

# **Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone During the Years 1791-1793**

**Anna Maria Falconbridge**



NARRATIVE OF TWO VOYAGES  
TO THE  
RIVER SIERRA LEONE

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TRAVELS AND NARRATIVES

No. 30

Editorial Adviser: JOHN RALPH WILLIS

NARRATIVE  
OF  
TWO VOYAGES  
TO THE  
RIVER SIERRA LEONE  
DURING THE YEARS  
1791—1793

PERFORMED BY  
A. M. FALCONBRIDGE

First published 1794 by  
**FRANK CASS AND COMPANY LIMITED**

Published 2014 by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY, 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

ISBN 13: 978-0-714-61146-4 (hbk)

**Publisher's Note**

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent

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TWO VOYAGES  
TO THE RIVER  
SIERRA LEONE,  
DURING THE  
YEARS 1791--2--3,

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WITH A  
Succinct account of the Distresses and proceedings  
of that Settlement; a description of the  
Manners, Diversions, Arts, Com-  
merce, Cultivation, Custom,  
Punishments, &c.

And Every interesting Particular relating to the  
SIERRA LEONE COMPANY.

ALSO  
The present State of the SLAVE TRADE in the  
West Indies, and the improbability of  
its total Abolition.

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THE SECOND EDITION.

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L O N D O N.

Printed for L. I. Higham, N<sup>o</sup> 6, Chifwell Street.

MDCCCII.

PRICE 3s. 6d.

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## DEDICATION

TO THE

*Inhabitants of Bristol.*

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AFTER revolving in my mind a length of time, whose protection I might solicit for the subsequent pages, it strikes me, I may look up with more confidence to the City I proudly boast to be a native of, than to any other quarter.

Permit me, therefore, to trespass on your patience for a short space, by entreating your Countenance, and Patronage, to a faithful and just account of two voyages to the inhospitable Coast of Africa.—Chequered throughout with such a complication of disasters as I may venture to affirm have never yet attended any of my *dear Country Women*, and such as I sincerely hope they never may experience.

I will



I will not undertake to promise you either elegant or modish diction; and all I shall advance in my favour, is a rigid adherence to truth, which (without embellishment) I am persuaded will meet its just reward from the Inhabitants of Bristol; whom I trust, will have the goodness to keep in mind the infancy of my pen, that the recollection may serve for an apology, should they at any time catch me giving too much scope to its reins.

May every description of happiness attend the Inhabitants of Bristol, is the earnest prayer

Of their Townswoman,

and most devoted,

and obedient humble Servant,

*ANNA MARIA* ———.

BRISTOL, *August* 1794.

PREFACE.

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## P R E F A C E.

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

*In her first Voyage, she has given her reasons for going to Africa, described the incidents and occurrences she met with and (from ocular observations) the manners, customs, &c. of the people inhabiting those places she visited,—she has also made an humble attempt to delineate their situations and qualities, with a superficial History, of the Peninsula of Sierra Leone and its environs, which she certainly would have enlarged upon during her second Voyage, had not Lieutenant Matthews, previous to her returning to England in 1791, taken the start of her, by publishing his voyage to that Country;—that being the case, it would not only have been superfluous, but discovering more vanity than she could wish the World to suppose her possessed of, had she offered to tread in a path already travelled over by such an ingenious and masterly pen, to which she begs to refer the inquisitive reader.*

*This consideration and this alone, induced the Authoress to confine the letters of her last Voyage principally to the transactions and progress*

*gress of a Colony, whose success or downfall she is persuaded the Inhabitants, at least the thinking part, of almost every civilized Country, must feel more or less interested about, and she is sorely afflicted to warn the reader of an unpromising account which could not be otherwise, unless she had done violence to veracity ;—she is well aware Truth is often unwelcome, and foresees many facts produced to the World in the course of those letters will not be acceptable to the ears of numbers ;—therefore, in vindication of herself, she refers the Public to the whole Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, and hopes, if it be in their power, either severally or collectively, to contradict one tittle she has advanced, they will do so in the most candid manner ;—for the Authoress is open to conviction, and if convicted on this occasion, she will, with all due deference, kiss the rod of correction.*

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L E T T E R I.

LONDON, Jan. 5, 1791.

