

## THE EARLY AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE IN NEW ENGLAND.

BY WILLIAM B. WEEDEN.

---

THE deportation of African negroes—commonly called the slave-trade—was a movement of importance in the commerce of the latter seventeenth and of the eighteenth century. Perhaps the most momentous and effective change instituted in the minds of men, by this nineteenth century, is in the general conception and treatment of human slavery. The seventeenth century organized the new western countries and created an immense opportunity for labor. The eighteenth coolly and deliberately set Europe at the task of depopulating whole districts of western Africa, and of transporting the captives by a necessarily brutal, vicious and horrid traffic to the new civilizations of America. The awakened conscience of the nineteenth century checked the horrid stream of forced migrations; but an enormous social structure had been reared on servitude and enforced labor; its overthrow imperilling one of the fairest civilizations of the earth convulsed the great territory and the greater society of the United States of America.

North American slavery fell, and with it a vast structure of ideas, political, social and philanthropic, proceeding from the economic force of slavery on the one hand, and the humanitarian, ameliorating passion of mankind for freedom, on the other. Looking backward one and a half or two and a half centuries, we are amazed and humiliated, when we consider how little people knew what they were doing. When the old and enlightened countries sought eagerly for slaves

and taught their colonial offshoots to depend upon them, they dug a deep pit for their own children.

New England entered upon this long path of twisted social development—this wanton destruction of barbaric life in the hope of new civilized life, this perversion of the force of the individual barbarian into an opportunity for social mischief—with no more and no less consciousness than prevailed elsewhere at that time. The Winthrops and other Puritan colonists asked and received Indian captives for slaves as freely as any partisan went for loot or plunder. Indians were enslaved on all sides, as long as the local tribes lasted;<sup>1</sup> then Maine, then the Carolinas<sup>2</sup> and other districts<sup>3</sup> furnished captives for a never ceasing demand for labor. Cotton Mather<sup>4</sup> employed his negro servant, showing as little regard for the rights of man, as the Boston merchant or Narragansett planter. Sewall's was about the earliest and almost the only voice, raised in behalf of a large humanity. Fortunately for the moral development of our beloved colonies, the climate was too harsh, the social system too simple to engender a good economic employment of black labor. The simple industrial methods of each New England homestead, made a natural barrier against an alien social system, including either black or copper-colored dependents. The blacks soon dwindled in numbers or dropped out, from a life too severe for any but the hardest and firmest fibred races.

The mother country knew no humanity, but only an economic opportunity, in the enslavement of the negro. The Royal African Company<sup>5</sup> in their Declaration, as early as 1662, indicate the sentiment of England in this business. Other nations were invading the African trade, and there was danger that America "be rendered useless in their

---

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, Cape Cod, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Col. Rec. Conn., 1715, p. 516.

<sup>3</sup> Coffin, Newbury, p. 337; Col. Rec. Conn., 1711, p. 233; Essex Inst., VII., 73.

<sup>4</sup> Proc., M. H. S., 1812, p. 352.

<sup>5</sup> Declaration, Carter Brown Library, p. 1.

growing Plantations, through want of that usual supply of Servants, which they have hitherto had from *Africa*." To forward the affairs of this slave-dealing corporation, which included the King, Duke of York and many leading persons, was made a constant care for colonial governors.<sup>1</sup> In 1695 the traffic in negroes was considered the best and most profitable branch of British Commerce.<sup>2</sup> It was a melancholy omen of the immense significance of the slave-trade in that commerce that, the gold coin used even more than the sovereign as a unit of common prices, was named for Guinea whence gold and negroes were taken together.

Slavery was a small factor in New England, because economic laws forbade its growth. It was managed as humanely perhaps, as such a system could be conducted. It was not absolute constraint, nor a permanent confinement. A negro man and woman on Rhode Island in 1735, by "Industry & Frugality scrap'd together £200, or £300." They sailed from Newport to their own country, Guinea, where their savings gave them an independent fortune.<sup>3</sup> The slave-trade was likewise, a small constituent in itself, but it exercised a great influence in the whole commerce of the first half of the eighteenth century. Any active element in trade, anything much needed at the moment, affects the general movement of commerce, much more than its actual amount and more particular value would indicate.

Massachusetts writers have always been especially sore, at the point where the trade in African negroes is touched. If they had admitted that in fact, none knew at the time the enormity of the offence and that Massachusetts partook of the common public sentiment which trafficked in Indians or Negroes as carelessly as in cattle, their argument would be more consistent. Massachusetts attained enough in her

---

<sup>1</sup> Doc. N. York, III., 241, 261.

<sup>2</sup> Cary's *British Trade*, pp. 74, 76.

<sup>3</sup> *Bos. Evng. Post*, 1735.

history that is actual and real; it is not necessary to prove that she was endued with superhuman forecast, or a pragmatical morality. Instead of this simple avowal, they admit the good foundation of the indictment, then plead in extenuation of the crime, with Tristram Shandy's wet nurse that "it was a very little one."

