

Travels of A Lady 1774

Janet Schaw

The Voyage To The West Indies

Journal of a lady of quality; being the narrative of a journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776

THE finding of an interesting manuscript is much like the sighting of an unexpected island by a mariner sailing in strange seas, for the exploration of either, whatever may be the ultimate value of the discovery, affords all the excitement that accompanies an adventure into the unknown. Nor has this “*Journal of a Lady of Quality*,” stumbled upon accidentally in a search for other material, failed in any particular to fulfill the expectations of its discoverers or the promise of its charming title and opening pages; and one can only marvel that such a treasure should have lain so long unproclaimed.

That an incredulous reader may not have to speculate regarding the genuineness of the *Journal*, the editors hasten to say that it is no twentieth century fabrication, but that the manuscript from which the present text is printed is known as Egerton, 2423, and is even now in the British Museum. It is a quarto volume labelled “*Travels in the West Indies and South Carolina, 1774, '75*” ; and in the Museum Catalogue it is entered as a “*Journal by a Lady, of a Voyage from Scotland to the West Indies and South Carolina, with an account of personal experiences during the War of Independence, and a visit to Lisbon on her return 25 October 1774 December 1775.*” Quite a long description that, but withal an inaccurate one ; and surely he was a careless retainer of the British Museum who did the labelling, for even a cursory reading of the beautiful manuscript shows that “*North Carolina*” should be substituted for “*South Carolina*,” and that the narrative itself deals, at most, with only the preliminary events of the American War for Independence and continues nearly to the beginning of February, 1776.

Evangeline Walker Andrews

Orton Plantation

March 30 1920

Burnt Island Road [1] on board the Jamaica Packet 9 o’Clock Evening 25th Octr 1774.

WE are now got on Board, heartily fatigued, yet not likely to sleep very sound in our new apartments, which I am afraid will not prove either very agreeable or commodious ; nor, from what I can see, will our Ship be an exception to the reflections thrown on Scotch Vessels in general, as indeed, nothing can be less cleanly than our Cabin, unless it be its Commander, and his friend and bed-fellow the Supercargo. I hinted to the Captain that I thought our Cabin rather dirty. He assured me every Vessel was so ’till they got out to Sea, but that as soon as we were under way, he wou’d stow away the things that were lumbering about, and then all wou’d be neat during the Voyage. I appear to believe him ; it were in vain to dispute ; here we are, and here we must be for sometime. My brother has laid in store of whatever may render our Situation agreeable, and I have laid in a store of resolution to be easy, not to be sick if I can help it, and to keep good humour, whatever I lose ; and this I propose to do by considering it, what it is, merely a Voyage.

As we have no passengers but those of our own family, we will have all the accomodaton the Vessel is capable of affording, and we can expect no more.

My Brother has not yet got on Board, I dare say he will be sadly fatigued with the business he has had to go thro'. I will send this on shore with the boat that brings him off.

I propose writing you every day, but you must not expect a regular Journal. I will not fail to write whatever can amuse myself ; and whether you find it entertaining or not, I know you will not refuse it a reading, as every subject will be guided by my own immediate feelings. My opinions and descriptions will depend on the health and the humour of the Moment, in which I write ; from which cause my Sentiments will often appear to differ on the same subject. Let this therefore serve as a general Apology for whatever you observe to do so thro' my future Letters.

I am just now contemplating the various Sensations our intended Voyage and its destination produce in the little Group around me. [2] The two young Rutherfurds have not the most distant remembrance of their Father, yet such is the power of natural affection on their little hearts, that they are transported with the Idea of seeing him, and were they to draw his Portrait I dare say it wou'd be the most charming picture in the world ; as the three people they love best are with them, they have nothing to damp their pleasure. The case however is different with their Sister, she perfectly remembers her Father, and tho' she is equally rejoiced at the hopes of being once more clasped to the bosom of a fond Parent, yet her satisfaction is check'd by various considerations. In the first place, her Modesty makes her afraid he has drawn a picture of her person in his own Imagination, to which she will by no means come up, and her diffidence of her own attainments makes her fear he will not find her so accomplished as he has reason to expect. I believe she may make herself easy as to these, for few Fathers ever had better reason to be satisfied.

But there is another Source of distress, to a sensible mind, still more severe. In this Country [3] all her early friendships and connexions have commenced, which can only be form'd in the delightful Season of Youth ; to break these all at once, and bid them an eternal farewell, requires the utmost exertion of fortitude, and I have reason to believe it has been no easy task. As to myself, the approbation of my own conduct is my support against a thousand invading Passions. I had long taken root in my native Soil, yet it is not the spot of Earth that gave me being I call my Country. No ! it is the Social Circle of such friends, as few can boast their brightest hours of prosperity were enriched with, it was these that constituted my happiness ; the western world may shew me higher Scenes of riches, and Luxury may bid me view the difference, and how far they exceed us, but never can they afford my soul such evening Conversations as I have feasted on in the friendly Circle of our Cheerfull Hearth.

Give me again that glowing sense to warm,
The song to warble, and the wit to charm.

