

# JOHN COMPANY AT THE CAPE

## ADDENDUM

An Epilogue has been inserted between pages 218//219; the additional source-material referred to therein is not listed in the Bibliography, nor are the contents of this section included in the Index.

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JOHN COMPANY AT THE CAPE

A HISTORY OF THE AGENCY UNDER  
PRINGLE (1794 - 1815), BASED ON  
A STUDY OF THE "CAPE OF GOOD  
HOPE FACTORY RECORDS"

by

MARCUS ARKIN

(Lecturer in Economic History,  
University of Cape Town).

BNT 230 ARK

"Not only was the East India Company brought into contact with every country of Southern Asia, from Arabia to China and Japan, and with the islands in the Indian Ocean, including Madagascar, Ceylon, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and the Moluccas, but in Africa it had much to do with Egypt and the Cape Colony."

Sir William Foster, A Guide to the India Office Records, 1600-1858, p. xi.

"I entertain a sanguine hope that a constant and regular Communication will be preserved between India and the Cape of Good Hope by the Honourable Company's ships being directed to touch here on their outward and homeward Voyages. What ever refreshments and assistance they may stand in need of, and this Colony can afford, shall be most readily granted, and in return we shall hope to derive from their Visits those indispensable supplies, as well from England as from India, which, in its present distressed and impoverished State, the Colony requires."

Major-General David Baird, Acting Governor, Cape of Good Hope, to Sir George Barlow, Acting Governor-General, Fort William, Bengal, 7 February 1806 — India Letter Book, Cape Archives.

"...it must be self-evident to you, Gentlemen, that whilst the Company on the one side have the sole privilege of importing these supplies, on the other they are bound to provide them, and not to leave the whole almost to chance, as being of no importance."

John Pringle, Cape Agent of the Hon. East India Company, to the Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 22 August 1809 — Cape of Good Hope Factory Records, Vol. 1, India Office Library.

"There is no doubt that the Company handicapped the Colony in the development of its trade during the first three or four decades of the 19th century."

R.P.M. Insselman, Men of Good Hope: the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, 1804-1954, p. 85.

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Principal Abbreviations used in the Footnotes -

Add. MSS. ....	Additional Manuscripts, British Museum.
B.O. ....	First British Occupation; documents in the Cape Archives.
CGH.F.R. ....	Cape of Good Hope Factory Records of the English East India Company (manuscript volumes in the India Office Library).
C.H.B.S. ....	<u>Cambridge History of the British Empire.</u>
C.O. ....	Colonial Office Series, Cape Archives.
C.O.(P.R.O)..	Colonial Office Papers (Public Record Office, London).
Cape Town Gazette	<u>The Cape Town Gazette, and African Advertiser.</u>
Chronicles	H.B. Morse, <u>Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China, 1635-1834.</u>
<u>Correspondence and Proceedings</u>	<u>Correspondence and Proceedings in the Negotiation for a Renewal of The East-India Company's Charter, (1812).</u>
<u>Dropmore Mss.</u> ...	<u>Historical Manuscript Commission Reports: Report on the manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue, preserved at Dropmore.</u>
G.H. ....	Government House Records; documents in the Cape Archives.
H.C.S. ....	Honourable Company Ship.
H.C.S.S. .	Honourable Company Extra Ship.
<u>Hansard</u> ..	Cobbett's and (after Vol. XXIII) <u>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (1st series, 1803-20).</u>
<u>Madras Pub. Con.</u> ....	<u>Madras Public Consultations (manuscript volumes in the India Office Library).</u>
O.C. ....	Original Correspondence (India Office Library).
P.R.O. ....	Public Record Office, London.
<u>R.F.H.</u> ....	<u>The Records of the Fringles or Hoppringsills of the Scottish Border (ed. Alex. Fringle).</u>
<u>Recs.C.C.</u> .....	<u>Records of the Cape Colony (ed. G. McC. Theal).</u>
V.R.S. ..	Van Riebeeck Society.
Young ....	<u>Horwood Young, Napoleon in Exile at St. Helena, 1815-21, 2 vols.</u>

Note: There was little consistency in the manner of addressing Agency correspondence. For instance, some letters to Bengal were addressed to "The Governor General-in-Council, Fort William", some to "Lord Minto, Calcutta", and still others to "The Chief Secretary to Government, Bengal", although all would deal with the same or similar topics and would be handled by the same officials. Such inconsistencies have been preserved, although simplified, in the footnotes.

Conventional Currency Equivalents -

1. The monetary unit of China was a weight of silver known as the tael, but with the weight varying a great deal from region to region. The tael of currency at Canton was a hypothetical coin of 580 grains of pure silver and was used as the basic unit in the China Accounts of the East India Company, being treated as the equivalent of 6s. 8d. (£1 = Tls. 3).
2. In the province of Bengal the sicca rupee was the chief monetary unit and principal coin of circulation, with a nominal silver content of 176 grains; in 1794 it was worth 2s 4d., but by 1814 had depreciated to 2s. (£1 = 10 s.r.). In Madras several varieties of the Arcot rupee were current, while in Bombay the Surat rupee predominated. Uniformity was achieved only in 1836, when the Company introduced its own silver rupee (with a gross weight of 180 grains and a fine silver content of 165 grains).
3. The most important medium of exchange among European traders in the Far East was the Spanish dollar (normally minted in Mexico); it was invoiced in the Company's accounts at 5s. (£1 = \$4), although in actual fact it commanded prices which varied within the comparatively narrow range of 4s. 5d. - 5s. 6d. between 1794 and 1820.
4. By 1794 the paper rixdollar note was both the main unit of account and the chief form of money in circulation at the Cape of Good Hope, being sub-divided into 8 schillings or 48 stuivers. At the time of the First Occupation, it was the nominal equivalent of 4s. (£1 = Rds. 5), but by 1816 had depreciated in terms of sterling to 2s. 1d. See Table, Ch. IV, (ii)(d).

Weights and Measures -

- 1 catty =  $1\frac{1}{3}$  lbs.
- 1 catty box = 5 catties.
- 1 leaguer (Cape) = 152 wine gallons.
- 1 morgen = 2.12 acres.
- 1 muid = 3.1 bushels.
- 1 picul (Canton) = 133 lbs. (approx.).
- 1 pikol (Batavia) = 136.1 lbs.
- 1 ton (English) = 2,240 lbs.
- 1 ton (Cape and American) = 2,000 lbs.
- 1 tun = 252 wine gallons.

PREFACE

For much of its long and influential career, the English East India Company (familiarily known as "John Company") was not directly concerned with the Cape of Good Hope, and that Colony held no more than a very minor place on the fringes of its commercial affairs. During the eventful era of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, however, in the course of which the settlement finally passed out of Dutch into British hands, it did figure more prominently in the plans and policies of "The Gentlemen of Leadenhall Street", as the Company's Directors were called.

In 1794 John Company established an Agency at the Cape, which was to be maintained (with a short break during the rule of the Batavian Republic) until the Directors gave up trading on their own account in 1835. But the year 1815 marked the end of that institution's golden age, since the restoration of peace and Napoleon's exile to St. Helena coincided with the opening up of much of the Eastern trade to private merchants; in June of that year, too, John Pringle — the first and most influential of the Agents — died, and his successors had little more than routine tasks to perform.

Thus, although this study only touches on a very limited aspect of the Company's history, it deals with a not unimportant phase of early South African economic development which so far has received scant attention. This neglect appears to be due to the fact that the relevant documents are preserved in neither of the happy hunting-grounds generally frequented by historians of this period — the Public Record Office and the Cape Archives — but in the India Office Library. These manuscripts have now been carefully scrutinised, and it is hoped that their evaluation in this monograph will help to fill a gap in the present state of our knowledge.

The task of piecing together the history of the Cape Agency during the height of its influence has not been an easy one. Besides the technical problems encountered (these are touched on in the Bibliography), it must be borne in mind that over the past few decades the labours of a small army of scholars have been applied to the study of John Company's many-sided activities; the results of these researches — often widely scattered among the learned journals — are of forbidding bulk, and, in spite of the progress made in recent years, the subject of the Company's general influence is still full of controversy.

Moreover, for the period covered by this investigation, reliable statistical data is frequently hard to come by. This is not to say that such information is wholly lacking, but a good deal of it lies buried beneath vast heaps of archival rubble, the exhumation of which would involve almost a lifetime of arduous delving, and even then, there would remain many questions which such evidence could not clarify. Hence, while quantities are indicated where available and when they throw more light than shadow, the bulk of the material marshalled here is set forth mainly in concrete human terms rather than in averages and abstractions; representative episodes, characteristic and revealing comments from official quarters, and the opinions and attitudes of ordinary colonists are blended together in an attempt to distil the essence of what constituted Cape commercial life at that time.

Nonetheless, despite an approach which tries to avoid the extremes of the abstract, on the one hand, and the anecdotal, on the other, the subject-matter remains inherently subtle, and a treacherous course had to be steered between the Scylla of excessive simplification and the Charybdis, less easily avoided, of over-emphasising the obvious. The footnotes are

many and often too long to make for tidy reading, and the narration itself becomes sluggish when, for instance, it traverses, as is necessary, the complications of statutory provisions; and, although I have tried to avoid some sections developing into mere chronological catalogues of administrative details (some of which are of little or no consequence today, and include many names of bygone officials not significant in the Colony's history), much of what has been included here is not in itself memorable and is not meant to be precisely remembered. Yet, since direct acquaintance with the Agency records is out of the question for most readers, it seemed worthwhile illustrating vital points in the story with fairly copious extracts from the documents themselves, instead of simply summarising or paraphrasing them.

As my main purpose was to investigate the impact of the Company on the Colony's emergent economic life, the person who provided the physical link between Cape Town and East India House, John Pringle, became the obvious pivot for such a survey, and the scene is viewed through the windows of his Agency, as it were. Accordingly, in the opening Chapter, after a brief outline of the background circumstances leading to the British take-over in 1795, an account is given of the rôle which the Agency played during the First Occupation. Chapter II touches on the views of the Batavian administrators towards the Eastern trade, before examining in some detail the difficulties confronting the Colony and John Pringle in that connection during the early years of the Second Occupation. In Chapter III, attention is devoted to the settlement's embryonic trade relations, with particular emphasis on contacts with the captured Mascarenes and with St. Helena, and of the way in which the Company and its local representative

influenced these contacts. The Agency's own business operations, its internal administration, and its dealings with colonists and visiting ships are scrutinised in Chapter IV. The final Chapter deals with the extent to which the colonial economy was affected by the Charter Act and attendant legislation of 1813, concluding with a general recapitulation and summing-up.

For portions of the ground covered, the data remains tantalisingly scant, and I am fully conscious of the shortcomings and unevenness of the treatment in many respects. However, while these explorations in more or less uncharted territory are susceptible to amplification in the light of further research, I am reasonably confident that any supplementary quarrying into the sources will not alter the main outlines of the picture which I have tried to draw, though certain details might well be modified and the inferences rendered somewhat less speculative.

#### Acknowledgments

Although preliminary work on this project was started in 1957, much of the primary research was undertaken in London during 1958, and, towards that end, the financial assistance given by the Department of Education, Arts, and Science (National Council for Social Research) by way of a senior bursary, and by the Committee of Commonwealth University Interchange (British Council) in the form of a travel grant, is hereby gratefully acknowledged. I am also deeply grateful to the Senate and Council of the University of Cape Town for giving me the necessary study-leave to visit Britain.

The question of indebtedness is, as always, difficult to define. To claim independence from the contributions of the acknowledged experts in related fields would be absurdly presumptuous, and I am aware of a considerable debt to the scholarly reconnaissances of Professors Parkinson, Furber (who was also kind enough to give me invaluable advice in person on the use of the St. Helena records), Harlow, and Philips — even though some of the

argument which emerges from the following pages might not commend itself to them in its emphasis or inferences.

The preparation of this study was only made possible by my being given access to all of the East India Company's records relating to the Cape Colony which survive, and to Mr. S.C. Sutton and his staff at the India Office Library so my sincere thanks for their patience and ready advice; nor have they once complained about the numerous subsequent inquiries hurled at them from some six thousand miles away. I am most appreciative, too, of the help received from the staffs of the Public Record Office, the British Museum, the Goldsmiths' and Institute of Historical Research Libraries in the Senate House, University of London, the Central Reference Library, Westminster, and the British Library of Political and Economic Science (London School of Economics); acknowledgment is due, also, to the Keeper of Records, General Register House, Edinburgh, for tracing the will of John Pringle's father. In addition, much valuable assistance was received from the staffs of the Cape Archives, the Library of Parliament (Cape Town), the South African Public Library, the Jagger Library (University of Cape Town), and the University of Stellenbosch Library.

I am much indebted to Dr. H.R.C. Wright, of the University of the Witwatersrand, who collected some out of the way Pringliana for me and drew my attention to several relevant despatches in the Company's Madras records; to Professor D. Bax, of the University of Cape Town, and the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Colinsburgh, Fife, so my thanks for trying (albeit, in vain) to identify a sketch of John Pringle among the extant drawings by Lady Anne Barnard; acknowledgments are due, too, to Mr. Eric Pringle, of Adelaide, Cape, Dr. John A. Pringle, Director of the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, and Mr. H.B. Hockly, of Cape Town, for their help in piecing together the fragments of the Agent's personal background.

Professor L.H. Thompson, of the University of Cape Town, took time off from better things to read and offer valuable comments on part of the manuscript, while my friend, Heinrich Degenhardt, was unstinting in his help to eliminate the most glaring faults of style and exposition. At the same time, I should like to express my gratitude to Professor H.M. Robertson, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University

of Cape Town, whose tuition and advice originally set me on the path of historical research, and who, in spite of having to put up with a great deal of nonsense from me for many years, has never ceased to encourage my clumsy efforts at scholarship.

Naturally, the many shortcomings of this study, the opinions expressed herein, and the conclusions reached are my sole responsibility.

Marcus Arkin

Department of Economics,  
University of Cape Town,  
September, 1959.

- - - - -

## I. THE FIRST BRITISH OCCUPATION

-1

"The government of an exclusive company of merchants is, perhaps, the worst of all governments for any country whatever."<sup>1</sup>

Adam Smith's remark applied with particular force to the economic development of the Cape Colony. Since it possessed neither the spices of the East nor the precious metals of the New World, the Cape had never yielded to the Dutch any of the choice fruits of a ripe colony of exploitation. Forced mainly by strategic considerations in the mid-17th century to create a halfway station at the southern tip of Africa, the Directors of the United Netherlands East India Company had endeavoured persistently to limit their commitments and to administer the new base with an eye to their own interests, merely tolerating the unfortunate colonists as necessary evils. If, in the course of nearly a century and a half, the Colony had expanded both in size and population far beyond the modest limits set by the original Van Riebeeck hedge and the reluctantly-established Riebeeck River settlement, it was in spite of rather than because of Company policy.

By the closing decade of the 18th century the bankrupt Dutch Company had lost control of the reins completely, and even its own visiting commissioners were admitting that they had found "the large majority of the settlers financially ruined" and that these misfortunes had "called forth general expressions of dissatisfaction and bitterness against the Government on all sides."<sup>2</sup> To the colonists themselves the situation seemed even bleaker, and in the opinion of at least one vryburgher the Settlement was "rapidly approaching its annihilation": the over-issue of paper money had undermined what was left of local business confidence, foreign vessels had ceased putting

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1. The Wealth of Nations (ed. Cannan), Modern Library Edition (New York, 1957), p. 557.

2. Quoted by De Mist, Memorandum on the Cape (1802), Van Riebeeck Society, No. 3 (Cape Town, 1920), pp. 178-179.

in at Table Bay, "taxes upon taxes" had been recently levied, and in the frontier districts the farmers were in open armed rebellion against the despised Company.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, even under such adverse circumstances, with monopolistic restrictions hampering enterprise in almost every direction, the economic condition of the Cape settlers towards the close of the 18th century did not remain completely static. The commercial demands in the petitions of the Cape Patriots (1779-85)<sup>4</sup> and the organised movement to resist the imposition of a stamp duty on auction accounts (1793)<sup>5</sup> — though both had been unsuccessful — clearly indicated that something of an indigenous embryo mercantile community had begun to emerge. More and more colonists were turning their attentions to trade as a specialist occupation,<sup>6</sup> and it was this group which was to become increasingly important after the British had taken over the Cape in 1795; it was to discover, however, that dealings with an exclusive company were by no means at an end.

ii

If the Dutch Company was in the throes of eclipse, its British counterpart was not only still very active but had, in large measure, assumed the mantle of its rival in the Indian Ocean — the commercial hegemony of Jan Compagnie had given way to the almost undisputed leadership of John Company.

During the second half of the 17th century, when most of the chartered companies in Britain had had their privileges cancelled or severely curtailed,<sup>7</sup> the "United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies" had emerged from this early free trade onslaught with its monopoly virtually intact. In the

3. F. Kersteins, Memorandum on the Condition of the Colony (1795), in Rocq. C.C., I, pp. 167-175. A detailed and useful assessment of the Colony's economy during the last decade of the Dutch Company's rule is to be found in A. L. Geyer, Das wirtschaftliche System der niederländischen ostindischen Kompanie an Kap der guten Hoffnung, 1785-95 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1923).

4. G. Beyers, Die Kaapse Patriotte, 1779-91 (Cape Town, 1930), esp. Sk. II, ch. II; Eric Walker, A History of Southern Africa (London, 1957), pp. 101-104.

5. G. M. Theal, History of South Africa before 1795 (3rd edn., London, 1922), Vol. III, p. 269.

6. Biographical details of a typical Cape speculator and businessman of the period are given by Prof. J. A. Wild in his introduction to Die Joernal van Dirk Gysbert van Roonan, V.R.S., No. 18 (Cape Town, 1937), pp. 1-3.

7. S. Lipson, The Growth of English Society (London, 1949), p. 119.

course of the 18th century this English Company weathered further storms, successfully resisting would-be interlopers, splinter-movements in its own ranks, persistent rivalry and attacks from the French in India, and the vigorous criticisms of the influential Adam Smith;<sup>8</sup> moreover, the Company had tremendously increased the scope and volume of its trade with the Orient,<sup>9</sup> and, by surviving these various pressures and through the circumstances engendered by the world-wide Anglo-French struggle, had been drawn closer and closer to the State, becoming in many respects a semi-government department.<sup>10</sup> How the Company had reached this status was summed-up by its own historiographer towards the end of the century:

"....The trade to India and China....has been conducted by a Company, protected by Government; supported by exclusive privileges, and maintained on a joint stock. It has passed through a variety of vicissitudes, in consequence of opposition from the other European companies trading to the East-Indies, and has risen to its present height, both from the accidental circumstance of having been connected with territorial revenues, and of having received a succession of aids from the Public."<sup>11</sup>

This development of the English East India Company from a predominantly commercial into a predominantly territorial power gave additional twists to the debates inside and outside Parliament when its charter came up for renewal in 1793. The issue was no longer the simple one of the expediency or inexpediency of monopolies -- "a delicate branch of public economy" was now involved,<sup>12</sup> the Company having become "the Agent of the British Nation, trading to Asia under public regulations, and acting....under the control of the Executive Power and of Parliament."<sup>13</sup> It was thus a matter of whether a

8. M. Arkin, "A Neglected Forerunner of Adam Smith", S. African Journal of Economics, Vol. 23 No. 4 (Dec. 1955), pp. 301-305; Sir Wm. Hunter & P. S. Roberts, A History of British India (London, 1900), Vol. II, chs. viii-ix; C.H.S.A., Vol. IV, ch. iii ff.; Adam Smith, op. cit., pp. 705-713; R. P. Dutt, India Today (Bombay, 1949), pp. 103-110

9. Bal Krishna, Commercial Relations between India and England, 1601-1757 (London, 1924), chs. vii-viii.

10. E. S. Sutherland, The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics (London, 1952), pp. 413-414.

11. John Bruce, Historical View of Plans for the Government of British India.... (London, 1793), pp. 207-208.

12. Ibid., p. 530.

13. John Bruce, Report... on the Renewal of the Company's Exclusive Privileges of Trade for Twenty Years from March 1794 (London, 1811) p. 24

regulated trade, managed by the Company but under Government supervision and ultimate control, was better in the national interest than an open trade of individual merchants.

Although conquest was definitely superseding commerce in India, the Directors in Leadenhall Street, still traders at heart, were half-afraid of the strange hybrid which their Company had now become,<sup>14</sup> and it was left to the forceful Secretary of State, Henry Dundas, to pilot the charter-renewal Bill through the House; with Britain now embroiled in the Revolutionary Wars, this proved easier than might otherwise have been the case, and, as Pitt remarked, the measure was approved "with a quietness ~~was~~ unexampled in the annals of Parliament".<sup>15</sup> With a few modifications and some concessions,<sup>16</sup> the Company's exclusive trading privileges were renewed for a further twenty years, as from March, 1794.<sup>17</sup> Thereafter, the Directors' earlier alarm at the prospect of their servants' energies being diverted increasingly from trade to administration gave way to a reluctant acceptance of the inevitable; having become a political power in India, the Company during the next half-century was involved in the continuous expansion of British sovereignty across the sub-continent, completing, in the process, its own transformation from a commercial to a governing institution.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, until almost the end of the Napoleonic era, John Company held an absolute monopoly of British trade to the East: it was illegal for any British merchant vessel to sail past the Cape of Good Hope without the Company's licence, and such a licence was only issued in very exceptional circumstances.<sup>19</sup> Although this control of seaborne traffic between Asia and

14. C. Lestock Reid, Commerce and Conquest, being a History of the Honourable East India Company (London, 1947), pp. 146-147.

15. Quoted by C.H. Philips, The East India Company, 1784-1834 (Manchester, 1940), p. 73.

16. These are listed and discussed by John Bruce, op. cit. (footnote 13 above), pp. 273-285, although he was primarily concerned with the penalties which could be imposed on "People going unlawfully to India and trafficking there..."

17. For a useful survey of the Company's operations at the time of this Act, see Holden Furber, "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies, 1783-1796", Economic History Review, Vol. X, No. 2 (1st series), pp. 138-148.

18. cf. J.A. Williamson, A Short History of British Expansion (London, 1947, 3rd edn.), Vol. II, pp. 133-145.

19. C. Northcote Parkinson, The Trade Winds (London, 1945), Ch. VII

Europe was rigidly upheld, the Company's management of commerce in the Indian Ocean itself between the various Eastern ports was not nearly so rigorous. This flourishing "Country Trade", as it was known, linked up the ports of South China and Indonesia, on the one hand, and those of East Africa (including the offshore islands) and the Arabian Peninsula, on the other, with the busy harbours of India itself; it was handled mainly by the Company's own servants and favourites, who used Asiatic-built vessels which sailed under the British flag.<sup>20</sup> These circumstances were to be of some significance to the commerce of the Cape of Good Hope after London had ousted Amsterdam as the arbiter of that Colony's fortunes.

### 111

The main purpose behind the occupation of the Cape by the British in 1795 was to prevent the settlement from falling into the hands of the French — a calamity which would have imperilled lines of communication with the East.

The English East India Company itself had shown sporadic interest in Southern Africa from a much earlier date: in 1613 there is evidence which suggests that the Directors seriously contemplated setting up a half-way station to India in the neighbourhood of Saldanha Bay.<sup>21</sup> Table Bay was singled out by Shillinge and Fitzherbert when they put in there with five Company ships in 1620 and encountered a Dutch fleet; resolving to forestall their rivals, the two captains hoisted the English flag and took possession of the place "for the certain refreshment of the fleets".<sup>22</sup> The authorities in England, preoccupied with a severe commercial depression and other problems,<sup>23</sup> appear to have taken no further steps in the matter, and the Cape continued

20. A useful survey of the organization of this Country Trade is to be found in G.H. Parkinson, Trade in the Eastern Seas, 1793-1813 (Cambridge, 1937), pp. 317-326.

21. Victor de Kock, By Strength of Heart (Cape Town, 1953), ch. vi; H.H. Mackenzie, "Captain Cross and the First English Settlement at the Cape", Quarterly Bulletin of the S.African Public Library, Vol. II (1947), pp. 3-17, 49-54.

22. O.C. 907; also Factory Records Miscellaneous Series, Vol. 10.

23. J.D. Gould, "The Trade Depression of the Early 1620's", Economic History Review, Vol. VII, No. 1 (2nd series), pp. 81-90; G.S. Supple, "Thomas Mun and the Commercial Crisis, 1623", Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, Vol. XXII, No. 75 (May, 1954).

to be frequented indiscriminately by the mariners of many countries for the purpose of securing refreshments, though without any attempt at permanent settlement until 1652.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, even before Van Riebeeck's arrival, the Cape had gradually lost its place as a regular landfall for the English Company's ships, especially on the outward voyage; delays in collecting provisions from suspicious Hottentot clans, severe winter storms in Table Bay, and treacherous cross currents and heavy swells off the coast, led the English captains to prefer stops at Mauritius or Madagascar.<sup>25</sup> Under these circumstances, the vessels of John Company fell back on the traditional practice of the Portuguese, hurrying past the Cape unless some emergency made a stop imperative.<sup>26</sup> In the meantime, after taking possession of Table Bay, the Dutch had abandoned the island of St. Helena (where they had maintained a base since 1645); in 1652, therefore, finding the place deserted, the commander of the homeward bound English fleet annexed the island, and Charles II confirmed the Company's rights thereto in 1661; after several abortive efforts by the Dutch to recapture the island, a Royal Charter of December, 1673, re-granted St. Helena to the English Company "in perpetuity",<sup>27</sup> and thereafter homeward bound English ships regularly called there to water and secure refreshments.<sup>28</sup>

John Company remained satisfied with this island-base until the American War of Independence assumed global proportions and the French in 1781 despatched a considerable garrison to the Cape ahead of a similar English expedition under Commodore Johnstone;

24. On the circumstances which led the Dutch Company to despatch the Van Riebeeck party to the Cape, see H.M. Robertson, "The Politico-Economic Background of Jan Van Riebeeck's Settlement", S. African Journal of Economics, Vol. 20 No. 3 (Sept. 1952), pp. 207-219.

25. The Dutch, on the other hand, whose main goal was the Indonesian islands and not India itself, did not sight land again after rounding the Cape until they reached the Sunda Strait.

26. S.R. Welch, Portuguese Rule and Spanish Crown in South Africa, 1581-1640 (Cape Town, 1950), pp. 412-414.

27. Anon., List of Factory Records of the Late East India Company, (London, 1877), pp. xiv-xv; Young, I, pp. 102-103.

28. S.S. Wilbur, The East India Company and the British Empire in the Far East (New York, 1945), ch. xiv; S.R. Welch's discussion of "The English in Saint Helena" in his Portuguese and Dutch in South Africa, 1641-1806 (Cape Town, 1951), pp. 292-13, throws some light on Company rule there in the 18th century.

not only did the causes for the failure of Johnstone's squadron receive careful attention in Leadenhall Street and Whitehall — some regard was also given to the possibilities of setting up an alternative station along the southern shores of Africa.<sup>29</sup> In 1784 Henry Dundas became President of the newly-established Board of Control: a man with an apparently inexhaustible capacity for hard work and a tremendous enthusiasm for those pursuits which attracted him, he was keenly interested in the Cape and its position as the gateway to the Indian Ocean.<sup>30</sup> Late in 1785 it is certain that he gave close study to a report<sup>31</sup> on the desirability of establishing a base on the shores of "Groen Riviere Bay,<sup>32</sup> situate on the South East of Africa...distance East of the Cape of Good Hope about 500 English Miles", where, he was informed, "a port would be of the utmost benefit to this Nation in General and to the Honorable the East India Company in particular"; it was a neighbourhood "at present but thinly inhabited by Dutch", fertile, well wooded, and with abundant supplies of fresh water. Moreover,

"when we reflect on the intimate connection of Great Britain, both political and commercial, now with India, and that from the Channel to the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel the English don't possess a single port capable of affording shelter and protection or refreshment to their ships (St. Helena being incapable of supporting itself) — when we make this reflection it is presumed that the possession of a port on this Coast will be considered as an object of National importance... In the event of a war with Holland it will enable us more effectually to attack their Settlements on this Coast, or by holding out independence...play the back Game of American Independence, an event which will assuredly happen (They are extremely

29. C.H.B.R., Vol. VIII, p. 158, pp. 167-168; Memorandum from Secretary of State to Chairman, East India Company, Jan. 1782, C.O.77/25 (P.R.O.); cf. Home Misc. S., Vol. 154(6), pp. 119-120

30. Holden Furber, Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville, 1742-1811 (London, 1931), pp. 62-63.

31. The author was Lt. Henry Pesberton, who had recently returned from India on the H.C.S. Pigot; the document (with map) is among "Mr. Dundas' Miscellaneous Tracts" (No. 4), C.H.B.R., I. Another passenger on the same vessel, Lt. Col. Wm. Dairynple, produced a very similar "Proposal for a Settlement on the Caffre Coast", in which he argued that such a colony (perhaps settled in the first instance by convicts) "would be of the most important consequence to...the India Company" — Pitt Papers, G.D.8/128 (P.R.O.).

32. The Pigot anchored in this bay on May 2nd, 1785; St. Francis Bay (as it is now known) is some 35 miles to the west of Algoa Bay, and into it flows the River Kromme (to give it its modern spelling), which has its source in the Tsitsikama Mountains. The ship's company of roundabout 150 persons was lavishly entertained by Frederick Potgieter for nearly a month on his farm, and was most impressed by the variety of crops grown and the considerable flocks and herds which were kept. (See map of this region, V.R.S., Vol. 8, p. 133).

disaffected at present owing to their ports being shut up, and other oppressions and exactions of the Dutch Government) — but our settling on this Coast would hasten it provided such a measure was found necessary to our Government".<sup>33</sup>

While he gave his serious attention to schemes like these, Dundas was anxious to avoid antagonizing the Dutch; moreover, with the Dutch Company in a moribund state, there was always the possibility of securing the Cape cheaply and painlessly. Thus, when negotiations for a triple alliance were afoot in 1787, Dundas (through the Board of Control) suggested close collaboration between the two companies in the East, with the Dutch being given a share of the opium traffic in return for concessions to the English at the ports of Cape Town and Trincoalee.<sup>34</sup>

Although this diplomatic feeler proved abortive, Dundas did not give up hope of reaching some kind of amicable compromise with the Dutch on the Cape issue; and, as war clouds gathered over Europe, the Court of Directors began to urge the Home Secretary to redouble his efforts. Early in 1793, in a memorandum to Dundas, the Directors pointed out that the French, from their bases at the islands of Bourbon and Mauritius, could menace Company shipping in the Indian Ocean, and should be cut off from their nearest source of supplies, the Cape; moreover, a convoy system should be set up as soon as possible to safeguard homeward-bound vessels between the Cape and St. Helena, while the security of the Dutch settlement should be guaranteed by British naval protection.<sup>35</sup> Subsequently, the Court's Chairman was to clarify the Company's attitude:

"The importance of the Cape with regard to ourselves consists more from the detriment which would result to us if it was in the hands of France, than from any advantage we can possibly derive from it as a Colony. It commands the passage to & from India as effectually as Gibraltar doth the Mediterranean...."<sup>36</sup>

33. Pemberton was struck particularly by the fecundity and robustness of the colonists encountered in the neighbourhood: "The people are remarkably healthy and live to a great age. We saw some Dutch men and women whose prodigious stature and florid complexions announced the most perfect state of health.... one farmer informed us he had lived there 17 years, that no grown person had died in that time, and but one child. He is 64 years of age, has had 19 children, the youngest but one year old...."

34. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports: Droopere Mas. (London, 1927), Vol. I, 279-282, II, 426-443.

35. Committee of Secrecy Minutes, 28 Jan. 1793.

36. Sir Francis Baring to Henry Dundas, 12 Jan. 1795, Recs. G.O., I p. 22.

If the strategic aspect was uppermost in the minds of the Directors, there were also additional considerations. On the voyage to India, scurvy was still a major menace; as late as 1789 one homeward bound East Indiaman was so devastated by the disease that there were only four men on deck when the ship reached St. Helena.<sup>37</sup> And that island itself — as the Company and Dundas were well aware<sup>38</sup> — was becoming increasingly dependent on external supplies; with the French a potential danger ~~was~~ in East African waters, a call at Cape Town for fresh water and green vegetables had its attractions.

Meanwhile, Dundas had put his diplomatic machinery in motion: throughout the first half of 1793 the British embassy staff at the Hague carried on lengthy negotiations with the Dutch Company and Government, in the course of which it appeared that Holland was prepared to accept British naval protection for the Cape but was not anxious to have British troops stationed in the Colony.<sup>39</sup> These talks fizzled out as the Continental campaigns developed in intensity and the Netherlands itself was caught up in the bitter feud between the Patriot and Orange factions. Yet, they did have one significant consequence: the Dutch authorities agreed to the appointment of a Resident-Agent for the English East India Company at the Cape, whose task would be to arrange supplies for St. Helena; appointed to this post soon afterwards, John Pringle took up his duties at the Cape in April, 1794.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, with the outbreak of hostilities, the agent of the French governments at Mauritius and Bourbon had been expelled from the Cape.<sup>41</sup> The Colony's surplus was now to provision English convoys instead of French cruisers.