In the absence of exact statistics, we must trace the course of the trade in collateral reports and evidence. Dr. Belknap in his friendly correspondence with Judge Tucker in 1795, concerning slavery in Massachusetts, addressed letters to many leading men with various queries. The replies show among other matters the general prevalence of the trade in the province. Dr. John Eliot says: "The *African trade* was carried on (in Mass.) and commenced at an early period: to a small extent compared with Rhode Island, but it made a considerable branch of our commerce (to judge from the number of our still-houses and masters of vessels now living who have been in the trade). It declined very little till the Revolution."<sup>1</sup> Samuel Dexter says: "Vessels from Rhode Island have brought slaves into Boston. Whether any have been imported into that town by its own merchants, I am unable to say. I have more than fifty years ago, seen a vessel or two with slaves brought into Boston, but do not recollect where they were owned. At that time it was a very rare thing to hear the trade reprobated." . . . . About the time of the Stamp Act, what before were only slight scruples in the minds of conscientious persons became serious doubts, and, with a considerable number, ripened into a firm persuasion that the slave-trade was "*malum in se.*"<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Pemberton answers: "We know that a large trade to Guinea was carried on for many years by the citizens of Massachusetts Colony, who were the proprietors of the vessels and their cargoes, out and home. Some of

<sup>1</sup> 5 Mass. H. C., III., p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> 5 Mass. H. C., III., pp. 384-5.

the slaves purchased in Guinea, and I suppose the greatest part of them, were sold in the West Indies. Some were brought to Boston and Charlestown, and sold to town and country purchasers by the head, as we sell sheep and oxen.”<sup>1</sup>

John Adams says: “Argument might have some weight in the abolition of slavery in Massachusetts, but the real cause was the multiplication of laboring white people, who would no longer suffer the rich to employ these sable rivals so much to their injury. This principle has kept negro slavery out of France, England, and other parts of Europe.”<sup>2</sup>

From these reminiscences we turn now to the meagre accounts of the trade as it existed. Rhode Island or the modern Newport was undoubtedly the main port of the New England slave-trade. The Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations treated her Indian captives and slaves well.<sup>3</sup> From the necessity of her situation and from the enlightenment received from Roger Williams, she was more humane than her neighbors in her treatment of the Indian race. In Connecticut as late as 1711, a family of “Indian servants” consisting of Rachel and her seven children were distributed by will; they were called “blacks.”<sup>4</sup> Rhode Island went into the African slave-trade, it being the rising, profitable venture of the time. Newport was a port of the third or fourth class in 1676, far below Boston or Salem. By the turn of the century, its enterprise increased greatly and in fifty years its commerce rivalled in activity though not in extent that of Boston. Massachusetts had the fisheries by priority and the natural advantage of position. In the new development of the eighteenth century rum distilling was a chief factor, as has been shown. Rhode Island’s new energy seized upon this industry in company with Massachusetts.

<sup>1</sup> 5 Mass. H. C., III., p. 392.

<sup>2</sup> 5 Mass. H. C., III., p. 402.

<sup>3</sup> R. I. C. R., I., 243, II., 535, III., 433 and IV., 193.

<sup>4</sup> Caulkins’s New Lon., p. 330.

A free supply of rum with new vessels carried the Newport men into the rising slave-trade. In these ventures they had much Massachusetts capital engaged with them.

In 1708 the British Board of Trade addressed a circular letter to all the colonies relative to Negro slaves.<sup>1</sup> To stop the iniquity? Oh, no! "It being absolutely necessary that a trade so beneficial to the kingdom should be carried on to the greatest advantage"; they desired the most particular statements concerning the numbers imported by the Royal African Company and by private traders. The trade had been laid open to private competition in the year 1698 by Parliament.

Governor Cranston replied, Dec. 5, 1708,<sup>2</sup> that, from 1698 to Dec. 25, 1707, no negro slaves were imported into Rhode Island from Africa. That in 1696, the Brigantine *Seaflower*, Thomas Windsor master, brought from Africa forty-seven negroes, sold fourteen in the colony at £30 to £35 per head; the rest he carried by land "to Boston, where his owners lived." In 1700 one ship and two sloops sailed directly from Newport to the coast of Africa; Edwin Carter commanded the ship and was part owner in the three vessels. With him sailed Thomas Bruster and John Bates, merchants of Barbadoes and "separate traders from thence to the coast of Africa." All these vessels carried cargoes to Barbadoes and disposed of them there. It would seem that West Indian capital also availed of the advantages of Newport for prosecuting this commerce.

It will be observed that Governor Cranston is careful to limit his statement to Dec. 25, 1707. In February, 1708,<sup>3</sup> the Colony laid an impost of £3 on each negro imported. In April it enacted that the drawback allowed in the first act in case the negro was exported again, should be rescinded. There must have been a free movement of negroes, either

---

<sup>1</sup> R. I. C. R., IV., 53.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 54, 55.