*My dear Friend,*

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

Mr. Falconbridge is employed by the St. George's Bay Company to carry out some relief for a number of unfortunate people, both blacks and whites, whom  
Government

Government sent to the river Sierra Leone, a few years since, and who in consequence of having had some dispute with the natives, are scattered through the country, and are just now as I have been told, in the most deplorable condition.

He (Mr. Falconbridge) is likewise to make some arrangements for collecting those poor creatures again, and forming a settlement which the company have in contemplation to establish, not only to serve them, but to be generally useful to the natives.

Mr. Falconbridge, his brother Mr. W. Falconbridge and myself, are to embark on board the Duke of Buccleugh, Captain M<sup>c</sup>Lean, a ship belonging to Messrs. John and Alexander Anderfon, of Philpot Lane; these gentlemen I understand, have a considerable factory at a place called Bance Island, some distance up the river Sierra Leone, to which island the ship is bound.

The company have either sent, or are to send out a small cutter called the Lapwing, to meet Mr. F——, on the coast, she carries the stores for relieving the people, &c. This

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

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

**LETTER**



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LETTER II.

SPIITHEAD, Jan. 12, 1791.

*My dear Friend,*

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

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

You

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

However I went to bed, and being much fatigued, was in hopes every care would be buried for the night in delightful sleep ; but in this I was disappointed, for although my eyes were closed as soon as I got my head on the pillow, yet it was not of long continuance.

I had slept perhaps two hours, when the shocking cries of murder awoke me : I did not at the instant recollect where I was, but the first thoughts which occurred upon remembering myself on ship-board were, that a gang of pirates had attacked the ship, and would put us all to death.

All the cabin was by this time alarmed ; the cries of murder still continuing  
while

while the captain and others were loudly calling for lights; and so great was the confusion, that it was a long while before any could be procured: at length the light came, when I found myself some what collected, and had courage enough to ask what was the matter.

My fears were removed, by being informed it was a Mr. B——, a passenger, whose intellects were a little deranged: he continued his disagreeable hideous cries the whole night, and prevented every one from sleeping; for my part I scarcely closed my eyes again.

At breakfast Mr. B——— apologized, by telling us that his wife had murdered his only child, for which reason he had left her. “And,” said he, “the horrid act! has made such an impression on my mind, that I frequently think I see her all besmeared with blood, with a dagger in her hand, determined to take away my life also: it preys upon my spirits, for I want strength of mind to conquer the weaknesses.”\*

Mr.

\* I am inclined to think this was only the imagination of a frantic brain, for we were not able to learn any thing more of the story.

Mr. Alexander Anderfon came on board, and dined: he politely enquired if I was comfortable; assured me, that every thing had been put on board to render us as much fo as poffible.

In the evening he returned to town, and we got under weigh.

Nothing occurred on our paffage here except fuch frequent returns of Mr. B's delirium, as has induced Captain M<sup>c</sup> Lean to put him on fhore, from the opinion of his being an unfit fubject to go to the coaft of Africa.

I did not experience any of thofe fears peculiar to my fex upon the water; and the only inconvenience I found was a little fea ficknefs, which I had a right to expect, for you know this is my firft voyage.

There is one circumftance, which I forbode will make the remainder of our voyage unpleafant.

The gentlemen whom Mr. Falconbridge is employed by are for abolifhing the flave trade: the owners of this veffel are of that trade, and confequently  
the

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

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

I have not been on shore at Portsmouth, indeed it is not a desirable place to visit: I was once there, and few people have a wish to see it a second time.

The only thing that has attracted my notice in the harbour, is the fleet with the convicts for Botany Bay, which are wind bound, as well as ourselves.

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

the accounts I ever read or heard of wretchedness before.

I must close this which is the last, in all probability, you will receive from me, 'till my arrival in Africa; when, if an opportunity offers, I shall make a point of writing to you.

Pray do not let distance or absence blot out the recollection of her,

Who is truly your's.

LETTER

LETTER III.

BANCE ISLAND, Feb. 10, 1791

*My dear Friend,*

WE failed the very day I wrote you from Portsmouth, and our passage was unusually quick, being only eighteen days from thence to this place.

The novelty of a ship ploughing the trackless ocean, in a few days became quite familiar to me; there was such a sameness in every thing (for some birds were all we saw the whole way) that I found the voyage tiresome, notwithstanding the shortness of it.

You will readily believe my heart was gladdened at the sight of the mountains of Sierra Leone, which was the land we first made.