37. Asiatic Journal and monthly Register for British and Foreign India, Vol. XVIII (New Series; London, 1835), anon. article, "Outward Bound", p. 195; E.K. Chatterton, The Old East Indiaman (London, 1914), p. 4ff.; Parkinson, op. cit. (footnote 20), pp. 246-247.

38. See, for instance, Saring to Dundas, 4 Jan. 1795, Recs.C.C., I, p. 17.

39. Some of the documents in these exchanges are reproduced in Recs.C.C., I, pp. 1-17.

40. Pringle himself was to subsequently remind the Company Secretary of "the very short notice I had to leave Europe" — Pringle to William Ramsay, 16 June 1803, GCH.F.R., I; see also, Recs.C.C., I, p. 105.

41. Theal, op. cit., (footnote 5), Vol. III, p. 305. For a detailed discussion of commercial strategy and Anglo-French rivalry in the Eastern Seas during the late 18th century, see V.T. Harlow, The Founding of the Second British Empire, 1763-93 (London, 1952), Vol. I, pp. 106-135.

This state of affairs, however, could last only as long as the Dutch remained co-operative. Once the United Provinces had been overrun by the Revolutionary armies and the Batavian Republic created as a French appendage, the immediate occupation of the Cape became a priority objective to Dundas and his colleagues directing strategic operations from Whitehall.<sup>42</sup> All ideas about an alternative base had to be scrapped and plans set afoot to occupy Cape Town itself, since what had been a mere "feather in the hands of Holland, will become a sword in the hands of France".<sup>43</sup> Once this decision to occupy had been taken, the Court of Directors' main concern was that "The privileges & interest of the English East India Company" would be "completely guarded";<sup>44</sup> there was also the hope that American vessels, instead of sailing eastwards into the Company's exclusive preserves, might be induced to terminate their voyages in Table Bay, procuring Indian and Chinese articles at the Cape, thereby establishing "a beneficial trade instead of the contraband they now strive to continue".<sup>45</sup> That the Cape was a potential market for British goods, a base for economic penetration into the interior, or a possible area for further colonisation were considerations ignored completely by East India House.

The War Office and Admiralty were left in no doubts about the Company's support for the venture: in May, 1795, seven East Indiamen intercepted and captured a valuable fleet of nine Dutch ships in the vicinity of St. Helena; in India, meanwhile, the Company's vessels Bombay Castle, Sketer, and Brunswick had been fitted out as men-of-war, and were sent to join Elphinstone's squadron in Simon's Bay.<sup>46</sup>

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42. Dropmore MSS., Vol. II, pp. 645-646.  
 43. Recs.C.C., I, p. 26; C.H.B.S., Vol. VIII, pp. 170-172.  
 44. Recs.C.C., I, p. 23.  
 45. Recs.C.C., I, p. 26. This is not to suggest that the Company favoured any scheme which would have involved making Cape Town an entrepôt between Asia and the New World; any such re-exports would have been strictly limited and under Company surveillance; as it turned out, the Americans proved un-co-operative and the plan was never implemented.  
 46. F.C.Danvers, List of Marine Records of the Late East India Company (London, 1896), p. xix. P. Gosse, St. Helena, 1501-1835 (London, 1938) p. 202; cf. War Office instructions to Commodore Blankett, 16 Feb. 1795, C.O. 77/57 (P.R.O.).

Prior to the British landings, the Company's Agent had been withdrawn from the Colony and sent to St. Helena, where he landed on April 4th, 1795;<sup>47</sup> Pringle, after almost a year at the Cape, must have been able ~~possibly~~ to give valuable advice to the planners of the expedition. The Agent returned to the settlement in June on the Company ship Orpheus, and was taken immediately under the wing of Admiral Elphinstone, "who was pleased to express much satisfaction at my arrival, and directed that I should remain with him in his own ship until the expedition is at an end".<sup>48</sup> Thus, right from the outset of the First Occupation, John Company's representative was in a position to influence British policy at the Cape. Yet, Pringle had returned a week too late to prevent Maj.-Gen. Craig from issuing a declaration which promised the colonists that they would be allowed to trade with the English Company's settlements in the East<sup>49</sup> — a pledge which he had no authority to make and which was not to be fulfilled.

John Pringle, like the British service commanders, was much taken aback by the Dutch decision to offer resistance instead of quietly admitting the task-force in the name of the Stattholder; and to the Directors he reported --

"The ideas of Independence (sic) which the people here seem to have imbibed, are so very ridiculous, & the scheme so wild, that I confess such an obstacle to our success never entered my mind. I am of opinion that it has been imposed by some designing Democrats on the ignorant & credulous Boers who are now called from the distant parts of the country by the general alarm; and those who are at the head of affairs, by encouraging the delusion (which they must have more sense than seriously to believe) will engage those farmers to become tools in their hands to prosecute their private Designs.

They have this morning by order of Governor Sluysken, stoppt all supplies for the Squadron; & they have a Camp close to the Cavalry house at Maysenberg, the half way between this & Cape Town....<sup>50</sup>

47. Pringle to Secret Committee, 4 April 1795, CGH.F.R., VI.

48. Pringle to Secret Committee, 27 June 1795, CGH.F.R., I.

49. Rees.C.C., I, pp. 64-65; cf. H.E. Egerton, A Short History of British Colonial Policy, 1606-1909 (9th edn., London, 1932), p. 255. It should be added that Craig had received no precise instructions on commercial policy, and was familiar neither with the details of the Company's charter nor with the provisions of the various navigation laws.

50. Pringle to Secret Committee, 27 June 1795, CGH.F.R., I.

During the following weeks of protracted negotiation between Dutch and British, Pringle appears to have disembarked from the H.M.S. Monarch in Simon's Bay and to have returned to his home in Cape Town itself, where, in view of his "intimate knowledge of most of the Leading People of the Colony", he was able to play a minor rôle in these palavers and in the subsequent administrative take-over.<sup>51</sup> But, a month after the final capitulation, he was complaining to London that he was "not at all in the Secret of what is going on" and that he was still waiting for things to become "a little more settled" before reporting to the Directors in full.<sup>52</sup>

One of the things which had been "going on" above Pringle's head, as it were, was a bitter controversy between General Craig and Commodore Blankett (who took over command of the naval squadron after Elphinstone's departure) on the propriety of allowing neutral vessels to trade with the Cape;<sup>53</sup> and when a Danish ship, the Alexander, bound for the Coromandel Coast, put into Table Bay in December, 1795, to offload European merchandise and take on a cargo of hides and wine, the Commodore protested that this was "extremely detrimental to the interest of the Honourable East India Company to whom this trade in Danish bottoms has been long obnoxious".<sup>54</sup> Craig, who was now "Commandant" of the settlement, defended his action in allowing the vessel these liberties on the grounds that the articles landed<sup>55</sup> were of "indispensible necessity", that such supplies had not yet been sent from Britain, and that the exports were essential as a means of payment in the absence of sufficient specie.<sup>56</sup> It was an admission, in fact, that, without a regular customs house establishment and in the face of extreme shortages, the Laws of Trade could not, as yet, be enforced.

51. See, for instance, Elphinstone's despatch to Henry Dundas, 3 July 1795, Recs.C.C., I, pp. 102-106.

52. Pringle to Secret Committee, 14 Oct. 1795, CGH.F.R., VI.

53. e.g., Craig to Blankett, 16 Dec. 1795, Recs.C.C., I, pp. 252-253.

54. Blankett to Craig, 3 Dec., 1795, Recs.C.C., I, p. 237.

55. Comprising mainly metal implements, canvas, and staves.

56. Craig to Henry Dundas, 27 Dec. 1795, Recs.C.C., I, pp. 283-285.

By the opening months of the following year, Craig's predicament had become even more complex, since Table Bay was now attracting all sorts of foreign vessels, with many "undesirable" consequences, not the least of which was that supplies were reaching the French Islands:

"These Ships arrive from Europe with an assorted Cargo of all sorts of Goods pretending to be bound to India. They all stop at the Isle of Mauritius, & carry from hence if they are permitted, Grain, Flour & Provisions, which they receive in exchange for what they have landed here. Otherwise they drain the Colony of the little specie they have & continue the dependence & connection of the mercantile people here with foreign Merchants, instead of opening a Correspondence with England, so that no trade can be more detrimental to our interests than this, as well as its being in direct violation of the Navigation laws."<sup>57</sup>

While Commodore Blankett complained in these terms to the Lords of the Admiralty and proceeded, whenever possible, to put a spoke in Craig's wheel by placing naval guards on board neutral vessels to prevent cargo movements in port, the Commandant was informing the War Secretary of "the publick dissatisfaction and discontent" occasioned by such measures, and suggesting a general indulgence of neutral trade under the existing circumstances.<sup>58</sup>

In the meantime, the initial excitement and dislocations of the Occupation were over, and Pringle was able to inform Leadenhall Street that "This Colony is in a perfect state of Tranquillity, notwithstanding some vague rumours of Riot and Sedition in the District of Graaf Renet and circulated here upon very slender Foundations by deceived or designing People;"<sup>59</sup> The Company Agent could now begin giving earnest attention to solving the problems of his commission; such potential frontier upheavels were of little concern to the man responsible for ensuring, <sup>on the one hand,</sup> ~~that~~ ~~the one hand~~ that the Honourable Company's monopoly was preserved, and, on the other, for taking steps to provide the Cape market with essential supplies of Asiatic produce.

57. Blankett to Evan Nepean (Secretary of the Admiralty), 4 March 1796, Recs.C.C., I, p. 334.  
58. Craig to Henry Dundas, 8 March 1796, Recs.C.C., I, pp. 336-337.  
59. Pringle to Secret Committee, 16 Apr. 1796, CGH.F.R., VI.

The British, on occupying Cape Town, had found a sprawling community of some five to six thousand white inhabitants, many of whom were the owners of skilled artisan slaves; in fact, the whole life of the town was firmly based on a slave economy; thus, although a burgher might be described as a baker, tailor, or carpenter, he would perform little of the actual manual work connected with his occupation. Moreover, due to the legacy of corruption and illicit dealings left by the Dutch Company, every citizen was a potential trader and speculator. Prices of imported goods fluctuated tremendously, a great deal depending on ~~market~~ the prospects of how quickly stocks could be replaced. These characteristics had given the Cape a bad name among voyagers to and from the East, many of whom were badly "stung" in their dealings with the colonists.<sup>60</sup>

One such visitor was Col. Sir John Murray, Military Auditor-General of the Bengal Army, who stopped over at the Cape for several months during 1796 en-route to ~~Madras~~ India, and who subsequently handed in a memorandum of his impressions to the Governor General and Council, Fort William.<sup>61</sup> The Colonel was quick to observe the great contrast between the condition of the "adventurous" urban settlers and the interior farmers, most of whom were "both poor and indolent, and throughout in want of slaves;"<sup>62</sup> future prospects, however, were good if only the extreme shortage of European and Eastern goods could be overcome, and the English East India Company did not take unfair advantage of the colonists' distress --

60. O.F. Mentzel, *Description of the Cape of Good Hope* (1785), Van Riebeeck Society, No. 6 (Cape Town, 1925), pp. 75-76; A. Bernard, *South Africa a Century Ago* (London, 1901), p. 50;
61. C. Graham Botha, *Social Life in the Cape Colony in the 18th Century* (Cape Town, 1927), pp. 33-35; I. S. Edwards, *Towards Emancipation: a Study in South African Slavery* (Cardiff, 1942), pp. 15-16; *C.H.B.S.*, Vol. VIII, p. 759.
62. "Observations on the Cape of Good Hope", submitted to Sir John Shore and the Bengal Council, 11 Dec. 1797 -- *Home Miscellaneous Series*, Vol. 388; the document runs into more than 7,000 words.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 685-686.

"The Dutch Company (Murray wrote) always supplied the farmers with such articles at a cheap rate — and took corn and wines in return; but, from the situation of the times, there have been no supplies since the year 1792...and I am only fearful, should the East India Company be employed to send them, that their Agent here will wish to dispose of them at too high a rate..."<sup>63</sup>

To obviate this happening, Sir John suggested that the local Burgher Senate<sup>64</sup> be empowered to retail such indents, "charging a moderate percentage, by which means the farmers would have the goods at an easy rate, & the Publick Funds increased". He was convinced, too, that the Cape could provide a considerable market for "all sorts of British manufactures", that an extensive trade was waiting to be developed with the Bantu tribes along the east coast, where also were to be found plentiful supplies of timber for shipbuilding.<sup>65</sup>

Pringle, in his first estimate of the commercial situation under the new regime, was far less optimistic. He also found "a great scarcity of many articles of the first necessity", including all sorts of metal goods, coarse clothing for the farmers and their slaves, and, most particularly, "Tea and China Goods"; and he did suggest that the Directors consider instructing "one China ship to touch here annually — this would not only be a great relief to the Inhabitants, but also a very conciliating and popular measure". But he felt that the present "great distress" was due to the Colony's inability to produce desirable exports, though there might be some demand for local wines (which were "cheap and wholesome") in the Indian military hospitals.<sup>66</sup>

Craig, however, remained convinced that a regular supply of essential imports could be maintained if he were given a free hand to allow neutral vessels (which were "continually arriving, loaded with the very articles of which we are so much in want") to sell their cargoes; but he was anxious to avoid an open clash with Leadenhall Street, where the subject was "viewed in another light".<sup>67</sup>

63. Murray's Memorandum, *op. cit.*, pp. 686-687.

64. This institution (comprising six colonists selected by the Governor) was an advisory council on economic and social matters, and hence the obvious body for assessing local commercial needs.

65. Murray, *ibid.*, pp. 689-690.

66. Pringle to Secret Committee, 30 July 1796, *CGH.F.R.*, VI.

67. Craig to Henry Dundas, 12 April 1796, *Recs.C.O.*, I, pp. 355-356. Tea remained foremost among the Eastern goods most in demand — see Hantzel's remarks on the "incredibly large quantity" which the colonists could consume yearly if supplies were available — *V.R.S.*, Vol. 25, pp. 258-259.

The upshot was that the "free trade" which the colonists had been promised proved nebulous: as yet, little direct commercial contact had been established with Britain, and, because of Craig's understandable timidity in the matter, foreign vessels were not encouraged to trade "unless by special permission under urgent circumstances".<sup>68</sup>

The position was only clarified towards the middle of 1797 when Lord Macartney arrived as Governor and brought with him an Order in Council (dated 28 December 1796),<sup>69</sup> which, with few modifications, was to regulate the Colony's external trade for the remainder of the First Occupation. Conditions were now specified under which British and foreign goods could be brought in,<sup>70</sup> while it was laid down that all articles from countries to the east of the Cape could be imported only "by the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies", and that, similarly, exports eastwards had to be carried by the Company or under its licence.

Jan Compagnie had been ousted, and with it had disappeared that absolute control over all foreign trade which had characterised the Colony's development since the mid-17th century; but the advent of John Company implied that a major segment of the Cape's commercial relations with the outside world still was to be the exclusive preserve of a privileged body of distant merchants and that it was the task of its Agent on the spot to exercise a minute supervision over all matters concerning the Eastern trade. The manner in which John Pringle carried out his mandate and the impact of his actions on the settlement's commercial progress form the central threads of this study.

68. G.M. Theal, "Digest of the Records", Recs.C.C., V, pp. 29-30.

69. Recs.C.C., II, pp. 1-3.

70. Briefly, British goods from home ports in British vessels were to be admitted free of duty, but foreign goods arriving in British vessels were to be taxed at a rate of 5 per cent ad valorem; foreign ships belonging to countries "in Amity with His Majesty" were allowed to call at the Cape, but duties of 10 per cent were to be levied on all cargoes they off-loaded. Since the wording of this Act led to much confusion, it was clarified and slightly amended by a further proclamation of 11 February 1801 -- Recs.C.C., III, pp. 421-422. For an assessment of these measures, see A.J. Bruwer, Protection in South Africa (Stellenbosch, 1923), pp. 32-33.

The appointment of a former envoy to Russia and China and Governor of Madras<sup>71</sup> to head the Cape administration at a salary of £10,000 a year (plus £2,000 "table money") was some indication of the importance which Henry Dundas attached to Britain's new acquisition; in fact, on Macartney's taking office, considerations of economy were momentarily swept aside, and the new Governor arrived with an impressive retinue of subordinates and secretaries (all of whom were paid on a scale commensurate with his own salary) and with instructions to draw on the British Treasury if local revenues proved inadequate to meet the increased expenses of the civil establishment.<sup>72</sup> The Earl was one of the few colonial rulers of the period who carried out instructions to report fully on local conditions,<sup>73</sup> and his views and suggestions form an interesting commentary on contemporary thought in official circles about the position of the Cape in the New Empire.

There was no doubt at all in the Governor's mind that the Colony's importance to Britain rested on its strategic position rather than on any likelihood that its small population and slender resources could become sources of profit to the

"It does not indeed appear (Macartney wrote) that this Colony is ever likely to become a source of very abundant revenue. Its chief importance to us arises from its geographical position, from its forming the master link of connection between the western and eastern world, from its being the great outwork of our Asiatic commerce and Indian Empire, and above all from the conviction that, if in the hands of a powerful enemy, it might enable him to shake to the foundation, perhaps overturn and destroy the whole fabric of our oriental opulence and dominion... its immediate political, naval, and military advantages are so striking, and of such splendor, that every other consideration is for the moment almost extinguished in the blaze."<sup>74</sup>

71. George, Earl Macartney, was born near Belfast in 1737 and educated at Trinity College, Dublin; he was raised to the Irish baronetage in 1776 and made an earl in 1792; ill-health forced him to give up his post at the Cape ~~in 1798~~ at the end of 1798 — art. in Dictionary of National Biography.

72. Recs.C.C., II, pp. 36-37.

73. His extensive memorandum was forwarded to the Secretary of State in October, 1798 (Recs.C.C., II, p. 296) but can no longer be traced; Macartney's despatches, however, give a clear indication of his opinions.

74. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 10 July 1797, Recs.C.C., II, p. 114.

Since the Cape would inevitably cost a great deal to run, Macartney was in favour of treating the Colony as an appendage of the Indian Empire; and, since he had been clearly instructed that everything possible was to be done to uphold the Company's chartered privileges,<sup>75</sup> the easiest solution would be to make the Company directly responsible for the general administration of the <sup>Cape</sup> ~~settlement~~.<sup>76</sup> If this step was not feasible until after a peace settlement, then, in the meantime, at least the port and its officials<sup>77</sup> and the local customs establishment<sup>78</sup> should be placed under Company control.

Moreover, if the Company was anxious to supply the Cape market with European articles, an outward bound fleet would have to be despatched early enough to reach Table Bay before the onset of the winter gales;<sup>79</sup> otherwise it would mean ~~having~~ having to make use of Simon's Bay, "which is twenty miles from hence, the road over land extremely bad, and the expence of carriage exorbitant". As regards Eastern produce, the Company should be expected to maintain local warehouses with adequate stocks of "India and China goods....which might be sold....at a much cheaper rate than any individuals trading on small Capitals could afford".<sup>80</sup>

Macartney was aware, however, that it would be no easy task to induce the Directors to assume such obligations and responsibilities, and that very probably East India House was

75. Macartney's Commission, 5 Jan. 1797, Recs.C.C., II, p. 23.

76. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 15 Dec. 1797, Recs.C.C., II, p. 214; Dundas had, in fact, already instructed the Company archivist, John Bruce, to prepare a report on the history of the Cape in order to help decide this question of whether the Colony should be governed directly by the Crown or through the Company, and this task had occupied the historiographer for a considerable part of 1796-97 "wading through heavy Dutch authors and still heavier Dutch papers" — Sir Wm. Foster, John Company, (London, 1926), pp. 236-237.

77. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 10 July 1797, Recs.C.C., II, pp. 117-118.

78. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 21 Feb. 1796, Recs.C.C., II, p. 240.

79. Indiamen during these war decades invariably left the port of London as a division of eight or ten vessels escorted by one or two warships, and scarcely ever sailed singly; such convoys generally departed at monthly intervals between

February and June; the convoy for Canton (which was most likely to have room for exports to the Cape) sailed in mid-March and might well reach Cape Town in the teeth of a north-wester — see Parkinson, op. cit. (footnote 19), pp. 151-152.

80. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 10 July 1797, Recs.C.C., II, pp. 118-119.

quite oblivious to the potential advantages of the Company's status in the Colony; as a good servant of the Crown, he was determined to jolt the Directors out of their lethargy --

"Nothing...can be more true than that the Crown, by taking possession of the Cape, has most amply consulted the interests of the East India Company in every point of view, not only providing for their convenience and security by its happy position, and local ascendancy, but opening a new market and intermediate depository for their trade and commodities. However these advantages may be blinked by some, or unknown to others, they must soon force a general conviction of their value, in spite of real ignorance or affected indifference. If ever therefore, at any future period, His Majesty should be disposed to cede the Cape of Good Hope to the East India Company, it would prove to them an acquisition of prodigious importance, deserving a very high price to be paid for it, and worth infinitely more to them than any apprehended expence which its maintenance could involve. If on the other hand, this Colony is to remain in the hands of the Crown at a peace, it will still be reasonable that the Company should pay a handsome compensation for the continuance of the extension, now granted, of their monopoly from the eastward to the Cape. Should they decline it, there can be no question that other Nations would bid for the preference, and offer a considerable price for it. I just throw out this hint, because by a private letter or two which I have seen, from England, it would seem as if there were not wanting some Gentlemen in Leadenhall Street, who affected to disparage or undervalue this Colony."<sup>81</sup>

Here was an shrewd a piece of economic blackmail as ever left a colonial governor's desk! In fact, Macartney's outlook was that of a liberal-mercantilist: he was pleased to note that the Cape yielded products which were complementary to those of the mother country, and was anxious to "direct" but not to "force or to crush" local business initiative;<sup>82</sup> on the other hand, if the Company was persuaded to take over the Colony, such a step, naturally, would be unpopular among Cape Town's merchants -- but they would be no worse off than before, when the settlement was "governed by a Company, whose powers were of the most extensive nature, which powers could not therefore be now complained of, if vested in their successors."<sup>83</sup>

81. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 14 June 1798, Recs.C.C., II, pp. 265-266.

82. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 10 July 1797, Recs.C.C., II, p. 117.

83. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 15 Dec. 1797, Recs.C.C., II, p. 214.

Henry Dundas expressed complete agreement with Macartney's views on the Colony's strategic importance,<sup>64</sup> and ~~was~~ admitted that the Court of Directors displayed prejudice "in their decisions with respect to the Cape" which seemed to make the prospects for the Company assuming direct responsibility somewhat remote; but he was not prepared to force their hands until the restoration of peace -- and even then the system adopted would depend upon the circumstances "arising out of the relative situations in which the different powers may stand at that period".<sup>65</sup>

## vii

That East India House viewed the problem of the Cape in a different light is revealed clearly by the lack of interest displayed by the Directors in taking steps to ensure adequate provisions of Eastern commodities for the Colony's inhabitants. The Cape was but a small pebble on a big beach, and if administering the revenues of Bengal was then of greater importance to the Company than the further extension of commercial relations across India,<sup>66</sup> it was hardly to be expected that it would exert itself unduly to supply the needs of a few thousand people at the extremity of the Dark Continent. On the contrary, the Directors' main concern regarding the Cape was negative rather than positive: if any but themselves or favoured persons licenced by them were allowed to bring Eastern produce into the Colony, there was the danger of the settlement becoming a vast clandestine entrepôt, with such goods being re-exported to places (particularly in the New World) which normally depended on the Company's own sales from its Leadenhall depositories for supplies of Asiatic articles.<sup>67</sup> It had been this fear -- rather than any desire to monopolize the local market itself -- which had led the Directors to insist that the Eastern trade to the Cape be confined to their own or their nominees' hands.

64. Henry Dundas to Macartney, 25 Jan. 1793, Recs.C.C., II, p. 225.

65. Henry Dundas to Macartney, 15 Dec. 1793, Recs.C.C., II, pp. 311-312.

66. Holden Furber, John Company at Work: A Study of European Expansion in India in the late eighteenth century (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), pp. 22-23; C.H.S.E., Vol. IV, ch. Xvi.

67. The shrewd Macartney clearly understood the Company's attitude, as his despatches from the Cape to the Indian Presidencies reveal -- see, for example, his Circular Letter to the Councils at Fort William, Madras, and Bombay, 6 Jan. 1793, Recs.C.C., ~~pp. 221-222~~ II, pp. 221-222.

The Company, therefore, was in no great hurry to take advantage of the privileges bestowed on it in December, 1796. Pringle, true enough, lost little time in appealing to his superiors to make businesslike arrangements:

"The Order of His Majesty in Council for regulating the Trade of this Colony reserving to you exclusively that to the Eastward, renders it highly necessary that you should give explicit Instructions on that Head -- I expect they will be sent by the next Fleet, but if not, I hope you will see the necessity of arranging the Business soon, and ordering sufficient supplies for the Consumption..."

In this same despatch the Agent dwelt on the difficulties of assessing adequately the quantities and qualities of the various articles which would be required, although "Coarse Goods in General" were sure of a quick turnover.<sup>88</sup>

While Pringle was being disabused from his fond hopes of speedy action by the Directors, a crisis in the Colony had been averted through several fortuitous circumstances: on its own initiative, the Madras Government licensed two private shipments of Coromandel goods to the Cape, and during September, 1797, calicoes and other piece-goods were being landed from the Bombay and Restoration;<sup>89</sup> in addition to these consignments, Macartney induced the captains of several returning East Indiamen to offload portions of their "private cargoes",<sup>90</sup> including some boxes of China tea;<sup>91</sup> moreover, "A neutral Ship or two, on their way to Europe or America, ....had permission to sell some coffee or sugar" -- articles which were not available from any other source.<sup>92</sup> Thus there was some relief from the chronic shortage of Eastern commodities: in the last few months of 1797 Asiatic produce valued at more than 220,000 rixdollars was landed at the Cape, compared with less than 50,000 rixdollars in goods from British and European ports over the same period.<sup>93</sup>

88. Pringle to Secret Committee, 24 July 1797, CGH.F.R., VI.

89. Madras Council to Macartney, 25 June 1797, Recs.C.C., II, pp. 104-105; Macartney to Governor & Council, Fort St. George, 9 Nov. 1797, Madras Pub. Gen. (21 Sept. 1798, pp. 2793-96).

90. The commanders of Company vessels were permitted to indulge in a limited amount of private trade (not to exceed 99 tons per round trip), except for dealings in "woollens and warlike stores" on the outward voyage, and "musk, camphire, arrack, and China raw silk" on the return -- Danvers, op. cit., p. xv.

91. Pringle to Secret Committee, 13 Nov. 1797, CGH.F.R., VI.

92. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 27 Nov. 1797, Recs.C.C., II, p. 205.

93. Customs Returns, Sept.-Dec. 1797, Recs.C.C., II, p. 218.

Nonetheless, by the end of 1797, both Governor and Agent still remained in complete ignorance of the Directors' intentions, and the authorities in India were as yet no better informed on the indent question.<sup>94</sup> Eventually, the Company having taken no steps to provide the Cape with regular supplies, Macartney found that the Colony's "pressing necessities" entailed some deviation from a literal adherence to the Order in Council;<sup>95</sup> hence, early in 1798, Pringle was instructed to prepare indents of those articles which, "from his knowledge and long experience" of the Cape's needs, he thought would be most in demand.<sup>96</sup> In consultation with the Burgher Senate, the Agent proceeded to draw up the required lists, and these had been forwarded to the three Presidencies and the Company's Super cargoes at Canton by the middle of the year.<sup>97</sup>

It was only at this stage that notification was received from London that at last the Court had bestirred itself sufficiently to instruct its servants in India as follows:

"As it will be necessary to supply the Cape of Good Hope with Indian Articles for the consumption of that Settlement, we direct you to comply with all such Indents as you may receive from the Governor, and to take all the Goods if possible on the Ships taken up by us at a reduced rate of freight, in preference to the regular Ships; such Goods will be put up for Sale at an advance of not less than Six per Cent on the prime Cost, Freight, and Charges.

We also direct, that you consign the Goods so indented for, to Mr. Pringle our Agent at the Cape, who is to dispose of them by public auction in small lots that Individuals may derive every advantage from the consignment.

In framing the Indents for piece goods, the Earl Macartney has been particularly requested to attend to the actual Demand for consumption in the Settlement and not for the purpose of exportation."<sup>98</sup>

94. Pringle to Secret Committee, 28 Dec. 1797, CGH.F.R., VI. Nonetheless, the Agent was considering the building of "considerable Magazines on the spot of waste ground next the Church Square for holding the Articles necessary to the supply of the Colony" — Pringle to Macartney, 11 Dec. 1797, B.O.9/19.
95. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 21 Feb. 1798, Recs.C.C., II, p. 239.
96. Macartney to the Councils at Fort William, Madras, and Bombay, 6 Jan. 1798, Recs.C.C., II, p. 222.
97. Pringle to Macartney, 19 May 1798, B.O.9/63-65; Macartney to Pringle, 15 June 1798, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Secret Committee, 12 July 1798, CGH.F.R., VI; full details of the Burgher Senate's suggestions are given in Recs.C.C., II, pp. 267-272; see also glossary of piece-goods in Appendix II.
98. Extract, Company's "Commercial Letter" to Bengal and Madras, 2 March 1798, CGH.F.R., I; cf. Asiat. Pub. Con. (Pringle to Governor & Council, Fort St. George), 7 Sept. 1798, pp. 2882-3. Bombay and Surat never figured very prominently as sources of piece-goods for the Cape market — see below, Ch. IV, n.75.

Little eager enthusiasm is displayed here to supply the Cape market — the tone suggests, in fact, that the Company hardly regarded it as a commercial proposition at all and was being made to carry an unwanted burden; this impression is reinforced by the six per cent advance<sup>99</sup> — a very modest target set by Directors who (had they so wished) could have aimed at reaping maximum monopoly returns. Moreover, the regular homeward-bound convoys were not to be disturbed or delayed; instead, cheaper but slower and less reliable "extra" ships<sup>100</sup> had to be hired. The overriding consideration was the prevention of illegal re-exports at all costs: individual merchants at the Cape had to be given no opportunity of accumulating tempting surplus stocks (although this proviso is cloaked by a touch of pseudo-humanitarianism), and all indents were to be limited to immediate local needs.<sup>101</sup>

Once this circular was issued, the Directors relapsed into a state of torpor, leaving their officials in the East to carry out the instructions as best they could. By the end of 1798, however, Maj.-Gen. Dundas (at the head of the Cape administration after Earl Macartney's departure) had heard from the Presidencies that "particular circumstances" prevented the despatch of special Company shipments to the Colony, and that individual merchants in India were to be allowed to furnish the necessary supplies "under certain restrictions".<sup>102</sup>

Apparently, there was no shortage of shippers in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay willing to speculate on such ventures, nor any reluctance on the part of Cape Town businessmen to obtain permission to import;<sup>103</sup> and, early in 1799, Pringle was complaining that the Cape market had become so overstocked with Eastern goods that local buyers had neither inclination nor capital to contemplate making anything but bargain purchases.<sup>104</sup> Having long suffered

99. In later despatches (e.g., to Calcutta, 12 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., II; to Canton, 17 July 1812, CGH.F.R., III) Pringle made it clear that this was to serve both as a reserve price and as the ideal mark-up.

100. I.e., ships hired for single voyages only, though many were often employed almost continually; they were not designed specifically for Indian waters and were mostly smaller than the regular ones.

101. See below, n. 185.

102. Gov.-Gen. in C., Ft. William, to Dundas, 22 Oct. 1798 (with encls.), CGH.F.R., I; cf. Recs.C.C., II, p. 344, pp. 504-505.

103. B.O.33, *passim*; cf. Andrew Barnard to Macartney, 25 Jan. 1799, D.Fairbridge, Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape (Oxford, 1924), p. 87.

104. Pringle to Maj.-Gen. Dundas, 3 Jan. 1799, B.O.9, p. 185; Pringle to Wm. Huskisson (Henry Dundas' Under Secretary), 6 April, 1799, CGH.F.R., I (also in Recs.C.C., II, p. 420E.).

from a deficiency of Asiatic produce, the local market was now in the throes of a violent glut, and this cyclical phenomenon was to repeat itself for as long as the Company exercised control over the settlement's imports from the East.<sup>105</sup>

### viii

During the era of Macartney the surface pattern of the Colony's trade comprised the importation of necessities and negligible exports (and these mainly sea stores) of Cape produce, since both the wine and wheat surpluses were absorbed mainly by the increased military and naval forces based on the Peninsula.<sup>106</sup> Beneath the surface, however, it was apparent that the Company's half-hearted attitude towards the settlement and its decision not to directly indent on its own account ~~was~~<sup>were</sup> promoting all kinds of contraband activity. In fact, as early as October, 1795, Pringle had indicated to his superiors the sort of thing to expect:

"Some time ago a Small ship under Genoese Colours, called el Sincato touched here, from China, bound to the Is. of St. Bartholomew in the West Indies — as this seems to be a new channel of Trade, merely calculated for Smuggling India & China Goods into our Island, which must in the Event be productive of Injury both to you, & the fair West India Trade, I think it my Duty to mention the case in order that you may take such Steps as you shall think best to check such speculations in their Infancy."<sup>107</sup>

There was much worse to come: by the middle of 1797 Macartney himself was complaining that

"This Port is often visited by foreign neutral Vessels from Batavia, chiefly Danish, which are many of them Dutch at bottom, (possibly English), though so artfully covered that the fraud is not to be detected. Some of them have attempted to carry on a contraband trade here, but have submitted to the penalties of it with so little murmuring, that I am inclined to think the forfeitures were inconsiderable in comparison of the Goods that escaped seizure."<sup>108</sup>

Although the Governor attempted to discourage the visits of neutral

105. During 1800 there was to be a further abrupt change in the Company's indent policy — see section (ix) below.

106. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 27 Nov. 1797, Recs.C.C., II, pp. 205-206.