<sup>3</sup> There was an act for the same purpose in 1702. R. I. C. R., IV., 471.

from Africa direct, or by the way of the West Indies, to have occasioned such watchful legislation. In 1712,<sup>1</sup> and again in 1715,<sup>2</sup> the act was tinkered. The Assembly gravely remitted the duties on "two sucking slaves" from Barbadoes in 1716.<sup>3</sup> The impost amounted to enough by 1729 to justify an appropriation dividing it, one-half toward paving the streets of Newport, one-half toward "the great bridges on the main."<sup>4</sup> The tax was repealed in 1732.<sup>5</sup>

We may judge of the state of the public conscience touching slavery and the movement of the slave-trade by the collateral arguments of a writer in the Boston News Letter<sup>6</sup> in 1718. In the previous year there had been eighty burials of Indians and Negroes in Boston. The writer argued that the loss at £30 each amounted to £2,400. If white servants had been employed instead, at £15 for the time of each the town had saved £1,200. A man could procure £12 to £15 to purchase the time of a white servant who could not pay £30 to £50 for a Negro or Indian. "The Whites strengthens and Peoples the country, others do not." Such political economy satisfied the artless publicists of that time.

The merchants of Boston quoted Negroes like any other merchandise demanded by their correspondents. Mr. Thomas Armory had frequent calls from North Carolina. In 1720 he buys for Thos. Bell a man at £60, though they often brought £80. "Since the Law about slaves passed they prove better than they did, and no one sells, but endeavours to buy."<sup>7</sup> In 1723 he sends out a female house servant bought at £50, on "condition to export her else she would have been worth £70." Again in 1724 "a good likely fellow that speaks English sells from £70 to

<sup>1</sup> R. I. C. R., IV., 134.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> R. I. C. R., IV., p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471.

<sup>6</sup> Mar. 3, 1718.

<sup>7</sup> MS. letters.

£80." Again, "Nobody sells without some fault." "In the fall we expect negroes here directly from Guinea, a vessel having sailed from here and one from Rhode Island."<sup>1</sup> The Boston News Letter advertises in 1726, "Several choice Gold Coast Negroes lately arrived."<sup>2</sup> Felt notes a cargo received in Boston in 1727, the highest sale from which was at £80.<sup>3</sup> In 1736 the News Letter<sup>4</sup> has "just imported from Guinea, a parcel of likely young negroes, boys and girls." Advertisements of "imported" negroes, not specifying their locality are frequent. The inventories in Boston and in the various towns often enumerate them, generally one or two in a family. In 1715, Charles Hobby<sup>5</sup> of Boston leaves six, two at £50, four at £40 each. In 1735, John Jekyll<sup>6</sup> was responsible for five; one at £85, three at £65, one at £50. In one case we find two cradles for Negroes. In 1740, Richard Hunt<sup>7</sup> had seven; the prices show the inflation of currency. Great Cuffee at £200, Andrew £150, Will and Little Cuffee £140 each, Tommy £150, Rose £110 and poor Boston only £80. In 1731, Jahleel Brenton<sup>8</sup> at Newport devises three negroes, a child and an Indian woman.

The Pepperells did not import negroes directly from Africa; their vessels brought them frequently from the West Indies.<sup>9</sup> Indeed it was said "almost every vessel in the West India trade would return with a few."<sup>10</sup> The West Indies being the large market, naturally controlled the destination of cargoes even when the vessels went from New England, as we have seen in one instance from Newport.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> MS. letters, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> News Letter, Oct. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Felt, Salem, II., 416.

<sup>4</sup> Dec. 29th.

<sup>5</sup> Suffolk P. R., 19, 103.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 32, 310.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 35-42.

<sup>8</sup> Newport Hist. Mag., Vol. 4, 89.

<sup>9</sup> Parson's Pepperell, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Bourne, Wells & Kennebunk, and see Mass. Arch., 63, 231.

<sup>11</sup> MS. 1257, *ante*.



Governor Hunter reported to the Lords of Trade in 1718 that no negroes come from Africa to New York direct in British vessels<sup>1</sup> "but the duties laid on Negroes from ye other Colonies are intended to encourage their (our) own shipping and discourage the importing their refuse and sickly Negroes here from other Colonies."<sup>2</sup> In 1731 President Van Dam<sup>3</sup> arguing again that the New York duty did not injure Great Britain, mentions a vessel belonging to that colony with a considerable number of negroes on board from Africa.

The African trade from Newport and Boston was conducted in sloops, brigantines, schooners, and snows, generally of forty or fifty tons burden. One brigantine is thus described: "sixty feet length by the keel, straight rabbet, and length of the rake forward to be fourteen feet, three foot and one half of which to be put into the keel, so that she will then be sixty-three feet keel and eleven feet rake forward. Twenty-three feet by the beam, ten feet in the hold, and three feet ten inches between decks and twenty inches waste."<sup>4</sup> The 3 ft. 10 in. was the height allowed the slaves, in later and worse times, this was reduced to 3 ft. 3 in. with 10 in. to 13 in. surface room for each. The abuses led to a law restricting the number of slaves to two and one half for each ton. In the early times we are treating, the number was about one and one half to a ton. The value of the vessels engaged was not large. The *Sanderson*, brigantine, whose voyages I shall introduce, was offered new in 1745 for £450, Jamaica currency. The snow *Susey* was bought in Boston in 1759, with outfit, for £568, lawful money.

---

<sup>1</sup> Yet the record says also that private traders imported into New York 1700-1726, 1,573 negroes from the West Indies and 822 from the coast of Africa and Madagascar. Doc. N. Y., V. 814.