My going will chear the Travils of the best of Brothers, and once more give me the other, lost from childhood. [4] Time will restore me to you, perhaps to my dear Native land, on which may Heaven shower its choicest blessings. But farewell, my spirits are quite worn out, and my fatigues require rest, tho' I fear my narrow bed will be no great inducement to the drowsy powers. Adieu, sound and peaceful be the slumbers of my friend, whatever Mine prove.

Sleep was more obliging than I expected ; it was not long before all my cares were lost, which wou'd sooner have happened, but from the music of Mrs Mary's nose who had got the start of me. [5]

Our Bed chamber, which is dignified with the title of State Room, is about five foot wide and six long ; on one side is a bed fitted up for Miss Rutherford and on the opposite side one for me. Poor Fanny's is so very narrow, that she is forced to be tied in, or as the Sea term is lashed in, to prevent her falling over. On the floor below us lies our Abigail, Mrs Mary, now

Mrs Miller. As she has the breadth of both our Beds and excellent Bedding, I think she has got a most enviable berth, but this is far from her opinion, and she has done nothing but grumble about her accommodation, and I fear will prove a most complete Abigail indeed.

We had not slept above an hour, when my Brother arrived, he let down the half door to enquire after our healths. We both waked with pleasure at his well-known and friendly Voice, and made him happy by assuring him we found ourselves much better than we expected. After delivering the affectionate Compliments of merry friends, he warned us not to be alarmed if We heard a noise and screaming on Deck, for that the boat had gone off to bring Ovid, our owners poor Devil of a Negro man on Board, who was to be laid in Irons, 'till we were fairly out at Sea. We desired to know what crime the poor wretch had committed to deserve so hard a sentence. He replied, he knew of none, for he believed he was a much worthier man than his Master, whom he had reason to think a very great scoundrel without heart or feeling. Just then we heard the Boat along side: my brother left us, and went on Deck to mitigate, if possible, the rigours intended against this unfortunate creature, and we lay trembling in fearful expectation of the event, but happily for our feelings, poor Ovid finding himself over-powered by numbers, submitted without resistance.

Just then Mrs Miller awoke, was much surprised how we could sleep in so odious an hole, for her part, she never expected to close an eye in this Vile ship, was deadly sick with the motion (tho' by the bye it had not yet begun to move), and fell fast asleep with the words half pronounced on her Tongue. I am sure she is to be a great plague, but as she has left her Country with us, nothing shall prevent her being kindly treated, however little she may deserve it from her behaviour. My brother, who was sadly fatigued, had got into his Cott, which swings from the roof of the Cabin ; our two little men were fast asleep in a bed just below him, when we were informed from the Deck that they were going to weigh anchor. Every body that was able, got up to see this first grand operation. My Brother descended from his Cot, the boys sprung out of bed, all hands were on Deck, hurry, bustle, noise, and confusion raged thro' our wooden kingdom, yet it was surprizing how soon every thing was reduced to order. In little more than a quarter of an hour, all was over, the watch was set, and nothing to be heard, but the sound of the man's feet moving regularly backwards and forwards at the helm, and the crowing of a Cock that the noise had waked in the Hen Coop. My Brother, as he again retired to his airy couch, informed us in passing our state room, that we were now underway, and that we wou'd be in the Channel [6] in a few hours, where we wou'd have the finest view of the finest Country in the World. He then gave poor Fanny some Saline drops to settle her stomach, which had felt the very first motion of the ship ; a circumstance that gives me much concern, as I fear she will find it too much thro' our Voyage. As yet I am very well, and hope I will not be much hurt, tho' I must expect a little touch as well as others. My Brother now mounted into his Cot, the boys got to bed, we shut up our half door, and in a few moments, we were all again in the arms of Sleep.

But short must be the slumber in so unquiet and uncertain a situation, we were soon roused again by the Voice of our Capn, [7] who was talking to my Brother, and it was with no small vexation that we were informed by him that the wind had chopt about, and being now full in our Teeth, it was impossible for him to proceed up the channel, and that it was necessary to change his course, and go round by the North of Scotland. It is hardly possible to imagine a more disagreeable passage at this Season of the Year than this must be. The many Islands, Shelves and Rocks, render it very dangerous, which, with the addition of a rough sea, sudden squalls, and the coldest climate in Britain, gives as uncomfortable a prospect as one wou'd wish. However my brother agreed, all hands were called, hurry again filled the Vessel, "About Ship" was now the word, in the performing of which operation, every thing was tumbled topsyturvy. A few moments however settled us once more, and quietness wou'd again have restored us to rest, had not the Cock, as harbinger of day, repeatedly told us it was now morning. Nor were we the only passengers on Board whom this information con-

cerned, his wives and children who now heard him, made such an outcry for Breakfast, as shewed their Stomachs suffered nothing from the Sea Air.