107. Pringle to Secret Committee, 14 Oct. 1795, GSH.F.R., VI.

108. Macartney to Henry Dundas, 10 July 1797, Recs.C.C., II, p. 118.

ships, and to curb clandestine re-exports by directing his customs officers "to take bonds under heavy penalties" from all importers,<sup>109</sup> the Company's Agent remained convinced that "many Merchants, both here and Abroad, are making use of this Colony as a Cloak for illegal Trade".<sup>110</sup>

Macartney's fears that it was English interlopers rather than Danish and other neutrals who were the main instigators of such contraband activities, were fully confirmed in a subsequent report to Henry Dundas by John Holland, the Postmaster General, on "The Injury the Trade of the Hon'ble East India Company appears to me to be suffering at the present period".<sup>111</sup> In his opinion, it was "a notorious fact" that most neutral vessels and their cargoes arriving at the Cape were actually owned by British subjects living at home or in India; as a consequence of such subterfuges, "the Trade and consequently the Revenue of the East India Company must annually be injured to an immense amount".

By the turn of the century the methods of these interlopers had been woven into a regular pattern: their ships would be fitted out in a neutral port (such as Copenhagen), they would call at the Cape (ostensibly for refreshments), and give as their destination Tranquebar (a Danish settlement) or some other equally inoffensive place; in reality, they would supply the French garrisons at Mauritius and Batavia, and encroach upon the Company's trading preserves in India.<sup>112</sup> And Pringle had come to believe that these activities were receiving increasing support from foreign governments, whose attentions were being directed towards the Indian Ocean partly by the lucrative profits of his own Company and partly by the power vacuum created with the eclipse of the Dutch in the Far East; he was especially suspicious of the Americans —

"The American frigate Essex has passed here on March 11th on its way to the Sunda Straits....I am inclined to believe its real intention is to examine the Islands of St. Paul (& others) on the coast of Sumatra, & in general to look for a proper place to form an Establishment...."<sup>113</sup>

109. Macartney to H. Dundas, 21 Feb. 1798, Recs.C.C., II, p. 240.

110. Pringle to Secret Committee, 4 May 1798, CGH.F.R., I.

111. Recs.C.C., II, pp. 347-348 (23 Jan. 1799).

112. cf. Recs.C.C., III, pp. 7-8, 28-30, 94-95, 105-106.

113. Pringle to Wm. Ramsay (Secretary of the East India Company), 10 March 1800, CGH.F.R., VI. (After 16 Nov. 1798, Pringle's despatches to Leadenhall Street were addressed to the Secretary and/or the Court, not to the Secret Committee, as heretofore).

ARRIVAL OF MERCHANT VESSELS AT CAPE PORTS DURING THE FIRST OCCUPATION

[based on data in B.O.72; Marine Recs. (India Office); COM.V.R. I, VI; Recs. C.C., I-V]

	<u>Company Ships</u>	<u>Other British Vessels</u> *	<u>American</u>	<u>Danish</u>	<u>Swedish</u>	<u>Portuguese</u>	<u>Hamburg</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>Dutch</u>	<u>Pruss</u>	<u>Other Foreign Ships</u>	<u>Total</u>
16 Sept. - 31 Dec. 1795	16	10	9	3	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	44
1796 ... ..	31	74	36	18	4	2	-	-	-	10	3	178
1797 ... ..	63	44	36	22	1	5	1	-	-	6	2	180
1798 ... ..	47	54	29	26	-	2	6	-	-	7	-	162
1799 ... ..	25	33	23	22	-	4	4	-	-	5	1	117
1800 ... ..	23	19	19	12	3	2	-	-	-	6	-	84
1801 ... ..	43	41	27	6	1	-	2	-	-	16	1	136
1802 .. ...	20	21	36	21	-	9	3	9	29	-	3	151
1 Jan. - 20 Feb. 1803	3	6	9	5	-	3	-	5	11	-	1	43
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	271	302	215	134	9	27	16	14	40	56	11 +	1,095

\* Includes "Country" and Cape ships (exclusive of coasters).

+ Made up of 4 Spanish, 2 Prussian, 1 Genoese, 1 Tuscan, 1 Russian, and 2 cartel vessels.

Meanwhile, the problems of smuggling and contraband had come to be intimately connected with the question of how prize goods were to be handled. Early in 1799 the Danish vessel, Angelique, chartered by Americans, and proceeding from Madras to Manila with a cargo of piece-goods, had been intercepted and brought into Simon's Bay for trial at the Vice Admiralty Court.<sup>114</sup> Judge Holland, foreseeing the probability of protracted litigation, issued a warrant for the sale of a portion of the cargo to defray expenses — an action which immediately raised the issue of the Court's prerogative to condemn or otherwise dispose of East Indian produce in the Colony. In Pringle's opinion, Holland's instruction contravened the Order in Council of December, 1796, and he was staunchly supported by Maj.-Genl. Dundas. The upshot was a bitter controversy between John Holland and John Hooke Green (the Collector of Customs) on the one side, and the Agent and Acting Governor on the other, in the course of which blows were very nearly exchanged!<sup>115</sup> And to the Court of Directors Pringle despatched an urgent appeal to have the whole business investigated and clearly defined, otherwise

"if prize cargoes are to be disposed of in this Colony, the Hon'ble Court must readily conceive the impossibility of ever making any reasonable arrangements for supplying it, which shall not be liable to be entirely defeated by the introduction of a captured Cargo, such as the one in question..."<sup>116</sup>

The matter was finally submitted to a panel of Crown Lawyers, whose opinion favoured the Company — i.e., it was illegal to dispose of prize goods of Eastern origin for local consumption.<sup>117</sup>

114. The proclamation setting up a Court of Admiralty at the Cape (6 Jan. 1797) is given in Recs.C.C., II, pp. 28-34; John Holland filled the dual rôle of sole judge on the Court and Postmaster-General — Theal, Hist. S.A.F. since 1795, Vol. I, p. 34, 39. For an account of the operation of prize courts and the treatment of contraband seizures under international law during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, see C.H.B.E., Vol. II, ch. xxiii.

115. B.O.11/31-243, especially Holland to Maj.Genl. Dundas, 12 & 19 March 1799; Pringle to Maj.Genl. Dundas, 3 April 1799; B.O.9/201-203; Holland to Henry Dundas, 5 April 1799; Recs.C.C. II, pp. 408-409; Maj.Genl. Dundas to Henry Dundas, 6 April 1799, ibid., II, pp. 416-417 (the Acting Governor was Henry Dundas' nephew); Barnard to Macartney, 6 April 1799; Fairbridge, op. cit., pp. 112-113.

116. Pringle to Court of Directors, 5 April 1799, GGH.P.R., VI

117. Henry Dundas to Maj.Genl. Dundas, 27 Aug. 1799, Recs.C.C., II, p. 477. Meanwhile, another Danish ship, the Christianus Septions, had been detained at the Cape, and when the Court restored that part of her cargo which was perishable, Pringle raised no objection to the goods being disposed of locally, "under proper security that the Articles sold shall be exported bona fide to Denmark, their original destination" — Pringle to Maj.Genl. Dundas, 1 June 1799, B.O.9/221-222.

The Angelique dispute by no means ended the matter: soon after his arrival as Governor, Sir George Yonge received a lengthy memorandum<sup>118</sup> from the local naval commander (now Vice Admiral Roger Curtis) on the topic of prize goods, in which he described "the sorrow and dismay" felt by his captains and officers because of the recent opinion handed down by the Crown lawyers.

"Admitting for the sake of argument (Curtis continued), that Prize Goods of Countries to the Eastward of the Cape of Good Hope cannot legally be sold at this place, we cannot avoid thinking it would ill become the Wealth and Grandeur of the East India Company to persist in opposing the supposed rights of their Charter to our claims for common justice, the claims of Men who acquire the Property they are forbid to sell, whilst they are protecting the Ships of the Company from the grasp of the Enemy, and in the prevention of illicit Trade, so detrimental to its Interests. For, our being permitted to vend our Prize Goods here, would comparatively no more injure the immense concerns of the East India Company, than the taking a drop of Water from the Ocean would decrease its depth."<sup>119</sup>

The down-to-earth Pringle had little regard for such hyperboles -- to him the trade of the Cape could be much more than a drop in the ocean: "were there only a certainty with respect to Prize Goods", he told the Directors, "the Supply of this Place would be a valuable Trade to the Honourable Company"; but as long as there was any doubt in that connection, indents from the East would remain highly speculative.<sup>120</sup>

According to Lady Anne Barnard (who had no reason to be overjoyed by his arrival, since his wife now replaced her as "first lady" at the Castle), the new Governor was "a very weak old soul" but "full of good intentions"; Theal believed Sir George Yonge to have been ~~was~~ "decidedly the most incompetent man" ever at the head of the Colony's affairs; while Professor Walker is hardly more generous in describing him as "a heavy old jobber more sinned against by his associates than sinning".<sup>121</sup> Nonetheless, Yonge, finding himself

118. Recs.C.C., III, pp. 9-12 (1 Jan. 1800).

119. Ibid., p. 11.

120. Pringle to Ramsay, 12 Jan. 1800, GGH.P.R., VI.

121. South Africa a Century Ago, p. 250; A History of South Africa since 1795, Vol. I, p. 71; History of Southern Africa, p. 126.

pulled in one direction by the Navy and in another by the East India Company's Agent, and not forgetting the views of the lawyers, proceeded to issue a sensible compromise Proclamation<sup>122</sup> on the subject of prize goods a month after receiving Curtis' valuable protest. In terms of this edict, condemned prize articles of Eastern origin could now be sold by public auction, provided the buyers gave security bonds to the customs that such goods would be exported to Britain within a stipulated period; but an important exception was made in the case of articles certified as highly perishable by the customs inspectors, whereupon they could be disposed of locally subject to an import duty of ten per cent on the sale price.

While the old Governor himself was convinced that these measures had "settled the Point to the general satisfaction of all Parties",<sup>123</sup> Pringle was much less optimistic:

"....you will find a Copy of Sir George Yonge's Regulations with respect to Prize Goods (he wrote to the Company Secretary) and the Hon. Court of Directors will be able to judge how far it is consonant to their wishes; but unless very much pains are taken to regulate this Business at home, it will prove a source of endless Contestation, as the Navy are highly dissatisfied with the Restrictions and have made further serious representations on the Subject...."<sup>124</sup>

Although he believed that Yonge's edict was "fair enough" in theory, Pringle objected strongly to the manner in which he, as Agent, was excluded "from having any share in surveying & knowing what articles ought to be allowed for interior consumption"; he foresaw "frequent applications to grant indulgences", which the customs officials, without his support, might find difficult to refuse.<sup>125</sup>

Since Pringle was correct in his estimate of the Navy's continued resentment at all attempts to limit its scope of prize disposal, this matter was to promote further bickering and friction on many subsequent occasions.

122. Recs. C.C., III, pp. 34-37 (3 Feb. 1800).

123. Yonge to Henry Dundas, 8 Feb. 1800, Recs. C.C., III, p. 39.

124. Pringle to Ramsay, 29 March 1800, GGH.P.R., VI.

125. Pringle to Ramsay (Private Letter), 27 March 1800, GGH.P.R., VI. Prior to Yonge's proclamation, the Agent had urged strongly that the Custom House officers be "properly instructed" in the disposal of prize goods of Eastern origin to obviate "troubles and misunderstandings" — Pringle to Yonge, 24 Dec. 1799, B.O. P/271.

If Agent and Company had so far enjoyed, if not always enthusiastic support, at least ~~an~~ little opposition from local commanders, an open rift was to appear with the arrival of Yonge, since the new Governor (he came out in December 1799) held ideas very different to those of his predecessors on what constituted proper relations between Company and Colony.-- ideas which were not disclosed in his handling of the prize goods dispute.

Yonge was soon impressed by the Cape's ~~growing~~ commercial importance, and felt that customs arrangements were already inadequate to serve "the growing Business" being transacted;<sup>126</sup> moreover, the Colony was unrivalled as a prospective entrepôt for three continents and served as the natural gateway to India.<sup>127</sup> Thus, in consequence of the settlement's commercial and strategic significance,

"....If it is retained at a Peace, Government should keep It in Its own Hands, and not grant It, Improvidently, away to the E.I. Company, which would be the most unwise, and, I do not scruple to add, the most Dangerous Thing in the World. For the Example of American Independence teaches a Lesson on this Subject, which is against giving such great Means into the Hands of Distant Colonies to resist...."<sup>128</sup>

If the Company represented a political danger, its commercial monopoly was also, in Yonge's view, an economic disadvantage to the mother country:

"I do not see that this Colony stands much in need of East India Produce, and it appears to me, that what it does stand in need of, should rather be furnished from Great Britain than from India. ....It is desirable to knit & tye this Colony to the Mother Country as much as possible, & to make it look no more to the East....An Increase of Inhabitants & of Cultivation will also produce an encrease of demand on Great Britain for Articles of all Sorts, and open a Market for British Manufactures which will be continually increasing."<sup>129</sup>

Here were viewpoints in complete contrast to the sentiments previously expressed by Macartney; Yonge's was the orthodox voice

126. Yonge to Henry Dundas, 8 Feb. 1800, Recs.C.C., III, pp. 139-40.

127. Yonge to Henry Dundas, 29 March 1800, Recs.C.C., III, pp. 94-96.

128. Ibid., p. 97.

129. Yonge to Henry Dundas, 15 Nov. 1800, Recs.C.C., III, pp. 356-357.

of a mercantilism which had failed, apparently, to learn the real lessons of the American War; the Governor's anxiety to remove Company influence stemmed from a craving to render the Cape more rather than less dependent on Britain. Nevertheless, unlike most official spokesmen at home and in the Colony at that time, he had at least taken note of the settlement's need for immigrants and increased productivity.

In view of his sentiments, it was only a matter of time before Yonge clashed with Pringle, in the course of which the Cape's anomalous status was to become most apparent — since here was a foreign possession being temporarily administered by the British crown (ostensibly on behalf of the Stadtholder) within the limits of the Company's charter. The first skirmish took place less than three weeks after the new Governor's installation, when Yonge resolved to send a private British merchant vessel, the Queen, to Madras with dispatches, in spite of Pringle's warning that such intercourse with India was totally prohibited; overruled, lacking precise instructions on what action to take in "so delicate a business", and wishing to avoid an argument "which would probably lead me farther than I might be able to conduct with propriety", the Agent could merely inform East India House of the incident.<sup>130</sup>

This friction was intensified when the Company once again altered its indent policy: by mid-1800 the Calcutta authorities could no longer ignore the growing contraband activities centred on the Cape and "judged it expedient to determine that no further supplies" were to be sent from the Company's Indian factories, "except upon regular Indents"; once more Pringle was instructed to frame orders in accordance with the Colony's needs and to forward

130. Pringle to Ramsay (private letter), 27 March 1800, CGH.F.R., VI. Eight years later the Agent had not forgotten this clash, and was to recount the episode of the Queen in detail in discussing "the most serious consequences of sending a private ship to India" — Pringle to Caledon, 5 June 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

Strangely enough, Pringle does not appear to have been unduly concerned when (in April-May 1800) Yonge was embroiled in a dispute with Henry Jessup (Chief Searcher of the Customs) and Peter Moussé (a wily Irish advocate) over the forwarding to England of certain Eastern goods which had been seized and then restored by the Vice Admiralty Court — an action which they alleged was an infringement of the Company's charter; it was an involved, "strange higgledy-piggledy business", according to Lady Anne Barnard, and culminated in the two gentlemen being sent home — Pringle to Court of Directors, 15 May 1800, CGH.F.R., VI; Yonge to Henry Dundas (private letter with enclosures), 12 May 1800, Recs.C.C., III, pp. 152-162; South Africa a Century Ago, pp. 286-287; Andrew Barnard to Macartyney, 14 May 1800, Fairbridge, op. cit., pp. 201-204.

these as soon as possible to the three Presidencies.<sup>131</sup> This despatch reached the Agent at the end of October, and was sent immediately to Yonge for his information and approval;<sup>132</sup> nearly two weeks later, in a rigmarole of a reply, the Governor laid down that such indents would have to receive Government House sanction and import licences.<sup>133</sup> Once again, Pringle was forced to appeal to London,<sup>134</sup> and soon protests were forthcoming from the Directors to Downing Street "upon the subject of the Impediments which have arisen in the supply of Articles, the Produce of Countries to the Eastward of the Cape necessary for the supply and consumption of that Settlement".<sup>135</sup> While it appears unlikely that this controversy had any direct influence on Yonge's abrupt dismissal,<sup>136</sup> it was not long before Maj.-Gen. Dundas, once again at the head of affairs, was being instructed to "obviate the difficulty and embarrassment" which had been created through "the Interference of the late Governor" by admitting Company supplies to the Cape in future without any impediment.<sup>137</sup>

Nevertheless, Pringle's prompt despatch-writing and the unusually quick re-action of the Court had not prevented colonial trade from being adversely affected by this wrangle. Goods forwarded on the Company's homeward-bound fleet towards the close of 1800 and off-loaded at St. Helena for transhipment to Table Bay, could not be landed without Yonge's licence being applied for and granted, and this the St. Helena authorities would not ask for, holding the Governor's policy to be a gross interference with the Company's privileges.<sup>138</sup> The Colony was once again destitute of all Eastern goods before the status quo was restored by the Acting

131. Secretary to Government, Bengal, to Pringle, 5 June 1800, CGH.F.R., I. The private firm of Chase & Co. (Madras) was permitted thereafter to export a mixed cargo of rice, timber, and piece-goods to the Cape on the Matilda, a licence for that purpose having been issued before the revised indent policy had come into force, making it "impossible therefore for the Governor in Council to retract it" — I. Sebbe (Chief Secretary, Commercial Dept., Ft. St. George) to Pringle, 22 Nov. 1800, B.O.9/295-296.

132. Pringle to Yonge, 31 Oct. 1800, Recs.C.C., III, p. 351.

133. Yonge to Pringle, 12 Nov. 1800, Recs.C.C., III, p. 355.

134. Pringle to Court of Directors, 30 Nov. 1800, CGH.F.R., VI.

135. cf. Recs.C.C., III, p. 466.

136. The Agent's despatch is unlikely to have reached Britain before 14 Jan. 1801, when Henry Dundas curtly notified Yonge to avail himself "of the first opportunity of returning to England" — Recs.C.C., III, pp. 408-409. Pringle was appointed subsequently to the commission which investigated the charges against Yonge.

137. Lord Hobart (Henry Dundas' successor) to Maj.-Gen. Dundas, 7 April 1801, Recs.C.C., III, p. 466.

138. Governor in Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 9 Apr. 1801, CGH.F.R.

Governor telling Fringle that

"The previous licence...here required by Sir George Yonge appears to me unnecessary...if not an infringement of a privilege of the East India Company never before questioned."<sup>139</sup>

With the Company's honour vindicated, the Agent chartered a small vessel to proceed to St. Helena;<sup>140</sup> but it was not until November, 1801, that the stores from that island (mainly assorted chests of China teas) had been landed at Cape Town,<sup>141</sup> almost a year since leaving India (to say nothing of their original despatch date from Canton!).

x

Sent out to a newly-acquired colony under abnormal wartime conditions, Fringle had no enviable task at the Cape: he had to contend with Directors who were mainly concerned with preventing the settlement from falling into hostile hands or becoming a magnet for interlopers; he had to maintain contact with three separate Company administrations in India and the Supracargoes of Canton — none of whom were particularly interested in keeping the Cape adequately supplied with Eastern produce; he had to cope with the pet theories and personal idiosyncrasies of governors as far apart in temperament and ability as Macartney and Yonge; and the disputes over prize goods had incurred for him the bitter enmity of the local naval authorities.<sup>142</sup> Thus Fringle's effective power to serve the Company's interests at the Cape was very limited:

"...I beg only to put you in mind [ he confided to the Secretary, East India House ] that I am here the Sole Person in the Company's Service (on which those in His Majesty's are not much inclined to look with a favourable eye), & that it is out of my power to do what in a different situation

139. Maj.Gnl. Dundas to Fringle, 12 May 1801, Recs.C.C., III, p. 492.

140. Fringle to Court of Directors, 30 Oct. 1801, CGH.P.R., VI.

141. "Memorandum of Stores forwarded from St. Helena on the Pegasus", 20 Nov. 1801, CGH.P.R., I.

142. This mainly took the form of all kinds of obstacles being placed in the Agent's path whenever a Company vessel put into the Cape for repairs and he had to beg equipment from naval stores (cf. Vice Admiral Curtis' letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 Sept. 1801, Recs.C.C., IV, p. 71); see below, Ch. II, (iii)(b).

would be very easy. Under this description I mean to include all that relates to the intercourse of Foreigners here, carrying on illicit Trade either with Europe or India. I cannot search their Ships, I can obtain little or no information concerning their views, & if I did, it would be next to impossible for me to take any effectual step in consequence."<sup>143</sup>

Moreover, the English Company was looked upon with undisguised hostility by the embryo mercantile community of Cape Town, who regarded it as a major barrier to the genuine commercial freedom promised in 1795 — and it was only natural that such hostility should find an outlet in abuse of the Agent; this rôle of scapegoat, Pringle discovered, attracted "much personal odium" to himself, required "a good share of patience to submit to" within the narrow limits of Colonial society, and could be "very embarrassing".<sup>144</sup>

There is no doubt, however, that during the First British Occupation — in strong contrast to the last years of Dutch rule — there was a good deal of prosperity among the colonists in the neighbourhood of Table Bay;<sup>145</sup> and, as the commercial life of the settlement "became more healthily connected with the channels of world trade",<sup>146</sup> it implied a corresponding upswing in the activities of the Agency. On first coming to the Cape in 1794, Pringle had found that "the only thing to be done was to write an occasional letter, which required no kind of help"; after the arrival of the British, some assistance became necessary, but it was "only trifling and occasional"; but, towards the end of 1798, the Agent could tell East India House that

"....the business of the Hon'ble Company has increased tenfold in every branch of it in this Place, & which must still augment very considerably by the Arrangements for Supplying the Colony with Indian produce, the Detail of which will not be trifling...."<sup>147</sup>

143. Pringle to Ramsay (Private Letter), 27 March 1800, CGH.F.R., VI.

144. Ibid.

145. R.P.W. Innesman, Men of Good Hope: The Romantic Story of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, 1824-1954 (Cape Town, 1955), pp. 15-16; H.N. de Kock, Selected Subjects in the Economic History of South Africa (Cape Town, 1924), p. 85.

146. C.W. de Kiewit, A History of South Africa, Social & Economic (London, 1941), p. 30.

147. Pringle to Ramsay, 15 Sept. 1798, CGH.F.R., VI.

It was a trend which proved cumulative, until, by the beginning of 1801, the Company's Secretary was being told by Pringle:

"You will perceive Sir to what an extent the Business has now reached, and that the management of it, together with the making up and transmitting such various Details and Accounts both to India and China, as well as to you, must of necessity require the additional Assistance of Clerks...."<sup>148</sup>

In fact, since 1796, Pringle had had sporadic clerical assistance from Thomas Maxwell, "a Gentleman of Experience, Ability, and Assiduity"; and by 1798 the services of a Joseph Gibson were being used to look after unsold Company stocks in the warehouses and to supervise deliveries after each public vendue; and by 1801 Maxwell was finding regular employment in the Agency office.<sup>149</sup>

Conditions of service among the Agency staff appear to have been far from satisfactory. On his appointment, Pringle had been given no indication of what salary to expect, and soon found himself in a "very distressing situation", unable to support himself "with propriety".<sup>150</sup> Notwithstanding constant pleas to the Directors to "come to some fixed determination" about his allowance, it was only in 1798 that any salary was prescribed —

"....by which time a considerable sum was due to me, for which I drew of course — and by that means had a much larger balance in my Agent's hands than could have possibly been the case had I received payment from the Hon'ble Court yearly, instead of near 5 years arrears at once. My Agents became bankrupts at that very moment, by which unfortunate concurrence of circumstances, I suffered a very severe loss, together with long arrears of interest — to which perhaps the Hon'ble Court may admit I have a very fair claim...."<sup>151</sup>

Nonetheless, Pringle had recovered sufficiently from these setbacks by the beginning of 1800 to be able to purchase a new house for eighty thousand guilders — an amount well above the level of what the Colonial Secretary could then afford.<sup>152</sup>

148. Pringle to Ramsay, 23 Feb. 1801, GGH.F.R., VI.

149. Pringle's letters to Ramsay of 15 Sept. 1798, 12 Jan. 1800, and 25 Feb. 1801, GGH.F.R., VI.

150. Pringle to Secret Committee, 27 June 1795, GGH.F.R., I.

151. Pringle to Ramsay, 17 June 1803, GGH.F.R., VI.

152. Andrew Barnard to Macartney, 11 Jan. 1800, Fairbridge, op. cit., p. 156.

If the Agent himself was treated in such a casual manner, it was unlikely that his own local hirelings would fare better. At first, Maxwell was given "a small allowance as some recompense for his trouble", but Pringle urged the arrangement of "regular emoluments";<sup>153</sup> in 1801 he was still harping on the subject,<sup>154</sup> while as late as mid-1803, when the Agency was being wound up, Maxwell himself was pleading with East India House to consider his remuneration "after eight years under the immediate direction of Mr. Pringle".<sup>155</sup> Gibson, the outdoor help, appears to have been paid on a sporadic piece-work basis.<sup>156</sup>

While the surviving Company documents for this period shed little light on the Agent's activities, the Barnard' correspondence gives some indication of his tribulations and social status.<sup>157</sup> He was a frequent traveller along the bad road to Simon's Bay, where he had to view and report on captured, damaged, and disease-ridden vessels; he was badgered constantly for passages to India; in November, 1798, when a violent south-easter started a fire in the warehouses, Pringle had to witness recently-landed stocks of tea and other Eastern goods go up in flames; in the following year his own home was gutted by floodwaters — which explains why he was forced to purchase an expensive new residence during a period of highly inflated property prices. Yet there were some compensations: he found time to collect seeds for the Keeper of Kew Gardens, he dined and wined with the Elite (being one of the few on such occasions to remain unruffled by Maj.-Genl. Dundas' sudden outbursts of temper), and participated in the annual allotment of Constantia vintages; it is possible, however, that he was not always fully appreciative of Lady Anne's untiring efforts to find him a wife.<sup>158</sup>

153. Pringle to Ramsay, 15 Sept. 1798, CGH.F.R., VI.

154. "I beg leave to again remind you of what I formerly wrote relative to Mr. Maxwell, whose Assiduity and Attention will I now hope, induce the Hon'ble Court to take his Services into their Consideration" — Pringle to Ramsay, 23 Feb. 1801, CGH.F.R., VI.

155. Maxwell to Ramsay, 17 June 1803, CGH.F.R., I.

156. Pringle to Ramsay, 15 Sept. 1798, CGH.F.R., VI.

157. In her letters to Henry Dundas (South Africa a Century Ago), Lady Anne makes no mention of Pringle at all, but the numerous references to him in the other correspondence of the Colonial Secretary and his wife suggest that the couple were on close and friendly terms with the Agent.

158. Fairbridge, op. cit., pp. 70-71, 103, 117-118, 125, 156, 225-226, 231, 242, 285; his activities as an amateur botanist are mentioned in Eric, op. cit., and John Pringle's Pringles of the Valleys (Adelaide, Cape, 1957), Appendix on 241-242.

After the Indian governments' decision to supply the Cape directly with produce and the termination of the controversy over import licences, fairly regular shipments of Eastern goods were forthcoming and for a time there were no further outcries against scarcities. In January, 1802, however, while Pringle was busy selling "to advantage" consignments of rice and piece goods recently landed from Madras and Calcutta, news began to filter through that preliminary negotiations were afoot to restore Dutch rule. Immediately the small number of English merchants who had come to the Cape during the Occupation began to sell up their property, Government expenditures were curtailed, and bills on London became almost unprocureable. The Agent was now at a loss about how to transmit the proceeds of his sales and anxiously awaited "Instructions how to act under the present Circumstances".<sup>159</sup>

Pringle's predicament was aggravated when several colonists began to prepare vessels for trips to the French Islands and Batavia, and, in his view, the height of impudence was reached when

"Messrs. Onkraydt & Co., Merchants of this Place, applied for leave to dispatch a Vessel to Ceylon, Madras, & Bengal, to return here with Indian produce — and founding their pretensions principally on the Cape having been ceded again to Holland; I thought their Application both improper and impertinent...."<sup>160</sup>

In order to discourage further applications of this nature, the Agent persuaded the Acting Governor to issue a proclamation which reiterated the injunction against unauthorised imports from the East and their re-exportation without a special licence.<sup>161</sup> Even this measure did not provide for all contingencies: on June 14th, when the Milford arrived with an assorted cargo of Malabar produce and a regular permit from the Governor of Bombay, Pringle found that he "could not of course make any objection to those articles being admitted to an Entry".<sup>162</sup>

159. Pringle to Ramsay, 3 Jan. 1802, CGH.F.R., VI.

160. Pringle to Ramsay, 9 March 1802, CGH.F.R., VI; cf. Immelman, op. cit., p. 81.

161. Government Advertisement, 11 March 1802, Recs.C.C., IV, p. 220.

162. Pringle to Ramsay, 12 July 1802, CGH.F.R., VI.

Meanwhile, the Agent, still lacking instructions from London, had been saddled with the Colony's annual quota of China stores, which had been landed from the Royal Admiral in early April, and to William Ransay he reported:

"You will readily conceive that in the present situation of this Place I was greatly embarrassed what to do on such an Occasion. I at first determined to forward the whole to England, but immediately Applications were made on all quarters requesting me not to deprive the Colony of this Supply -- as there was no probability that any thing more could be brought here from China in less than two Years, and in short throwing themselves on the generosity of the Hon'ble Company. I could not however disguise the Difficulties that must occur in remitting the proceeds of what I had already on hand without adding this Cargo to encrease them, for, though the Sales of different Articles go on as usual, ....a Bill on England is not to be procured."<sup>163</sup>

Consequently, before allowing the consignment to be auctioned, Pringle elicited an assurance from Maj.-Genl. Dundas that, upon evacuation by the British, Company stores remaining at the Cape would be regarded "as far as possible as Public Property".<sup>164</sup>

The Treaty of Amiens, which brought a temporary halt to hostilities in Europe and provided for the retrocession of the Cape to Dutch rule, was signed on March 27th, 1802,<sup>165</sup> but formal intimation of the transfer only reached the Colony in August.<sup>166</sup> Thereafter, Pringle had his hands full arranging passages on both Company ships and other vessels (including two Americans) for the British forces from the Cape to India;<sup>167</sup> by the end of the year he had organized the evacuation of more than 3,800 men and their families.<sup>168</sup>

163. Pringle to Ransay, 13 April 1802, CGH.F.R., VI.

164. Ibid.

165. In terms of Article VI: "The Ships of every Description belonging to the other contracting Parties shall have the Right to put in there, and to purchase such Supplies as they may stand in need of as heretofore, without paying any other Duties than those to which the Ships of the Batavian Republick are subjected" (the "other" parties in this case being Britain, France, and Spain) -- G.W. Byers, Select Constitutional Documents illustrating South African History (London, 1918), pp. 12-13.

166. Hobart to Maj.-Genl. Dundas, 30 April 1802, Rees.C.C., IV, pp. 262-263; Proclamation by Maj.-Genl. Dundas, 13 Aug. 1802, Rees.C.C., IV, pp. 336-337.

167. Maj.-Genl. Dundas to Hobart, 27 Nov. 1802, Rees.C.C., IV, p. 451.

168. Rehabilitation Returns, Rees.C.C., IV, p. 453, 460.

The arrival at the Cape at the end of December, 1802, of Lord Hobart's "Most Secret" despatch instructing Maj.-Gen. Dundas to delay the hand-over,<sup>169</sup> led Pringle -- who seldom commented on the shifts and stratagems of global politics -- to write as follows to the Court of Directors:

"....every precautionary measure within our power has been adopted, and I make no doubt that in the event of Hostility the present Arrangements....will secure the Colony to Great Britain, an object of the highest Importance to the Interests of the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Company -- since it is sufficiently evident from the conversation of many Persons just arrived here, that our late Enemies are fully aware now of the Injury they can do us from this Station; as both French and Dutch upbraid the weakness and stupidity of their old Governments for having overlooked such Advantages during the American War, when they held possession of this Settlement."