<sup>2</sup> Doc. N. Y., V. 509.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., V. 927.

<sup>4</sup> Am. Hist. Rec., I., 311-19, 388-45. Geo. C. Mason's statements from MS. records which I use freely.

Small vessels were considered more profitable than large ones, and they were handled by small crews; the captain, two mates, and about six men. Generally a captain and mate, two or three men and a boy sufficed. When the voyage was to the West Indies, a cooper was included, who made bungs, heads, etc., on the outward trip to set up with Taunton and other staves, together with Narragansett hoops, into barrels and hogsheads, when he came into port. White oak staves went into rum casks, and red oak into sugar hogsheads. There were two grades of water casks "common" and "Guinea;" the latter were worth two and a half to three dollars or one third more than the former.

The West Indies afforded the great demand for negroes; they also furnished the raw material supplying the manufacture of the main merchandise which the thirsty Gold Coast drank up in barter for its poor banished children. Molasses and poor sugar distilled in Boston, and more especially in Newport, with rum made the staple export to Africa. Some obtained gallon for gallon of molasses; but the average was 96 to 100. Newport had 22 still-houses; Boston had the best example owned by a Mr. Childs. The cost of distilling was  $5\frac{1}{2}$  pence per gallon. Cisterns and vats cost 14s. to 16s. per 100 galls. in 1735, not including lumber; three copper stills and heads, three pewter worms and two pewter cranes cost in London £546.11.3. The quantity of rum distilled was enormous, and in 1750 it was estimated that Massachusetts alone consumed more than 15,000 hhd. molasses, for this purpose. The average price in the West Indies of molasses was 13d. or 14d. per gallon. The consumption of rum in the fisheries and lumbering and ship-building districts was large; the export demand to Africa was immense. It was importunate too. Capt. Isaac Freeman with a coasting sloop in 1752 wanted a cargo of rum and molasses from Newport, within five weeks. His correspondent wrote that the quantity could not be had in three months. "There are so many vessels lading

for Guinea we can't get one hogshead of rum for the cash. We have been lately to New London and all along the seaport towns in order to purchase the molasses, but can't get one hogshead."<sup>1</sup>

The Guinea voyagers were known as "rum-vessels." There was no article of merchandise comparable to rum on the African coast. Our forefathers are not to be charged with any especial preference for this civilizing instrument over all the other resources of two continents. Their instincts were neither moral nor immoral; they were simply economic. They had tried dry goods and Africa rejected them in favor of the wet. Capt. George Scott writes pathetically in 1740 from the Coast, of his trials in exchanging dry goods for black chattels. Out of 129 slaves purchased he had lost 29 and then had "five that swell'd and how it will be with them I can't tell." He had one third of his dry goods left and thought if he had staid to dispose of it he would have lost all his slaves. "I have repented a hundred times ye buying of them dry goods. Had we laid out two thousand pound in rum, bread and flour, it would purchased more in value than all our dry goods." Could any hungry and thirsty savage ask for a keener and more sympathetic interpreter of his appetites?

One slaver took out in her cargo "80 hhds. six bbs. and 3 tierce of rum, containing 8220 gals., 79 bars of iron (known as 'African iron,' these bars were used as a currency, as we shall see), 19 bbs. flour, 4 tierces rice, 2 bbs. snuff, 28 iron pots, 20 bbs. tar, 3 bbs. loaf sugar, 4 bbs. brown do., 7 quarter casks wine, 1 bb. coffee, 1 bb. vinegar, 20 firkins, 2 do. tallow, 10 bbs. pork, 15 half do. 10 boxes sperm candles, 4 kegs pickles, 2 bbs. fish, 1 bb. hams, 12 casks bread, 4 casks tobacco, 1 trunk of shirts and cotton hollands, 3000 staves, hoops and boards, 470 ropes of onions, 4 bbs. beans," with water, shackles, hand-cuffs, etc. The cargo was mixed and it was probably intended for touching

<sup>1</sup> Am. Hist. Rec., I., 316.

in the West Indies. The parts adapted for that market would be disposed of, then the rum, shackles, vinegar, etc. would be carried to the West Coast of Africa. Vinegar was a sanitary necessity. In good weather the negroes were brought on deck daily, their quarters were cleaned and sprinkled with vinegar, and if docile they enjoyed the outward air the greater part of fine days. Males were separated from females in the hold by a bulkhead.

Insurance was sometimes effected on the venture, though there could not have been enough written to cover a large proportion of the risks. The premiums were too high, and the merchants through joint ownerships distributed their risks over a large number of ventures and small values. The Newport vessels were taken generally by underwriters in New York. The rate was often eighteen to twenty per cent. on Guinea voyages, one party underwriting about £100. Almost all insurances were underwritten by several parties joining in the contract.<sup>1</sup> Rates varied much in different years, as war brought privateers, or chance brought rovers. From Newport to Jamaica in 1748, the rate was five to six per cent., in 1756 it advanced to twenty per cent. and in 1760 fell to eleven per cent.

