Governor in Chief
 Payment, 39, 40, 45, 150
 Promotion system, 38-39, 148
 Qualifications, 43
 Senegambia, in, 61
 Trading by; *see* Private trading
 Papers, disposal after winding up, 170
 Petition for administration of Senegambia, 60-61
 Petition against Royal African Company, 14
 Reorganisation scheme of 1804, 147
 Reply to Commissioners of 1810, 156-157
 Rivalry with Sierra Leone Company, 108, 149
 Secretary, yearly re-election, 29
 Territory administered, 15
 Unification of West Africa resisted, 154, 165
 Winding up, 165-166
 Coomassie, consul appointed, 160
 Cornwallis, Captain William, quarrel with O'Hara, 85
 Cumming, Thomas, Senegambia projects urged on Pitt, 57

- DARTMOUTH, William Legge,**
 Second Earl of :
 Correspondence with O'Hara,
 82-85, 86
 Support of Company of Merchants
 against Dutch, 22
- Dawes, William, Governor of
 Sierra Leone :**
 Appointment, 125
 Councillor at Sierra Leone,
 qualifications, 119
 and Nova Scotians, dispute on
 land, 125
 Proposals for government of
 Sierra Leone, 121
- Defensive Alliance with Holland,**
 36
- Dixcove, rent for, 49**
- Dispatches, capture at sea, 98**
- Dupuis, Joseph, mission to
 Coomassie, 160-161**
- Dutch in West Africa :**
 Aggression against Company of
 Merchants, conference in London,
 22-23
 and Ammoniah, quarrel, 49
 Defensive Alliance with English,
 36
 Fighting with Company of Merchants,
 36-37
 Settlements, 5
- EGREMONT, Charles Wyndham,**
 Second Earl of, appeal to, for
 Senegambia monopoly grant,
 59-60
- Elmina, Dutch headquarters on
 African coast, 5, 36**
- Exploration, missions to Ashanti,
 158-160**
- FALCONBRIDGE, A. M., Chief Agent
 for Sierra Leone :**
 Dismissal, 120
 Relief operations conducted, 110,
 113-114
- Falconbridge, Mrs. A. M., letters
 on life in Sierra Leone, 118,
 120, 130**
- Fall, Ensign, seizure of command
 at death of Clarke, 99**
- Fantis :**
 Danger to English forts, 34
 Relations with settlers, 52, 151
 War with Ashantis; *see* Ashanti
 War
- Fetu, Dey of, payments to, 48, 52**
- FitzHerbert, Alleyne, on African
 provisions in Treaty of Versailles,
 100**
- Fort St. Louis :**
 Capture from French, 57, 77
 Cession to England, 58
 Re-capture by French, 99
 Slaves purchased for, 98
 Trade monopoly, charge against
 MacNamara, 95
- Forts :**
 Chiefs; duties and powers, 37-38
 Condemned by Commissioners
 of 1810, 154
 Control refused by Board of
 Trade, 27
 Description, 6
 Inspection by naval captains, 12
 Necessity, view of Company of
 Merchants, 1812, 156
 Number and position, 5, 6, 32
 Order of importance, 35
 Proposals for control, 1750, 8-9
 Rents paid to natives, 48-50
 Supplies to, nature and methods,
 44-46
 Value to native traders, 50
- Freetown :**
 Attack by French, 126-127
 Municipal institutions granted,
 134
 Planning, difficulties, 120
- French in West Africa :**
 Gold Coast post obtained, 28
 Infractions of Peace of Paris, 77,
 79, 82-83, 84
 Portendic trading right, dispute,
 83-86
 Senegambia, in, 62, 63-64, 87-
 88
 Settlements in eighteenth century,
 5
 War with English for Senegambia,
 99-100
- GALAM :**
 Cession to England, 58
 English settlement proposed by
 O'Hara, 79
- Gambia district :**
 Board of Trade report on British
 claims, 1765, 62
 Exclusive trade rights claimed
 by England, 86
 French vessel seized by Mac-
 Namara, 86
 Retained by England in 1783, 100
 Settlements under Company of
 Merchants, 5, 15
See also Senegambia