Nor was there any doubt in the Agent's mind that the interests of the Company in this matter were "inseparable from the General Interests of the Empire at large".<sup>170</sup>

As the dangers of an immediate resumption of the war receded, the embarkation programme was resumed, and by the end of February, 1803, the Batavian authorities had assumed complete control.<sup>171</sup> Pringle himself was to remain on at the Cape to handle all documents and correspondence and to make final arrangements for the transfer of all public stores to the new administration.<sup>172</sup> No steps had been taken, however, to secure official recognition from the Dutch of his competency to act on behalf of the English Company, and lacking "particular and explicit Instructions" on all points in this sphere, the Agent believed that his rôle would no longer be very effective.<sup>173</sup>

This premonition proved to be quite justified: no sooner had tidings reached Cape Town that the war had been renewed (Sept.,

169. Hobart to Maj.-Gen. Dundas, 17 Oct. 1802, Recs.C.C., IV, p. 447; for a brief summary of the background to these delaying tactics, see S.H.S.E., Vol. VIII, pp. 191-192.

170. Pringle to Court of Directors, 13 Jan. 1803, OGH.F.R., VI.

171. Maj.-Gen. Dundas to Hobart, 1 March 1803, Recs.C.C., V, p.162ff.

172. Appointment of a British Agent at the Cape of Good Hope (and Instructions), 19 Feb. 1803, Recs.C.C., V, pp. 151-154.

173. Pringle to Ramsay, 25 Dec. 1802, OGH.F.R., VI.

1803), than the provisions and funds left in Pringle's charge were sequestrated by Janssens and De Mist.<sup>174</sup> Even before this event, however, the Agent had resolved to close down "the Hon'ble Company's concerns in this Colony with the least possible delay consistent with their interests". In his opinion, there were three good reasons for such a drastic step: firstly, "not being publicly recognized" by the Batavians, his continued presence was "of little real utility, and in fact unbecoming the dignity" of his employers; in the second place, he felt that the intimate knowledge he had gained of Dutch policies and plans should be delivered to Leadenhall Street in person, thereby affording the Directors "a variety of information which however useful can never be comprised in a letter"; finally, there was a strong personal motive -- having had no ~~summe~~ break for more than a decade, Pringle believed that an opportune time had arrived "to return to England on leave of absence".<sup>175</sup>

By March of 1804 no further instructions had been received from East India House and no substitute had been sent out to take over John Pringle's duties; thus, leaving everything at the Cape "in such a state as will not cause any detriment to the Hon. Company's affairs", he apparently "embraced the first means of proceeding Home" that presented itself.<sup>176</sup> It would have been a carping critic indeed who would have challenged the Agent's assertion that during the First Occupation, with regard to his employers, "I can with the clearest conscience declare that I have never once omitted using my best Endeavours to further their Interest as far as my Judgment & means have permitted".<sup>177</sup>

174. Rees, C.C., V (Theal's Digest), p. 109; the total amount involved was more than £50,000 and must have proved a welcome addition to the depleted treasury. Nearly eleven years later, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Company, on hearing that peace negotiations were pending between Britain and Holland, urged the President of the Board of Control to press on the Dutch an "equitable" claim for reimbursement -- Messrs. Alphinstone and Inglis to the Earl of Buckinghamshire, 30 Aug. 1814, Rees, C.C., X, pp. 164-165.

175. Pringle to Ramsay, 16 June 1803, CGH.F.R., I.

176. Ibid. In this June despatch Pringle had added: "As opportunities of hearing from home are so very uncertain, I shall remain here in the expectation of your commands until February or March next"; there are no surviving subsequent despatches for this period, and the East India Register & Directory for 1805 (compiled in mid-1804) does not list any Company representative at the Cape.

177. Pringle to Ramsay (Private Letter), 27 March 1800, CGH.F.R., VI.

While the records of this period indicate that there constantly lurked the "danger" of the Cape becoming a distributing base for Eastern wares, little progress was made during the First Occupation in the Colony's ability to export its own produce. In May, 1801, Pringle had received a despatch from Calcutta requesting a consignment of Cape wheat and flour for Mocha<sup>178</sup> and asking for information about what "comforts" and other articles the settlement had available for export.<sup>179</sup>

The Agent's reply provides an interesting commentary on the state of local commerce at that time. The Colony itself, he pointed out, was actually suffering "such great scarcity" of both grain and flour that it was only by the relief of rice expected from India that "we can hope to make shift until next harvest". Wine exports were equally difficult since supplies of casks were inadequate and sugar deliveries uncertain. Moreover, Pringle knew of

"nothing produced here that can be called 'comforts', unless your Lordship means raisins & dried fruits -- but as no trade is carried on in these Articles, the quantity made is limited to the usual demand for internal consumption, and the sea stock of Ships, so that the supply to be expected from hence is at once trifling and sporadic...."

And, while a certain number of draft horses and bullocks might be procured for export, the problem of forage for their maintenance at sea could not be easily overcome. In addition, lacking its own shipping, the Cape was wholly dependent on those vessels

"such as might accidentally come here with a cargo to deliver -- a chance so uncertain that your Lordship must never place the smallest reliance on tonnage to be procured at this place".

Nor was Pringle too optimistic about what the future might hold in store:

"....although I cannot pretend to State to what extent the Colony is capable of improvement, yet I am certain, years must elapse before it will be fully equal to supply the Army and Navy, together with its own Inhabitants, and have any Surplus worth

178. This Arabian Red Sea port was no longer the great trading emporium it had been in the 17th century, but Company vessels still put in there occasionally to collect Arab horses, dyestuffs, and, of course, coffee -- P.F. Robinson, The Trade of the East India Company from 1709 to 1813 (Cambridge, 1912), Ch. IV.

179. Governor General in Council, Fort William, to Pringle, 2 March 1801, CGH.F.R., I.

mentioning to spare — hitherto we have never been able to get any grain in advance, but deem it fortunate if one Harvest brings us on to the next... In short, it appears that the resources of the Cape are still deemed both in Europe and India much greater than they really are."<sup>180</sup>

Thus the Colony's commercial horizons, it would appear, were still strictly limited, seldom extending beyond the supply of Cape Town's civilian population, the armed forces, and stores for passing ships. Yet the beginnings of a genuine export trade were closer at hand than the Agent imagined, and he himself was to play a not unimportant part in helping to lay the foundations of such a traffic in the following decade.<sup>181</sup>

Moreover, if the Cape had not yet managed to throw off the shackles of a privileged company, commercial affairs during the First Occupation contrasted favourably with pre-1795 circumstances, when the Colony had been administered directly by the servants of an enterprise which made the search for monopolistic profits its chief object. The English Company, on the other hand, had only an indirect influence on policy decisions made in London; it exercised no control over local government, and many of the former petty restrictions and exactions on internal trade had been swept away, enabling business enterprise within the settlement to develop both in volume and complexity.<sup>182</sup>

In addition, before 1795 virtually all external commerce had been in the hands of Jan Compagnie, a rapidly sinking institution with a very slender hold on its former great trading empire in the Eastern Seas, into which Dutch shipping was finding it increasingly difficult to penetrate. But, thereafter, only

180. Pringle to Lord Wellesley & Council, 16 May 1801, CGB.P.R., I. Nonetheless, with the French still in Egypt, Mocha remained strategically important, and the Agent managed to collect a small cargo of malted provisions and wines, which was loaded on the brig Fanny for that port, the freight charge amounting to 4,643 s.rupces — Pringle to Wellesley, 27 June 1801, W.O.1/13782, P.R.O.

181. See below, Ch. III, passim.

182. A whole series of progressive economic regulations are to be found in the proclamations issued during the middle period of the First Occupation: for instance, anti-monopoly measures were promulgated by Craig (11 Feb. 1797, B.O.61, f. 241-243), Macartney (5 Sept. 1797, B.O. 61, f.425-428; 27 Dec. 1797, B.O. 64, f.121; 2 Oct. 1798, B.O.62, f.133-136), and Dundas (9 Dec. 1798, B.O. 63, f.21), arrear loan-farm rents were remitted (4 July 1797, B.O.64, f.100), while a generous attitude was adopted towards tax collections (11 July 1797, B.O.61, f.365-72).  
Examples of commercial progress are to be found in O.L. Leipoldt, 300 Years of Cape Wines (Cape Town, 1952), pp. 80-81, and P.W. Laidler, The Growth and Government of Cape Town (Cape Town, 1939), pp. 154-155, although the latter writer adds that business morality remained "at a very low ebb", ibid., p. 190.

the trade to the east of the Cape was monopolised, and then by a company which did command adequate shipping facilities and extensive sources of supply, which frequently mitigated its chartered privileges by allowing private merchants to supplement the flow of Asiatic goods to the Colony,<sup>183</sup> which, on occasion, even encouraged the re-export of such articles,<sup>184</sup> and (unlike its Dutch counterpart) was interested mainly in preserving its exclusive status<sup>185</sup> rather than in deriving maximum returns.

If, economically speaking, the Cape as yet had relatively little to offer John Company and was looked upon more as a potential commercial danger than a trading asset, from a strategic angle the Colony remained of vital importance (and this consideration was to bring the British back in 1806). Yet hardly a passage is to be found in the records of the First Occupation which is concerned primarily with devising means to serve most effectively the wellbeing of the colonists themselves; for, as John Pringle had observed, the interests of Company and Nation in this matter were synonymous — in spite of the lessons of American independence, the traditional mercantilist notion that a colony could and should be run for the sole benefit of the occupying power was still popularly regarded as being very much of a practical proposition.

183. Such indulgences never included traffic in China goods, the Company preserving that part of its monopoly "with the utmost rigour" — Pringle to Maj. Genl. Dundas, 11 Feb. 1799, B.O.9/197-198. Nor was the Company always to follow such a liberal policy as regards Eastern indents — see below, Ch. III, (i)(a). But during the First Occupation, it was ~~was~~ only on rare occasions (an instance is to be found in B.O.9/195) that the Agent objected to the landing of piece-goods as being "most decidedly contrary to the King's Order in Council". In fact, even the masters of visiting foreign vessels were frequently permitted to dispose of Eastern articles (tea excluded) to defray their expenses in port — Pringle to Bernard, 30 Sept. 1802, B.O.9/351; petition of captain of American ship, Foxwell, B.O.41.

184. The most notable case was the despatch from the Cape of Indian commodities to Madagascar, since it was the Directors' wish to furnish that island "from hence with any little supply, rather than that the French or Portuguese should reap the Advantage" — Pringle to Brig. Genl. Fraser (commander during Dundas's absence at Graaff Reinet), 16 Aug. 1799, B.O.9/223.

185. To that end, Pringle was instructed "to send by every opportunity, an Account in Abstract, of the Cargoes of all Ships which touch at the Cape homeward bound" and to ensure that the total indents for any year did not exceed "the Amount of the Annual Consumption... in as much as any thing beyond that object is at present the chief ground of Alarm" — Pringle to Macartney (with enclosures), 13 May 1798, B.O.9/63-69; and 16 Nov. 1798 (with encls.), B.O.9/161-162.

## II. A TIME OF TRANSITION (1803-10)

### (i) General Background to the Re-Occupation

#### (a)

Unlike their Dutch predecessors, the Batavian administrators did not regard the Cape Colony merely as an exploitable possession of somewhat doubtful value en-route to the East; nor was the settlement to them simply a temporary possession of great strategic importance in wartime, as it had been to the British. As far as Advocate De Mist and Governor Janssens were concerned, the Cape was an integral if distant segment of the motherland, and they sought to enhance the material welfare of its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

Among the many grandiose schemes to encourage the Colony's commercial development which they toyed with, one of the most significant was the idea of promoting the Cape's pivotal position in the Eastern trade by throwing open the commerce of the Indian Ocean to private Dutch citizens, preserving only the traffic in tea, spices, and saltpetre as a State monopoly;<sup>2</sup> the colonists themselves, besides being allowed to trade freely with Holland ~~and~~ and all other Dutch possessions, were to have access to the American markets and the African islands.<sup>3</sup>

Such laudable intentions, however, had to contend with the realities of a global war: by the end of 1803, Dutch shipping had once again been swept from the seas and the settlement was dependent on irregular visits from American and Danish vessels;<sup>4</sup> while farmers were saddled with unsold surpluses,<sup>5</sup> there were serious shortages of imported goods, leading to a sharp rise in prices —

1. De Mist, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-171, 186, 268; see also Prof. H.B. Thom's introduction to W.S. Van Rynveld, Aanmerkingen over de Verbetering van het Vee aan de Kaap de Goede Hoop (1804), Van Hooft Society, No. 23 (Cape Town, 1942), pp. 16-17.

2. De Mist, *ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

3. Van der Merwe, J.P., Die Kaap onder die Bataafse Republiek, 1803-06 (Amsterdam, 1926), pp. 327-331.

4. Immelman, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

5. John Barrow, Travels into the Interior of South Africa (2nd edn., London, 1806), Vol. II, p. 341.

a situation which was aggravated further by additional issues of paper rixdollar notes.<sup>6</sup> As had happened so often before in the Colony's history, slump had followed boom.

To at least one Batavian official, this state of affairs came as no surprise: young Baron van Pallandt (who, for a short while was Janssens' acting private secretary) found much poverty and hardship:

"At the present time [i.e., mid-1803] solid wealth is generally lacking, and the officially ascertained liabilities in insolvent estates amount to nearly twenty million Dutch florins, and this with a white population of 6,000, including the garrison."<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, van Pallandt believed that if the Cape emerged as an emporium for Eastern goods, this would be of doubtful value to Holland itself:

"If the inhabitants of the Cape were capable of giving to their undertakings a solid foundation<sup>8</sup> they could open a store of goods which they could obtain from India, and what the Republic's ships did not fetch they could send to Holland. It would remain to be seen if this easy method of carrying on trade with India would not tempt certain small merchants in Europe to fetch at the Cape merchandise for which, owing to their limited means and the length and risks of the voyage, they could not go as far as India. All the commodities which come from India [to Holland] would as a consequence become more expensive. It was perhaps the fear of such a possibility which made a former government do everything in its power to prevent trade from flourishing at the Cape."<sup>9</sup>

It seemed unreasonable to expect the mother country to sacrifice itself in this way for a colony which "even now is costing large sums of money", but had little to offer in return in the form of genuine exportable wealth.<sup>10</sup>

6. E.H.D. Arndt, Banking and Currency Developments in South Africa, 1692-1927 (Cape Town, 1928), pp. 21-22.

7. Baron A. van Pallandt, General Remarks on the Cape of Good Hope (1803); translated from the French and published by the Trustees of the S. African Public Library (Cape Town, 1917), p. 31. The author had this brochure printed at the Government Press without Janssens' knowledge and attempted to send copies to Republican officials in Holland; the "plot" was discovered, most of the copies were destroyed, and the young baron himself was sent home in disgrace (see Graham Botha's foreword to the translation).

8. He had previously suggested that they were incapable of doing so, in view of their innate "laziness" and their frivolous consumption of luxuries during the First British Occupation — ibid., pp. 30-31.

9. Ibid., pp. 34-35. Displayed here is an outmoded mercantilism of the 17th century variety which De Mist himself had firmly discarded, and the logic of arguing that increased competition among private shippers would serve to raise prices in Holland is not particularly apparent; moreover, van Pallandt's assertion that the former Dutch Company had limited the Colony's commerce in the interest of lower prices at home is sheer eyewash.

10. Grain supplies were irregular, Cape wines were not much sought after, there were great drawbacks to wool exports, while "whaling is only in the preparatory stage at present" — ibid., pp. 37-38.

Now was the Cape of such consequence any longer as a half-way refreshment station; according to van Pallandt, "nautical art" had reached the stage of such "perfection" that the Colony's value in this respect had been lost.<sup>11</sup> There remained the strategic question: could such a fortified post, three thousand leagues from the Netherlands, be of such use to the Republic in time of war?

"Our weak navy answers for us, and the masters of the seas would prevent us from carrying out any enterprise successfully by merely sending a small squadron to cruise before our ports, thus blockading us within our own territory.... The wild seas would be no obstacle to them, seeing that the British ships cruised in these waters during the whole period of the war."<sup>12</sup>

These facts, which are rather painful to confess but nevertheless are true, are not of a nature to flatter us nor to raise our political hopes. Under conditions such as these the Cape would be of no use to the Republic. It would never repay all the sacrifices made for it, and the Colony would merely be a burden in time of war."<sup>13</sup>

In short, although "praiseworthy efforts" were being made to bring about improvements, the Cape was "far from being a terrestrial paradise" and its supposed advantages were merely the product of De Mist's "enthusiastic imagination"; it was not worthy of heavy sacrifices by the Republic and would never compensate "for the loss of the Island of Ceylon".<sup>14</sup>

Although it is difficult to judge the extent to which such views typified the outlook of the junior Batavian officials at the Cape, it seems apparent that the Commissioner-General's visionary optimism was by no means shared by all of those in his retinue.

(b)

If there were Dutch observers like van Pallandt who believed that the Colony was of little value, there were also English propagandists who were prepared — because of the more favourable position in which their own country was then placed — to put forward exactly the opposite case in favour of British re-occupation. No

11. Van Pallandt, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

12. Tidings of the renewal of hostilities in Europe had not yet reached the Cape when these lines were written.

13. Van Pallandt, *ibid.*, p. 29.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

sooner had John Pringle returned to England to report in person to the East India House on the Cape situation,<sup>15</sup> than there was published in London a detailed analysis of the political and commercial advantages which might be derived from British re-possession.<sup>16</sup>

The author -- a Captain in the Royal Irish Regiment -- recounted the prosperity derived by the colonists from the First Occupation, which he contrasted with the poverty and grievances of the Cape settlers under Dutch rule.<sup>17</sup> But, with the settlement once again in the hands of a "tributary republic", direct French control of the base was imminent, and this would afford Britain's "intriguing and perfidious enemies" with an ideal means "of undermining the pillars of our commercial grandeur".<sup>18</sup> As in 1795, it was fear of France and the question of naval strategy<sup>19</sup> which focused British attention on the Colony:

"For the purpose of defending our own foreign possessions, or keeping our enemies in check, no station can indeed be found comparable to the Cape of Good Hope. The facility and expedition with which troops can be sent from it to the East or West-Indies, to South America, or to any part of the coasts of Africa, must enable us to counteract, with the best possible effect, every attempt which might be prejudicial to our interests."<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the military and naval advantages which made the retaking of the Colony a matter of urgent "political prudence", there were subsidiary benefits to be derived: an export trade in wine, tobacco, olives, and sugar, it was believed, could be developed provided immigrants and capital investments were forthcoming; and foreign (particularly American) rivalry in the Indian Ocean would be discouraged.<sup>21</sup> In any event, with the resources of St. Helena becoming scantier than ever and Rio de Janeiro an unsatisfactory landfall because its Portuguese controllers at any moment might come under French sway, "a station in those seas for refreshing the crews of our trading vessels is an object daily rising in importance".<sup>22</sup>

15. See above, Chapter I (xi).

16. Robert Percival, An Account of the Cape of Good Hope (London, 1804); a year previously the same author had written An Account of the Island of Ceylon.

17. Percival, ibid., ch. xvi, pp. 306-317.

18. Ibid., ch. xvii, pp. 329-338.

19. A. T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812 (London, 1892), Vol. II, pp. 388-390.

20. Percival, ibid., p. 335. 21. Ibid., pp. 331-333. 22. Ibid.,

In the year of Trafalgar the struggle against Napoleon was rapidly assuming a new shape, and for the next decade economic warfare, embracing the Berlin Decrees and the Continental System, was to become a major factor in the Franco-British conflict.<sup>23</sup> Under these circumstances, English pamphleteers were probably justified in arguing that, if Napoleon occupied the Cape, the trade of the East India Company would be badly hit by French cruisers using it as an operational base.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the focal point of British interest in the west was now South America, where there seemed to be a possibility of adding disaffected Spanish colonies to the New Empire or at least of making them part of a vast triangle of trade which would link up the South Atlantic with India and Europe.<sup>25</sup> How East India House would have reacted if this plan had materialized is by no means clear,<sup>26</sup> but that there was a close connection between the re-occupation of the Cape and the hope of expanding British trade in Latin America is indicated by the sequence of events.

On September 1st, 1805 (i.e., fifty days before the Battle of Trafalgar), a fleet of fifty-one ships under Sir Home Popham, with Maj.-Gen. Baird and 6,700 troops on board, left Cork ostensibly for the East Indies, but with secret instructions to occupy the Cape. Arriving in Table Bay on January 2nd, this force quickly overcame Janssens' gallant but futile attempts at resistance, and by early March the Batavian leaders had evacuated the Colony.<sup>27</sup> As in 1795, regular vessels of the East India Company (Jane Duchess of Gordon, William Pitt, Europa, and Streatham), together with twelve "extra" ships,<sup>28</sup> were attached to and formed part of the squadron.

23. G. Braun, Europe and the French Imperium (New York, 1938), pp. 92-97; S.P. Hackscher, The Continental System: An Economic Interpretation (Oxford, 1932), Part II, chs. 1-II.

24. Both Pitt and Henry Dundas (now Viscount Melville) were fully alive to this danger; they had regretted the Cape's retrocession to the Dutch and conferred on the possibilities of re-occupation early in 1805 — J. Holland Rose, William Pitt (London, 1912), Vol. II, p. 532.

25. H. Herring, A History of Latin America (New York, 1955), pp. 270-271; C.H.B.A., Vol. II, pp. 102-104, Vol. VIII, pp. 196-197.

26. Subsequent correspondence between the Cape and Brazil agents of the Company suggests, however, that the Directors would have prevented Cape merchants from playing an active rôle in such a triangular traffic — see (iii)(d) below.

27. Rees.O.C., V, pp. 222-360; G.H. Theal, Belangrijke historische dokumenten over Zuid Afrika (Cape Town, 1911), Vol. III, pp. 202ff.

28. Rees.O.C., V, p. 234, 242; VIII, p. 122.

After the surrender of the Cape, Popham apparently became uneasy at the inaction of his fleet in the midst of the world-wide Napoleonic struggle, and was impressed by the talk of an American slave-trader whose brig happened to be in Table Bay that surprise attacks against Buenos Aires or Montevideo were certain of success.<sup>29</sup> The Admiral's appetite was whetted further by Baird (now installed as Military Governor), who considered

"The possession of a Settlement on the Coast of South America ...pregnant with incalculable advantages, as well to our Nation at large as to this Colony in particular; and I need not point out...the peculiar benefit to be derived from its opening, in our hands, a new and profitable channel for the exportation of our home manufactures, which it has been so much the study and wish of the present French Government to obstruct and diminish."<sup>30</sup>

Thus, with 700 men on board, Popham sailed for St. Helena on April 13th, where he induced the Governor of the island to spare him a few more troops;<sup>31</sup> the ill-fated expedition then headed for the River Plate.<sup>32</sup> The episode was a clear illustration that the re-occupation of the Cape had been viewed, in some circles at least, in relation to the New World as well as to the East.

(c)

No sooner had word reached Whitehall that the Second Occupation was proceeding according to plan, than the Secretary of State recommended to the Court of Directors

"...a renewal of the orders which were given to the Company's Servants in India & China in 1797 for furnishing the Cape of Good Hope with the necessary supplies from those countries."<sup>33</sup>

The Company, however, was not going to be stampeded into making any rash promises; its experience of the Cape during the First Occupation had not been an altogether happy one, while the struggle against France and its own difficulties with Indian rulers had

29. F.A. Kirkpatrick, A History of the Argentine Republic (Cambridge, 1931), pp. 46-48.

30. Baird to Castlereagh, 14 Apr., 1806, Recs.C.C., V, p. 398.

31. Gosse, op. cit., p. 237.

32. For details of the British landings in South America, the campaigns fought, and the ultimate withdrawal, see Kirkpatrick, ibid., ch. V, R. Levene & W.S. Robertson, A History of Argentina (New York, 1937), pp. 191-202, and Bernard Moses, Spain's Declining Power in South America (Univ. California Press, 1919), ch. xiii.

33. Windham to Wm. Elphinstone, 3 Apr., 1806, CGH.P.R., I. Parliament at this time was considering a "Trade Regulation Bill" for the Colony -- Hansard, VI, 446, 523, 539, 563, 636, 640, 805.

played havoc with its dividend-earning capacities:

"The situation of the Company is, at this time, very different from what it was at the last renewal of the Charter, in 1793. European war, with hardly any intermission, through the whole of the period that has since elapsed, has exceedingly increased the expenses, and reduced the profits of the Company at home; and has likewise enlarged the scale of expenses abroad; where, moreover, wars with the Native Powers have been repeatedly carried on, to the vast accumulation of the Indian debt, now advanced from eight millions sterling, at which it stood in 1793, to about thirty-two millions.... As, in consequence of all the events which have happened since the year 1793, the benefits intended to the Proprietors of East-India Stock, by the Charter then passed, have not been realized...."<sup>54</sup>

Accordingly, the ~~HONOURABLE~~ Court's Committee of Correspondence, after a close scrutiny of the Cape Agency's previous history, resolved to recommend that the Company should undertake to supply the Colony with Asiatic produce only under the following conditions:

- "1st. That an Order of Council be issued similar to the one dated 28th December 1796 vesting the whole Import and Export Trade (excepting Prize Cargoes for which a particular Regulation is proposed) in commodities the produce or manufacture of Countries to the Eastward of the Cape solely in the Company; to give effect to this Regulation it will be necessary that the Company's Agent at the Cape be permitted to have free access to the Entries at the Custom House and also that the powers and competency of the Court of Justice there in respect to the infliction of Penalties etc. for the breach of Regulations be clearly and unequivocally defined to the end that every facility be afforded both to the discovery and punishment of illicit Trades.
- 2nd. The Indents for the Supply of the Cape to be framed with a view to the actual Consumption of the Colony and transmitted by the Company's Agent there, to the respective Governments in India and the Supra Cargoes at Canton.
- 3rd. The Articles in question to be consigned to the Company's Agent at the Cape who should be directed to put them up to Sale in small lots, at an advance not exceeding 46 p.cent. on their cost, freight and charges.
- 4th. As the Supply of the Cape by the Company with Indian and China produce will be undertaken merely with a desire to

54. Letter from the Chairman and Deputy Chairman (Edward Parry & Charles Grant) to the President of the Board of Control (Robert Dundas), 15 Dec., 1808 — Correspondence and Proceedings in the Negotiation for a Renewal of the East-India Company's Charter (London, 1817), pp. 4-5.

meet the wishes of Government and to administer to the comfort and convenience of the Colony, it will be but just that they be guarded against the probability of loss; in reference to this point, it becomes indispensably requisite that some specific regulations be adopted in respect to the disposal at the Cape of Prize Cargoes, the produce of the East; it should therefore be directed that such Cargoes if sold at all there be sold for exportation only.

5th. The limited means of remitting the produce of the Company's Sales, at the Cape, necessarily causing a great accumulation of the Paper Currency in the hands of their Agent; whereby the Company have heretofore sustained a very serious loss, it becomes an essential consideration that this inconvenience may be as much as possible obviated in future, to effect which it is submitted that an arrangement be made with His Majesty's Ministers that the Government should receive from the Company's Agent the proceeds of the Sales for which Bills of Exchange should be drawn on England, and as the loss formerly sustained by the Company (as of the Account above referred to) has arisen from Circumstances which the Company could not controul, and to which they in a similar Contingency may be again subject, it is submitted that an arrangement be made with His Majesty's Ministers that the Company be reimbursed the Amount of every loss arising from the Causes beforementioned.

6th. It having been ascertained when the Cape was formerly in possession of Great Britain that Americans and other Neutrals advantageously traded in the Export of European Merchandise to the Cape, thereby draining the Colony of its bullion and probably encouraging a contraband of Indian Articles, it is submitted that such an increased Import Duty at the Cape be imposed on Neutral Cargoes in comparison with British as would effectually discourage their adventuring therein. Formerly Imports in British Ships the produce or manufacture of Great Britain paid no Duty; in all other cases the Duty was, if in British Ships, 5 p.cent., Foreign only 10 p.cent. on the invoice value which in the latter case ought to be increased to 15 or even 20 p.cent.

7th. The possession of the Cape affording great facilities to unlicensed British subjects proceeding to India and the power formerly possessed by the Company's Agent being very inadequate to counteract the evil, except on Company's Ships, it is recommended as highly necessary to adopt some Regulation to prevent His Majesty's Ships

as well as the Company's, or those under Foreign Colours, from carrying passengers being British Subjects or the Subjects of States at War with Great Britain, from the Cape to India, without the special permission of the Company's Agent in Writing."<sup>35</sup>

This document has been reproduced in toto since, in effect, most of its contents were to form the framework within which the Cape Agency was to function during the second period of John Pringle's incumbency.

A week thereafter, the Directors, conceiving these proposals "to be indispensably requisite for the proper management of the Subject in question", forwarded them to Secretary Windham;<sup>36</sup> he, in turn, submitted the draft measures to the Lords of the Treasury, who sanctioned the first four,<sup>37</sup> expressed doubts about the fifth, and submitted the sixth and seventh resolutions to the consideration of the Lords of the Committee of Council for Trade.<sup>38</sup> Further delays ensued while the Privy Councillors debated the questions of duties on neutral cargoes and passages to the East,<sup>39</sup> but in the end the Company triumphed in almost all directions.

Eventually, not only was Leadenhall Street's monopoly re-affirmed in language which hardly differed from the Order in Council of December, 1796,<sup>40</sup> but Governor Caledon received instructions to give the Company's Agent full access to the Customs' records and all other facilities "requisite for the due execution of his business", and to take special precautions against unlicensed passages to India;<sup>41</sup> moreover, he was ordered to impose

35. Correspondence Reports, Vol. 30, No. 65, pp. 223-226 (30 May 1806).

36. Elphinstone & Parry to Windham, 6 June 1806, CGH.P.R., I.

37. Order in Council, 11 June 1806, Privy Council Registers, P.C.2/170, pp. 353-355 (P.R.O.).

38. Extract of Treasury Minutes, 14 Oct. 1806, CGH.P.R., I.

39. Minutes of the Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations, Vol. 17, p. 203, 246 (P.R.O.).

40. Proclamation by Caledon, 29 Sept. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 155. In fact, Baird, soon after arriving at the Cape, had laid down that Eastern produce should only be admitted under licence and had absolutely prohibited the re-exportation of such goods — "Instructions for the Collector of His Majesty's Customs in this Settlement", 16 April 1806, Recs.C.C., V, pp. 402-404.

41. Castlereagh to Caledon, 30 May 1807, Recs.C.C., VI, pp. 116-117.

a 15 per cent ad valorem duty on all cargoes brought in by neutral vessels.<sup>42</sup> Further, the Company was assured that all paper currency received from Agency sales would be exchanged for bills on London at the same rate as Government drafts on the Treasury were drawn<sup>43</sup> — a guarantee which raised a storm of protest from those civil servants at the Cape whose salaries were paid in sterling money, and who consequently feared that this preference would preclude them from making any remittances.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, with the exception of the prize goods issue, which remained fluid,<sup>45</sup> and the Government's natural reluctance to reimburse the Company for any loss of its property at the Cape as a result of future hostile sequestrations, the Directors had gained all their demands. It remained to be seen whether, in return, John Company would exert itself sufficiently to furnish the colonists of the Cape with a regular and ample supply of Eastern products at reasonable prices.

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#### (ii) Initial Problems and Policies

##### (a)

Cape Town in 1806, with a white civilian population of less than 7,000,<sup>46</sup> had not changed markedly in character since the previous period of British rule: although some hotels and inns had been built and shops were gradually replacing horse trading, ~~many~~ colonists still lived on their slaves' petty peddling, hyenas still scavenged the streets at night, visitations of smallpox were not infrequent, and the state of the town market place was formidable to everything without wings.<sup>47</sup> Contacts with the outside world remained sporadic and uncertain, and in

42. Proclamation by Calcutta, 18 Sept. 1807, Recs.C.C., VI, pp. 203-204.

43. Castlereagh to Edm. Parry, 22 May 1807, CGH.F.R., I.

44. cf. Recs.C.C., VI, p. 217; see below, Ch. IV, (ii)(d).

45. See (iii)(b) below.

46. Census Returns for 1806, Recs.C.C., VI, p. 75.

47. F.W. Laidler, A Tavern of the Ocean (Cape Town, 1927), pp. 124-125, 140, 144, 146; soon after his return, the Company's Agent had to report "the awful visitation of tremendous Earthquakes more or less violent every few hours" — Pringle to Ramsay, 9 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., VII (cf. Recs.C.C., VII, p. 238, Laidler, ibid., pp. 125-126).