After careful and elaborate preparation, manning the vessel, assorting her cargo, planning the voyage and insuring the adventure one would say all was ready to sail. Not so! This world had done its part, but the other worlds—the stars—must be called upon for their conjunction, their propitiating influence in accomplishing a safe and profitable return. An astrologer or “conjurer” was employed to “cast a figure.” This was an elaborate chart displaying cabalistic figures and courses, known to the initiated. Mr. Mason gives an example<sup>2</sup> and reports examination of hundreds of these horoscopes, many of which were annotated in the margin with the experience supposed to confirm the

<sup>1</sup> For form of policy see *Am. Hist. Rec.*, I., 318.

<sup>2</sup> *Am. Hist. Rec.*, I., p. 319.

star lore, as "6 D & h always wins the profits," etc. When the hour assigned by the horoscope came, the vessel must start, be it day or night, calm or storm; the moorings were cast and the voyage dated from that fatalistic hour. We may wonder that the Malbones, Vernons, Ayraults, Collinses and others, accounted among the most cultured Americans of their day, affected or patronized such rubbish. But whatever their own esoteric conviction might have been, they could not overlook the superstitious and wonder-loving prejudices of their sailors. Cabin and fore-castle both would pluck safety from danger the more certainly, when convinced that the stars in their courses were working in their favor.

These fleets and traders did not find a sure market or a certain supply of captives on the Gold Coast. In subsequent days, about a half-century later, after a thorough system had been established, factories with magazines of the goods coveted by the interior tribes, were kept supplied on the coast. Slave-pens were built and the poor savages were herded ready for the buyer. In our period there was no horrid order in this disorder of the human race. Vessels crowded upon each other, and losses occurred often, through mere irregularity in the traffic. In 1736 Captain John Griffin found this state of affairs and a very "troublesum" voyage. The French were out in great numbers and there were nineteen sail of all nations in the harbor at once. "Ships that used to carry pryme slaves off is now forsed to take any that comes: heare is 7 sails of us Rume men that we are ready to devour one another, for our Case is Desprit."<sup>1</sup> The rum men were the New England craft probably. Captain "Hamond" had been on the coast six months, getting only sixty slaves on board. The sturdy man-trading skippers were quite pathetic in the story of their mishaps. Captain David Lindsay, an energetic member of the class, writes from Amanaboe in

<sup>1</sup> Am. Hist. Rec., I., 312.

1753, "Ye Traid is so dull it is actuly a noof to make a man Creasey." His first mate was sick with four of his men. Obligated to replace his worn out cable and stock of oakum, he fears the blame of his owners, yet the "rusk" was too great. Five or six "rum-ships" were at hand. His vessel was not too trustworthy and they could see "day Lite al round her bow under deck. I never had so much Trouble in all my voiges."

Nevertheless the doughty mariner carried his rified brigantine, the *Sanderson*, into Barbadoes about four months later, with fifty-six negroes, "all in helth and fatt." Of these forty-seven were sold<sup>1</sup> there, the remainder going to Rhode Island probably. Captain Scott in 1740 was sorely tried also. He sent his second mate to leeward trading, but a slave escaped carrying two ounces of the vessel's gold dust. Then the blacks from the shore captured the mate, and the captain going to his rescue was mulcted in £32, in goods, for ransom. He estimated the whole loss through the "mate's folly" at £300. He bought slaves and goods from a Dutchman, intending to sell them to the French. But the unfortunate chattels were all taken "with the flucks," three dying, three more "very bad." He had one hundred good slaves and no gold, waiting for twenty more. Provisions were very high and water cost him ten shillings per day. Every man slave paid for in goods "cost £12 sterling prime."<sup>2</sup> The price of a prime man slave in 1762 was one hundred gallons of rum. The instances given are types, and the voyages, outfits and orders were quite similar one with another.

Captain Lindsay's troubles did not deter him from other attempts. In 1754 he sailed in a new schooner, the *Sierra Leone*, of forty tons, owned jointly by Wm. Johnston & Co., of Newport, and parties in Boston whose names are

<sup>1</sup> Am. Hist. Rec., I., pp. 339, 340, see for accounts in detail.

<sup>2</sup> Yet the Western world had advanced the value of "chattels" in 1720. Ten shillings "English goods" would buy a negro at Madagascar. Johnson's Pirates, II., 86.

not given. He sailed for Africa direct, and the commissions and privileges given the officers are of interest. In addition to the regular wages, the Captain received four parts out of one hundred and four for "Coast Commission," five per cent. on sale of the cargo in the West Indies, and five per cent. on goods purchased for the return cargo. Moreover, the Captain had a privilege of five slaves, the two mates had a privilege of two slaves for each. In these times the vessel did not carry a surgeon. When he was introduced at a later period he was allowed a gratuity of £50, and the Captain one of £100, if the profit amounted to two per cent.; they received half of these amounts if the loss was no more than three per cent.