- Gascoyne, Bamber :
 Attack on Company of Merchants, 20
 Collection of African papers, 167
- Germaine, Lord George, Colonial Secretary :
 Correspondence with governors of Senegambia, 90, 92, 93, 97, 98
- Gold Coast :
 Ashanti invasion ; *see* Ashanti war
 Defects in administration, report of 1765, 63
 Forts, reduction recommended, 154
 Governor-in-Chief :
 Duties, 33, 35-37
 Government control instituted, 163, 164
 Independence of Council, 148
 Reform scheme of 1804, instructions to governor, 147-148
 Relations to Committee in London, 35-36
 Store ships, and, special duties, 47
 Vice-Admiralty Court requested, 148-149
- Goree :
 Attack advocated by Governor Clarke, 94
 Fortified by French, 63
 Capture from French, 57, 99
 Restored to France, 58, 100
- Grigg, missionary, in Sierra Leone slave trade, 124
- Guinea Coast, English and Dutch settlements, 5
- Gum Trade :
 Capture of cargo by French, 82, 83, 84
 Duty imposed, 67
 English rights admitted in Peace of Versailles, 100-101
 Importance, 57
 Proposal to include gum in enumerated articles, 64
- Gunpowder, exemption from export restrictions granted to Company of Merchants, 26
- HALIFAX, George Montague Dunk, Second Earl of, African affairs referred to, 22, 62
- Hallowell, Captain, report on Sierra Leone, 138
- Hillsborough, Wills Hill, Second Viscount, support of Company of Merchants against Dutch, 22
- Hobart, Robert, Baron Hobart, suggestions as to government of Sierra Leone, 137
- Hundredors and tithingmen :
 Appointment and duties, 121-122
 Legislative powers claimed, 122-123, 128
- JAMES, Frederick, mission to Ashanti, 158-159
- James Island and Fort, 5, 77, 82, 99
- Jolly, French trading post, 79
- LACY, Lieutenant, quarrel with Fall, 99
- La Grosse*, French vessel seized by MacNamara, 92
- Lancaster merchants, views on African trade, 111
- Liverpool merchants :
 Representation on Committee of Company of Merchants, 30
 Views on African trade, 9, 10, 111
- Lloyd, Captain, leader against Temnes, 136
- London merchants :
 Representation on Committee of Company of Merchants, 30
 Views on African trade, 111
- Lower Guinea, Portuguese domination, 6
- Ludlam, Thomas, Governor of Sierra Leone :
 Appointment under Sierra Leone Company, 131
 Appointment under Crown, 141
 Rebellion crushed by, 132-133
- Luttrell, Temple, attack on Company of Merchants, 20
- Lysacht, Patrick, fort chief, cruelty, 38
- MACAULAY, Zachary, Governor of Sierra Leone :
 Appointment to Sierra Leone Council, 119
 Hundredors' demands granted, 123, 129
 Nova Scotian revolt against, 127-129
 Slave traders, and, 124
- Mackenzie, Captain Kenneth, Commander of Independents

- Attack by natives, 51
 Campaign against Dutch, 37
 Outrages committed by, 55
MacNamara, Lieutenant Matthias,
 Lieutenant Governor of Senegambia :
 Character, 96
 Appointment, opposition of O'Hara, 87
 Charges against, by O'Hara, 88, 91
 Dismissal, 92, 95-96
 French vessel confiscated by, 86, 92
 Report on governorship by Board of Trade, 95
 Trial, 94, 95-96
 Maroons, settled in Sierra Leone, 133, 137
Marryat, James, bill for abolition of Company of Merchants opposed, 165
Mason, Major, Governor of Fort St. Louis, 58
Melvil, Thomas, Governor of Gold Coast :
 Appointment and instructions, 32-33, 40
 Removal demanded by Board of Trade, 25
Meredith, Henry, Commander of Annamaboe, murdered, 153
Meredith, Sir William, bill for regulating elections in Company of Merchants, 19, 30
Miles, Richard, Governor of Gold Coast, 43
Mill, David, Governor of Gold Coast, 35
Morse, Edward, Chief Justice of Senegambia :
 Governor Clarke, on, 96
 Judicial reforms, 93
 Justice in Senegambia, on, 80
 Maladministration charges, 94
Mutter, William, Governor of Gold Coast :
 Dismissal for exporting slaves, 40
 Rise in service, 39