Table Bay "harbour" — which was exposed to violent storms all the year round<sup>48</sup> — there were only two minute jetties where cargoes from visiting ships could be unloaded off small rowing boats.<sup>49</sup>

Those British traders who had settled in Cape Town after 1795 had, for the most part, returned home when the Batavians took over.<sup>50</sup> Of the few who remained on, most were ordered to leave by Janagens when hostilities were renewed, although at least William Caldwell "and a few other English Gentlemen", while nominally prisoners-of-war, were allowed to continue trading with neutral vessels and to land goods from them.<sup>51</sup> After the Second Occupation, there was a steady trickle of British merchants back to the Cape,<sup>52</sup> until, roundabouts 1810, they had come to form an important, though numerically insignificant,<sup>53</sup> part of the urban community. It was this group which handled the bulk of the Colony's foreign trading activities, and firms like Ebdon & Watts, Hamilton Ross & Co., W. Wilberforce Bird, and Shortt & Berry, were to figure prominently in the Company's Agency records.<sup>54</sup>

During the First Occupation, William Huskisson, as Under-Secretary for War, had held a watching brief in London over matters affecting the Colony's interests, but had not concerned himself unduly with trading problems. After 1807, however, his successors in this capacity made frequent representations to the appropriate quarters when matters arose which were likely to affect the settlement's commercial status.<sup>55</sup>

48. Such was the danger of ships dragging their anchors and being driven on shore during the winter north-westerlies, that Company vessels were regularly instructed to make for Simon's Bay instead if they chanced to be in Cape waters between May and October; see below, Ch. III, n.261.

49. M.H. de Kock, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-338.

50. See above, Ch. I (xi).

51. Caldwell to Pringle, 8 June 1808, *CGH.F.H.*, X; in 1806 Caldwell became Deputy Postmaster, and subsequently (1811) was appointed vice Postmaster — *Recs.C.C.*, V, p. 356; VIII, p. 239.

52. See, for example, *Recs.C.C.*, VI, p. 313; VII, p. 139.

53. Adult male "British Civil Inhabitants" numbered less than thirty in 1810; by 1814 the figure stood at roundabout fifty — cf. *Recs.C.C.*, VII, pp. 273-274; I, p. 104.

54. Correspondence with merchants of Dutch origin accounts for less than a quarter of Pringle's dealings with local traders.

55. The relevant Huskisson Papers (Add. MSS, 38789) are disappointingly uninformative on economic relations between the Cape and Britain; Huskisson's successors are listed in Appendix III(a), below; see, also, Ch. V (iii), and *Recs.C.C.*, VII, p. 247; IX, pp. 137-138; X, pp. 210-211.

When Baird and Pughan had taken possession of Cape Town, they soon discovered that the recent poor harvest was wholly insufficient to meet the needs of the colonists plus the augmented garrison.<sup>56</sup> Immediately, transports were despatched to St. Helena and Madras for rice, wheat, and flour,<sup>57</sup> and by September, 1806, the return of these vessels, together with improved crops at home, had removed all fears of a scarcity of foodstuffs.<sup>58</sup> Since the renewal of the war in 1805, however, the Colony had been starved of piece-goods and other Eastern wares, and, after the Warmer Senate had made representations to Baird on the subject, he allowed several American ships to land calicoes and coffee;<sup>59</sup> but his successor, Lord Caledon, followed a less consistent policy in this respect.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, East India House, having entrenched its privileged status at the Cape, forwarded indents to Calcutta and Canton in an attempt to meet the Colony's most urgent needs.<sup>61</sup> As there was no prospect of these supplies arriving before the passage of at least another year, and because the landings permitted by Baird and Caledon had been deficient in both quantity and variety, and Cape market was still virtually destitute of Asiatic products when John Pringle returned to his post.

(b)

The Agent (accompanied now by a wife and child) arrived in Simon's Bay on the H.C.S. Walmer Castle on the morning of the 31st May, 1806, and proceeded immediately to "wait upon" Governor Caledon, reporting to him the substance of his instructions from

56. Proclamation by Baird, 14 Feb. 1806, Recs.C.S., V, p. 347.

57. Baird to Lord Bentinck (Governor of Madras), 6 Feb. 1806, G.H.34/2; Secy., Political Dept., St. St. George, to Baird, 12 May 1806, G.H.13/1; Col. Robert Patton (Governor, St. Helena) to Baird, 22 April 1806, G.H.13/2. Most of the flour sent from St. Helena was found to be "unfit for use".

58. Baird to Windham, 11 Sept. 1806, G.H.23/1.

59. Baird to Windham, 28 July and (?) Aug. 1806, G.H.23/1.

60. When the homeward-bound China fleet touched at the Cape in September, 1807, Caledon permitted the offloading of some miscellaneous articles, but would not sanction the admission of any tea or other items likely "to interfere with the East India Company's trade and consequently tend to its disadvantage"; a few months later, when the Minerva arrived from Ceylon with a cargo of eastern produce, he "regretfully" withheld permission to land it "in consequence of the orders received from home upon this head", although the Governor of Ceylon had sanctioned the voyage; at roundabout the same time, however, the Cape Packet's freight of piece-goods, sugar, and gunny bags from Calcutta was admitted without fuss, the vessel's master holding a licence issued by the Bengal authorities — Caledon to Castlereagh, 24 Sept. 1807, G.H.23/1; Caledon to Lt. Col. Maitland (Governor of Ceylon), 22 March 1808, G.H.34/2; licence and invoices, Cape Packet (Calcutta), 4 Jan. 1808, G.H.13/1.

61. Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 8 June 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

the Court of Directors; he was happy to find that

"...his Lordship (is) perfectly disposed to do every thing that can be wished, for the purpose of carrying into full effect the views of the Hon. Court as far as depends upon him."<sup>62</sup>

With this prospect of sympathetic support, Pringle set to work on the difficult task of furnishing Eastern goods for local consumption.

Until the Company's own indents started to come in, a series of makeshift, arbitrary arrangements, admitting private imports of scarce supplies, were necessary. After asking for and being promptly furnished with a Customs return of Indian produce landed during the previous twelve months,<sup>63</sup> the Agent outlined his immediate intentions to the local authorities:

"...as the chief object of the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Court of Directors is to ensure a regular Supply of Eastern produce for the bona fide use of this Colony, and not for re-exportation or illicit Trade, that upon all occasions where His Excellency shall judge such importation necessary until the Company receive their own Stores for that purpose, I shall be happy to do every thing in my power to forward so desirable an object; it being understood that such Articles shall be only in small quantities at a time, and for the purpose of immediate consumption."<sup>64</sup>

At the same time, he reported to his superiors in London that

"...the Colony is in the greatest distress for want of the most necessary Articles of Supply — common brown Sugar has been selling at 6 Schellings the pound, & is still at 4 — and many other things in proportion; it is therefore absolutely incumbent upon me to endeavour to provide for this pressing want if possible, either by purchasing if an opportunity should offer, or of permitting a reasonable Supply to be imported for daily consumption".<sup>65</sup>

Thus, within less than a month of his return, Pringle sanctioned sales by public vendue of rice, sugar, coffee, sago, muslins, calicoes, and other piece goods — with a total value of more than £2,000 — all of which had been imported by local traders, but had been placed under Custom House seal pending the Agent's

62. Pringle to Ramsay, 29 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

63. Pringle to G. Bird (Deputy Colonial Secretary), 16 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Theo. Ord (Customs Dept.) to G. Bird, 29 June, 1808, CGH.F.R., X.

64. Pringle to G. Bird, 29 June 1808, CGH.F.R., 卷, XVIII

65. Pringle to Ramsay, 29 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

arrival, and which he believed were "really wanted in this Colony, the Company having as yet nothing in store".<sup>66</sup>

Once embarked on such a policy, Pringle continued in this direction for some time: in July the captors' agents of the French brig La Jeune Laurie were permitted to sell small quantities of various items<sup>67</sup> which were not worth "the object of any merchant's purchasing for exportation", while their disposal locally, in Caledon's view, was not "likely to interfere with the Company's interests";<sup>68</sup> in August, the officers and crew of the American ship Reliance (which had been seized and condemned in the Vice Admiralty Court) were allowed to dispose of a considerable cargo of Cheribon coffee to pay their "heavy expenses incurred in this Colony and their passage out of it";<sup>69</sup> by September, such was the scarcity of tea, the Agent was prepared to give his consent to the landing of thirty-two chests of this most treasured monopolised product off the Hannah & Sally, another American vessel;<sup>70</sup> and, in October, a Simonstown merchant was given leave to sell four hundred bundles of rattans, "an article much wanted in the Colony".<sup>71</sup>

66. Pringle's Memorandum on Wm. Caldwell's memorial to Caledon, 8 June 1808, CGH.F.R., X; Pringle to Caldwell, 14 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I; "Humble Memorial" of W. Wilberforce Bird to Caledon, 15 June 1808, CGH.F.R., X; Pringle to C. Bird, 16 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Memorial of R. Swan to Caledon, 27 June 1808, CGH.F.R., X.

67. 875 bags Bourbon coffee                    33 pieces nankeens  
 77 bags cloves                                5 pieces muslins  
 14 bales cotton                                3 pieces ginghams  
     10 blue handkerchiefs

68. Memorial of Haude & Robertson to Caledon, 18 July 1808, CGH.F.R., X; Pringle to C. Bird, 19 July 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII. However, such generous treatment of captured prize cargoes was not to become typical of Company policy at the Cape -- see below, (iii)(b).

69. Petition of Wm. Lane, Supercargo, on behalf of the officers and mariners of the condemned ship Reliance, 5 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to C. Bird, 4 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII. The coffee in question formed part of the "private adventures" of the crew and as such had been restored by the Court, but the bulk of the cargo had been condemned with the ship.

70. Pringle to C. Bird, 19 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII. Long before its India trade monopoly was abandoned, in 1813, the Company was directing most of its commercial energies to the China tea trade; Pitt's Commutation Act of 1784, which had provided for a drastic reduction in custom duties on tea, had resulted in an enormous upswing of demand, until eventually that commodity had virtually become the raison d'être of the Company's trading activities -- M. Greenberg, British Trade and the Opening of China, 1800-42 (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 3-5.

71. Pringle to I. N. Endres, 11 Oct. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

By that time, however, the general supply position was becoming more serious, and, with still no immediate prospects of the Company's own cargoes arriving, Pringle informed Leadenhall Street -

"...the Hon'ble Court will see the necessity of granting permission more readily to land such things as may be wanted, than otherwise would be done; it shall however be, as hitherto, with the greatest caution, & not large quantities at a time".<sup>72</sup>

Hence, over the next couple of months W. Wilberforce Bird was allowed to land supplies of Bourbon coffee, a load of rice, "ten bags of cotton and a few cases of sundries", and to indulge in a "moderate sale" of muskams;<sup>73</sup> on December 26th, Pringle raised no objection to the surgeon on board the H.C.S. Wexford selling "two Bales of Shirts, four Boxes of Wax Candles, and a few Boxes of Shoes", valued at roundabout 1,000 rupees.<sup>74</sup>

The early months of 1809 were especially rich in such concessions, after the Agent had received a further Customs report of Eastern produce entering the Colony in the second half of the previous year;<sup>75</sup> thus, for example, finding that it was an item "much wanted by a certain class of people", Pringle admitted forty boxes of sugar candy,<sup>76</sup> and sanctioned the sale of yet another rice cargo,<sup>77</sup> sixteen bales of coarse Madras textiles,<sup>78</sup> and a miscellany of articles off the Tongebux (with the exception of tea and shawls).<sup>79</sup>

Yet, such stop-gap concessions were not made indiscriminately, the Agent taking particular care to avoid establishing precedents,

72. Pringle to Hamsay, 4 Oct. 1808, CGH.F.R., VII.

73. Memorial of W.W. Bird to Caledon, 1 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Pringle to C. Bird, 2 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII; H. Alexander (Colonial Secretary) to Pringle, 5 Dec. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

74. Pringle to Thos. Shepherd, 23 Dec. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

75. Pringle to Caledon, 7 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

76. Memorial of Capt. A. Robertson (H.C.S. Surat Castle) to Caledon, 20 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., X; H. Alexander to Pringle, 24 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII; J. Ineson (Pringle's deputy) to Alexander, 26 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., ~~XXXXXXXX~~ I.

77. Memorial of Messrs. Maude, Robertson, and De Goetlogen to Caledon, 20 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Alexander, 28 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

78. Pringle to Thos. Newberry (surgeon on H.C.S. Ceylon), 4 Feb. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; the goods were valued at "about £500".

79. Pringle to Alexander, 4 March 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

the consequences of which could not be easily foreseen. For example, when Capt. Ramsden of the H.C.S. Phoenix asked to be allowed to sell a few bales of damaged piece goods (his own private investment),<sup>80</sup> the application was turned down on the grounds that

"...it is impossible to admit as a principle, that goods destined for another Market, and damaged upon the Voyage, should have the smallest claim for admission into this Colony on that account".<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, when an American captain sought permission to land coffee and pepper to defray the expenses of repairing his vessel, Pringle refused to sanction such sales.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, although the entries which the Agent had permitted had gradually eased the want of Indian articles, the Colony was still desperately short of supplies from China. Thus, when the Company vessel Warley separated from the returning Canton fleet and put in for urgent repairs on 29th June, 1809, there was a general clamour for the authorities to afford a portion of its tea and other cargo. The Agent, observing that even Caledon had become ~~the~~ "seriously displeased", yielded to the pressure, and 356 assorted chests of tea and 5,000 pieces of muskeens were landed, to be disposed of for 48,650 rixdollars,<sup>83</sup> yielding "a very considerable net surplus".<sup>84</sup> Under the circumstances, Pringle trusted that the Directors would "no doubt see that this measure was unavoidable".<sup>85</sup>

Such action tinkered with but failed to solve the problem of providing a steady supply of Eastern goods for the Cape market within the framework of the Company's charter.

80. At this time, of the goods imported into Britain from India by the Company, a growing proportion represented the legitimate private trade of ship commanders and officers; in the year 1808-09, for instance, these private imports amounted to £520,603 out of a total of £1,317,832 — The East-India Question (by "the Editor of the Former Debates") (London, 1813), pp. 196-199.

81. Iason to Ramsden, 17 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Ramsden to Caledon, 19 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., X; Iason to Alexander, 19 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

82. Petition from Geo. Main (American brig Gipsy) to Caledon, 27 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., X; Pringle to Alexander, 28 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

83. Pringle to Capt. Montagu (H.C.S. Warley), 30 June 1809, CGH.F.R., I; C. Bird to Pringle, 5 July 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Secretary of the Burgher Senate to Caledon, 8 July 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Capt. Montagu, 13 July 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

84. Pringle to Ramsay, 19 Sept. 1809, CGH.F.R., VII.

85. Pringle to Ramsay, 11 July 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

(c)

There was one item which particularly gave much cause for concern — timber, supplies of which from America and Europe were very difficult to procure under wartime conditions; on the other hand, while local supplies of yellow-wood could be used for internal constructional work, the planks became eroded on exposure to the sun.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, there was an urgent need to import teak from the East, the profits on which were bound to be considerable; in fact, soon after his arrival, Pringle, observing "how greatly this Colony is distressed for Timber", had permitted a local firm to place an order with teak merchants in India.<sup>87</sup>

Caledon, especially, was worried about the position, and his secretary informed the Agent:

"His Excellency has desired me to represent to you, that it is extremely desirable that encouragement should be given to the importation of timber from India which is much wanted in this Settlement, and the trade in which it is by no means probable the East India Company will undertake on their own account; His Excellency has no doubt but that the Government in India will grant the necessary licenses to this effect, upon your representation of the state of this Colony in regard to this article... At the same time His Excellency would very much wish to guard against a monopoly of such importation being granted to any particular persons, but trusts that some general regulations may be fixed upon, which, by creating competition, will be more likely to keep the price moderate, and thus be advantageous to the public at the same time that the speculators cannot fail to have an ample profit".<sup>88</sup>

These excellent sentiments could not be ignored by Pringle, who suggested that the Burgher Senate be asked to draw up a list of requirements,<sup>89</sup> which he discovered comprised 34,500 boards of teak of eleven different categories;<sup>90</sup> by early August, 1808, an urgent despatch had gone off to Calcutta, requesting the Governor-General—"to provide timber for the supply of this Colony".<sup>91</sup>

86. Cf. J.H. Bellington, *Southern Africa: A Geographical Study*. (Cambridge, 1955), Vol. I, p. 304.

87. Petition of Messrs. Reynolds & Elmore to Caledon, 17 July 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, I; Pringle to C. Bird, 21 July 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, XVIII.

88. C. Bird to Pringle, 27 July 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, I.

89. Pringle to C. Bird, 28 July 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, I.

90. J.J. Vos (President, Burgher Senate) to Caledon, 4 Aug. 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, I.

91. Pringle to Lord Minto in Council, 8 Aug. 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, XVIII.

That was as far as Pringle was prepared to go: in November, when Messrs. Shortt & Berry petitioned to be allowed to send their own vessel to collect a cargo of planks at Pegu, he informed them that it was totally out of his power "to grant a license to any ship to proceed to India to trade in any shape whatever".<sup>92</sup> In fact, the Colony was to be starved of teak supplies until 1812-13, when fairly regular private shipments under Company licence began to arrive from Bengal, and, for a while, from Java.

(d)

One of Pringle's chief tasks on his return was to place the Company's own trading ventures at the Cape on a business-like footing. ~~Within~~ Within a week of his arrival he had asked the Burgher Senate for a list of "probable articles from China that will be required for the use of this Settlement for the ensuing Season";<sup>93</sup> on the basis of this data, he drew up a formidable indent,<sup>94</sup> which he entrusted to Wm. Parry, (who had accompanied him on the outward voyage and was on his way to Canton via Madras to join the Company's establishment there), with the request

"...that from Your Knowledge of this place You will be good enough to explain to the Select Committee any part of it [i.e., the indent] which may require it, as to the qualities and descriptions of things wanted and most particularly to impress upon them the absolute necessity of the Stores arriving in time for Table Bay."<sup>95</sup>

A few days later letters had gone off to Madras and Calcutta, in which the Agent expressed the hope that the indent ordered by the Court in 1807 had been received and that the goods were now on their way, and promising in the near future "a correct statement of the annual demand as nearly as such can be estimated".<sup>96</sup>

92. Messrs. Shortt, Berry, & Co. to Pringle, 20 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Shortt & Berry, 21 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

93. Pringle to Caledon, 24 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

94. Burgher Senate to Caledon, 6 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I; it included 9,000 cases of mixed teas, 30,000 pieces of cloth of assorted colours and sizes, a variety of sewing silks, and such oddments as sage (2,000 lbs.), "black whaled neckerchiefs", and 1,000 lbs. of "laxa" (an early form of meat-extract for making soap).

95. Pringle to Parry, 6 June 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

96. Pringle to Governor & Council, Fort St. George, 8 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 5 June 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

This proved to be a more difficult task than Pringle had imagined: after being furnished with a list of what the Directors had ordered in 1807,<sup>97</sup> the Burgher Senate compiled what amounted to four separate indents of goods from Bengal, Surat, Madras, and Ceylon;<sup>98</sup> the Agent thereupon pointed out that the Colony's supplies could be more conveniently and cheaply shipped from one port, and suggested that Calcutta be chosen as Bengal produced almost everything required ("or excellent substitutes"), whereas prices elsewhere would be higher and patterns would be different; he also recommended the inclusion of rice and sugar, since both articles would always find buyers at the Cape, and were necessary, in any event, as ballast.<sup>99</sup> Given an annotated schedule of Bengal manufactures, the Burgher Senate consolidated the indent along the lines suggested,<sup>100</sup> and this was promptly forwarded to Calcutta with the following covering note:

"I enclose copies of correspondence between His Excellency the Governor, the Burgher Senate and myself on the subject of the supply of this Colony with Indian produce, to which I entreat your Lordship's attention. The first Indent framed by the Burgher Senate appeared to me very ill arranged and difficult to comply with, as it required Articles from almost every part of India to be sent here; I have therefore prevailed upon them to withdraw it, and find substitutes in the manufactures of Bengal only, by which means the Indent now forwarded herewith will easily load a small vessel; and I hope Your Lordship will order one to be expedited with all convenient speed, as the Supply is greatly wanted."<sup>101</sup>

By that time, too, a similar note of urgency was creeping into Pringle's despatches to London, where the Directors learnt that unless the stores which they had ordered for the Cape arrived soon, "this Colony will really be reduced to great distress".<sup>102</sup>

97. Pringle to Caledon, 29 June 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

98. Burgher Senate to Caledon, 7 July 1808, CGH.F.R., X.

99. Pringle to Caledon, 14 July 1808 (with annexure of "Articles that may be had from Bengal"), CGH.F.R., XVIII.

100. Burgher Senate to Caledon, 2 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., I: the final list was as follows -

300,000 lbs. sugar

400,000 lbs. rice

2,000 lbs. cotton yarn (for knitting)

4,000 lbs. cotton thread (for candlewicks)

20,000 lbs. pepper

1,000 lbs. mace

3,000 lbs. cinnamon

1,000 lbs. cloves

2,000 lbs. nutmegs

36,800 pieces of assorted cloths  
(with details specified)

101. Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 8 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

102. Pringle to Ramsay, 29 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

By September of 1808 the Agent had received "certain information from St. Helena by the Ships just arrived" that no China goods could be expected before the next year<sup>103</sup> — news which induced him to relax the strict embargo on private tea landings. At the end of that month the "Extra" ship Figria, carrying the indent ordered from London, was despatched to the Cape from Calcutta,<sup>104</sup> and reached Table Bay "in perfect good order" on January 21st, 1809.<sup>105</sup> Its cargo of sundry piece goods and sugar, invoiced at 43,265 rupees, had been disposed of completely by the middle of that year,<sup>106</sup> yielding 82,873 rixdollars,<sup>107</sup> nearly half of which amount (after making ample allowance for freight and charges) represented net profit.<sup>108</sup> Although Pringle was satisfied with the quality of this consignment and felt that if the articles of his own indent turned out as good "nothing better can be wished for",<sup>109</sup> the fact remained that, except for this relatively small Figria cargo and the compulsory offloadings from the Warley, the Agency received nothing whatsoever from either China or India throughout the first half of 1809.

It could have come as no great surprise to the Agent, therefore, when Caledon intimated to him verbally that, unless the position improved, there would have to be complaints to Whitehall about the manner

"in which this Colony has been deprived of all Indian produce at any reasonable prices by the neglect of furnishing regular supplies according to the terms agreed upon between Government and the Hon'ble Court of Directors..."

103. Pringle to C. Bird, 19 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

104. Thos. Brown (Chief Secretary to Government, Port William) to Pringle, 26 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., X.

105. Pringle to C. Bird, 22 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

106. "Except for a small quantity of cotton yarn, for which the demand is not great, owing to its being too coarse".

107. Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 18 Sept. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

108. Pringle to Ramsay, 11 July 1809, CGH.F.R., VII.

109. Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 10 June 1809, CGH.F.R., I; his only adverse comment on the Figria cargo was — "I find however that black chintzes do not answer here, and therefore should not be sent in future".

Accordingly, he urged the Directors to send instructions to India and China

"directing a more regular Supply to be sent for the use of this Settlement & not to allow it almost entirely to depend on chance; as this practice if longer persevered in will doubtless lead to discussion with His Maje. Government, whilst at the same time it deprives the Hon'ble Company of a beneficial trade although on a small scale to this Place".<sup>110</sup>

And, to Lord Minto in India, he wrote too of the local authorities' displeasure at "the inadequate supplies furnished by the Company whilst all other means of procuring them are strictly prohibited to the Inhabitants", and went on to mention the "exorbitant prices" paid for the Tigris shipment, which were "very much beyond what could be obtained had the Supply been of sufficient magnitude for the Consumption", and the consequent dissatisfaction of the colonists.<sup>111</sup> The Canton establishment (from whom, as yet, Pringle had received no word) was also castigated for its neglect in

"leaving this important Settlement destitute of so many articles almost now become of necessity & of course forcing the Garrison, Fleet, & Inhabitants to pay an enormous price for the small quantities that could be obtained..."

In no uncertain terms, he reminded the Select Committee of its obligations in this connection:

"...it must be self-evident to you, Gentlemen, that whilst the Company on the one side have the sole privilege of importing these supplies, on the other they are bound to provide them, and not to leave the whole almost to chance, as being of no importance."<sup>112</sup>

When, at long last, the Cape did begin to receive China stores, it became apparent just how the Company's cumbersome shipping arrangements for the Colony — superimposed on wartime exigencies and the slow and perilous communications of the period — had aggravated the local supply position. Although the Canton

110. Pringle to Ramsay, 11 July 1809, CGH.P.R., VII.

111. Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 18 Sept. 1809, CGH.P.R., XVIII.

112. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 22 Aug. 1809, CGH.P.R., I.

factory had received the original indent from London in good time, the order could not be fulfilled immediately because of

"the embarrassments which the Trade of this place has experienced in consequence of a detachment of British troops having been landed at Macao and which put a stop to all commercial communication from the beginning of October to the end of December..."<sup>113</sup>

By the time normal trading with the Chinese had been resumed, Pringle's own despatch had arrived, and the supercargoes thereupon combined the two indents; even so, by January, 1809, they were still not in a position to comply fully with all requirements, and forwarded what stores were available via Bengal, "from thence to be transmitted to their ultimate destination", since, if the homeward-bound China ships had to put in at the Cape, it "might occasion considerable detention to a valuable fleet".<sup>114</sup> The remainder of the combined indent was shipped on the Walzer Castle in March of that year, to be landed "at St. Helena, from whence it may readily be conveyed to its ultimate destination".<sup>115</sup>

It was the second half of the cargo which arrived first: the Walzer Castle put in at St. Helena during August, and the Company's packet Casperdown had to make two trips with the Cape's stores, the last "catty-boxes" of tea being off-loaded in Table Bay on December 15th — nearly two-and-a-half years after the original indent had been posted from East-India House!<sup>116</sup>

113. During 1808 Macao was occupied by Admiral Drury, allegedly to anticipate a French occupation of that Portuguese base — cf. Greenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

114. Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 29 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

115. Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 3 March 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

116. Governor and Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 25 Aug. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Chs. Blair (Collector of Customs), 3 Sept. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Pringle to Capt. Cothran (H.C.S. Casperdown), 22 Sept., 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Governor and Council, St. Helena, 9 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Governor and Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 24 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Blair, 15 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII. The China stores landed by the Casperdown (Sept.-Dec. 1809) at the Cape comprised:

1,972 catty boxes of tea (catty =  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs.; each box held 5 catties)

16 chests of silk thread

4 chests of silk paunch

10 chests of Canton cloth

These items arrived "in good condition except the boxes of Canton cloth and sewing silk which were much broken, and with some deficiencies".

Part of the remainder of this China investment arrived from Bengal in January, 1810, on the Warren Hastings, and saddled the Agent with further difficulties:

"I have held four Sales of the Goods lately arrived which fetched high prices; but I fear that a considerable number of the Teas will prove musty, which I am informed is by no means an uncommon case with inferior Teas, packed in such small quantities. Previous to selling such as may appear damaged, I shall cause a regular survey to be held on the same, which will at once prove satisfactory to the Company & obviate all difficulties and disputes that might otherwise arise between the Buyers and the Vendor Master."<sup>117</sup>

The final instalment via India was landed from the Potterham in March, with most of the teas "in a most deplorable state", due mainly, Pringle believed, to the frequent transshipings which these articles had undergone;<sup>118</sup> and, in a subsequent note to Canton, he asked for better quality teas in future (of a grade similar to that shipped to the London market), to be packed in larger chests, "rendering damage much less likely".<sup>119</sup>

Meanwhile, the stores which had been ordered from India itself had started to arrive at the end of December, 1809, on the homeward-bound Calcutta fleet, and dribblets continued to come in during January and February of the following year, the last of the series being off-loaded from the "Extra" ship Ocean in early March; the bulk of these cargoes comprised stores of rice, grain, and sugar, but blankets, shawls, spices, and pepper were also landed — and all the items "were delivered generally in good condition".<sup>120</sup> For the rest, Pringle had to be content with the promise that "the further supplies which you have indented for will be consigned by the earliest conveyance".<sup>121</sup>

117. Pringle to Ramsay, 2 Feb. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

118. Pringle to Ramsay, 31 March 1810, CGH.F.R., VII; Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 9 June 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII, see below, Ch. IV, (i)(a).

119. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 5 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

120. Pringle to Chs. Blair, 25 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 16 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Pringle to Capt. McTaggart (H.B.S.S. Ocean), 20 Feb. and 6 March 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

121. H. Tucker (Secretary to Government, Port William) to Pringle, 17 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

Although, as has been noticed, it was not the Directors' intention to make enormous profits on their supplies to the Cape (an advance of only 6 per cent on prime costs plus handling expenses being the aim), such was the "excess" demand that a net profit of more than 170 per cent had been made on Agency sales by the end of August, 1810!<sup>122</sup> In spite of his efforts to ease the position, John Pringle had to witness the spectacle of the Colony kept short of Eastern goods by a trading organisation-turned-imperial-watchdog grown too big to concern itself with furnishing adequate supplies at moderate prices to a market which was of little consequence in its affairs.

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(iii) Upholding the Monopoly

What was of consequence to the Company, of course, was that the Cape should not be allowed to become a base for infringing the Indian Ocean monopoly, and much of Pringle's work during the first two years of his return was bound up with maintaining the chartered privileges of East India House. This took the form of: (a) a strict regulation over private re-exports of Eastern produce; (b) limiting, as far as possible, the competition of prize cargoes and shipping; (c) securing the co-operation of the Customs in upholding the Company's monopoly; (d) taking stern measures against contraband shipping and smuggling activities. It will be necessary to examine briefly each of these aspects in turn.

122. Copies of the Agency's annual accounts up to 31st August, 1810, revealed the following salient features (the amounts being reduced to round numbers):

- (1) Invoice value of all goods imported from India and China and sold at the Cape since Pringle's arrival in mid-1808 amounted to 136,300 rixdollars.
- (2) The gross profit on the sale of these articles came to 319,100 rds.
- (3) Salaries, wages, warehouse rents, custom duties, landing and vendue charges totalled 84,500 rds. — to be deducted from the gross profit figure.
- (4) This left a net profit on the invoice value of 234,600 rds.

— data derived from the annual accounts forwarded by Pringle to Ramsay, 21 Nov. 1810, CCH.F.R., II.

(a)

As soon as Pringle returned to the Cape, he was besieged by local merchants seeking permission to re-export Eastern goods purchased during the Batavian regime or secured at prize auctions. One of many examples was the following inelegantly phrased petition received from Modyer, Korsten & Co. a week after his arrival:

"Your Memorialists are proprietors of a certain quantity of Cotton Wool brought in here as Prize under the late Dutch Government and Sold by them for Exportation. Memorialists addressed themselves to His Excellency the Governor for to be allowed to export the Same, but was referred to await the arrival of the Agent of the East India Company. Memorialists therefore beg leave to address themselves to You, respectfully requesting You may please to grant permission for the exportation of the said Cotton Wool under such Conditions as You may deem proper".<sup>123</sup>

The Agent's compromise remedy was to grant the request, provided the cotton-wool was sent direct to London, "to be sold at the Company's Sales, and that the Company be paid 25 p. cent. for landing, housing, & charges of management".<sup>124</sup> A few days later the same formula was applied to a similar memorial,<sup>125</sup> and was used again when J. Van Bihl & Co. found themselves laden with 100 bales of Surat cotton "of no use whatsoever in this Colony";<sup>126</sup> and that energetic shipping agent, W. Wilberforce Bird, was allowed to re-export ("under the usual conditions") a quantity of Indian manufactures and a load of indigo, after being refused permission to sell these articles "for interior consumption".<sup>127</sup>

Then there was the case of Isaac Lezar,<sup>128</sup> who was anxious to export to North America 100,000 lbs. of turmeric<sup>129</sup> purchased

123. Memorial of Modyer, Korsten & Co. to Pringle, 7 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

124. Pringle to Modyer, Korsten & Co., 9 June 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

125. Memorial of A.S. Amyot to Pringle, 15 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Amyot, 16 June 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

126. J. Van Bihl & Co. to Pringle, 24 Dec. 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Van Bihl, 31 Dec. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

127. Memorial of W.W. Bird to Caledon, 15 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to G. Bird, 16 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to W.W. Bird, 4 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

128. A German Jew who had settled at the Cape in 1793 — L. Herrman, A History of the Jews in South Africa (London, 1930), pp. 65-66.