Lindsay showed his usual capacity and made a successful voyage in about ten months, much to the gratification of the Boston copartners, in the *Sierra Leone*. They write to their Newport associates, April 28, 1755, "Lindsay's arrival is very agreeable to us & we wish we may never make a worse voyage. Are you determined to get a larger vessel for him?" May 26, 1756, they write concerning a snow of Mr. Quincey's, "She is about 112 tons, a fine vessel for ye Guinea trade."<sup>1</sup> Her name was the *Hanover*, and they afterward purchased her. In the voyage of 1756 Lindsay took one hundred and thirty-three slaves into Barbadoes, having lost eighteen. He carried some gold coin and bought gold dust on the coast. Ivory was handled also in the traffic.<sup>2</sup>

As the trade grew Newport became more and more the great market. Connecticut reported in 1762 "some few vessels to Coast Guinea." The captains were men of force and business ability, as may be inferred from the foregoing facts. They often took small ventures for the friends of the owners—outward in rum—inward in Negroes. *Charming Polly* lent her romantic name to a Newport

<sup>1</sup> Am. Hist. Rec., I., 341.

<sup>2</sup> Sheffield, R. I., Privateers, p. 56.

slaver in 1759. One of the schooner's bills of lading bears a hogshead of rum to buy a Negro boy thirteen or fourteen years old, with the remainder in gold dust. Mistress Polly knew not that her name would go down to future generations soiled by contact with this inhuman traffic in the flesh and blood of our dark skinned brothers and sisters. Such conceptions were far above and beyond the ethics of the early eighteenth century. A respectable "elder" who sent ventures to the coast with uniform success, always returned thanks on the Sunday after a slaver arrived in Newport, "that an overruling Providence had been pleased to bring to this land of freedom another cargo of benighted heathen to enjoy the blessing of a Gospel dispensation."<sup>1</sup> This "elder" has gone the way of other bigoted gospellers. The passions of man are still lustful, and his temper is cruel in gratifying them; but his intellect has been trained into wholesome contempt for the ignorance of these unconscious Pharisees. Science has not solved the mysteries of the unseen, but she has taught modern generations a decent self distrust and some proper respect for all the religions of all the children of God.

The spirit of an early eighteenth century American was bodied forth in Peter Faneuil, whose whole lineage is "held in peculiar honor"<sup>2</sup> in Boston. Peter was of Huguenot blood, born in New Rochelle, New York, at the very beginning of the century, and was transferred to Boston to become his uncle Andrew's executor and legatee. Trained in the best mercantile system, of moderate enterprise, yet careful, holding the largest estate of the time. Here was a man without reproach, solid, large featured, self considering, but liberal in his way; his eulogist, Lovell, master of the Latin school, voiced the public sentiment at his death, when he said; the bounty of Faneuil Hall, "however great, is but the first fruits of his generosity, a pledge

---

<sup>1</sup> Am. Hist. Rec., I., 312.

<sup>2</sup> Mem. H. Bos., II., 259.



of what his heart, always devising liberal things, would have done." His private charity was equal to his public munificence, "so secret and unbounded that none but they who were the objects of it can compute the sums which he annually distributed."

In such savor of holiness, charity and benignity, lived this pocket-prince bachelor and husband of property, as he walked to church with his good sister, velvet-bound prayer book in hand, his heart holding "many more blessings in store for us," his fellow-men, according to gushing Mr. Lovell. For his fellows, yes; not for humanity as it came to be known a generation later, when King George's red coats put a curb on proud Boston, and the people—Huguenot or English, native or African, black or white—mustered to put down tyranny, to assert independence.

No matter how large the inheritance, how successful the ventures, how full the tide an inflated currency floated into good Peter's coffers, it must be made larger. Commerce must mix, trade must go. He drums up debtors with proper vigilance, submits reluctantly to the customary two and one-half per cent. exchange his friend and frequent correspondent, Gulian Verplanck, charges him in New York. His eye is open, scanning the commercial horizon and seeing that men everywhere "act the Honest and Just part by me."<sup>1</sup>

Greed and thrift are near allied. The poor Captains Lindsay and Scott tugging painfully over on the Gold Coast, the small merchants handling rum down at Newport, had no keener eye for profit and increase than this sumptuous merchant—bewigged, beruffled and bebuttoned—as he strutted modestly down the broad terraces of the stately mansion near King's Chapel, to seat himself in the "chariot" with arms and harness, "in the handsomest manner." We get an occasional glimpse in the one letter book<sup>2</sup> preserved, of items which look shady and sooty.

<sup>1</sup> Letter Book, 1737. N. E. Hist. Gen. Soc'y.

<sup>2</sup> In Cabinet N. E. Hist. Gen. Soc'y.

March 24, 1739, he hopes Verplanck has "an acco<sup>t</sup> of the Negroes being sold." April 15, 1740; he expects a remittance of gold dust from "Coast of (an unreadable name)." These may be coincidences; all the traders dealt more or less in gold, ivory and "black ivory."

But can we believe the curious, prying eyes of modern research, as it uncovers an actual venture after Negroes, a voyage deliberately planned by Peter Faneuil, owned one-half by himself, one-quarter by his neighbor John Jones, and one-quarter by the Captain John Cutler? The name of the craft, too; did Peter slap his fair round belly and chuckle when he named the snow, *Jolly Bachelor*? This must be merely the sad irony of fate that, the craft deliberately destined to be packed with human pains and to echo with human groans should in its very name, bear the fantastic image of the luxury loving chief owner. If these be the sources of profits and property, where is the liberty of Faneuil Hall, where the charity of good Peter's alms?