NAIMBANNA, King, sale of land to settlers, 105, 114
 Native races in W. Africa :
 Bribery by settlers, 51-52

 Free labour, 52
 Policy of Company of Merchants, 54-55
 Presents and dashees, 53
 Revenge on unpopular settlers, 50-51
 Rulers renting land to English, 48-49
 Unrest caused by abolition of slave trade, 153
 Navigation Acts, interpretation, dispute, 80-82
 Negroes in America and England :
 Problems after War of Independence, 103-104
 Settlers in Sierra Leone; *see* Nova Scotians
Nesham, Christopher, agent for Senegambia, 73
 Niger in early maps, 4, 5
North, Frederick, Lord, defers regulation of African trade, 21
 Nova Scotians :
 Agitation for independence, 127-129, 131-132
 Friction with white settlers, 127
 Grant to Sierra Leone Company for settling, 135-136
 Native attack led by, 136
 Quarrel with governor on land question, 125
 Settlement in Sierra Leone, 114-115

O'HARA, Colonel Charles, Governor of Senegambia :
 Charges against on retirement, 88-89, 91-92
 Commission and instructions on appointment, 68-72
 Defence of Senegambia, suggestions, 78
 Dismissal, 90-91
 Navigation laws upheld, 81
 Neglect of dispatches, reply to charges, 76-77, 82-85, 86
 Trade protection, measures, against French, 84
 Ordnance Board, inquiry into condition of African forts, 18

PEACE of Paris (1763), terms regarding West Africa, 23, 58
Peace of Versailles (1783), terms regarding West Africa, 23, 100
Pitt, William, the Elder, views on Peace of Paris, 58

- Pitt, William, the Younger, letters of Sharp to, 109
- Portendic :
 Attack by English, 86
 French trading claims, 83, 84, 85
- Portodally, French trading post, 79
- Portuguese in West Africa, eighteenth century settlements, 5, 6
- Ports in England :
 Protests against Sierra Leone Company, 111
 Representation on Committee of Company of Merchants, 9, 10, 30, 155, 163-164
- Postlethwayt, Malachy, description of West Africa, 5
- Private trading :
 Company of Merchants' officials, by, regulations, 39-41
 Governors of Senegambia charged with, 89, 95
 Senegambia, regulations, 71
- Privy Council, Committee on Trade and Plantations :
 Company of Merchants, and, relations, 27
 MacNamara's appeal dismissed by, 95-96
 Provisions sent to West Africa, difficulties, 46
- QUAQUE, Rev. Philip, Chaplain on Gold Coast, 42
- ROBERTS, Governor John, neutrality with Dutch, 36
- Royal African Company :
 Company of Merchants, and, overlapping and friction, 13-14, 31-32
 Establishment, 7
 Grants for upkeep of forts, 7-8
 Winding up, 12-13, 14
- Rum, changes in trade, 45
- St. GEORGE'S Bay Company :
 Monopoly of Sierra Leone trade sought, 108-109
 Petition for grant of land, 110
See also Sierra Leone Company
- St. Louis Island; *see* Fort St. Louis
- Senegal :
 British expedition against French, 57
- Cession to England by Peace of Paris, 57, 58
- French posts in eighteenth century, 5
- Restoration to France, 100
See also Senegambia
- Senegambia :
 Agents, duties and names, 73
 Board of Trade Report on O'Hara's government, 88-89
 Chaplains, difficulties of appointment, 97
 Chief Justice, position, 68
 Constitution, 66
 Council :
 Composition and procedure, 66-67, 69
 Defects, 102
 Crown Colony :
 Establishment, 64
 Failure, causes, 101-102
 Definition by Order in Council, 66
 Financial system, 72
 French and English rivalry, 62, 63-64, 77, 79, 87-88
See also Portendic
 Gold Coast, and, status compared, 64, 74-75
 Governor :
 Debts incurred by, 73-74
 Duties and powers, 66, 68-70
 Grants from Treasury, 73-74
 Judicial system :
 Failures, 94, 102
 General account, 67-68, 69
 Reform by Clarke, 93
 Lieutenant Governor, reform of position, 98
 Military establishment :
 General account, 68, 70
 O'Hara's reforms, 78
 Military rule during war with France, 100
 Naval defence question, 85-86
 Naval regulations, 71
 Officials :
 Civil establishment, 67
 Salaries, 72
 Parliamentary debate on, 1777, 97
 Protection scheme, 98
 Trade :
 Difficulties at founding of province, 79
 Regulations of 1765, 70-71
 Vested in Company of Merchants, 60-61