129. An East Indian plant of the ginger family, the powdered rhizome of which is used as a dyestuff or a condiment; at the Cape (where it was — and still is — known as borrie) small quantities were needed for preparing curry dishes and making yellow rice; a consignment of 100,000 lbs., however, would have represented several years' sales on the local market.

in 1805 from the Batavian Government; he also had in his possession

"a quantity of Tea of the finest quality, which cannot be sold for the consumption of this place owing to its being so high priced but should likewise be exported."<sup>130</sup>

While Pringle was prepared to allow the turmeric to be sent to the Company's auction rooms at East India House, he believed that the request with respect to the tea was really an attempt "at trading from hence in Eastern produce", which he could not permit; "the mere question of profit or loss being of no consideration whatever".<sup>131</sup> Nor would he change his mind when Lezar appealed to him as a family man:

"...the Article has become burdensome and already distressed me considerably in my circumstances... I hope, Sir, that when You have taken into consideration my numerous Family & that they have only me to look to for their Support, You will have the Kindness to grant me this indulgence, for which I shall be ever grateful."<sup>132</sup>

The real cause of Lezar's embarrassment was probably an erroneous purchase of the highly expensive "White-Blossom" or "Pekoe" blend, whereas "the so-called Tea Congou" was "the sort commonly used in the Colony".<sup>133</sup> His anxiety to re-export the turmeric seems to indicate a lack of local demand for exotic spice products -- an impression which is reinforced by the request of another local merchant at this time to send 2,000 lbs. of cloves to Brazil,<sup>134</sup> and the permission given to the London firm of Brown & Jordan to indent from the Cape (via East India House) 2,000 lbs. of nutmegs and 500 lbs. of mace (originally imported from Java during the Batavian era).<sup>135</sup>

130. Memorial of I. Lezar to Caledon, 16 July 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

131. Pringle to C. Bird, 19 July 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

132. Lezar to Pringle, 8 Feb. 1809, CGH.F.R., I. On rare occasions when conditional permission was given to re-export tea on compassionate grounds, such concessions often proved valueless: for instance, when Silas Jones was allowed to send out 32 chests "provided the Tea be exported to the place of its original destination", the destination turned out to be Amsterdam and not the neutral United States, as Pringle had imagined -- Petitions of Silas Jones (of the American brig Hannah & Sally) to Caledon, 12 Sept. and 16 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to C. Bird, 19 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

133. Burgher Senate to Caledon, 8 July 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

134. P. de Necker to Pringle, 2 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., I; the Agent promptly turned down this petition on the grounds that "there can be no exportation of East India produce from hence to South America" -- Pringle to Necker, 2 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., I; see below, (iii)(d).

135. Pringle to Alexander, 28 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII; see below, Ch. III, n.345.

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If considered in conjunction with the Agent's handling of local private sales, a number of important points about re-export policy emerge: (1) if primary products from the East (especially staple necessities, like rice) were urgently needed, and the Governor's attitude was favourable, permission was usually given for local disposal under Agency surveillance;<sup>136</sup> (2) Asiatic manufactures (such as shawls, dungarees) could not be sold by private persons on the Cape market under any circumstances, but their re-exportation was allowed (together with primary items unsuited for local consumption, like expensive spices) on condition that the Company handled their disposal in London and received an appropriate "rake-off"; (3) particularly tight restrictions applied to the landing, local sale, or re-export of tea, "the richest jewel in the Company's commercial crown"; (4) small quantities of Eastern articles (including "reasonable" amounts of tea) were allowed out if they came under the denomination of ship stores -- under which circumstances the size of the vessel and its crew and the nature and length of the voyage were the criteria for determining the amounts.<sup>137</sup>

(b)

Since he had already come into conflict with the local naval establishment during the First Occupation over the vexed question of prize goods and their disposal,<sup>138</sup> it was only natural that Pringle would make a special effort to place this issue on a clear footing as soon as possible. His instructions from East India House, however, were vague on the whole subject: on arrival, he discovered that prize articles of Eastern origin had recently been sold in the Colony for exportation to Brazil, although he was inclined to believe that the Directors had intended such goods to be sent to England only; but he hardly knew how to interfere, should it become necessary, without being clearly informed".<sup>139</sup>

136. "The deviation from the strict adherence to the Letter of the King's Order in Council respecting the introduction of Eastern produce into this Settlement for consumption can only be justified on the ground of necessity" -- Pringle, in a letter to Alexander, 4 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

137. Pringle to F. Dashwood (Collector of Customs), 2 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Capt. T.H. Brine, 2 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

138. See above, Chapter I (viii).

139. Pringle to Ramsay, 29 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

In October, 1809, when a schedule of customs duties was published, it laid down, inter alia, an import tariff of 10 per cent on the sale price for prize goods of Indian origin sold for local consumption "under peculiar circumstances".<sup>140</sup> In effect, this implied either the existence of strong compassionate grounds — such as the "unfortunate case" of the supercargo attached to the condemned Danish vessel Helena, who was allowed to dispose of thirty boxes of prize arrac when he ran short of cash<sup>141</sup> — or it meant that the goods in question were in a highly perishable condition and unfit for exportation.<sup>142</sup> In both circumstances, the Agent's consent was needed, and was usually given (though sometimes with great reluctance)<sup>143</sup> if the Governor himself recommended the concession.

The problem of destination was clarified in mid-1809, when instructions arrived from Leadenhall Street that Eastern prize goods, condemned at the Cape and sold for exportation, could be sent "to any port or place, and not confined to England only" — a measure which Pringle feared would give a considerable boost to future prize sales,<sup>144</sup> although the local naval commander expressed great satisfaction.<sup>145</sup> But there remained many points about which Pringle was uncertain: even where goods were not involved, was it legitimate, for instance, to transfer to India in ballast a condemned vessel purchased at the Cape?<sup>146</sup> And what was the status of cargoes restored by the Admiralty Court — did

140. "Tariff of Import and Export Duties", Recs.C.C., VII, p. 197.

141. C. Bird to Pringle, 16 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to C. Bird, 19 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

142. For example, the agent for the claimants of the recaptured brig Rhandar Box, after listing the following prize goods, pointed out "that the goods enumerated are of a description totally different from those usually imported by the Hon. Company and in their present state unfit to be exported to a foreign market":

- 31 bales and matted packages of piece goods;
- 16 bundles damaged by salt water;
- 7 bales open and plundered;
- 2 matted packages of tanned leather;
- 2,244 earthen cooking pots;
- 495 matted packages of tobacco;
- 147 bags of small copper coin.

— Memorial of A. Robertson to Caledon, 7 March 1810, CGH.F.R., X; Pringle to C. Bird, 16 March 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

143. Pringle to Alexander, 4 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Alexander, 3 March 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

144. Pringle to Caledon, 12 May 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

145. Admiral Bertie to Pringle, 12 May 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

146. Pringle to Ramsay, 28 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., VII.

and these still require Agency consent before being disposed of locally or exported?<sup>147</sup> And was the Agency entitled to contest the Court's decision that the legal costs of a prize dispute be defrayed from the sale of a portion of the cargo involved?<sup>148</sup> If anything, the issues had grown more complex since the First Occupation.

At the same time, if Pringle still retained a good deal of authority over the manner in which captors handled their goods, it was the navy which often had the last word in connection with Company vessels ~~involved~~ involved in prize disputes. For example, when the Company's ship Grappler -- which had been taken by the French, converted into a corvette, and attached to the Mauritius squadron -- was recaptured and brought to the Cape, Pringle failed to persuade the Admiralty Court to restore it, the judges basing their decision on the following clause from the Prize Act:

"If such vessel, so retaken, shall appear to have been, after the taking by H.M.'s Enemies, to have been by them set forth as a Ship of War, the said Ship shall not be restored to the former Proprietors but shall in all cases, whether retaken by any of H.M.'s Ships, or by any Privateer, be adjudged as Lawful Prize for the benefit of the Captors".<sup>149</sup>

(c)

The prize problem was closely connected with the Agent's conviction that the local Customs establishment should form part of the machinery for upholding the Company's chartered privileges. He feared, particularly, that wholly inadequate steps were being taken to ensure that prize cargoes actually left the Colony and went to their correct destinations, and to H.M.'s Collector of Customs he wrote

"upon a subject of considerable importance which I should wish to give the Hon'ble Court of Directors correct information about. By Act of Parliament Prize Goods, the produce of Countries to the Eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, must be

147. Pringle to Ramsay, 31 March 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

148. Houghton & McDonald to Caledon, 5 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XI; Lawson to Alexander, 11 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

149. Admiral Bertie to Pringle, 1 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; see, also, Bertie's despatches to the Admiralty, 20 Oct. and 16 Nov. 1809, Recs. C.C., VII, pp. 207-208, 226-228; another case in which a Company vessel (the Streatham) was involved at this time is mentioned below, (iv)(b).

sold for exportation. My wish is therefore to know what Bonds or other Securities are taken, returnable to the Customs here, within any given time to prove the delivery of such Goods at the manifested port for which they are said to be exported; and what method is adopted to ascertain that the whole quantity landed here provisionally, until sold for exportation, is bona fide so exported..."<sup>150</sup>

The answer was only partly reassuring: apparently, purchasers of prize articles had merely to produce a certificate (derived from the manifest of the vessel concerned) within twelve months.<sup>151</sup> Pringle, far from satisfied, thereupon drafted a form of security which he wished the Customs in future to insist upon receiving whenever prize goods were exported, together with a specimen certificate to be returned from the port of destination before the bond could be cancelled.<sup>152</sup>

After examining these proposals, they were rejected by the Collector:

"Hitherto we have considered that Goods bought for exportation, and which appear in the manifest of a Cargo of a Vessel cleared out for a given Port, was sufficient to guarantee their arrival at the same; because if the Cargo did not agree with the manifest, of course the Vessel and Cargo would be liable to seizure..."

Hence Pringle's plan, in his opinion, would cause very considerable inconvenience to local merchants without any corresponding improvement in security.<sup>153</sup> Thwarted at local level, the Agent urged his superiors to take up the matter at home;<sup>154</sup> this the Directors must have done, for in October, 1809, Caledon was assuring the War Minister that "the principal exertion of the custom house officers is directed against the smuggling in of East India Goods for the sake of the re-export".<sup>155</sup>

An opportunity to intervene actively in the hope of forcing a general tightening-up of customs procedure occurred in January, 1810, when Pringle noticed an advertisement in the local Gazette

150. Pringle to Dashwood, 25 Oct. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

151. Dashwood to Pringle, 27 Oct. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

152. Pringle to Dashwood, 29 Oct. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

153. Dashwood to Pringle, 3 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

154. Pringle to Ramsay, 28 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., VII.

155. Caledon to Castlerough, 16 Oct. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 194.

for a large sale of Eastern goods<sup>156</sup> in which no conditions of sale were specified; he immediately protested to the local Vendue Master,<sup>157</sup> and received an assurance that the auctioneer's clerk had been instructed not to proceed with the sale unless the articles were in their original packages and potential buyers were informed that the goods would remain under seal until shipped for exportation.<sup>158</sup> Referring to the incident as a matter of "great magnitude", the Agent suggested to the Colonial Secretary that proper precautions to ensure genuine exportation were not being taken and urged "that official Custom House regulations on this head may be enjoined, as formerly suggested by me to the Collector..."<sup>159</sup>

Although Pringle felt strongly that this was an issue which very directly concerned the Company's interests, Alexander reacted to the Agent's demand by deeming it "an improper interference with a department of the Colonial Government".<sup>160</sup> Being reluctant at that stage to urge the matter any further and wishing to avoid "an altercation with Government, which can lead to no practical good", Pringle, nonetheless, remained convinced that stricter measures by the Customs "would be productive of much good" by ensuring that exportation did in fact take place; without such controls, he was certain that "East Indian produce in considerable abundance finds its way irregularly into the Colony", thereby prejudicing the Company's own local sales.<sup>161</sup>

156. It was inserted by I. Macvitie acting as agent for a syndicate comprising (Pringle believed) "Neutrals or at least not Residents at the Cape, who, of course, are never heard of afterwards" -- Pringle to Ramsay, 20 Jan. 1807, CGH.F.R., VII.

157. Pringle to W.F. Pagel, 13 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

158. Pagel to Pringle, 14 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., X.

159. Pringle to Alexander, 14 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

160. Alexander to Pringle, 27 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., X.

161. Pringle to Ramsay, 31 March 1810, CGH.F.R., VII; the main deficiencies in the existing regulations, according to the Agent, were the auctioning of goods intended for re-exportation in lots which were irregular or too small, the frequent ~~release~~ release of such articles to the purchasers by the Customs before they were shipped, and the lack of adequate security bonds.

(d)

If Pringle met with only indifferent success in his endeavours to have better regulations framed at the Custom House, he still wielded sufficient influence to curb contraband and smuggling activities in other directions. And, since a clandestine traffic in Asiatic goods — including tea<sup>162</sup> — had been centred on the Cape before his return in mid-1808, he made a particular point of checking carefully the documents of all private British merchantmen proceeding to the East and insisting that the Customs did not grant a clearance certificate if such vessels were without an authenticated Company licence for the voyage; and on at least one occasion, when a private ship sailed from the Cape for New South Wales without such authority, it was boarded by naval officers as it left Table Bay and despatched to Britain under escort.<sup>163</sup>

Even without direct smuggling, the Company's trading position at the Cape could be threatened by developments on the other side of the South Atlantic. A month after his arrival, for instance, the Agent informed Leadenhall Street:

"On the subject of Sugar I think some arrangement should be made at home, for as Sugar can and may be imported here from the Brazils I fancy much cheaper than from India, a competition may arise that will injure the Company's Sales, and without that article it will be difficult to make up a cargo for a small ship from Bengal..."<sup>164</sup>

One way of stopping South American supplies from arriving was to prevent local merchants selling Eastern goods in exchange; thus, after being frequently badgered "for leave to export East India produce to Rio Janeiro", Pringle told the Custom House, "I beg it to be at once understood that no such permission can be on any account whatever granted".<sup>165</sup>

However, it was not going to be as easy as all that. The Company had recently established an Agency in Brazil, and in September, 1808, Pringle received the following note from his counterpart in Rio:

162. Pringle to Ramsay, 29 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

163. Pringle to Ramsay, 19 Feb. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Alexander, 17 April 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Alexander to Luson, 18 April 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

164. Pringle to Ramsay, 29 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

165. Pringle to Dashwood, 2 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

"I beg leave to solicit the favour of your recommendation to both the English and Dutch merchants resident at the Cape, and to inform them that we shall be happy to receive their consignments to this Port, and to execute any orders which may be transmitted to us..."<sup>166</sup>

The reply was pointedly abrupt:

"I am so particularly restricted from intermeddling with local trade in any shape whatever, that it will not be in my power to be of any use to you in that way..."<sup>167</sup>

If he could help it, Pringle was not going to have his life made more difficult by encouraging a new channel of potential clandestine activities. Commercial contacts with the opposite coast continued intermittently, with small shipments of Cape wine and butter being exchanged for sugar, wood, "and a few trifles besides";<sup>168</sup> but the Agent was not taking any chances, and he requested his opposite number in Brazil

"to be very attentive to observe whether Indian produce is brought from hence, that I may know how far smuggling is practised in those commodities".<sup>169</sup>

The long-term danger from the Company's point of view was that Portuguese and American vessels would short-circuit its monopoly by catering for the clothing needs of the South American negro slave population through developing a direct trade in coarse Surat textiles from India to Brazil.<sup>170</sup>

After 1808, however, there are scant references to this problem in the Agency records: the interest shown in certain British business and government circles to obtain a New World market as compensation for the loss of the North American colonies — linked up in triangular trade with Europe and Asia — had waned with the failure of the Popham expedition; the setting up of Company control points at Rio and the Cape went a long way towards eliminating any direct trade to South America in Eastern goods (except for small quantities of legally exported prize articles); and there was little prospect of anything but a

166. A. Cunningham to Pringle, 2 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

167. Pringle to Cunningham, 12 Sept. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

168. Pringle to Ramsay, 4 Oct. and 23 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., VII.

169. Pringle to Cunningham, 7 Oct. 1808, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

170. Cunningham to Pringle, 15 Nov. 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

very petty commerce developing at that time between two primary producing areas like the Cape and Brazil.<sup>171</sup>

Since the Company's own fleets frequently by-passed the Cape on their homeward voyages, leaving Eastern stores for the Colony at St. Helena, that island represented another danger-spot for smuggling activities into and from the settlement. In October, 1809, when the Company's packet ship Camperdown landed a portion of the China indent left at St. Helena by the Walmer Castle,<sup>172</sup> its commander, Capt. Cowham, asked to be allowed to land and sell some articles<sup>173</sup> on his own account. While admitting these "trifles",<sup>174</sup> Pringle urged the St. Helena authorities to publicise on their island "the Regulations of the Trade in Eastern Produce to this place", stressing that no private goods could be landed without an express licence.<sup>175</sup>

In December, however, when the Camperdown was again in Table Bay offloading Company stores, a Customs inspector caught some crew members trying to smuggle in silk handkerchiefs and a few pieces of nankeen.<sup>176</sup> Although the value of the goods involved was negligible and neither the captain nor his officers were in the least implicated, the Company's carefully prepared anti-smuggling machinery swung into action, with almost Gilbertian results. The men were brought to trial, the offending articles and the rowing-boat in which they had been secreted were confiscated, and a fine of triple the goods' value and twelve months' imprisonment was imposed.<sup>177</sup> There followed the curious phenomenon of the Company's Agent pleading with the Governor to show clemency to the smugglers, since the Camperdown, "being already several hands short of her

171. With sugar, gold, and diamonds, the Brazilians, up to the early 19th century had, however, been much more successful in developing a profitable export trade — cf. A.G. Keller, Colonization: a Study of the Founding of New Societies (New York, 1908), ch. iv; M. Arkin, "Jewish Economic Activities in Colonial Brazil", Jewish Affairs (July 1957), pp. 25-30.

172. See above, (ii)(d).

173. "...800 Bengal coarse sheets, 3 sets of China, some India silk handkerchiefs and a small quantity of ladies shoes" — Cowham to Pringle, 9 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., X.

174. Pringle to Alexander, 9 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

175. Pringle to Governor and Council, St. Helena, 9 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

176. Memorial of Cowham to Caledon, 26 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., X.

177. Alexander to Pringle, 4 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., X.

number", would be unable to return to St. Helena if the men were sent to jail!<sup>178</sup> Caledon, while revisiting the prison sentences, refused to cancel the fines,<sup>179</sup> and — since the offenders had "nothing in the world but their monthly wages left at home for the supply of their families" — Agency funds had to be provided for the triple penalties.<sup>180</sup> The struggle to uphold John Company's chartered prerogatives had sustained an unforeseen bounding setback.

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(iv) The Intended Madras Armament

(a)

In spite of differences of opinion on customs procedure and vigorous criticism of the Company's desultory and inadequate indents from China and India, relations between the Cape Government and the Agency during the period immediately after Pringle's return were probably more cordial than they had been during most of the First Occupation, and he found, as a general rule, "the greatest readiness and goodwill in the Government here to forward the Company's views".<sup>181</sup> Although he did not always see eye to eye with the local military and naval commanders, or with the heads of the customs and secretarial departments, the Agent did find that Governor Caledon himself was anxious "to support the interests of the Company by all practicable means".<sup>182</sup> In return, Pringle periodically relaxed the tight ban on Cape passengers proceeding to the East at the Earl's request, feeling certain that the Directors would realise how "ungracious" it would be to resist "His Excellency's wishes, whilst he so uniformly & scrupulously maintains in every respect the privileges of the Hon'ble Company".<sup>183</sup>

178. Pringle to Alexander, 9 Jan. 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII.

179. Alexander to Pringle, 11 Jan. 1810, CGH.P.R., II.

180. Alexander to Pringle, 14 Jan. 1810, CGH.P.R., X.

181. Pringle to Ramsay, 31 March 1810, CGH.P.R., VII.

182. Alexander to Luson, 18 April 1809, CGH.P.R., I.

183. Pringle to Ramsay, 4 Oct. 1808, CGH.P.R., VII; in this particular instance, the Governor had asked Pringle to allow "Mrs. Baumgardt & Her Children to proceed to Bengal" on a Company vessel.

Consequently, when an emergency arose which called for close collaboration between Agency and Government, it is not surprising to find Pringle offering as much co-operation as possible — particularly since major interests of the Company itself appeared to be directly threatened. On October 15th, 1809, Caledon received the alarming news from Ceylon

"that a very considerable proportion of the E.I. Company native troops headed by Commanding Officers of Corps, are in a state of insubordination and mutiny..."<sup>184</sup>

Immediately the question arose of whether or not it was expedient to despatch a relief force from the Cape to Madras; the Governor himself was in little doubt —

"If the point under discussion turns upon the comparative object of securing one possession at the risk of losing the other, I believe I may state it with some confidence as the opinion of one of His Majesty's principal ministers, that the true value of this Colony is its being considered at all times as an outpost subservient to the security and protection of our E.I. possessions; that those possessions are in most eminent danger at the moment is unfortunately but too obvious..."<sup>185</sup>

The local military commander, Lt.-Gen. Grey, also thought that it was a "positive duty" to aid the Madras Government, and drew up a list of troops available for the project "whenever Tonnage can be procured for their conveyance";<sup>186</sup> and, although Admiral Bertie was reluctant to suspend his plans for blockading Mauritius,<sup>187</sup> he was sharply overruled by Caledon with the tart query — "Of what consequence, of what utility can the Isles of France be to Great Britain if she loses her Empire in the East?"<sup>188</sup> Thus plans were to be pushed ahead for the embarkation of some 2,400 men, their equipment and provisions.<sup>189</sup>

184. Caledon to Grey, 15 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., X (a garbled version of this confidential letter is to be found in Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 168-170); for a description of the background and course of these commotions, see H.H. Wilson, History of British India (London, 1845), Vol. I, pp. 116ff.  
185. Caledon to Grey, 15 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., X.  
186. Grey to Caledon, 16 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., X (also in Recs.C.C., VII, p. 175).  
187. Bertie to Caledon, 17 Oct. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 199-200; Caledon to Bertie, 19 Oct. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 203-205.  
188. Caledon to Bertie, 17 Oct. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 200.  
189. Caledon to Bertie, 19 Oct. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 206.

There was "but a small proportion" of the ~~mass~~ required tonnage available, however,<sup>190</sup> and the Governor called upon Pringle to supply the deficit by either hiring British or neutral merchantmen, "or by any other means which you may judge more advantageous if equally expeditious".<sup>191</sup> The Agent felt "very proud" of being asked to co-operate in "this grand work of supporting the Hon'ble Company's Government in India" and believed that the occasion was "perhaps the most critical for the British Empire that has occurred in this Era of Extraordinary Events"; nonetheless, without wanting to appear lukewarm or wishing to avoid a full share of responsibility,

"the fact really is, My Lord, I find it a matter of utter impossibility to superintend the Equipment of the different Transports in different Bays, to receive after proper inspection & survey the Water Casks as they are purchased, or are made, the firewood, hammocks, and a long list of etc., and redeliver these to the Ships again — for all which purposes His Majesty's Government has on the spot large and efficient establishments. I therefore with the utmost deference request leave to suggest to Your Excellency the great advantages that would ensue to the Public Service were these matters ordered at once to be done by the respective departments, Naval and Military, to whom they would have naturally fallen in His Maj's. Service under other circumstances — and I will contribute everything in my power to facilitate the grand object in view and pay all the expenses which the different departments may incur, or arrange things so that they will be entirely separate from the current services of the Colony — in whatever manner Your Excellency and the Commanders in Chief by Sea and Land may approve."<sup>192</sup>

The upshot was a meeting at Pringle's house two days later (27th October), where the Agent convinced Caledon, the two service chiefs, and Resident-Commissioner Shield, that, in the absence of a large staff and an elaborate establishment, he would not be able to personally manage the details of the intended armament; instead, it was agreed that everything should be conducted as if the expedition "were fitting out by order of

190. Caledon to Castlereagh, 19 Oct. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 202.

191. Caledon to Pringle, 22 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., I (also in Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 208-209).

192. Pringle to Caledon, 25 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

H.M's. Ministers", except that Pringle would pay for all the purchases on the part of the Company<sup>193</sup> and assist in all other respects as far as lay in his power.<sup>194</sup>

(b)

During the next month there were many of these conferences, and by November 18th the Governor had high hopes of being able to despatch the force within a fortnight.<sup>195</sup> Four prize vessels (Silsit, Peggy, Tangebar, and Ceres) had been commandeered,<sup>196</sup> an American ship, the Felicity, had been hired, and Pringle had hopes, too, of converting the H.C.S. Streatham into a troop-carrier. This vessel, with a considerable part of its cargo still intact, had been recovered in September by the squadron blockading the Isle of Bourbon, and brought to the Cape as a prize.<sup>197</sup> On arrival in Table Bay, the Streatham and her cargo were claimed by Pringle on behalf of the Company, in return for appropriate salvage,<sup>198</sup> but the captors' agents<sup>199</sup> referred the issue to the Admiralty Court.<sup>200</sup> While the ship's status remained in doubt, its commander, Captain Dale, opposed its use as one of the Madras transports unless the Agency furnished a guarantee of indemnity to protect the interests of his principals.<sup>201</sup> Pringle, of course, was not in a position to do this, but tried to re-assure the Captain as far as possible:

193. The general practice at that time was for the Company to meet all the costs of shipping regular troops to its dependencies in India.

194. Pringle to Caledon, 29 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

195. Caledon to Castlereagh, 18 Nov. 1809, Recs.G.C., VII, p. 229.

196. Ibid., p. 230.

197. Bertie to the Admiralty, 20 Oct. and 16 Nov. 1809, Recs.G.C., VII, pp. 207-208, 226-228.

198. Pringle to Bertie, 9 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

199. Messrs Maude, Robertson, & De Coetlogen.

200. Bertie to Pringle, 10 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., X.

201. Dale to Pringle, 10 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., X; most of its vessels were chartered by the Company for a prescribed number of voyages, but remained the property of private capitalists who were known collectively as "The Shipping Interest", had shares in the Company and wielded great influence in the Court of Directors — see Philips, op. cit., pp. 80-87; on the Parliamentary and City connections of this group, see Dorothy Marshall, English People in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1956), pp. 79-80.

"...you must be sensible how impossible it is for me to decide such matters; they can only be left to the decisions of the Hon. Court of Directors and the Owners of the Streatham; and altho differences may sometimes arise respecting Settlements of Freight at the India House, I am confident the Justice and Liberality of the Hon. Court will always be, as they have been, conspicuous in cases so clear, and at the same time so urgent as the present..."<sup>202</sup>

When this argument failed to win over the suspicious Captain, the Agent requested the Governor's intervention, since, without the Streatham, it was impossible to despatch the force on schedule.<sup>203</sup> This was soon forthcoming, and Dale was directed to prepare his vessel for sea immediately, while the captors' agents were instructed to unload, store, and value the cargo.<sup>204</sup>

Meanwhile, the prize ships, having arrived at the Cape after encountering the wear and tear of long voyages, had been lying around for months, without any repairs, and were very ill equipped for travel to Madras.<sup>205</sup> Thus, throughout these hectic weeks of feverish preparations, a great deal of correspondence passed between the Agency, Commissioner Shield, the Agent Victualler, and the Simonstown shipwright, John Osmond ("a person of good character and apparently of great zeal and activity"), who had been recommended to Fringle by the Governor to undertake the inspection and repairs of the prize vessels.<sup>206</sup> To Osmond and others<sup>207</sup> whom Fringle hired at short notice and on favourable terms to convert derelict hulks into seaworthy transports, this intended Madras expedition represented a source of high windfall profits, while local ship chandlers experienced a short-lived boom.<sup>208</sup>

The arrival of a "Country"<sup>209</sup> ship from Bengal on November 19th brought news of improved conditions at Madras, and Caledon resolved t

202. Fringle to Dale, 10 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

203. Fringle to Caledon, 12 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

204. Alexander to Dale, 12 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Fringle to Bertie, and to Messrs. Maule, Robertson, & Co., 13 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

205. Bertie to Caledon, 24 Oct. 1809, Rees.C.C., VII, pp. 209-210.

206. Caledon to Fringle, 22 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

207. Such as Henry Phillips, who worked on the Pilnit, which was moored in Table Bay.

208. Osmond to Fringle, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R. I (these letters display a lively sense of humour and indicate that the shipwright had become a close personal friend of the Agent); W. Wilberforce Bird to Fringle, 8 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

209. I.e., a licensed private vessel used in the "Country Trade" —

"suspend forwarding the troops, but as the principal expense has been already incurred, and the Shipping is almost ready I consider it wise to remain prepared in case any new emergency may arise."<sup>210</sup>

Consequently, Pringle was instructed to limit further expenditure as far as was consistent with keeping the transports "ready to proceed should circumstances render it necessary";<sup>211</sup> at the same time, it was resolved to dispense with the Streatham's services, and Captain Dale was told to "act as if the preceding correspondence had not taken place";<sup>212</sup> The Agent discovered, however, that not one of the converted prize ships had on board "a single Mate or any person who can take charge of the stores and fittings"; thus, if the Governor was anxious to keep these vessels in readiness, responsible officers would have to be ~~sent~~ stationed aboard immediately — otherwise there was no way of preventing "the almost complete dismantling of the Ships from the embossment that would necessarily ensue".<sup>213</sup>

This problem had solved itself by the end of the year, when Caledon learnt of "the happy restoration of tranquility in the Presidency of Fort St. George", and directed Pringle to discharge the transports and settle all expenses already incurred.<sup>214</sup> A week thereafter the Agent Victualler was asked to receive back those stores shipped for the voyage,<sup>215</sup> and Pringle had sent his own version of the whole episode to the Governor-General of Bengal.<sup>216</sup>

210. Caledon to Castlereagh, 21 Nov. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 232-233.

211. Caledon to Pringle, 21 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., X.

212. Pringle to Dale, 22 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII. It was not until the end of December that the Vice Admiralty Court restored the Streatham to its Company owners, together with a load of 6,000 bags of saltpetre, the Agency paying salvage "at the very favourable rate of 30/- per cent." The rest of the cargo (consisting mainly of indigo, but with some piece-goods) was ordered to be landed, "to ascertain if possible by the marks and numbers whose property it may be". This examination had not been completed until mid-March, when the indigo was condemned to the Crown; Pringle immediately advised Lendenhall St. to launch an appeal against this sentence — Pringle to Ransay, 2 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R. IXA; Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 4 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Pringle to D. Pontardant (Proctor of the Vice Admiralty Court), 15 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Pringle to W.D. Jennings (King's Proctor), 16 March 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Pringle to Lord Minto, 9 June 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

213. Pringle to Caledon, 22 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

214. Caledon to Pringle, 25 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., X; Pringle to Caledon, 27 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII; see also, Caledon to Castlereagh, 20 Jan. 1810, Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 246-247.

215. Pringle to Bertie, 1 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., II.

216. Pringle to Lord Minto, 4 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

Not only did the War Office commend Caledon for the prompt and ready manner in which he had been prepared to send a large part of the local garrison to India<sup>217</sup> — he also received warm appreciation for his "zealous assistance" and "ready co-operation" from the Company Directors,<sup>218</sup> who must have been gratified to learn that at the Cape there was a governor so concerned for their welfare as to express the following sentiments:

"Although the interests of the Company are so much those of the Nation and of my Sovereign that I felt it my bounden duty to act as I did; yet it gives me great satisfaction to know my conduct has met the approbation of so eminent a body as the Hon'ble the Court of Directors. I thank you Gentlemen for the handsome mode in which you have communicated their acknowledgement of my exertions and beg you will impress upon the Hon'ble Court a reliance upon my zeal and determination for promoting the Interests of the East India Company whenever opportunities occur."<sup>219</sup>

Had the Colony been administered directly as a Company possession, the gentlemen of Leadenhall Street could hardly have expected better treatment.

(c)

While Caledon was being praised for his patriotic conduct, Pringle — as an aftermath of the abortive expedition — was confronted by a series of demands for compensation from the masters and agents of the conscripted vessels.

When ~~the~~ Captain Clement of the chartered American ship Felicity asked for reasonable recompense,<sup>220</sup> and was told to submit his claim in specific terms,<sup>221</sup> he requested "two months' pay as a moderately just compensation" for the time the ship had been engaged and for "the disappointment resulting from its discharge", observing ~~at~~ the same time "that among merchants when a ship is chartered and the freight not furnished, she is entitled to one half the charter even if given up the next day".<sup>222</sup> The case was submitted to a panel of three arbitrators (one nominated

217. Earl Liverpool to Caledon, 8 Feb. 1810, Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 252-253; Caledon to Liverpool, 30 June 1810, Recs.U.C., VII, pp. 296-297.

218. Secret Committee to Caledon, Committee of Secrecy Minutes, 20 Feb. 1810.

219. Caledon to Secret Committee, 30 June 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

220. Clement to Pringle, 4 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., I.

221. Pringle to Clement, 5 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

222. Clement to Pringle 6 Dec. 1809, C.G.H.F.R. X.

by the Agency, another by Clement, and the third by the two nominees),<sup>223</sup> and indemnification of 6,000 paper rixdollars was awarded, together with a drawback of duties on those articles which the Captain had been forced to offload at the Cape but would not be able to sell on the local market.<sup>224</sup> The whole business had taken less than two weeks to be settled, apparently, to the satisfaction of both parties.

The problem of the conscripted prize vessels, however, involved much more complex issues, and gradually degenerated into controversial financial bickerings. After making several efforts to reach compromise adjustments, Pringle informed Caledon:

"It is difficult for me to give Your Lordship any idea of the obstacles which I encounter in every attempt to settle the discordant interests involved in the business of the captured ships SE taken up for transports by your Lordship's desire. I am perfectly of opinion it will never be done without a very decided interference of Government -- at the same time I must allow, I do not easily see how that interference can take place, without considerable appearance of partiality. The only means that suggests itself to me as likely to answer the end, with greatest effect and Justice, would be I think a committee of four or five persons appointed by Your Lordship to investigate and make a report on the subject.... I must candidly own that I am completely nonplussed myself, and unless such a committee should be able to suggest a remedy, I foresee nothing but what is unpleasant. None of the ships are yet clear of the Admiralty Court & I must still of course keep the people on board...."<sup>225</sup>

A small committee was eventually nominated<sup>226</sup> to wrestle with these difficulties, and it recommended that the prize claimants be given the alternative of either receiving outright payments from the Company for the vessels or compensation through the Agency for the improvements made.<sup>227</sup>

223. Pringle to Clement, 6 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

224. Pringle to Caledon, 14 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

225. Pringle to Caledon, 6 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

226. It comprised: W. Wilberforce Bird (now Acting Comptroller of Customs), Alexander Robertson (local ship chandler and prize agent), W.D. Jennings (King's Proctor), and Joseph Luson (Pringle's deputy) -- Caledon to Pringle, 2 Feb. 1810, CGH.F.R., I.