Those mountains appear to rise gradually from the sea to a stupendous height, richly wooded and beautifully ornamented  
by

by the hand of nature, with a variety of delightful prospects.

I was vastly pleased while sailing up the river, for the rapidity of the ship through the water afforded a course of new scenery almost every moment, till we cast anchor here: Now and then I saw the glimpse of a native town, but from the distance and new objects hastily catching my eye, was not able to form a judgment or idea of any of them; but this will be no loss, as I may have frequent opportunities of visiting some of them hereafter.

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

When the ceremony of saluting was over, Captain M<sup>c</sup> Lean and Mr. W. Falconbridge



conbridge went on shore; but it being late in the evening, I continued on board 'till next day.

Here we met the Lapwing cutter. She failed some time before us from Europe, and had been arrived two or three weeks.

The master of her, and several of the people to whose assistance Mr. Falconbridge is come, and who had taken refuge here, came to visit us.

They represented their sufferings to have been very great; that they had been treacherously dealt with by one *King* *Jemmy*, who had drove them away from the ground they occupied, burnt their houses, and otherwise devided them of every comfort and necessary of life; they also threw out some reflections against the Agent of this island; said he had sold several of their fellow sufferers to a Frenchman, who had taken them to the West Indies.

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

Those

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

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

At dinner the conversation turned upon the slave trade: Mr. Falconbridge, zealous for the cause in which he is engaged, strenuously opposed every argument his opponents advanced in favour of the *abominable* trade: the glass went briskly round, and the gentlemen growing warm, I retired immediately as the cloth was removed.

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

Seeing so many of my own sex, though of different complexions from myself, attired in their native garbs, was a scene  
equally

equally new to me, and my delicacy, I confess, was not a little hurt at times.

Many among them appeared of superior rank, at least I concluded so from the preferable way in which they were clad; nor was I wrong in my conjecture, for upon enquiring who they were, was informed one was the *woman* or *mistress* of Mr. — —, another of Mr. B——, and so on: I then understood that every gentleman on the island had his *lady*.

While I was thus entertaining myself with my new acquaintances, two or three of the gentlemen left their wine and joined me; among them was Mr. B——, the agent; he in a very friendly manner begged I would take a bed on shore.

I thanked him, and said, if agreeable to Mr. Falconbridge, I would have no objection: however, Falconbridge objected, and gave me for reason that he had been unhand somely treated, and was determined to go on board the *Lapwing*, for he would not subject himself to any obligation to men possessing such *diabolical* sentiments.

It was not proper for me to contradict him at this moment, as the heat of argument and the influence of an overportion of wine had *quickened* and *disconcerted* his temper; I therefore submitted without making any objection to come on board this tub of a vessel, which in point of size and cleanliness, comes nigher a hog-trough than any thing else you can imagine.

Though I resolved to remonstrate the first seasonable opportunity, and to point out the likelihood of endangering my health, should he persist to keep me in so confined a place.

This remonstrance I made the next morning, after passing a night of torment, but to no purpose; the only consolation I got was,—as soon as the settlers could be collected, he would have a house built on shore, where they were to be fixed.

I honestly own my original resolutions of firmness was now warped at what I foresaw I was doomed to suffer, by being imprisoned, for God knows how long, in a place so disgusting as this was, in my opinion, at that time.

Conceive

Conceive yourself pent up in a floating cage, without room either to walk about, stand erect, or even to lay at length; exposed to the inclemency of the weather, having your eyes and ears momentarily offended by acts of indecency, and language too horrible to relate—add to this a complication of filth, the stench from which was continually assailing your nose, and then you will have a faint notion of the Lapwing Cutter.

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

With these assurances I went on shore, not a little elated at the reprieve I was to enjoy for a few hours.

The gentlemen received me with every mark of attention and civility; indeed, I must be wanting in sensibility, if my heart  
did

did not warm with gratitude to Messrs. Ballingall and Tilly, for their kindneses to me: the latter gentleman I am informed will succeed to the agency of the island; he is a genteel young man, and I am told, very deservedly, a favourite with his employers.

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

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

ROBANA TOWN.

KING Naimbana's compliments to Mr. Falconbridge, and will be glad to see him to-morrow.

(Signed)

A. E. GRIFFITHS, Sec.

Such an immediate answer from a *King*, I considered a favorable omen, and a mark  
of