- Sharp, Granville :**
 Director of Sierra Leone Company, 113
 Letter on changes in Sierra Leone under Company, 116
 Negro emigration scheme, 104, 106
 Relief of Sierra Leone colony, appeals to Pitt, 109-110
 Views of government of Sierra Leone, 106, 107
Shelburne, William Petty, Second Earl of, interest in African affairs, 22
Shirley, Captain Thomas, leader of expedition against Dutch, 37
Sierra Leone :
 Base for suppression of Slave Trade, as, report of 1810, 154, 155-156
 Constitution :
 Changes under Royal Charter, 134
 Free State scheme, 106
 Sierra Leone Company's scheme, 117, 120-123
 Council :
 Failure of first body of eight, 117
 Reduced to two members, 119
 Defence, defects, 130
 Early difficulties of Colony, 105, 123-124
 First emigrants, 114-115
 French attack, 125-126, 127
 Governor :
 Absolute power granted by Company, 118-119
 Grants from Treasury :
 Increase in reply to petition, 1802, 137
 Refusal in 1803, 138
 Judicial system :
 Company, under, 122
 Changes under Royal Charter, 134
 Weakness, 130
 Land :
 Distribution and tenure under Sierra Leone Company, 119-120, 125, 129-130, 134
 Grant to St. George's Bay Company, 110-112
 Legislative chambers established, 129
 Native attack, 109
 Negro settlers from Nova Scotia; *see* Nova Scotians
 Negro settlement scheme, 104-106
 Quitrent dispute, 128
 Rebellion against Governor Ludlam, 132-133
 Re-establishment of colony by Sierra Leone Co., 114-115
 Relief expedition, 110
 Royal Charter to Sierra Leone Company, provisions, 134
 Status of settlers under Sierra Leone Company, 115-116
 Temne invasions, 136
 Transfer to Crown from Sierra Leone Company, 137-141
Sierra Leone Company :
 Anti-slavery measures, 135
 Capital, effect of French attack on settlement, 126
 Directors, names of first Board, 113
 Failure, parliamentary criticism, 140-141
 Grants from Treasury :
 Civil establishment, 135
 Increases in 1802 and 1804, 137, 138
 Refusal in 1803, 138
 Land granted, conditions, 129-130, 134
 Objects, 113
 Papers, disposal after winding up, 172
 Philanthropic endeavours, summary, 143-144
 Rights granted by Parliament, 111-113
 Royal Charter granted, 131, 133-134
 Winding up, 142
 Slave Coast, settlements of Company of Merchants, 15, 32
Slave Trade :
 Abolition :
 Company of Merchants' attitude, 146-147
 Effect on officials' salaries, 40, 150
 International co-operation, difficulties, 162-163
 Resentment of African natives, 152-153, 157
 Base of West Indian prosperity, 1
 Crippling effect on other forms of commerce, 135
 Forbidden in Sierra Leone, 107, 135
 Investigation by Board of Trade ordered, 27, 146