Their demands complied with, the outcry ceased, but they kept such a Peck Pecking directly over head, that it was impossible to rest, and banished all desire to sleep. This was a Misfortune much less felt by me than my poor young friend, who was now sick to death. I prevailed on Mrs Miller to get up and give us a dish of Tea, this she actually tried, but was not able to stand on her feet, as she was now really sick, and the motion of the Ship very violent. It was in vain for either of us to think of moving, and we were almost in despair, when fortunately I bethought me of Robert, my brother's Indian servant, a handy good fellow. " Oh !" cried I, to the first that I saw, " oh ! for Heaven's sake send us Robt, Black Robt." Robt approached our state room, with all the dignity of a slow-stalking Indian Chief. " Dear Robt," exclaimed I, " cou'd you be so good as to get us a dish of Tea ?" " To be certain, my Lady," replied he, " but Miss is very badly, and Tea is not good for her ; I will get her a little good Chicken broth." " Do, dear Robt," cried poor Fanny, in a voice of the utmost thankfulness. Robt stalked off, and it was not long before he made his appearance with a Mess of the most charming chicken broth that ever comforted a sick stomach ; and if ever you are again at Sea, pray, remember Robert's receipt, and if you do not find it the best thing you ever tasted, surely I have no judgment in Broths. Robt dealt out his benefits in Tea cup-fulls, every one had a little, and every one had a desire for more, so that his broth went thro' many Editions.

My Brother was now up, and tho' he wou'd not own he was sick, yet confessed he was a degree at least beyond squeemish. This he attributed to the smell of the Cabin, and to say the truth, this alone was enough. This sense of his has often been troublesome to him, and I am much mistaken, if he will find pleasure from it during his abode in the Jamaica Packet. Even the boys complain of being, they do not know how-ish, so he and they have gone on deck to try the Air. But tho' I make no doubt this is a good receipt, it is not in Miss Rutherford's power or mine to follow their Example, for, besides that we cannot keep our feet one moment, the Climate, we are in, is one of the coldest and worst in the World. The air is bitter beyond expression, with the addition of a constant dragling rain which renders it unsufferable, even to the poor Sailors, who are hardly able to stand out the watch ; and as they never fail to be wet thro' and thro', my Brother is become very anxious about their healths, as he observes we have not half the compliment the Owner bargained with him for ; his being obliged to stay so long at London made him trust to this fellow Parker the owner of the Ship, [8] and I am afraid we will find he has not paid much regard to the confidence that was reposed in him.

He came and pressed this Vessel on us, declaring that as he had the highest obligation to Mr Rutherford and my brother in Carolina, he had brought this ship from Newcastle, where he was destined for a different Voyage, on purpose to accommodate us, as she was an excellent Vessel, and he could let us have her entirely to ourselves. He affected a perfect indifference as to terms, which, however, in the end, turned out very high. We had the precaution however to have her Hull viewed, which was declared vastly good, and I hope is so. He told us his plan was to send her with a light lading to the West Indies, where she would dispose of her Cargo, and, after taking in some Rum, Sugar, etc., wou'd sail with my Brother (as soon as he had settled his affairs at St Kitts [9]) to whatever American Port he desired.

There is no such thing as being warm, do what we will, and tho' we have but little wind hitherto, yet we are jaulted to death by the motion of the ship in these rough seas. Yet the Capt is every moment congratulating us on the smoothness of our Vessel, which he declares is so soft in her Motion, that one may play at Bowls on the deck. However as I am like to beat out my teeth every time I try to drink, and often after all am not able to bring the cup to such a direction as to obtain my desire, I cannot help thinking he rather overrates the gentleness of

her Motions, tho' the mate in confirmation of what his Captain says, asserts, that last time he crossed the Atlantick even in a calm, they were forced to ly flat on their faces, which the hogs stubbornly refusing, had their brains knocked out against the sides of the ship. How happy are we, who are only in danger of losing teeth and breaking limbs.

As I was amusing myself with my pen, and Fanny with her book, a little while ago, my brother came into the Cabin, and informing us the weather was tolerable fair. He had provided watch-coats to secure us from the cold, and begged we would go with him upon deck, as he was sure a little fresh air would do us much good. We immediately accepted his invitation, and while we were preparing for this excursion, I asked my brother, if he had seen all our crew, and what sort of hands they were ; for that as I lay awake last night in bed, I heard a heavy groan, (from that part of the steerage [10] which is only divided by a few boards from our State room,) when presently a Voice called out, " What's the matter, man," on which the groaner (as I supposed) replied, " Alas! alas ! this is a hard pillow for three score years to rest on."

My brother smiling took me by the hand, and reaching out the other to Fanny, bade us come along, and we wou'd probably discover our groaning Neighbour. We now ascended the Companion or Cabin stair, when, judge of my surprize, I saw the deck covered with people of all ages, from three weeks old to three score, men, women, children and suckling infants. For some time I was unable to credit my senses, it appeared a scene raised by the power of Magic to bring such a crowd together in the middle of the Sea, when I believed there was not a soul aboard but the ship's crew and our own family. Never did my eyes behold so wretched, so disgusting a sight. They looked like a Cargo of Dean Swift's Yahoos [11] newly caught.