Neither Faneuil, the owner, nor Cutler, the master, lived to see the return of the snow with the ghastly funny name. The safe and prosperous merchant went out from the Tri-mountain city in all the pomp of funeral circumstance, as we have seen. Poor Cutler, with two of his sailors, was "barbarously murdered" on the Coast of Guinea near the Banana Islands, by the natives whom he was persuading and converting "to the blessing of a Gospel dispensation."

This catastrophe was March 9, 1742. George Birchall, a resident of Banana Islands, Sierra Leone, then appeared on the scene and took possession of the abandoned vessel. The natives had stripped her and carried off such slaves as were already on board. Birchall with considerable skill apparently, bought back a part of her stores from the natives, together with twenty slaves, refitted the snow with sails and rigging from English slaving vessels, and appointed Charles Wickham master. Wickham shipped two mates, a boatswain and two sailors, April 10, 1743,

and two more sailors May 1, at Sierra Leone for New England, and brought his vessel into Newport about the sixteenth of August following with twenty Negroes on board. George Birchall libelled the vessel and cargo in a friendly suit for salvage before Hon. John Gridley, Judge of the Court of Vice Admiralty of the Colony of Rhode Island. Benjamin Faneuil, brother, administrator and heir of the late Peter, with John Jones, all of Boston, appeared to claim their rights, one-half having been Peter's, one-quarter Jones's and one-quarter Cutler's, the late master for whom Benjamin was executor. Judge Gridley decreed the sale of vessel, cargo and Negroes by William King, Deputy Marshal, awarding one-third of the proceeds to Birchall for salvage and two-thirds to Faneuil and Jones.

There were some nice points involved, for while reasonably enough there was no dispute about such well won salvage, Gridley curiously rejected the "Portage bill"<sup>1</sup> of

<sup>1</sup>This "portage bill," the bill of costs and the sworn statement of Benjamin Faneuil, Admr., are given at length. The documents of the case, unusually full for the time, are preserved in the Rhode Island Archives at Providence.

"A Portage bill of mens Names and wages Due on board the Snow Jolly Bachelor, Charles Winkham master, bound to Newengland Commencing at Serrillione, 10<sup>th</sup> of April, 1743.

Men's Names.	qualities	w <sup>n</sup> Shipt	w 6 month Sterling	w <sup>n</sup> Dis-charg'd	w <sup>s</sup> Due.
Charles Winkham	Master	April 10	£6 - -	Aug <sup>t</sup> 18, 1743	£25.. 12..
John Battey	Mate	D <sup>o</sup>	3.. 10	D <sup>o</sup> 17 -	14.. 16.. 4
Oliver Arnola	2 <sup>d</sup> mate	D <sup>o</sup>	3.. 10	D <sup>o</sup> - -	12.. 14..
Alex. <sup>der</sup> McKinsey	Boatswain	D <sup>o</sup>	3	D <sup>o</sup> 16	12.. 12..
Silvester Sweet	Sailor	D <sup>o</sup>	2.. 10	D <sup>o</sup> 18 -	10.. 13.. 4
Oliver Somes	D <sup>o</sup>	D <sup>o</sup>	2.. 10	D <sup>o</sup> 16	10.. 10 -
W <sup>m</sup> Henerey	D <sup>o</sup>	May y <sup>e</sup> 1 <sup>st</sup>	2 - -	D <sup>o</sup> 16	7.. 1.. 4
W <sup>m</sup> Hyat	D <sup>o</sup>	D <sup>o</sup>	2.. 10	D <sup>o</sup> 18	8.. 18.. 4
					£102.. 17.. 4

Newport, Aug<sup>t</sup> 18<sup>th</sup>, 1743.

E: E: p. CHARLES WINKHAM.

Burchell & Co. of Snow Jolly Batchelor.	Cost of Court.
For Drawing the Libels & attorneys Tax.....	£0.. 18.. 8
For filing and allowing.....	12.. 8
To attachment Seal and service.....	.. 10.. -
To the marshalls Fee.....	.. 2.. 6
To three Interligitary Decree & Recos.....	2.. 11.. 6
To Taking Evidence in Court.....	.. 6.. -
To a Copy of the Libel.....	.. 2.. 6

officers and men's wages £102. 17. 4 from Sierra Leone to Newport. Leonard Lockman in a subsequent decree, Aug. 26, 1743, allows this bill and orders Marshal King to pay it from the proceeds. We wonder how it could have been otherwise, but the judge must have had legal ground for the first decision.<sup>1</sup>

The snow was sold to Captain Wickham for £1,300. The twenty negroes sold for £1,644, ranging from £40 to £134 each. The men averaged nearly £84, the women nearly £79; but while the highest man brought £134, the next dropped to £100, while three women brought respectively, £101, £105, £106. The mocking ironies in this whole transaction are not confined to the portly Faneuils. A list of honorable names, Vernon, Tweedy, Brinley,

To the marshall for keeping the Vessel in Custody 19 days.....	2..	7..	9
To the marshall for selling Snow & Twenty Negroes at 2½ p Cent...18..	5..	6	
To the Reg <sup>r</sup> for paying & Ceerving D <sup>o</sup> at 2½ p. Cent. ....18..	5..	6	
To the Doorkeeper &c.....	4..	6	
To Decree Definitive & recording.....	1..	12..	10
	£46..	2..	8
	£184..	10..	8

JN. GRIDLEY, Judge.