227. "Report of the Committee nominated to investigate upon all matters arising out of the late intended armament", 3 Feb. 1810, CGH.F.R., II; it suggested the following compensation schedule --

	<u>Claimants to Receive</u>	<u>or give for the Ship</u>
<u>Peggy:</u>	Rds. 10,000	Rds. 2,105
<u>Ceres:</u>	9,000	3,168
<u>Kangoorah:</u>	15,000	4,158
<u>Fleet:</u>	25,000	3,895

While Pringle had agreed to equip the four ships in question as troop transports, and was prepared to submit to a fair award, he was not, of course, authorized to purchase any of the vessels on the Company's account; alarmed at the prospect of being saddled with unwanted tonnage, he felt it was up to the Government — which had seized the vessels in the first instance — to settle for their restoration with the claimants.<sup>228</sup> But it was already too late: with the publication of the committee's report, the Peggy's agents tendered her at the appraised value,<sup>229</sup> while those of the Fangebar were quick to accept 13,000 rixdollars on behalf of the captors and expressed their determination to adhere to the suggested terms.<sup>230</sup> And, when Caledon asserted that the committee's recommendations — "which certainly leave an option to the captors or claimants" — were the most equitable which the Company could expect under the circumstances,<sup>231</sup> the Agent was forced, albeit reluctantly, to give way.<sup>232</sup> Rather than have the ships on his hands, however, he handed them back to the claimants "without requiring reimbursement for any of the expenses of their outfit".<sup>233</sup>

All told, the Agency disbursed roundabout 150,000 rixdollars on account of the contemplated expedition to Madras,<sup>234</sup> 40,000 of which it had been compelled to borrow from the Lombard Bank; this had meant disappointments for many individual Cape Town traders who had been promised short-term loans by the Bank authorities over December and January, 1809-10.<sup>235</sup> Nonetheless, by the middle of 1810 the overdraft had been wiped out through the enormous profits reaped from the indent sales, and there still remained "a very adequate benefit to the Hon. Company".<sup>236</sup>

228. Pringle to Alexander, 26 Feb. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

229. A. Robertson to Alexander, 20 Feb. 1810, CGH.F.R., II.

230. Maude, Robertson, & De Coetlogen to Pringle, 2 March 1810, CGH.F.R., X.

231. Alexander to Pringle, 3 March 1810, CGH.F.R., X.

232. Iason to Alexander, 5 March 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

233. Pringle to Messrs. Maude, Robertson, & De Coetlogen, 7 March 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

234. Iason to Alexander, 24 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

235. J.J. Maynier (Bookkeeper, Lombard Bank) to Alexander, 21 April 1810, CGH.F.R., II.

236. Pringle to Haussay, 21 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

If the contemplated Madras expedition had turned out to be something of a damp squib, it did reveal a lack of effective liason and harmony among the various interests concerned when it came to handling urgent shipping crises of that nature -- although it also demonstrated the Agency's pivotal position in such emergencies and the growing awareness that the Company's interests were frequently those of the nation as a whole. Moreover, since the men on the spot (Governor, Military Commander, and Agent) had been quite prepared to jettison the Colony rather than run the risk of losing some ground in India -- a policy eventually endorsed by both Whitehall and the Directors -- it clearly indicated that, in official eyes, when danger threatened further east, the Cape was still expendable.

III. EMBRYO TRADING CONTACTS

To a Colony grown accustomed to sporadic visitations of severe economic depression, the decade which followed the Second British Occupation turned out to be a time of relative prosperity.<sup>1</sup> In part, no doubt, this was a consequence of steady currency inflation matched by an extensive but confident use of credit;<sup>2</sup> but there were also more solid foundations supporting this boom, since (especially during the years 1810-14) the Cape not only began to develop regular commercial contacts with nearby island neighbours, but ~~also~~ sporadic trading relations with more distant markets grew up as well. It was a trend hindered by the natural drawbacks of an isolated position in world trade, a paucity of desirable exports, and a small, widely-dispersed population which was still essentially self-sufficient in outlook.<sup>3</sup> There were man-made obstacles to be surmounted, too, such as the hazards of long-distant sea communications in wartime, the restraints of archaic Navigation Laws,<sup>4</sup> and a frequent lack of knowledge about local conditions in British government circles.

The Cape Agency of the English East India Company played something of a Jekyll and Hyde rôle in this connection, helping to forge external economic links in some respects, but actively hindering the process in other ways. The aim of this chapter is to outline the early growth and vicissitudes of those foreign trade avenues in which the Company and its Agency showed a marked interest.

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1. G.G.W. Schumann, Structural Changes and Business Cycles in South Africa: 1806-1936 (London, 1938), pp. 56-58.
2. P. Warden Grant, Considerations on the State of the Colonial Currency at the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town, 1825), pp. 13-15; S.F.S. Die, Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika (Stellenbosch, 1928), Vol. II, p. 149; Arndt, op. cit., Part I, ch. ii.
3. "Self-containedness was the mark of rural life. A Western Province farm....supplied most of its own wants, relied on its slaves for handicrafts, and looked to the outer world only for a few luxuries and raw materials" — Eric A. Walker, The Great Trek (London, 1934), p. 25, cf. V.R.S., Vol. 18, pp. 281-283.
4. The struggle against Napoleon had given a new lease of life to the traditional mercantilist slogan of "ships, colonies, commerce" as British manufacturers ruefully contemplated the effects on their prosperity of the Continental System — cf. R.L. Schuyler, The Fall of the Old Colonial System, a study in British Free Trade: 1770-1870 (New York, 1945), p. 69.

(a)

As the French extended their military and political sway over Europe, British naval power gradually wrested far-distant colonial outposts from their control. One motive for this "mopping-up" process was a desire to gain a monopoly of tropical products as some compensation for the Emperor's attempts to exclude British goods from the Continent, although strategic considerations were also very important;<sup>5</sup> and in those French territories overseas which suffered from the drawbacks of diminutive size, isolation, and erratic weather, and where there was correspondingly little incentive on the part of the British to send out their own settlers or invest capital, the fundamental purpose of attack and occupation was usually to prevent such settlements from ever again making nuisances of themselves.

Ever since the outbreak of the Anglo-French struggle in the 1790's, the island-cluster of the Mascarenes -- which included Mauritius (Île de France), Bourbon (Réunion), and Rodrigues -- had served as a base for extensive raids on British shipping;<sup>6</sup> and, as early as 1800, Sir George Yonge had suggested that "the Reduction of this nest of Pirates" would be of great benefit "to all the Indian Commerce, for they fitt out Ships & Plan Expeditions without Its being known, and by various Channells gott Intelligence and Directions from France".<sup>7</sup> When the war was resumed in 1803, the East India Company began to feel the full brunt of these attacks: no corner of the Indian Ocean proved safe from "the corsairs", and within three years fourteen heavily-laden East Indiamen had fallen victim to marauding French cruisers,<sup>8</sup> including the 1,200 ton Warren Hastings, with its valuable tea cargo, which was taken in Cape waters in June, 1806.<sup>9</sup> In addition to such losses by capture,

5. Cambridge Modern History, Vol. IX, p. 240; C.H.B.S., Vol. II, p. 106; Isabel V. Jackson, European Powers and South-East Africa, 1796-1856 (London, 1942), p. 75.

6. Williamson, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 146-147.

7. Yonge to Henry Dundas, 29 March 1800, Recs.C.C., III, p. 95.

8. H. Proutot, L'Île de France sous Decaen, 1803-10 (Paris, 1901), pp. 496-509.

9. T.V. Bulpin, Islands in a Forgotten Sea (Cape Town, 1953), p. 216; cf. Recs.C.C., VI, p. 90.

French privateers, operating from their bases in the Mascarenes, sank more than 15,000 tons of Company shipping between 1803 and 1809, and in the last of those years alone cargoes worth over one million pounds sterling went to the sea-bottom.<sup>10</sup> As one member of Admiral Bertie's blockading squadron put it in 1810:

"It was a disgrace to our government that Mauritius had not been attacked fifteen years before. Had it been taken then, what sums would have been saved to the nation, and to the East India Co. in particular, whose trade suffered so much from the squadron which harboured there. While the ports of the mother country were completely blockaded, this remote island managed to equip and keep afloat a squadron which, while it did incalculable mischief to our commerce, supported the national flag of France with greater honour than it could boast of in any other quarter of the ocean."<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, it was only after the news had leaked out that Napoleon was seriously contemplating a major onslaught on India mounted from the Île de France,<sup>12</sup> that the squadron based at the Cape was instructed to send every vessel it could spare to blockade the islands,<sup>13</sup> preventing, especially, any intercourse with neutrals (since the prize cargoes brought back to Port Louis were apparently being disposed of to American merchantmen in return for scarce foodstuffs).<sup>14</sup>

When the blockade failed to produce a surrender because supplies continued to be available to the islanders from Mozambique and Madagascar,<sup>15</sup> Rodrigues was occupied by a force sent from India (mid-1809) as a rallying point for attacks on its larger and more important neighbours;<sup>16</sup> by July, 1810, following a series of successful raids on the harbour of St. Paul, Bourbon had been reduced by a formidable armament<sup>17</sup> — Mauritius alone

10. Home Misc. Series, Vol. 817, f.640 (20 Jan. 1810).

11. John Blakiston of the Royal Engineers — quoted by Balpin, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

12. C.N.Parkinson, Trade and War in the Eastern Seas, 1803-10 (University of London thesis, unpublished, 1935), Part II, pp. 186-188.

13. Pringle to Gov. & C., St. Helena, 4 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII

14. Bertie to Admiralty, 30 Sept. 1808, Recs.C.C., VI, pp. 384-85.

15. Caledon to Bertie, 19 Oct. 1809, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 204; M.V.Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 79; Recs.S.E.Africa, IX, pp. 2-3.

16. Col. H.Keating (task-force commander) to Castlereagh, 25 March 1810, G.H.13/3; Minto to Caledon, 26 March 1810 (with encls.), G.H.13/1; cf. Theal, Hist. S.Af. since 1795, I, pp. 240-241.

17. Keating to Caledon, 21 July 1810, G.H.13/3; cf. R.Coupland, East Africa and its Invaders (Oxford, 1938), p. 140.

remained unconquered. There followed a month later the disastrous Battle of Grand Port, in which four warships were lost and more than two thousand sailors and officers captured by the French.<sup>18</sup> This defeat proved to be merely a temporary setback: a force 10,000 strong was despatched from India and assembled at Rodrigues; joined by a contingent from the Cape, it was put ashore on Île de France at the end of November, and the garrison of Port Louis had capitulated by December 3rd.<sup>19</sup> With this "subjugation of the last remaining Colonial Territory of France",<sup>20</sup> Robert Farquhar, an official of the East India Company who had been left in charge of Bourbon, was transferred to Mauritius as Governor;<sup>21</sup> he was to play a decisive rôle in the history of the Mascarenes over the next decade, and proved to be particularly well suited to the task of inducing the 7,000 French colonists of Mauritius to accept British rule.<sup>22</sup>

Since the whole issue was intimately connected with the Company's welfare, there was close collaboration between the Cape Agency and the naval authorities during this period of blockade and conquest,<sup>23</sup> and Admiral Bertie received much valuable information about developments on Mauritius and its neighbours from Pringle's incoming mail.<sup>24</sup> When the final onslaught was being prepared, the Agent spent much of his time organising the

18. Sulpin, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-224; *Rees.C.C.*, VII, pp. 360-365; for a sketch-map of the battle, see H.C.M. Austen, *Sea Fights and Corsairs of the Indian Ocean: being the Naval History of Mauritius from 1715-1810* (Port Louis, 1935).
19. *Rees.C.C.*, VII, pp. 373-375, 424-425; Wm. James, *The Naval History of Great Britain, 1793-1820* (London, 1886), Vol. V, pp. 144, 205; A.G. Field, "The Expedition to Mauritius in 1810 and the Establishment of British Control" (a summary of an unpublished thesis in the University of London Library), *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. X (Nov. 1932), pp. 126-129.
20. Bertie to the Admiralty, 6 Dec. 1810, *Rees.C.C.*, VII, p. 461.
21. P.J. Barnwell & A. Foussaint, *A Short History of Mauritius* (London, 1949), pp. 124-125; the administration of the islands was transferred from the Company to the Crown in April, 1811, but Farquhar remained Governor until 1823.
22. Helen F. Manning, *British Colonial Government After the American Revolution, 1782-1820* (Yale U.P., New Haven, 1935), Part II, ch. xiv.
23. Pringle to Bertie, 28 Dec. 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, XVIII; Pringle to Bassay, 4 Jan. 1809 and 20 Feb. 1809, *CGH.F.R.*, IXA.
24. Bertie to the Admiralty, 30 Sept. 1808, *Rees.C.C.*, VI, pp. 386-387; Pringle to Bertie, 16 Jan. 1809, *CGH.F.R.*, XVIII.

fitting out of those transports in Simon's Bay which were to carry the Cape contingent.<sup>25</sup> And the apparent disappearance of the French flag from the Indian seas afforded Pringle an opportunity to congratulate his superiors on an event which he believed was "highly beneficial to the Company's Interests in general, but especially to their Navigation".<sup>26</sup>

## (b)

The conquest of the Mascarenes immediately raised the question of the extent to which trade between those islands and the Cape was permissible within the terms of the Company's charter:

"A supply of live stock, Cape Wines, and English Manufactures (Caledon believed) might be exported from hence, and a return Cargo might be sent...liable to the restriction of such Articles as would interfere with the supply of goods provided by the Honorable East India Company."<sup>27</sup>

Ever since the first successful landing at Rodrigues, a number of local merchants had displayed a keen interest in the new potential market,<sup>28</sup> and by the early part of August, 1810, Pringle had received several requests via Government House for permission to furnish supplies to the troops then massing for the final onslaught.<sup>29</sup> The Agent's reaction was a neat compromise between duty, loyalty, and expediency:

"...although upon all ordinary occasions I should conceive myself implicitly bound by the Hon'ble Company's fixed regulations on this subject, still as I have had such ample experience of the just views and true regard to the Company's Interests which have so conspicuously guided His Excellency upon all occasions, I feel completely justified in agreeing to whatever he may judge advisable upon this novel state of things likely to ensue from the capture of the French Islands until I shall have received the Instructions of the Hon'ble Court."<sup>30</sup>

25. Osmond to Pringle, 3, 8, 20 Sept. 1810, CGH.F.R., II; Pringle to Shield, 15, 22 Sept, 8 Oct. 1810, ibid., II; Recs.C.C., VII, p. 416.

26. Pringle to Ramsay, 27 Dec. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII. However, as late as mid-1811 the Cape Government received the "unpleasant intelligence" that three heavily-armed French frigates had been sighted off Mauritius heading in the direction of Madagascar — Maj. Gen. H. Warde to Caledon, 13 May 1811, G.H. 13/5; and ditto to ditto, 27 May 1811, ibid.

27. Caledon to Liverpool, 12 July 1810, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 354.

28. W.G., Gray & Holding to Pringle, 31 March 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

29. W.S. Bird to Caledon, 13 July 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Gray & Holding to Caledon, 19 July 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

30. Pringle to C. Bird, 19 July 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

Thus, in late August and early September the schooner Alexander and the brig Fancy were permitted to sail for Bourbon, laden with Cape produce and European merchandise, but with an express limitation that nothing was to be brought back in return except coffee, cotton, sugar, and rice.<sup>31</sup>

There was a mixture of motives behind Pringle's sanctioning of this limited intercourse: he was not unaware that some trade had previously taken place between the Cape and the Isles of France during the Dutch and Batavian eras, and was genuinely interested in widening the Colony's commercial horizons if it could be achieved without any injury to the Company;<sup>32</sup> at the same time, the despatch of "trifling Europe articles of consumption" would boost the morale of the armed services and help to speedily convince the islanders themselves "of the benefits that will accrue to them from our possession";<sup>33</sup> moreover, the Agent believed that he had now found an opportunity of overcoming his grave remittance problem<sup>34</sup> by using a portion of the funds available from the proceeds of the Company's local sales to purchase Cape supplies for the conquered islands.<sup>35</sup>

Although the trade remained a dangerous business until Mauritius itself had fallen (the Alexander, in fact, was taken by the French),<sup>36</sup> local merchants remained eager to take the plunge. The adventurous Silberforce Bird, for instance, who already held the contract to supply the Cape squadron with its provisions, was prepared to deliver as much Cape wine as was needed to the Bourbon garrison, providing his own shipping for the purpose.<sup>37</sup> And by the end of November, 1810, applications for trading permits were being

31. Pringle to Gray & Holding, 1 Aug. 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII; Pringle to Selden & Watt, 12 Aug. 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII; Caledon to Liverpool, 27 Aug. 1810, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 359.  
32. Pringle to Ramsay, 27 Aug. 1810, CGH.P.R., VII.  
33. Pringle to Farquhar, 2 Aug. 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII.  
34. "I have at present a very large balance of cash in my hands which the very high rate of exchange (45 p.cent) prevents my remitting to London" -- Pringle to Farquhar, 13 March 1811, CGH.P.R., XVIII.  
35. Pringle to Farquhar, 27 Aug. 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII.  
36. Farquhar to Pringle, 12 Oct. 1810, CGH.P.R., XI.  
37. W.W.Bird to Pringle, 15 Sept. 1810, CGH.P.R., XI; Pringle to Farquhar, 17 Sept. 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII.

made so frequently, that the Collector of Customs was authorized to grant clearances for Rodrigues and Bourbon on production of the appropriate licences without insisting on any further formalities.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, with the arrival in Table Bay of the first return cargoes, Pringle had a foretaste of troubles to come: in addition to cotton and coffee, the Fancy had brought back unlicensed cloves and indigo, which he insisted could only be landed for re-export "on the usual condition of being sold at the Company's sales paying 5 p. cent for charges, etc."<sup>39</sup> With this experience, the Agent began to wonder whether it might not be prudent to place further restrictions on the trade, the Company itself playing a more active part, and to Farquhar he wrote:

"I am highly flattered by your approbation of the measures adopted here of granting licences to private ships to trade under certain restrictions to the French Islands & I hope it will be sanctioned from home as much mutual benefit may be derived from this intercourse. The supply of Coffee however for this Colony will be an object which I think the Hon'ble Company will wish to reserve to themselves — I therefore request you will take this object into consideration & let us know how far it would be consistent with your arrangements to receive a certain quantity of wine & wheat from hence returning coffee, by which means a small vessel might be usefully and constantly employed between the two Settlements."<sup>40</sup>

With the occupation of Mauritius, however, and pending the arrival of definitive instructions from Leadenhall Street, Pringle had no alternative but to extend the interim licensing arrangements to that island also.<sup>41</sup>

Farquhar's first despatch as Governor of Mauritius brought further disillusionment as well as something of a shock: fearing that island sugar would not be allowed to compete with West Indian produce on the British market, the new administration was encouraging the cultivation of cereals instead; in addition, the Commissary General had already entered into a contract with an English firm for the supply of arrack and spirits. Thus, except for

38. C. Bird to Chas. Blair, 17 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI; C. Bird to Pringle, 23 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to C. Bird, 26 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

39. Ebdon & Watt to Galedon, 27 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to C. Bird, 29 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

40. Pringle to Farquhar, 2 Dec. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

41. Pringle to Ramsay, 2 April 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

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butter in small barrels, cheese, and dry Constantia wine, there were not many Cape articles "likely to find a ready sale at Port Louis". What was even worse, Farquhar had misinterpreted the Agent's allusion to Company surplus funds: discovering an "extreme shortage of Cash" on the Île de France, he urged Pringle to send as much specie as could be spared in return for bills on London or island produce.<sup>42</sup>

Pringle was quick to enlighten the Governor,<sup>43</sup> but not quick enough; before a reply could reach Mauritius, the authorities there had sent the captured brig L'Orient to collect a considerable cargo of coffee<sup>44</sup> at St. Denis, Bourbon, for despatch to the Cape market "to cover a proportion of the advances of specie which we have sanguine hopes you will be able to make us".<sup>45</sup> Through no fault of his own<sup>46</sup> the Agent now found himself embroiled in the pecuniary embarrassments of a government which had been forced to borrow at high rates of interest from the astute merchants of Port Louis, whose harbour was crowded with ships, and whose boisterous shops were doing a roaring business.<sup>47</sup>

(c)

In the meantime, the situation had become even more complicated because of a directive from Leadenhall Street received during

42. Farquhar to Pringle, 28 April 1811, CGH.F.R., XI. In an effort to diminish "the enormous interest upon money", Farquhar set up a bank closely modelled on the Cape's Lombard Bank which furnished "a species of Currency not likely to be exported..." — Farquhar to Caledon, 20 May 1811, G.H.13/3; see also the undated proclamation establishing the bank, G.H.13/3.
43. "It would have afforded me great pleasure to have complied with your request respecting a remittance of money, but the thing is totally impracticable, the currency of this place being entirely paper and the few Spanish dollars that might be found are prohibited from being exported under very heavy penalties..." — Pringle to Farquhar, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.
44. It comprised 4,837 bales (of 100 lbs. each), invoiced at 68,035 Spanish dollars — G. Tilfair (Secretary to Government, Bourbon) to Pringle, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.
45. Farquhar to Pringle, 21 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.
46. Pringle's original statement about surplus monies had been quite unambiguous: "I have now and am likely to have considerable funds proceeding from the Company's sales, which it would be very desirable to employ in furnishing the articles you may require from hence, as remittances to England are not easy to procure" — n.35 above; cf. Ch. IV, n.125.
47. Farquhar to Pringle, 11 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; cf. Bulgin, op. cit., pp. 229-230. Subsequently, the Governor of Mauritius was to explain to the Colonial Secretary that "The predominant character of the island arises from its singularly valuable port, and the enterprising commercial spirit of its population, resulting from that great natural advantage, which has attracted to it, the merchants and capital of all nations..." — Farquhar to Bathurst, 1 June 1816, Original Correspondence, Mauritius & Seychelles, G.O. 167/Vol. 29 (P.R.O.).

June, 1811, which completely prohibited the re-export of eastern produce from the Cape to Britain (except for raw cotton and prize goods), "such trade being contrary to the Company's Privileges and the Navigation Act".<sup>48</sup> However, those traders who had established contacts with Bourbon and Mauritius had been procuring not only items allowed in for local consumption but also pepper, cloves, cinnamon, and other spices for re-shipment to Britain.<sup>49</sup> In terms of the new regulation, Pringle was forced to place all such unlicensed articles under the Customs House lock until definitive instructions were received on the trade with the Mascarenes.<sup>50</sup>

It was a predicament "full of embarrassments" for the Agent, since the merchants concerned (as well as their Port Louis suppliers) had secured the regular permission of the Mauritius Government to purchase any of the islands' products;<sup>51</sup> he suggested to Farguhar that, for the time being, "it would be much to the advantage of the merchants themselves, and spare a great deal of trouble", if they were prohibited from bringing articles back to the Cape which could not be sold on the local market.<sup>52</sup> To avoid undue hardship, he allowed a large quantity of cloves and a load of ivory — return cargoes from Port Louis — to be sent to Canton;<sup>53</sup> but he drew the line at permitting some of the pepper to be despatched to Brazil as it would open

"a communication direct from the Cape to foreign colonies with Eastward produce — the very object which the Legislature & the Company have most earnestly wished to prevent..."<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, while he allowed traders to continue sending both colonial products and British merchandise to Mauritius and Bourbon,

48. Pringle to Alexander, 17 June 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

49. W.W.Bird to Caledon, 24 March 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to J.W. Stoll (Acting Secretary), 26 March 1811, CGH.F.R., XVIII; A.Andrews to Pringle, 6 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; R.Musgrave to Lt.-Col. Grey, 11 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; R.Shepherd to Pringle, 15 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

50. Pringle to Alexander, 15 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX — goods belonging to the following merchants were involved: A.Andrews, W.W.Bird, A.Gray, Hall & Rose, J.Kelly, A.McDonald, R.Musgrave, W.P.Roper, R.Shepherd.

51. G.A.Barry (Chief Secy., Mauritius) to J.R.Thompson (Port Louis), 22 April 1811, G.H.13/3; Barry to Pringle, 29 June 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to Ramsay, 29 July 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

52. Pringle to Farguhar, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

53. W.W.Bird to Grey, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to Alexander, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Edden & Watt, 23 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

54. Pringle to C.Bird, 31 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX. Duplicate copies of Agency correspondence (For July-Aug. 1811 only) with local merchants and Government House on trade with the French Islands are to be found in the Cape Archives — G.O.32/56-87.

he reminded them that the intercourse "was originally granted and continues now to be sanctioned as a temporary indulgence" — it was not to be regarded as a permanent right.<sup>55</sup>

L'Orient arrived in Table Bay early in September, 1811, with its cargo of Bourbon coffee "belonging to H.M. Government at Mauritius";<sup>56</sup> Pringle could see no prospect of getting rid of it on the local market, except at an enormous loss.<sup>57</sup> Since the consignment exceeded the Colony's normal annual consumption, local merchants, like Wilberforce Bird, who had stocks of coffee still on hand, were immediately up in arms against being "forced into competition with a Government at a price below cost", and felt that at least they should be allowed to re-export their own supplies without fear of seizure.<sup>58</sup> Before any action one way or another could be taken, the drama developed a new twist with the Navy's sudden seizure of L'Orient on the pretext that the vessel had not been "regularly condemned in the Vice Admiralty Court".<sup>59</sup> Judgment was not given until the end of November, the Court decreeing restitution of the ship and cargo, but, since it was held that there had been sufficient cause for detention, the expenses of adjudication were to be met by the Agency as claimant.<sup>60</sup>

No sooner was Pringle free to offload the wretched cargo, than every person on the Agency staff was struck down by influenza — "at present so prevalent in Cape Town" — and there was a further delay.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, the rats had been busy on board, and what they had left was found "mixed with ballast and very dirty".<sup>62</sup> By the end of

55. Pringle to B. Stone, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R. XI.

56. Pringle to Alexander, 3 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

57. Pringle to Farquhar, 8 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

58. W.W. Bird to Cradock, 17 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

59. J.K. Dixon (Commander, L'Orient) to Pringle, 19 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI. On hearing of the seizure, Farquhar commented: "It is impossible that the case can occasion you more surprise than it has done me... It appears to me that the very circumstance of my having consigned the Vessel and produce to you... is sufficient if other proofs were wanting to show the futility of the new claims set up with regard to the illegality of the voyage" — Farquhar to Pringle, 1 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

60. Pringle to Farquhar, 2 Nov. 1811; Pringle to Jennings, 7 Nov. 1811; Pringle to Farquhar, 15 Nov. 1811; Mason to Farquhar, 16 Dec. 1811 — CGH.F.R. XIX.

61. Pringle to Dixon, 8 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

62. Pringle to Farquhar, 22 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

January, when offloading was complete, the retail price of coffee had fallen from 30 to 22 rixdollars a bag since local indent merchants had naturally taken advantage of the Orient's misfortunes to get rid of their own stocks as quickly as possible.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, in addition to legal expenses totalling more than 4,000 rixdollars,<sup>64</sup> the Agency had to foot the bill of maintaining the vessel's crew over months of idleness because of the difficulty likely to arise later on of signing up a fresh complement.<sup>65</sup> Failing to secure an adequate return freight, Pringle despatched the unfortunate ship to Port Louis in February with a small quantity of wine,<sup>66</sup> and resolved to get rid of the coffee as soon as possible, since it was "unthinkable that the price should increase but more likely will fall".<sup>67</sup> As late as November, 1812, however, the Agent was still saddled with some unsold stocks as "purchasers expect fresh supplies, and the natural consequence is a very limited demand"; he feared that more months would elapse "before the whole is disposed of".<sup>68</sup>

Thus ended in fiasco Robert Farquhar's one and only attempt to sponsor through official channels a coffee trade between the Mascarenes and the Cape of Good Hope.

(d)

Meanwhile, the quantity of articles brought back from the Isles of France and impounded by the Customs had been steadily growing, and by the end of August, 1811, a worried Pringle had furnished the Directors with a detailed inventory, soliciting their indulgence "in consequence of the peculiar circumstances of the case".<sup>69</sup> A few weeks after assuming office, the new Governor, Sir John Craddock, received a memorial from Wilberforce Bird (who, from the outset, had been one of the most active participants in the trade) which clearly reflected the growing impatience of the merchants involved:

63. Pringle to Farquhar, 27 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

64. Pringle to Farquhar, 14 March 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

65. Pringle to Farquhar, 2 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

66. Pringle to Capt. Dixon, 15 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

67. Pringle to D. Power (Deputy Secretary to Mauritius Govt., then visiting Cape Town), 26 March 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; replying the same day, Power fully agreed — "the propriety of such a measure appears to me unquestionable", CGH.F.R., XII.

68. Pringle to Farquhar, 7 Nov. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

69. Pringle to Alexander, 29 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Ramsay, 31 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

"Your Memorialist being a Shipowner did, under License from the Governor & from the Agent of the Honorable East India Company immediately on the Capture of Mauritius and Bourbon, send supplies to the Navy, Army, and Inhabitants and was allowed to bring back by way of return, Coffee & Sugar for Colonial consumption, and that for the amount of his cargoes beyond the quantity of Coffee and Sugar required for the supply of this Colony, he expected to receive Spanish dollars or Government Bills.

Your Memorialist not being allowed to export Sp. dollars and Government Bills being payable only at Madras at a loss of near 15 p.c., he received a license from the Governor of Mauritius and Bourbon, to export Pepper, Cloves, Gums, Cassia Cinnamon and other articles, which are here under the care of the Collector of H.M. Customs. ...application being made to allow these articles (not permitted to be sold here) to be exported to England (or elsewhere) and warehoused by the Honorable East India Company, an answer was returned that 'the decision of the Court of Directors must be first had'; nearly twelve months have elapsed since the capture of the Isle of Bourbon & eight since the arrival of the produce now warehoused without such decision being made known....

It is almost superfluous to state my expectation that produce forbidden to be sold here would be allowed exportation. No man could be so absurd as to order his returns for supplies sent in such articles as he knew he could neither sell for consumption at the Cape or export from it -- that would be to receive no payment at all....

Your Memorialist is not unacquainted with the restraint which the Charter of the Honorable East India Company imposes.... but hopes that Your Excellency under the circumstances of these articles having been received in return for supplies and of the Prohibition of their Sale here for Colonial consumption will deem it expedient to grant permission to your Memorialist to export them in the Golden Grove now about to sail for England at your Memorialist's own risk....<sup>70</sup>

While not feeling empowered to assent to this application,<sup>71</sup> Cradock referred Bird's petition to the Agent and asked for his views thereon.<sup>72</sup> Pringle took this opportunity to familiarise the new Governor with some of the background circumstances:

"When the Isle of Bourbon fell into our hands last year, the naval and military forces employed on that service became almost entirely dependent on the Cape for comforts and supplies of every kind, and, as the Expedition had been equipt from India no instructions applicable to the case could be received from

70. W.W. Bird to Cradock, 26 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

71. C.Bird to W.W.Bird, 30 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

72. C.Bird to Pringle, 30 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

England for a great length of time. Impressed therefore with the urgency and justice of immediately granting the assistance which could be only afforded from hence, His Excellency the Earl of Caledon did us the honor to communicate his Views on this Emergency in which as far as depended on me I fully concurred; and, in consequence, licences were granted to such merchants as chose to adventure in Cape produce & the smaller articles of European manufacture & which are in common use -- with an express limitation that nothing should be brought back in return except coffee, cotton, sugar, and rice."

Thereafter, in the Agent's opinion, an extremely lenient policy had been followed:

"In England it is perfectly well known that the smallest deviation from the letter of a Licence would subject to very great penalties & even to Confiscation of the whole; here, however, nothing of the kind was done, but when Mr. Bird and other Merchants chose to import a variety of articles -- many of them not even the produce of the French Islands, they hardly could expect that any sanction would be given to such an infraction by us; I therefore contented myself with merely stipulating that the goods thus imported contrary to the tenor of the original Licence, should remain under the Custody of the Officers of His Majesty's Customs until instructions should be received on the subject from home."

Thus, Pringle was firmly convinced, Bird and those others in the same position, had only themselves to blame for their present predicament:

"It will I think appear to Your Excellency that the hardship and inconvenience complained of, have no other origin than in the breach of the original licence on which the whole of this communication with the French Islands was founded and which, altho' merely a temporary indulgence limited and restricted as already mentioned, seems now to be considered as a right and the refusal to extend it looked upon as a hardship. It is scarcely necessary to remark to Your Excellency that the Licence of the Governor of Mauritius and Bourbon to export goods from these Islands by no means includes the consequence of their being landed here or to be allowed to be exported from this place with the additional sanction of any authority here."<sup>75</sup>

Such sentiments -- based, not unexpectedly, on a purely legalistic interpretation of the circumstances -- served for a time to hold the rising tide of discontent at bay. In fact, this exchange proved to be a prelude for a "tougher" policy by the Agent towards trade and traders with the Mascarenes.