It was impossible to account for this strange apparition, till the Captain informed me, that they were a company of Emigrants, whom the owner had made him smuggle aboard privately, and had ordered to be kept close under the hatches till we were out at sea. He vindicated himself, by declaring, he was under the most absolute necessity of obeying the owner, whom he sincerely believed to be one of the greatest Villains upon earth ; that he and every one was much surprized how we came to trust him, for that his character as a scoundrel was notorious wherever he had lived, that he himself had been ruined by him, and was now forced to serve him, as he had got his all into his possession, and put it out of his power to make bread in any other way. To this he added many other particulars, and summed up all by the comfortable intimation, that C——r, the supercargo, [12] was just such another, and put on board for the express purpose of cheating and deceiving us ; he, the Captain, being thought too honest to perform this piece of duty. This tale he has also told my brother, which the goodness of his own heart induces him to believe : but for my own part, I take it to be a forged story altogether, and that they are all alike. The mate, however, notwithstanding the story of the hogs, seems an honest plain fellow, and I am inclined to think much better of him than of the others. Indeed he does not entertain a very high opinion of his messmates himself, nor appears much satisfied with his present berth, but says it is like Padie's Candles, it will not mend. He so often mentioned Padie's candles, that I became curious to know what sort of things they were, and found it was a favourite foremast joke of a teague, [13] who hung some candles before a fire to dry, and as they melted, swore, arrah, on my soul, now the more they dry the more they wet. This may be no joke to you, but has been such a one to us, that I am afraid the youngsters will make the poor man ashamed of his only piece of wit.

As I am resolved no more to encounter these wretched human beings, I will have the more time to write. Indeed you never beheld any thing like them. They were fully as sensible of the motion of the Vessel as we were, and sickness works more ways than one, so that the smell which came from the hole, where they had been confined, was sufficient to raise a plague aboard. I am besides not a little afraid, they may bestow upon me some of their live-stock, for I make no doubt they have brought thousands alongst with them. Faugh ! let me not think of

it ; it affects my stomach more than this smooth sailing Vessel, or this shocking rough Sea, in which we are tumbling about so, that I can hardly hold the pen.

I am warm nowhere but in bed, and it is really surprizing how sound we sleep ; we wake indeed regularly at the calling of every watch ; but I begin to think it chearful. Poor Fanny is still vastly sick ; when out of bed, she sits like a statue of monumental Alabaster, so white, so cold and so patient. This is by no means the case with my brother, who is deadly sick and even as impatient as it is possible. I am quite distressed to see him in such a plight, and can discover nothing to give him relief. I have exhausted all my physic and cookery to no purpose, poor soul, nothing sits on his stomach, nor can he rest a moment thro' the Night, but bounces in and out of his cot, every quarter of an hour, the ropes of which not being originally strong, down it comes, then all hands to tie him up. He gives them many a hearty curse, and truly I am often tempted to join him. His sufferings however never get the better of his good humour, he laughs at himself, and would freely allow me the same liberty, had I the heart to use it ; he comforts poor Fanny; tho', thank God, she is not near so ill as he is.

I must now go and prepare for bed, which, I assure you, is no easy task, the toilet engages much more of my time at Sea than ever it did at land ; we sit in bed till we dress, and get into it, when ever we begin to undress.

Mrs Miller is in such bad humour that we dare hardly speak to her. This, you may believe, would be matter of little moment, were she not mistress of the provisions, and will let us have nothing but what she chuses ; we have, particularly, a large quantity of eggs prepared to keep thro' the Voyage. Miss Rutherford, this morning, humbly begged one, but had not interest sufficient to obtain it, tho' she saw Mary eat a couple very comfortably to her own breakfast. If you have a mind to learn, they say, go to Sea. I remember an Anecdote of the Ship's Crew aboard which the Duke of Gloucester first went abroad. The Sailors were all drawn up to pay they Compts as he came on board, but his highness hurried into the Cabin, without taking the least notice of them. " I think," cries Jack to Tom, " this same prince or Duke, has d—d little manners." " Why, where the devil should he have got them," returned Tom, " when he never was at Sea before." And so, dearest friend, good night, dream of me, as I shall try to do of you.

My poor brother has passed another night, with as little comfort as the former. He finds himself worst in the Cabin, and for that reason, stays continually on deck, notwithstanding the constant Rains, the oze and even the waves that wet him thro' and thro'. The Vessel is so deeply loaded, that she is within a few inches of the water, by which means the waves come all over the Deck. This indeed looks frightful, but as yet we have only a rough Sea to combat, for we have no more wind than is necessary to swell our sails and bear us along, and this, they assure us, is the reason we feel it so rough, as the ship lies tumbling about amongst the waves, and has not her sails sufficiently filled to buoy her above them ; and this reasoning I begin to comprehend, yet cannot find in my heart to wish an increase of wind.

We have just finished breakfast, a meal which costs no little trouble. Miss Rutherford can get nothing she is able to taste. Tea without milk she cannot drink, and Coffee is reprobated by us all for the same want. We tried chocolate, but found it much too heavy. I have carried one point and got eggs, but we unfortunately trusted the provideing the bread to our owner, and there is not a bisket on board fit for any thing but the hogs. However, my brother had swallowed an egg, and was just going to drink a cup of burnt Claret with spiceries, which Robert was cooking over the Cabin stove, with much care and attention, when the Nasty Captain coming down to take a dram from his gin case, set all our stomachs topsy turvy by the smell. My brother flew to the deck, Miss Rutherford to her state room, I applied to my smelling bottle, while Mrs Miller more wisely than any of us joined the Captain, and finds herself much the better for it.