And Benjamin Faneuil of Boston in New England Esq. as he is Adm<sup>r</sup> of all & singular the Goods Debts Rights & Credits of Peter Faneuil late of sd Boston Esq. dece'd who in his life owned one half of the Snow aforse'd her Cargo &c and as he the sd Benj. is also Execut<sup>r</sup> of ye Late Will and Testament of the aforesaid John Cutler dece'd who in his Life owned one other quarter part of sd Snow &c and John Jones of Boston aforesaid Merch<sup>t</sup> who owneth the other Quarter of sd Snow &c come into Court & say they have always been & still are ready to pay the proponent (on his delivering to the s<sup>d</sup> Benj. & John or their Bros. the Snow aforesaid her Cargo &c) a just & reasonable Reward for saving the s<sup>d</sup> Vessel her Cargo &c. & sending her into this port of this &c.

THO WARD."

<sup>1</sup>Another case opens the question of wages. Before Captain Charles Wickham took command of the *Jolly Bachelor*, apparently he was adrift on the Guinea coast, his snow, the *Eagle*, having been taken from him Feb. 9, 1742-3, by a Spanish privateer. He had shipped in the *Eagle* from Newport for Guinea, Sept. 8, 1742, Alex. Mackensie, at £8 per month. Wm. Wyat and Silvester Sweet each at £7. 3. The prices must have been in paper currency. The sailors claimed that enough of the *Eagle's* cargo was saved to pay their wages and they "libel & appeal" against Wickham in Judge Gridley's court. The case was set down for the Saturday after Sept. 30, 1743. The result of the trial does not appear.

Robinson, Carr, Cranston are represented in Marshal King's list of purchasers of the captives procured by Faneuil's gold and Cutler's blood. But there is one name pre-eminent, in being borne by the descendant who became three-quarters of a century later, the greatest anti-slavery exponent, when New England waked to the final struggle. Then Boston did not come, but Newport went to Boston. The buyer of the highest priced "£134 negro boy" was Mr. Channing. Was he the grandfather of William Ellery Channing?

The armament provided by Birchall for the *Jolly Bachelor* deserves mention, for it shows what was indispensable for a slaver carrying forward our Elder's gospel mission. Birchall and Captain Wickham did not buy unnecessary outfit in the far away market of Sierra Leone. It included four "buckaneer" guns at six bars each, two small guns at four bars, two muskets at four bars, four guns at five bars, powder seven bars, one small gun eight bars, two pistols eight bars, six cutlasses at one bar. Other articles in the new outfit were ship stores and provisions, the inevitable rum and "Manyoea." This was furnished several times, and as a boat load cost only two bars it must have been a native article of diet. The whole outfit at Sierra Leone cost 744½ bars.

We rub our eyes in amazement that any portion of exact and worthy Peter Faneuil's "effects" or accounts was estimated in bars. Gold dust, ingots and plate were only various forms of specie, but bars did not appear on the ledgers of the early solid men of Boston or Newport. The European and American missionaries—if they did not carry all the Spartan virtues to the forsaken dark continent—at least gave it the boon of the iron currency of the Lacedaemonians. To give the strong metal value in use and value in exchange, they forged it into bars, known in New England as "African iron." These would make handy pocket pieces for the inhuman savage, when he should arrive at a pocket, or they could be welded into

convenient shackles to pin him down to a slaver's deck in three feet three inches, or at the most three feet ten inches of sitting room and free ventilation.

A pound sterling at Sierra Leone in 1743 was equal to twelve bars of this iron, a negro slave when the *Jolly Bachelor* balanced accounts June 14, was worth sixty bars or £5. At about the same time, according to Mr. Mason's old Newport documents, he was worth £12 in "goods," *i. e.* rum, at Sierra Leone.<sup>1</sup> We see the frightful scale by which merchandise ascends through rate after rate—paper priced rum, coast valued iron, sterling gold—while human flesh, sense, mind and spirit goes down in corresponding degradation.

The Romans were great but not humane, the Spaniards able and cruel, the English strong and sensible but selfish, the Americans followed in the footsteps of this civilization they inherited but did not create. The whole world in the eighteenth century, previous to the movement beginning in the American Revolution, which stirred the nations to their depths and shook thrones from their foundations, knew nothing of a refined humanity, knew but little even of the justice which should let men go free. The children of the world in their day are wiser than the children of light. Molasses and alcohol, rum and slaves, gold and iron, moved in a perpetual and unwholesome round of commerce. The most enterprising, alert and active ports only admitted the more of this fetid misery. All society was fouled in this lust, inflamed by this passion for wealth, callous to the wrongs of imported savage or displaced barbarian. The shallow sympathy expressed in the seventeenth century for Indians and native proprietors had expended itself. A new continent in possession, old Ethiopia must be ransacked, that the holders might enjoy it more speedily. Cool, shrewd, sagacious merchants vied with punctilious, dogmatic priests in promoting this prostitution of industry.

---

<sup>1</sup> See MS., p. 38, *ante*.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.