

A Journal of a Voyage made in the Hannibal, 1693-5 (excerpt)

Thomas Phillips

I also carried there on account of the African company, muskets, niconees, tapseals, baysadoes, brass kettles, English carpets, Welsh plains, lead bars, firkins of tallow, powder etc. None of which did answer expectation, being forc'd to bring back to England a great part of them; and those we sold were at a very low rate.

The cappasheirs each brought out his slaves according to his degree and quality, the greatest first, etc. and our surgeon examin'd them well in all kinds, to see that they were sound wind and limb... When we had selected from the rest such as we liked, we agreed in what goods to pay for them, the prices being already stated before the king...

Then we mark'd the slaves we had bought in the breast, or shoulder, with a hot iron, having the letter of the ship's name on it, the place being before anointed with a little palm oil, which caus'd but little pain, the mark being usually well in four or five days, appearing very plain and white after.

The negroes are so loath to leave their own country, that they have often leaped out of the canoa, boat and ship, into the sea, and kept under water till they are drowned, to avoid being taken up and saved by the boats which pursued them: having a more dreadful apprehension of Barbadoes than they have of Hell; though in reality they live much better there than in their own country. We had about 12 negroes did wilfully drown themselves, and others starv'd themselves to death; for 'tis their belief that when they die they return home to their own country and friends again... When our slaves are aboard we shackle the men two and two, while we lie in port, and in sight of their own country, for 'tis then they attempt to make their escape, and mutiny; to prevent which we always keep centinels upon the hatchways, and have a chest of small arms, ready loaden, and primed, constantly lying at hand upon the quarter-deck, together with some granada shells; and two of our quarter-deck guns pointing on the deck thence, and two more out of the steerage, the door of which is always kept shut, and well barr'd.

They are fed twice a day, at 10 in the morning and 4 in the evening, which is the time they were aptest to mutiny, being all upon deck; therefore all the time, what of our men are not employed in distributing their victuals to them, stand to their arms, and some with lighted matches at the great guns that yaun upon them, loaden with partridge, till they have done and gone down to their kennels between decks. Their chief diet is called dabbadabb, being Indian corn ground as small as oat-meal in iron mills, which we carry for that purpose; and afterwards mixed with water and boiled well in a large copper furnace, will 'tis as thick as a pudding. About a peckful of which in vessels, called crews, is allowed to 10 men, with a little salt, malagetta, and palm oil, to relish. They are divided into messes of ten each, for the easier and better order in serving them: Three days a week they have horse-beans boil'd for their dinner and supper, great quantities of which the African company do send aboard us for that purpose; these beans the negroes extremely love and desire, beating their breast, eating them, and crying Pram! Pram! Which is Very good! They are indeed the best diet for them, having a binding quality, and consequently good to prevent the

flux, which is the inveterate distemper that most affects them, and ruins our voyages by their mortality.

When we come to sea we let them all out of irons, they never then attempting to rebel, considering that should they kill or master us, they could not tell how to manage the ship, or must trust us, who would carry them where we pleased; therefore the only danger is while we are in sight of their own country, which they are loath to part with; but once out of sign out of mind. I never heard that they mutiny'd in any ships of consequence, that had a good number of men, and the least care; but in small tools where they had but few men, and those negligent or drunk, then they surprised and butchered them, cut the cables, and let the vessel drive ashore. Having bought my compliment of 700 slaves, viz. 480 men and 200 women, and finished all my business at Whidaw, I took my leave of the old king and his cappasheirs, and parted, with many affectionate expressions on both sides, being forced to promise him that I would return again the next year, with several things he desired me to bring from England; and having sign'd bills of lading to Mr. Pierson, for the negroes aboard, I set sail the 27th of July in the morning accompany'd with the *East India Merchant*, who had bought 650 slaves, for the island of St. Thomas, from which we took our departure, on August 25th, and set sail for Barbadoes.

We spent in our passage from St. Thomas to Barbadoes two months eleven days, from the 25th of August to the 4th of November following: in which time there happened such I: sickness and mortality among my poor men and Negroes. Of the first we buried 14, and of the last 320, which was a great detriment to our voyage, the Royal African Company losing ten pounds by every slave that died, and the owners of the ship ten pounds ten shillings, being the freight agreed on to be paid by the charter-party for every Negro delivered alive ashore to the African Company's agents at Barbadoes. . . . The loss in all amounted to near 6500 pounds sterling.

The distemper which my men as well as the blacks mostly died of was the white flux, which was so violent and inveterate that no medicine would in the least check it, so that when any of our men were seized with it, we esteemed him a dead man, as he generally proved. I cannot imagine what should cause it in them so suddenly, they being free from it till about a week after we left the island of St. Thomas. And next to the malignity of the climate, I can attribute it to nothing else but the unpurg'd black sugar and raw unwholesome rum they bought there, of which they drank in punch to great excess, and which it was not in my power to hinder, having chastised several of them, and flung over-board what rum and sugar I could find.

The Negroes are so incident to the smallpox that few ships that carry them escape without it, and sometimes it makes vast havock and destruction among them. But tho' we had 100 at a time sick of it, and that it went thro' the ship, yet we lost not above a dozen by it. All the assistance we gave the diseased was only as much water as they desir'd to drink, and some palm-oil to anoint their sores, and they would generally recover without any other helps but what kind nature gave them.

But what the small pox spar'd, the flux swept off, to our great regret, after all our pains and care to give them their messes in due order and season, keeping their lodgings as clean and sweet as possible, and enduring so much misery and stench so long among a parcel of creatures nastier than swine, and after all our expectations to be defeated by their mortality...

No gold-finders can endure so much noisome slavery as they do who carry Negroes; I for those have some respite and satisfaction, but we endure twice the misery; and yet by their mortality our voyages are ruin'd, and we pine and fret ourselves to death, and take so much pains to so little purpose.

Excerpted from Alison F. Games and Adam Rothman (eds.), *Major Problems in Atlantic History* (Houghton Mifflin, 2008), pp. 167-170.