Notwithstanding my resolutions of going no more on deck, I must attend my brother there just now, as he has sent to let us know that we are passing the fine islands of Orkney and Shetland. I little expected even to have had an opportunity of seeing them, so will give them a look in spite of the cold that flows off their frozen mountains.

I left you yesterday to view the Scotch Islands, which I accordingly did. We were almost opposite to Shetland, when we came on deck, but it afforded nothing to please my eye, or atone for the cold, that I suffered in looking at its barren heaths, frozen mountains and wild tracts of frightful rocks ; and I was turning in disgust from so cheerless a scene, when my attention was caught by one of the most affecting scenes that could be presented to a feeling heart, and, I thank God, mine is not composed of very hard materials. It is so warm on my mind that I fear I will not be able to reduce it into order, but if I am able to paint it the least like what I feel it, I am sure you will share my feelings.

You remember I told you some days ago how much I had been surprized, as well as disgusted, at the appearance of a company of Emigrants, who had been privately put aboard our Ship. I was too much chagrined at their being with us to give myself the trouble of inquiring who they were, but now find they are a company of hapless exiles, from the Islands Y we have just passed, forced by the hand of oppression from their native land.

The Islands were now full in sight, [14] and they had all crowded to that side of the ship next to them, and stood in silent sorrow, gazing fondly on the dear spot they were never more to behold. How differently did the same sight affect them and me ? What chilled my blood and disgusted my eye, filled their bosoms and warmed their hearts with the fondest, the most tender sensations, while sweet remembrance rushed on their minds and melted the roughest into tears of tenderness. The rude scene before us, with its wild rocks and snow-cover'd mountains, was dear to them, far more dear than the most fertile plains will ever appear. It was their native land, and how much is contained in that short Sentence, none but those who have parted with their own can be judge of. Many, whom I now beheld, had passed year after year in peace and sweet contentment; they wished, they imagined nothing beyond what it afforded, and their gray hairs seemed a security that they should mingle their dust with that of their fathers, when the cruel hand of oppression seized on their helpless age, and forced them (at that late season) to seek a foreign grave across the stormy main.

Hard-hearted, little Tyrant of yonder rough domains, could you have remained unmoved, had you beheld the victims of your avarice, as I have done, with souls free from guilt, yet suffering all the pangs of banished villians ; oh ! had you seen them, their hands clasped in silent and unutterable anguish, their streaming eyes raised to heaven in mute ejaculations, calling down blessings, and pouring the last benedictions of a broken heart on the dear soil that gave them being ; perhaps even a prayer for the cruel Author of all their woes [15] mixed in this pious moment. Lord require not our blood at his hands, he is the descendent of our honoured, our loved Master, the son of him I followed to the field of Fame in my happy youthful days, of that loved Lord, who diffused peace, plenty and content around him. The eager eye now went forth in search of particular spots marked by more tender remembrance; there a loved wife reared with fond maternal pride a blooming offspring. “ Yonder is my paternal cottage, where my cheerful youthful hours were passed in sweet contentment. Ah ! little then did I think of braving the wide Atlantick, or of seeking precarious bitter bread in a foreign land.”

In this general group of Sorrow, there was one figure that more particularly engaged my attention. It was that of a female, who supported with one arm, an Infant about a month old, which she suckled at her breast ; her head rested on the other, and her hand shaded her face, while the tears that streamed from under it bedewed her breast and the face of the Infant, who was endeavouring to draw a scanty nourishment from it. At her knee hung a little Cherub

about two years old, who looked smiling up into her face, as if courting her notice, and endeavouring to draw her from her melancholy Reflexions ; while a most beautiful little girl about eight years old stood by, and wept at the sight of her Mother's tears. I wished for Miss Forbes, with her pencil of Sensibility, to have done justice to this group of heart-affecting figures. I longed to address the Mother, but there is a dignity in Sorrow and I durst not intrude, but respectfully waited, till she gave me an opportunity. In a few minutes she raised her head from her hand and shewed me a face that had once been beautiful, was still lovely, but had a broken heart impressed on every feature. When she observed me looking at her, she stood up and courtesied. I returned her civility and moved towards her. " You are from one of these Islands," said I, " Yes, madam," returned she, " from that one we have just past." She looked abashed, and added with a heart-breaking smile, " You, no doubt, wondered to see me so much affected, but I was just then within view of my fathers house, he is the best of men as well as fathers, and I could not help thinking that perhaps, at that moment, he was pouring out his aged soul in prayers, for a lost and darling daughter" ; but her words were choaked ; something too seemed to choak myself ; so I relieved both by speaking to her of her children, who are indeed extremely lovely. She told me, two were left with her father, and that she had one more on board. Just then a neat pretty girl about eighteen came up to take the child. " Is that your daughter ?" said I, " No, madam," returned she, " that is an orphan niece of my husband, whom, in better days, he bred with a father's fondness. The poor child had no occasion to leave her own country. Many of her friends would gladly have taken her, but she would not leave us in our misery." I looked at Marion, for so she is called. I thought I never beheld any thing so beautiful. I wish to learn the history of this woman, which I will easily do, as they all know each other. I hope it will prove worth your reading and will give it a letter by itself. Tho' it be a hundred to one you never see these letters, yet as they give an idea of conversing with you, they afford myself infinite satisfaction.