- Markets provided by forts, 50
 Restrictions on practice by officials of Company of Merchants, 40
 Sierra Leone Company founded as counter-blast, 108
 Slaves in British settlements :
 Cape Coast Castle, at, special regulations, 52-53
 Marriage with the free, 53
 Payments and presents to, 53-54
 Purchase for St. Louis by government, 98
 Smeathman, Dr. Henry, scheme for relief of negroes, 104
 Smith, John Hope, mission to Ashanti organised, 158
 Society for Education of Africans, 136
 Soldiers, ill-treatment in Coast Forts, 38
 Spirits, drinking by natives, 46
 Stanton, Lieutenant, quarrel with Fall, 99
 Store ships :
 Abuses, 48
 Valuing of cargoes, 47
 Succondee, rent for, 49
 Succondee, Governor of, native attack upon, 51
 Surgeons in coast service, 41-42
- TANTUMQUERRY :**
 Fanti danger to, 34
 Rent for, 49
 Governor of, beaten by natives, 51
- Temnes, attack on Sierra Leone colony, 136
- Thompson, Captain, leader of negro emigrants to Sierra Leone, 104, 105, 106
- Thornton, Henry, first chairman of Sierra Leone Company, 113, 140
- Tilley, factory chief, assistance to Macaulay, 124
- Tithingmen ; *see* Hundredors and Tithingmen
- Tom, King :
 Quarrel with slaver, 131
 Sale of land to settlers, 105
- Torrane, George, Governor of Gold Coast :
 Appointment and instructions, 147-148
 Reform of African Service, 147-149
- Touchett, Samuel, Senegal monopoly sought, 59-60
- Trade and Plantations, Board of :
 Company of Merchants, and, relations, 12, 21, 24-27
 New Board, 1784, change of attitude, 27-28
 Proposals for control of African Forts, 1750, 8-9
 Reports on African affairs :
 1765, British establishments on coast, 62-64
 1776, O'Hara's governorship, on, 88
 1776, Senegambia, on, 88-89
 1777, Trade to Africa, on, 20
 1778, MacNamara's rule, on, 95
 Responsibility for acts of Company of Merchants refused, 26-27
- Trading Posts ; *see* Forts
- Trial of white men by negroes, 130
- Trinder, Thomas, rise in service, 39
- VERSAILLES, Treaty of ; see** Peace of Versailles
- WALL, Captain, Lientenant Governor of Senegambia :**
 Appointment, 98
 At Goree, 99-100
 O'Hara's charges against, 91
Weasle, sloop of war, protection of Senegambia coast, 85
- West Africa :
 British establishments, report, 1765, 62-64
 Commissioners to investigate condition of Forts, findings and replies, 154-157
 European settlers, distribution of nationalities, 5
 Exploration of interior, O'Hara's suggestion, 79
 Geographical knowledge of in eighteenth century, 4
 Natives ; *see* Native races of West Africa
- Trade :
 Alternatives to slave trade suggested by Company of Merchants, 153
 Board of Trade report, 1777, 20
 Coast price, meaning, 47

- Commodities, changing demand, 45, 46
 Foreign vessels banned, 81, 82
 Merchants' appeal for freedom, 9
 Value in regard to West Indies, 1, 7
 Unification schemes :
 Opposition by Company of Merchants, 154, 165
 Union of all districts under Crown, 166
 West Indies, dependence on African trade, 1
- Whydah, English fort, 5, 34, 38
 Wilberforce, William, 113, 140
 Williams, Secretary to Sierra Leone Company, letter to Company of Merchants, 108
 Winnebah :
 Fanti danger to, 34, 35
 Rent for, 49
 Worge, Lieutenant-Colonel, Governor of Fort St. Louis, 58
- YORKE, Sir Joseph, Ambassador at the Hague, 22, 23, 35