Pity, thou darling daughter of the skies, what a change do you produce in the hearts where you vouchsafe to enter ; from thee the fairest social virtues derive their being; it is you who melt, soften and humanize the soul, raising the man into a God. Before the brightness of thy heavenly countenance every dirty passion disappears pride, avarice, self-love, caution, doubt, disdain, with all which claim Dame Prudence for their mother ; and how different a set appears in thy train, those gently-smiling Goddess-charity, meekness, gentle tenderness with unaffected kindness. What a change has she wrought on me since my last visit to the deck. Where are now the Cargo of Yahoos ? they are transformed into a Company of most respectable sufferers, whom it is both my duty and inclination to comfort, and do all in my power to alleviate their misfortunes, which have not sprung from their guilt or folly, but from the guilt and folly of others.

I have made many friendships since these last two days, and was not a little vain, on my coming on deck this morning, to hear the children with infantine joy, call to each other : " O there come the Ladies." We rewarded their affection with some apples, which we gave the young Rutherfurds to bestow, a task which, they declared, afforded them more pleasure than the best apple-pye would have given them. I find the woman I formerly mentioned is considered as superior to the rest of the company, and what is not always an effect of superiority, she is greatly esteemed by them. I was at no loss to obtain her history, as every one seemed willing to do justice to her miseries and misfortunes.

Mr and Mrs Lawson, (for so they are called while the rest are only called John or Margt), were, till lately, in very affluent circumstances. He rented a considerable farm, which had descended in a succession from father to son, for many generations, and under many masters. He had also become proprietor of a piece of ground, on which he had built a neat house, and was thought a good match for Margt Young, the daughter of a neighbouring Farmer, more remarkable for his learning and respectable for his many virtues, than for his herds or flocks. The term of Lawson's Lease being out sometime ago, advantage was taken of the strong

attachment he had for what he considered his natural inheritance ; and his rent raised far beyond what it could ever produce. He struggled hard for some time, but all his industry proving vain, he was forced to give up his all to the unrelenting hand of oppression; and [to see] the lovely family, I have been so much admiring, turned out to the mercy of the winter winds. While I listened to this melancholy story, many of the Emigrants joined the person who was relating it, and added circumstances with which their own sad fate was connected; all, however, composed a tale of wo, flowing from the same source, Vizt the avarice and folly of their thoughtless masters.

I shall finish this account by a few circumstances regarding poor Mrs Lawson particularly, who is, it seems, the only surviving child of her fond parent, her two brothers having been killed [in the] last war in America. [16] It is needless to make any comment on the conduct of our highland and Island proprietors. It is self-evident, what consequences must be produced in time from such Numbers of Subjects being driven from the country. Should levys be again necessary, the recruiting drum may long be at a loss to procure such soldiers as are now aboard this Vessel, lost to their country for ever, brave fellows, who tho' now flying from their friends, would never have fled from their foes. I have just seen Lawson, he is a well looking fellow, between forty and fifty, has a bold, manly, weather-beaten countenance, with an eye that fears to look no man in the face, yet I saw it glisten, when I complimented him on the beauty of his family. " Yes, Madam," said he, " they deserved a more fortunate father," turning abruptly away to hide a tear, which did him no discredit, in my opinion.

I am just now summoned to the deck to take a view of the Fair Isle. For what reason it bears so pretty a name I cannot guess, for I expect little beauty in these Seas.

The Fair Isle, which we passed yesterday, is the last land which belongs to Scotland, and has indeed as little beauty as I expected. The side that lay next us, is one continued chain of perpendicular rugged Rocks, and in many places the upper parts hang over, so that a ship that was to be driven against them, would have very little chance of Salvation. I observed almost in the centre of the Island however, a very safe Bason, which would admit tolerable large Vessels, and very convenient for boats to land from, and I should think it a snug place to carry on a contraband trade. Yet I dont find any such use made of it, the inhabitants living entirely on what the Island affords, together with a little trade for provisions, which, ships who are passing purchase of them. It was peopled many years ago from Denmark, and has kept so clear of foreign connection, that they still retain their looks, their manners and their dress, and tho', in their intercourse with strangers, a bad sort of English is spoken by the men, yet, on the Island, nothing is spoken but their original language. Within our view was one very well-looking house, which, we were told, belongs to the proprietor of the Island ; and at a little distance, a town composed of hutts with a church. I observed several stack-yards, but neither a tree nor a shrub.

I have been the more particular as to this Island, as I do not recollect ever to have read any description of it, or indeed even heard of it, till the Captain advised me to trust to it for Sea-Stock, as an inducement to us to go north about, which, however at that time, we refused to do. He assured me, we would get poultry of all kinds extremely cheap, also eggs, fine dried fish and the best Cabbages, in the world. By the time we came on deck, he had hung out his flag and was plying off and on in the offing. The Sea was at that time running high, and it had begun to blow pretty fresh. I felt myself very uneasy for the boats, which, they told us, were extremely small. The signal was not out above a quarter of an hour, when we observed the shore full of people of both sexes, who were scrambling amongst the rocks, when presently they seemed to part, as if by consent, the one half making towards the town, while the other descended to the bason I formerly mentioned ; and we soon saw them distinctly launch a number of boats, and put out on this rough Sea, a sight which greatly increased my Anxiety. But as they came nearer, I was much pleased with the lightness with which they bounded

over the waves. They are indeed light, pretty, neat Vessels, all extremely clean, and painted with various colours. They were each manned with four rowers and are long and narrow. I fancy they resemble Indian canoes, but appear extremely proper for these Seas. A number of them arrived safe at our ship, in a few Moments after they put off from the shore, and no sooner got along side the Vessel, than three of them quitted every boat—the fourth remained to take charge of her—and bearing their merchandize in their arms, were aboard in a moment. The novelty of their appearance greatly amused me. They are entirely different from the Inhabit-ants of Scotland in general, and even from those of the Islands that lay next them ; they are of a middling Stature, strong built and straight, their complexions uncommonly fair, their skins remarkably smooth, their features high, aquiline noses and small eyes. Their hair is not red but real yellow, and the older ones wore it long on the bottom of the chin, which is very peaked. They wore red caps lined with skin and Jackets of the same with a Paulice [pelisse] of coarse cloth and boots of undressed skin, with the rough side outmost, over which were trousers made of cloth. They are very active and their figures tho' uncouth, are by no means disagreeable.

This fleet, however, brought us no provisions, but were loaded with the Island manufactures : such as knit caps, mittens, stockings, and the softest coarse cloth I ever saw made of wool. They informed us that the people we saw making to the town were gone for provisions, with which they would load their boats and be with us presently, that the best hen and duck was sold at four pence, a goose for sixpence, Chickens in proportion, eggs eighteen for a penny and plenty of Cabbage to boot. This was a most agreeable account ; and while those concerned were settling their bargains, which was not to be done without much haggling, Fanny, my brother and I leaned over the side of the Vessel, diverting ourselves with the motions of this second fleet, which made towards us with surprizing celerity. While we were thus engaged and thinking all was peace and kindness round us, the cry of “ Murder, help, murder,” made us turn suddenly round. Nor can I describe what were our sensations, when we beheld our Captain, Supercargo and even some of the sailors binding one of the Islanders to the mast and stripping off his cloths. The poor creature applied to us for protection, which he would have instantly got, had not my Brother's attention been called off to an object that more immediately engaged his humanity. This was one of the boats, which with a single rower on board, had got under the stern of our ship. The sea was so rough, that the motion of the Vessel was very violent, and she must have been dashed to pieces and the poor lad drowned, had not my brother flown to his assistance, part of the crew who had not joined the Captain and all the Emigrants engaging in this humane labour. The young man was saved, tho' the boat was all broke to pieces. As soon as they had got him safely on board, my brother turned sternly to the Captain and demanded the meaning of this outrage. “ Oh D n them,” cried the Captain, “ they know well enough.” “ Oh, your honour,” cried the poor wretch frightened to death, “ we never did him any harm, we did all we could to save his Ship and Cargo.” This brought out a secret ; and we now found, that, some months before this, our Captain had lost a ship on the frightful coast, I have been just describing. He could not deny they had used their utmost endeavours to serve him on that occasion ; but that he had lost a chest which contained sundry articles and which he supposed was stolen, and was determined to have it back. And this noble motive, we have reason to believe, was the reason we have been brought round this dangerous and shocking navigation. This account, however, added stronger reasons still for my brother's interesting himself to obtain them good treatment, that of some future Vessel, perhaps, having a like fate, when it was not to be doubted, but these people would remember the reward they had from our grateful and humane Captain. He therefore assumed such an air of Authority as awed our commander into compliance. He let fall the rope's end, unbound the Victim of his resentment, and released those he had made prisoners below, who were now permitted to return to their boats, but unfortunately for us, had time enough to give a scream of caution to their friends, who were now just at hand, and, who understanding the signal, instantly turned and rowed back to the shore as fast as they were able. And here ended our last Scotch adventure, with every hope of adding to our stock

of provisions, which luckily, however, is sufficiently large to last us till we reach Antigua, which will now be the first land we will see. Adieu then, thou dear, loved native land. In vain am I told of finer Climates, or of richer soils, none will ever equal Scotland in my estimation. And in the midst of all the luxuries of the western world, I will envy the Cottager in his snow-surrounded hamlet. The wind encreases very fast, we will not have the prayers of the fair Islanders.

- [1] Burntisland is a seaport of county Fife, on the north side of the Firth of Forth, five miles across from Leith and Edinburgh. As there was a ferry from Leith, it is quite probable that Miss Schaw and her party drove to Leith in carriages and there boarded the ferryboat for Burntisland. The seaport has an excellent harbour and was a favorite anchorage for vessels entering or leaving the firth, but the fact that the owner of the vessel lived at Burntisland may furnish an additional reason for the place of departure. Some of the Scottish regiments serving in the Revolutionary War sailed from this port, and as early as 1627 we meet with a vessel called the Blessing of Burntisland.
- [2] Miss Schaw was accompanied by her brother, Alexander, and by the three children of John Rutherford, of North Carolina Fanny, aged eighteen or nineteen, John Jr., aged eleven, and William Gordon, aged nine, all of whom, though born in North Carolina, had been sent to Scotland in 1767 for their education.
- [3] Scotland.
- [4] The “best of brothers” was, of course, Alexander; “the other, lost from childhood,” was Miss Schaw’s brother Robert, probably older than herself. Later in the narrative, she says that he “had not seen a bleaching-washing since he was a boy,” which would mean that he must have left Scotland at a very early age.
- [5] “Mrs Mary” was Mrs. Mary Miller, Miss Schaw’s waiting woman, who accompanied her mistress on her travels. Whether she attended Miss Schaw during her Lisbon sojourn is doubtful.
- [6] The “Channel” is the Firth of Forth.
- [7] The captain was Thomas Smith, and the vessel a brig or frigate of eighty tons, built in Massachusetts in 1772 and registered at Kirkcaldy, a seaport of Fife, northeast of Burntisland and the nearest port with a naval office. Captain Smith had registered the vessel on October 22, three days before sailing.
- [8] The owner of the ship, the *Jamaica Packet*, was George Parker, who had lived in Wilmington from 1762 to 1771 as a householder and merchant, and was well known to Rutherford and the Schaws. He had been a town commissioner in 1764, and in 1766, as owner of the ship *Nancy*, had taken part in the protest against the stamps during the Stamp Act troubles. In 1771 he decided to leave Wilmington and go to Burntisland, where he had a brother. Consequently, he sold his house on Market Street, his lands, negroes, pettiauger, furniture, chaise, etc., for £910 (Wilmington, Register’s Office, Conveyances, F, 157-160) and returned to Scotland. He seems to have been under some obligation to Rutherford, but in his dealings with Miss Schaw and her party showed very little honesty or friendship. There are references to him in the Brunswick County Records, Conveyances, A, 129-130, the *North Carolina Colonial Records*, VI, 177-178, and the Wilmington Town Records.
- [9] Alexander was going out as searcher of customs at St. Christopher.
- [10] “Steerage” in the sailing vessels of the day was the space below decks aft, that is, in the stern of the vessel. The accommodations, as the narrative shows, were straitened and uncomfortable. “Steerage passengers” are mentioned quite early in the eighteenth century.
- [11] The Yahoos of *Gulliver’s Travels* are described as brutes with human forms and vicious and uncleanly habits.
- [12] Though it is hardly possible to recover the name of the supercargo, his character as “a republican and a violent American” is a sufficient identification. It is evident that Miss Schaw did not like him, deeming him a silly fellow and a fool.
- A “supercargo” was an officer of a merchant ship who was entrusted with the sale of

the cargo and other commercial transactions. Such an officer required not only a knowledge of business, but also a certain amount of diplomatic skill to deal with extraordinary situations. The following explanation of the origin of this functionary is given by an old American naval commander. "Captains of ships were not often educated men ; they began to go to sea very young, they learned just enough to navigate their ships in the simple way and with the crude instruments of that day. They could handle their ships under all circumstances and they were proficient with lead and line, etc., but they were not merchants, and generally knew nothing about buying and selling cargoes ; consequently it was necessary that a merchant should go with the ship to do the cargo-selling and buying, and that man was the Supercargo. They were always men of mercantile education, often of extensive education, collegiate, etc., etc. At sea, after preparing their account-books, etc., they had little to do and they often learned to handle the ship, to navigate, etc., and became expert seamen. Bowditch, whose work on Navigation [1802] is the basis of most navigation books and whose own work is used by three-fourths of the navigators of the world, was the supercargo of a ship. He learned seamanship for want of something else to do. He was a college graduate and stood high as a mathematician, and when he took up navigation on board the ship he found the methods in use were crude and erroneous and he proposed to make new rules and processes and actually did make new rules from day to day, which the captain used and pronounced much better than the old methods." Letter from Commander Edward Hooker, November 9, 1894 (Connecticut Historical Society).

- [13] "Teague" was a word for a simple, unsophisticated Irishman, used generally in a half contemptuous sense. In origin the name was that of a faithful Irish servant, blundering and inefficient, one of the characters in Sir Robert Howard's comedy, "The Committee" (1665).
- [14] At this point the route of the vessel is obscured by Miss Schaw's confusion of the Orkney and Shetland Islands. The islands they had "just passed" were not the Shetlands but the Orkneys, from one of which the Lawsons and others must have come. Miss Schaw could not have seen the Shetlands at all, for the next land, which the vessel must have passed on the south side, was the Fair Isle, a small island three miles long and two broad, lying midway between the two larger groups. The "safe basin" referred to was the only harbor that the island possessed, a shallow indentation on the eastern side, rarely, if ever, frequented by ships. All habitations were on the south, so that in watching what was going on Miss Schaw stood at the rail facing north. An excellent map and description of this Fair Isle may be found in Tudor, *The Orkneys and Shetland*, ch. xxxiii.
- [15] We have been unable to identify the "cruel Author of all their woes," though the reference seems very specific and the charge is directed against a very definite and seemingly prominent person.
- [16] By the "last war in America" probably the French and Indian War is meant.

Journal of a lady of quality ; being the narrative of a journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776 (c1921)
Author : Schaw, Janet, ca. 1731-ca. 1801 ; British Museum. MSS. (Egerton 2423) ; Andrews, Evangeline Walker ; Andrews, Charles McLean, 1863-1943
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