75. Pringle to Cradock, 30 Sept. 1811, CGM.F.R., XIX.

The main reason was that, on the one hand, towards the end of 1811 the urgency which had originally justified the intercourse no longer existed, while, on the other, abuses were becoming more flagrant. When, for instance, W.P. Roper wished to "land the cargo of the ship Laustre from the Isle of France",<sup>74</sup> and Pringle discovered that, among other items, it included arrack, rum, ebony, French manufactures, and "even tea", he felt the request "exceeded all bounds"<sup>75</sup> and insisted on impounding the unlicensed articles "to await the decision of the Honorable East India Company relative to any proceedings they may be pleased to institute against the ship and cargo".<sup>76</sup> With equal firmness, he turned down a petition to tranship a load of European merchandise to Mauritius after it had been hawked around South America and the Cape without success, since that would "open trade from England to those Islands by merely touching at this Settlement".<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, he prevailed upon Cradock to warn all merchants that returns from Mauritius-Sourbon were in future to be confined to enumerated articles "without the slightest deviation".<sup>78</sup> In spite of believing that this policy was "injurious to the interests and prosperity of the Settlement", the Governor remained anxious to co-operate with the Agency in all measures which Pringle thought essential to preserve the Company's rights, and agreed that if merchants transgressed in future they would incur "the full penalty of their own perseverance in wilful error";<sup>79</sup> accordingly, a proclamation was duly issued to this effect.<sup>80</sup> In addition, the Mauritius authorities were asked to prohibit all exports to the Cape, except those specifically listed on the trader's licence — thereby preventing "such embarrassment & perhaps great injury to individuals since such articles will not be suffered to enter here",<sup>81</sup> an assurance that "every necessary precaution" would be taken along these lines was soon forthcoming from Port Louis.<sup>82</sup>

74. Roper to Cradock, 25 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

75. Pringle to C. Bird, 26 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX; C. Bird to Roper, 30 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

76. C. Bird to Roper, 31 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

77. J.B. Buzphreys to Cradock, 4 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Alexander, 11 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

78. Pringle to Cradock, 5 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

79. Cradock to Pringle, 7 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

80. Government Advertisement, 8 Nov. 1811, Rees.S.C., VIII, pp.196-197.

81. Pringle to Farguhar, 15 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

82. Farguhar to Pringle, 1 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

At the same time, Pringle continued to exercise his discretionary powers, though not always very consistently: when, for example, a cargo of tamarinds was received by Messrs. Ranken & Scott "on consignment from an English merchant at the Isle of France" who apparently believed that <sup>all</sup> Mauritius produce (except spices) were admissible,<sup>83</sup> the Agent agreed to their sale for local consumption on the grounds that the fruit was highly perishable, unsuited to any other market, much in demand at the Cape, and did not interfere with the Company's own indents;<sup>84</sup> a few months later, however — although exactly the same criteria applied — he refused to release five bales of hops.<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, Pringle continued to anxiously await definitive instructions from the Court, since "a very considerable property belonging to Individuals here" had piled up under the Customs House lock.<sup>86</sup>

On the strength of a copy of an Act "for the particular relief of the trade of the French conquered Islands with England and other parts",<sup>87</sup> Cradock was in favour of sending these articles to London at the risk of the owners concerned,<sup>88</sup> but was persuaded to hold back a little while longer by an Agent not anxious to support such a step without the Directors' sanction.<sup>89</sup> Thus, during the first half of 1812, the licensed trade continued, Cape produce only being shipped periodically to Mauritius or Bourbon in return for inoffensive cargoes like rice, raw cotton, and wooden staves.<sup>90</sup>

## (a)

After a good deal of protracted haggling between East India House and Whitehall, detailed instructions on the Cape's position with respect to the trade of the Mascarenes were finally forwarded

83. Ranken & Scott to Cradock, 7 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.  
 84. Pringle to Ranken & Scott, 4 Dec. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.  
 85. A. Morcos & Co. to Cradock, 16 May 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to C. Bird, 19 May 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.  
 86. Luson to Ramsay, 19 Dec. 1811, CGH.F.R., VII; Pringle to Ramsay, 11 March 1812, CGH.F.R., VII.  
 87. 51 Geo. III, c. 96 — 15 June 1811.  
 88. Alexander to Pringle, 18 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.  
 89. Pringle to Alexander, 18 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.  
 90. Pringle to C. Bird, 3 March 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; A. McDonald to Cradock, 16 May 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to C. Bird, 19 May 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

to Pringle in March, 1812, and on receipt were published as a Government Notice.<sup>91</sup> In future, there was to be no objection to the shipping of British merchandise and Cape commodities from the Colony to the French Islands in exchange for Island produce for local consumption; where such produce was found to be unsaleable at the Cape, application could be made to the Privy Council "for importing such surplus produce into London to be sold at the Company's sales" (since, in terms of the Navigation Laws, the Company's own licence under such circumstances was ineffectual); no goods of Indian origin were to be imported into the Cape from the Mascarenes.

The position having been placed at last on a clear basis, Pringle instructed the Collector of Customs to release the impounded articles,<sup>92</sup> and, "not being possessed of sufficient legal knowledge", requested the King's Proctor to frame the security documents and permits which were to be used in future.<sup>93</sup> After giving widespread publicity to the new measures,<sup>94</sup> he urged Farquhar "to admit of no deviation" and to instruct Port Louis officials that regular certificates of origin were to be granted only if they were completely satisfied that goods being shipped to the Cape were bona fide Island products — taking care, also, to forward such documents on the vessel carrying the articles in question.<sup>95</sup>

No sooner had the new regulations become known, than the Agent was inundated with requests from local merchants for permission to send vessels to Mauritius or Bourbon.<sup>96</sup> Thereafter, until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, an average of five or six ships returned annually to the Cape with pepper, staves, tamarinds, sugar, increasing

91. Pringle to Alexander, 26 May 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX; Advertisement, 29 May 1812, Recs.C.C., VIII, pp. 428-430.  
 92. Pringle to Blair, 26 May 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX.  
 93. Pringle to Jennings, 29 May 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX.  
 94. Jason to Massay, 10 June 1812, CGH.P.R., VII; Pringle to Rear-Admiral Stopford (who had replaced Bertie as Naval Commander), 12 June 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX.  
 95. Pringle to Farquhar, 13 June 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX.  
 96. Memorials to Graddock from W.F. Venables (30 May 1812), I de Wit (30 May 1812), C. Bragg (1 June 1812), and E. Duncan (4 June 1812) — CGH.P.R., XII; Pringle's stock reply was that "the Company has no objection to the shipping of British merchandise and Cape goods to Mauritius or Bourbon, but the return cargo must be colonial produce only and that for consumption here" — to C. Bird, 5 June 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX.

quantities of coffee, rice, and as much raw cotton as was required.<sup>97</sup> Since Farquhar was still making strenuous efforts to render the Islands more self-sufficient in foodstuffs,<sup>98</sup> and the French colonists were more anxious to purchase British manufactured necessities than Cape wines,<sup>99</sup> local exports to the Mascarenes over the years 1812-15 comprised a disappointing chronicle of trivial dairy items and occasional shipments of livestock;<sup>100</sup> at no time during this period did outgoing Cape cargoes to the Isles of France amount to a movement of any real significance.

If the Mauritius-Bourbon market proved to be a disappointing outlet for Cape exports in the long run, after the stationing of a Company agent at Port Louis,<sup>101</sup> that harbour, on the other hand, assumed growing entrepôt significance for the Colony and the bar on goods of Eastern origin reaching the Cape via the Mascarenes gradually became a deadletter. In December, 1812, for instance, Pringle raised no objection when a merchant of Colombo, Ceylon, wished to send a consignment of staves and tobacco to the Cape by way of Mauritius;<sup>102</sup> even the very occasional Company indents from Bombay came to be despatched through Port Louis, as in the case of 176 bales of piece goods consigned to Farquhar for transshipment on Pringle's account in April, 1813;<sup>103</sup> and by the

97. J.D. Schmitt to Pringle, 10 Aug. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Schmitt, 11 Aug. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Alexander, 12 July 1813, CGH.F.R., III; Roden & Watt to Pringle, 21 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; P. Albertus to Cradock, 21 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Alexander, 22 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

On a number of occasions after mid-1812 local merchants were distressed to find that the Agent had no authority to issue licences for Island re-exports from the Cape to London, and that the rignarole of securing Privy Council sanction was necessary — Ranken & Scott to Pringle, 15 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; P. Albertus to Pringle, 17 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Albertus, 18 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; W.F. Venables to Cradock, 31 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIII; Mason to Alexander, 1 Jan. 1814, CGH.F.R., XI.

By 1814, however, the position had been liberalised and Pringle was empowered to make such concessions — Pringle to Farquhar, 5 March 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to H. Home, 8 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX; Pringle to Edden & Watts, 9 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

98. Barwell & Toussaint, op. cit., pp. 131, 137-140.

99. Farquhar to Pringle, 22 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

100. Pringle to Alexander, 12 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; N. Seeborg to Cradock, 8 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., III; Pringle to J.W. Stoll (Secretary's Office), 11 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

101. Pringle to Mark Roworth (Acting-Agent, H.N.I.C., Mauritius), 18 Sept. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

102. Pringle to E. Bletterman, 17 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

103. Roworth to Pringle (with ...), 6 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

beginning of the following year the French Islands were being regularly listed as transit points in the licences which private shippers in India were then beginning to obtain for dealings with the Cape.<sup>104</sup>

An unforeseen consequence of the Mascarenes falling within the British orbit was to render the Cape Colony less dependent on tropical imports from regions in the Far East more fully under the East India Company's sway — so that ultimately the Company's own indent trade was adversely affected. The most conspicuous example of this trend was the emergence of a substitute beverage demand: starved of adequate tea supplies at reasonable prices, the Dutch settlers gradually switched to coffee-drinking; and, since the Company had not reserved the Bourbon trade for itself (as Pringle had thought it would),<sup>105</sup> by early 1813 the Canton depot was being instructed to reduce its tea shipments owing "to the great importation and cheapness of coffee from the conquered French Islands which many of the inhabitants prefer".<sup>106</sup> Even at this twilight stage of its long monopolistic career, John Company had not clearly grasped the fact that the demands for goods which are substitutes for each other are closely interrelated.

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#### (ii) The St. Helena Market

##### (a)

Although it comprises an area of less than 50 square miles and "is just a rocky top of a gigantic volcanic pile resting on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean",<sup>107</sup> the island of St. Helena was, in many respects, of more concern to the Agency and of greater importance in the trade of the Cape Colony during the

104. E.g., J. Scott & Co. (Fort William) to the Secretary of the Marine Board, 18 Jan. 1814 (with Annexure of articles), CGH.F.R., XIII.

105. See above, Ch. III, (i)(b), n.40.

106. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 12 Feb. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

107. L.D. Stamp, Africa — A Study in Tropical Development (New York, 1953), p. 501; cf. Young, I, p. 87.

early years of the Second Occupation than the much larger, more populous, and infinitely more productive Mascarenes.

Lying in the direct path of the Southeast Trade Winds, Jamestown<sup>108</sup> was less than 20 days' sailing distance from Table Bay, whereas the trip to Saint-Denis or Port Louis could take six weeks or more. Moreover, although it was directly administered by the East India Company, St. Helena did not fall within its exclusive trading preserves;<sup>109</sup> thus Pringle had no inhibitions about encouraging commercial contacts (and, in fact, was not unfamiliar with island conditions and requirements because of his own previous calls there).<sup>110</sup> In addition, throughout this period, St. Helena continued to figure prominently as a transshipment centre for Eastern goods indented by the Cape Agency and landed on the island by homeward-bound Company fleets — an arrangement which, in respect to China articles particularly, was preferable to consignments via Bengal.<sup>111</sup> Therefore, though in no way subordinate to the Jamestown authorities, Pringle was in frequent contact with them on many matters of mutual concern.

108. "On sailing round to the leeward of the island, James Town is described, literally built in a deep chasm of the rock, of width sufficient only to admit of a few streets, which the reflected rays of a vertical sun would render insufferably hot, did not the south-east wind blow steadily down this aperture at all seasons of the year.... The town contains but one principal street, about a quarter of a mile in length, and has nothing to attract attention; the houses are low, and built upon a small contracted English scale, and are by no means so well adapted to the climate as the cool brick floors and roomy apartments of the Cape-houses. The station is not healthy, and though less disease prevails than formerly, dysentery carries off great numbers at the approach of the rainy season..."

— Anon. Notes on the Cape of Good Hope (London, 1821), pp. 187-188.

109. On the island's status under Company rule, see O.L. Mathias, "St. Helena under the East India Company", The Fortnightly Review, Vol. CXXIII (1928), pp. 738-746.

110. It will be remembered that the Agent's chief duty on arriving at the Cape in 1794 was to make arrangements for sending regular supplies to St. Helena, and that just prior to the First Occupation, Pringle had spent some time on the island — see above, Ch. I, (iii), (iv).

111. Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 26 Jan. and 31 Jan. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 15 June 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 2 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, 30 June, 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

In a letter to the Governor & Council, Bombay (30 June 1812), in which he ordered a consignment of piece goods, Pringle added — "...and should there not be any vessel that is likely to touch here on her way home, these goods may be landed at St. Helena, as we have frequent communication with that Island" — CGH.F.R., XII.

Although official figures are lacking, it is possible to estimate the approximate size of the island's population roundabout 1812-13: the civil establishment comprised a Governor, deputy, and some thirty subordinates (including a judge-advocate, surgeon, paymaster, and chaplain);<sup>112</sup> on the military side there were twenty-four infantry and twenty-two artillery officers in charge of about one thousand troops;<sup>113</sup> in addition, there were between 400 and 500 white civilian inhabitants, made up mainly from soldiers' families, but with a handful of private merchants and farmers.<sup>114</sup> The non-Europeans comprised 1,400 Malay slaves,<sup>115</sup> about 650 indentured Chinese workers from Canton,<sup>116</sup> and a sprinkling of free "French Blacks". Altogether, therefore, something like 3,700 mouths had to be fed.

While the soil of St. Helena was not unproductive,<sup>117</sup> the goats introduced by the Portuguese in the 16th century had multiplied to such an extent that they had not only come to ransack the island's forests (the trees of which they destroyed by gnawing off the bark),<sup>118</sup> but, roaming at will, they devoured seedlings, crops, and fodder like four-legged locusts.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, not more than about 100 acres were under cultivation at any one time, yielding potatoes and some vegetables (mainly pumpkins), while the valley orchards near Longwood produced uncertain crops of guavas and figs.<sup>120</sup> Thus, with local output wholly insufficient to support the St. Helenians themselves, let alone provision the passing fleets, the Company was forced to ship stores regularly from Britain and India at an average annual cost of roundabout £100,000.<sup>121</sup>

112. East India Register and Directory for 1814, pp. 323-324.

113. J. Prior, Voyage along the Eastern Coast of Africa...to St. Helena (London, 1819), pp. 103-104 — the author was a surgeon on board the frigate Nisus which visited the island in 1813.

114. Prior, ibid.

115. Goosse, op. cit., p. 259; Young, I, p. 108.

116. S.L. Jackson, St. Helena: the Historic Island (London, 1905), pp. 55-56.

117. A. Beaton, Tracts relative to the Island of St. Helena (London, 1815), passim — the author was Governor of the island, 1808-13, and did much to improve its agriculture.

118. G.C. Watts, In Mid Atlantic (London, 1936), pp. 19-20.

119. Goosse, p. 261.

120. Notes on the Cape of Good Hope, pp. 189-190; Wilbur, op. cit., p. 199; Young, I, p. 107.

121. Jackson, p. 56; Goosse, p. 248. (This figure makes no allowance for transport charges at, roughly, £30 per ton).

The Directors, therefore, had every incentive to promote a supply-base for the island which might serve to reduce such heavy expenses, and the Cape of Good Hope was their obvious choice. A formal decision in this connection was taken only in 1813,<sup>122</sup> but Pringle had been working towards that end ever since his return to the Colony, largely in the hope of being able to overcome the Agency's remittance problem: since the export trade to the French Islands had not developed sufficiently to obviate the trouble and losses involved in making direct transfers to London,<sup>123</sup> and having accumulated further "paper currency from the sale of Indian and China goods",<sup>124</sup> he believed that the purchase of local stores for St. Helena would be a convenient means to get rid of surplus rixdollar notes without foreign exchange losses to the Company.<sup>125</sup> Thus, although the Jamestown authorities had wanted to pay for such supplies in hard cash<sup>126</sup> (even in the form of the widely-accepted Spanish dollar),<sup>127</sup> Pringle dissuaded them from such a course as it "would only augment the present difficulty".<sup>128</sup> Consequently, simple bookkeeping arrangements came to take care of the business, and in the ledgers of Leadenhall Street the Agency was credited with the amounts expended on Cape stores, while corresponding debit entries were made in the St. Helena account.

This combination of circumstances enabled the Colony to pay for at least a portion of its imports by promoting contacts with a market able to absorb increasing quantities of Cape surplus produce.

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122. "I have been informed by a letter from Mr. Secretary Ramsay that the Hon'ble Court have directed that a considerable part of the supplies for St. Helena shall be furnished from hence and that you will be desired to indent upon me accordingly" — Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 29 March 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.
123. "I have been induced to extend the traffic to St. Helena principally from the great difficulty I experience in making remittances direct to England, the premium upon the bills last drawn having been so high as 40 p. cent." — Pringle to Ramsay, 15 Dec. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.
124. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 25 April 1811, CGH.F.R., XVIII.
125. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 29 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.
126. Thos. H. Brooke (Secretary to Governor & Council), St. Helena, to Pringle, 10 Aug. 1808, CGH.F.R., X.
127. Governor Beatson, St. Helena, to Pringle, 15 June 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.
128. Pringle to Gov. & Council, St. Hel., 29 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

(b)

Wine was one commodity rapidly growing in annual output,<sup>129</sup> though by no stretch of imagination could the Colony yet be ranked as a major producing country; and, although Lady Anne Barnard had held Cape wines in high esteem,<sup>130</sup> except for the expensive Constantia vintage, the small quantity reaching the British market at the turn of the century was regarded by at least one gentleman in the Commons "as a drink only suitable for tipplers and bargemen".<sup>131</sup> Subsequently, Caledon had been anxious to take advantage of the scarcity of Continental wines in Britain due to wartime difficulties, believing that within a few years, given proper encouragement, the Colony would be "competent to supply any demand that can arise";<sup>132</sup> but the fact remained that there was still "a harshness and acidity peculiar to the Cape wines" which was said to cause heartburn, and that the Colony had not yet produced "anything that can compare with the wines of Madeira and France".<sup>133</sup> Local vintners, it would seem, had not quite mastered the technique of controlling fermentation during hot weather,<sup>134</sup> and it was the St. Helena market which was to encourage an improvement in this direction and serve as a stepping-stone in the emergence of a flourishing export trade.

When Col. Alexander Beatson arrived at Jamestown a few weeks after Pringle's return to the Cape, the new Governor

"found a garrison as well as many of the inhabitants immersed in the grossest intemperance, from the facility of obtaining, and their excessive use of, spiritous liquors..."<sup>135</sup>

Undeterred by the experiences of previous commanders who had been confronted by mutinies after limiting the consumption of arrack and rum,<sup>136</sup> Beatson began to discourage rum shipments

129. In 1806 less than 10,000 leaguers were produced; by 1815 output was close to the 15,000 level — Recs. C.C., VI, p. 76; XI, p. 52.

130. South Africa a Century Ago, p. 114.

131. Quoted by Leipoldt, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

132. Caledon to Liverpool, 21 March 1810, Recs. C.C., VII, pp. 268-269.

133. Notes on the Cape of Good Hope, p. 72.

134. cf. Lawrence Green, Tavern of the Seas (Cape Town, 1947), pp. 45-46.

135. Beatson to Ramsay, 11 Jan. 1812, St. Helena Factory Records, Vol. 70.

136. Gosse, op. cit., pp. 206-207, 243-247; Welch, Portuguese and Dutch in South Africa...., p. 318.

from Bengal, to promote a local brewing industry,<sup>137</sup> and to seek the mild wines of the Cape. Between October 1808 and March 1812 Pringle despatched five separate shipments "of the best Cape Madaira" for the use of the island hospital, a total of about 7,000 gallons, and the Governor had "every reason to be satisfied with the quality".<sup>138</sup> At the same time, as a further check to the islanders' "shameful intemperance", all retail liquor licences were abolished and the Agent was urged to deter private merchants at the Cape "from the habit of sending wine to St. Helena on speculation" — the trade was to be through the Agency itself;<sup>139</sup> while Pringle had no legal power to prevent such private shipments, he appears to have successfully discouraged would-be adventurers into the business.<sup>140</sup>

Meanwhile, in an effort to build up the wine trade, Cradock had abolished export duties,<sup>141</sup> instituted a system of premiums and rewards for the production of the best wines,<sup>142</sup> and re-established the office of wine-taster, who was to refuse export certificates if the samples tested did not reach the required standard.<sup>143</sup> These measures, Pringle informed Beatson, were bound to have the effect of "rendering the future supply to your Island something more advantageous".<sup>144</sup>

137. Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

138. Brooke to Pringle, 10 Aug. 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, I; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 5 Oct. 1808, *CGH.F.R.*, XVIII; Beatson to Pringle, 25 Aug. 1809, *CGH.F.R.*, X; Brooke to Pringle, 24 Nov. 1809, *CGH.F.R.*, X; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 15 Jan. 1810, *CGH.F.R.*, XVIII; Beatson to Pringle, 5 Nov. 1810, *CGH.F.R.*, XI; Pringle to Beatson, 25 April 1811, *CGH.F.R.*, XVIII; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 8 Oct. 1811, *CGH.F.R.*, XII; Pringle to Beatson, 18 March 1812, *CGH.F.R.*, XIX.

139. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 25 Aug. 1809, *CGH.F.R.*, X. (Pringle received letters from the island signed by the Secretary, or in the name of the Governor & Council, or from the Governor in person).

140. W.F. Venables to Cradock, 15 May 1813, *CGH.F.R.*, XII; Pringle to Alexander, 16 May 1813, *CGH.F.R.*, XIX.

141. Proclamation, 18 Oct. 1811, *Recs.C.C.*, VIII, p. 183.

142. Proclamation, 19 Dec. 1811, *Recs.C.C.*, VIII, pp. 214-215.

143. Government Advertisement, 3 Jan. 1812, *Recs.C.C.*, VIII, p. 238; Instructions for the Wine Taster, 10 Jan. 1812, *ibid.*, pp. 241-243; Leipoldt, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-87.

144. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 22 Jan. 1812, *CGH.F.R.*, XII.

In April, 1812, Pringle was informed that the Court had sent an order to Bengal (on Beatson's recommendation) to discontinue all further consignments of rum to St. Helena; instead, Cape wine was to be issued to the troops at sixpence per pint —

"...the consumption of the Garrison is about 80 gallons p. day and that for the Inhabitants and others, together with occasional supplies to His Majesty's Ships may be rated at 40 gallons — wherefore you may reckon our consumption about three-quarters of a leaguer p. day or 200 leaguers p. annum.<sup>145</sup> In respect of wines of better quality, we shall require about 10 leaguers annually of the Yellow Coloured Wine, which will be acceptable here for the Gentlemen of the Settlement as well as for a Substitution of Port Wine used in the Hospital.

Being now informed of our probable wants, we request you will send us about 40 or 50 leaguers quarterly, as it would be attended with inconvenience for want of store rooms besides the risk of not keeping if we had a large quantity sent at a time..."<sup>146</sup>

The trial period of small, sample orders had now given way to the bulk purchase of Cape wines.

The first contract was awarded by the Agency to a Cape Town wine-merchant, G.J. de Vos, who undertook to furnish sixty leaguers of "the same Quality of Wine as is issued to the Navy" and "guaranteed to keep good for six months after delivery" over quarterly intervals at a rate of 125 rixdollars per leaguer (exclusive of casks).<sup>147</sup> The first shipment had been received at Jamestown by December, 1812, and the St. Helena authorities expressed themselves satisfied with the quality.<sup>148</sup> On the arrival of the second instalment, however, three casks were found to be empty — fermentation having dislodged the stoppers — and most of the others were in a leaky condition;<sup>149</sup> de Vos argued that the fault lay in the use of casks fashioned from "old bad staves and not sufficiently strong to resist the power

145. 1 Cape leaguer = 152 gallons.

146. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 27 April 1812, CGH.F.R., III; cf. Young, I, pp. 107-108.

147. Pringle to Beatson, 4 July 1812, CGH.F.R., III; Pringle to Ramsay, 25 July 1812, CGH.F.R., VII.

148. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 16 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

149. The total wastage was 924 gallons — Storekeeper's Report to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 30 March 1813, St. Helena Factory Records, Vol. 79.

of fermentation",<sup>150</sup> and in this he was supported by the Wine-Taster:

"...As to the quality of the wines in question, I highly approved of it....but it is to be considered it was the most improper season for shipping wine of that Age as it is well known that all Wines ferment even in cool Cellars — such greater must the fermentation be when put into an hot hold and shipped in casks by no means Merchantable..."<sup>151</sup>

Craddock urged Pringle to forward these reports to Jamestown and to "vindicate as far as possible the credit of the Colonial Wines";<sup>152</sup> however, the incident did not prevent Beatson from ordering 10,000 gallons beyond the contract quota.<sup>153</sup>

In July, 1813, when a further instalment was despatched — this time in high-quality casks specially imported for the purpose<sup>154</sup> — and a portion again arrived in a defective state,<sup>155</sup> it became apparent that at least some of the wine was not of an adequate standard, and Pringle was induced to comment to Craddock:

"...if I might be allowed to make a suggestion, I think a proclamation from Your Excellency pointing out the encreasing demand for Cape produce might be of great use by inculcating the necessity of not only endeavouring to encrease the Quantity of the Articles but of improving the quality as well, and contenting themselves with a reasonable and equitable price to ensure a continued demand from abroad which never can be the case until mutual advantage be certain."<sup>156</sup>

Once the de Vos contract had expired (Sept., 1813), the Agent experienced great difficulty in maintaining the flow of wine to St. Helena: it had been a season of poor vintage,<sup>157</sup> with

150. G.J. de Vos to Wm. Caldwell (Wine-Taster), (undated translation), CGH.F.R., XII.

151. Caldwell to Pringle, 30 April 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

152. Craddock to Pringle, 18 May 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

153. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 30 April, 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

154. Pringle to Beatson, 10 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

155. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 12 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

156. Pringle to Craddock, 8 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

157. Total production for 1813 was 6,724 Leaguers, contrasted with 11,729 the previous year — Rece.C.C., IX, p. 49, 300; Pringle to Beatson, 20 March 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

a marked upswing in prices;<sup>158</sup> moreover,

"in consequence of the bad name the Cape wine had acquired at Mauritius and Rio Janeiro by improperly exporting it when new..."

Craddock was now strictly enforcing a proclamation which prohibited exports until the wine was eighteen months old — thus most merchants were not yet in a position to tender for a new contract.<sup>159</sup> In addition, shipping was extremely scarce and freights were high,<sup>160</sup> the cost of casks was steadily rising,<sup>161</sup> and, more important still, news had been received that duties on Cape wines entering the British market were to be considerably reduced;<sup>162</sup> and it was this last-mentioned factor which worried Pringle most —

"...I am afraid that the price of Cape wine will be considerably increased by the operation of an Act of Parliament for taking off a large proportion of the Duties payable on its importation into England — a regulation which nobody had foreseen... It is not in my power to guess what price will now be demanded, but the Dealers in and Growers of wine are so buoyed up at this moment that they only appear to be afraid of asking too little; a short time however will probably establish something like a fixed price, but I anticipate a very high one, especially as the last vintage was so deficient in quantity."<sup>163</sup>

Until the position sorted itself out, the Agent was content to make a series of stop-gap arrangements, and managed to procure a record amount of 600 leagues for the island during 1814, nearly half of which was supplied by his old stand-by, de Vos, while 50 were purchased from a merchant who had intended shipping it to Brazil until he "learnt that the market there was very bad".<sup>164</sup>

158. By October, 1813, the average wholesale price on the open market was roundabout 200 rixdollars per league — an increase of 75 rds. in a year.

159. Pringle to Col. Mark Wilks (who had taken over from Beaton in Sept., 1813), 27 Oct. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

160. This aspect is considered below, Ch. III, (ii)(c).

161. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 10 Jan. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

162. C.H.B.E., Vol. VIII, p. 232, 762; S.D. Neumark, The South African Frontier: Economic Influences, 1652-1836 (Stanford, California, 1956), pp. 31-33; Leipoldt, op. cit., pp. 93-96.

163. Pringle to Wilks, 11 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

164. de Vos to Pringle, 19 Jan. 1814, CGH.F.R., XVIII; A. McDonald to Pringle, 23 March 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 19 May 1814, CGH.F.R., XX; Pringle to Wilks, 11 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

Although the prices paid were relatively high (an average of 240 rixdollars per league), there was a note of qualified satisfaction in Pringle's report to the Directors in September, 1814:

"I have nearly sent all the wine required to St. Helena for the Year together with six months in advance, but the difficulty I experience in procuring shipping is so great that I am always fearful some failure in the supply will happen unless proper vessels are regularly appropriated for the purpose.... It is yet too soon to form a judgment of the probable price of wine next year — such will depend on political events, together with the result of the market in England for Cape wine, not yet known here..."<sup>165</sup>

Meanwhile, Pringle had managed to economise on casks by arranging for the used ones to be brought back from the island and securing their re-entry free of duty;<sup>166</sup> moreover, he had been instrumental in overcoming the island's storage problem by forwarding material for twenty vats accompanied by an experienced cooper.<sup>167</sup>

The reduction of the St. Helena garrison to a peace establishment had the effect of diminishing average annual consumption to about 50,000 gallons,<sup>168</sup> and in April, 1815,<sup>169</sup> Pringle called for tenders to supply this amount. The contract was awarded to Alexander McDonald, who was prepared

"to supply...the quantity in question at the rate of 260 rds. p. league of 152 gallons<sup>170</sup> deliverable in good new pipe casks properly seasoned at the rate of 44 rds. p. Cask. I shall further engage the wine shall not be less than 18 months old, that it shall be of an unexceptional quality of its sort, and that it shall hold good for six months after the date of its shipment."<sup>171</sup>

165. Pringle to James Cobb (who had replaced Ruxsey as Secretary of the E.I. Company), 24 Sept. 1814, CGH.F.R., VII.

166. Pringle to Alexander, 21 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XI; C. Bird to Pringle, 23 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

167. Ineson to Wilks, 13 Aug. 1814, CGH.F.R., XI; "in consideration of the exertions" which Pringle had "constantly made for the interests of this Settlement", Governor Somerset allowed the casks to be shipped duty free — C. Bird to Pringle, 21 September 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

168. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 21 Nov. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

169. Government Gazette, 1 April 1815.

170. "...this contract price is much higher than formerly — the difference arises from the unprecedented rate of Exchange (now between 80 and 90 per cent on bills), but which renders the Sterling Value of the wine per Gallon nearly the same as before" — Pringle to Wilks, 16 April 1815, CGH.F.R., XI.

171. McDonald to Pringle, 6 April 1815, CGH.F.R., XII.

Although de Vos had tendered at the same rate, the Agent found his samples to be "of so bad a quality that I could not think of taking any from him."<sup>172</sup>

By this time the pull of the preferential London market was beginning to make itself felt in earnest, and requests for additional supplies for the island had to be turned down since "all the wine fit for exportation has been already disposed of and nothing remains on hand".<sup>173</sup> Yet, as the following table indicates, until 1815 St. Helena had been the more important outlet:

PRODUCTION AND EXPORT OF CAPE WINES

<u>Year</u>	<u>Leaguers<sup>174</sup> Produced</u>	<u>Sent to St. Helena</u>	<u>Sent to<sup>175</sup> Britain</u>	<u>Sent to<sup>176</sup> India</u>
1808	9,525	7	—	—
1809	8,411	6	—	—
1810	10,400	10	—	10
1811	11,010	7	—	—
1812	11,279	76	67	12
1813	6,724	230	100	290
1814	8,697	600	583	97
1815	14,366	332	2,520	—

Note: Over this period occasional shipments found their way to Brazil, Australia, Mauritius, and Canton, but were quantitatively insignificant.

At the time of Pringle's death in June, 1815, Cape wines had ousted all rivals from St. Helena; although there was an absolute limit to what the island could absorb — in contrast to the British market<sup>177</sup> — it was to remain a highly-valued customer until the end of Company rule in 1836.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, the Agent's efforts had probably gone a long way towards restoring a semblance of sobriety among the troops and civilians of Jamestown!

172. Pringle to Wilks, 30 April 1815, CGH.F.R., XX.

173. Pringle to Wilks, 3 May 1815, CGH.F.R., XI.

174. Recs.C.C., VI, p. 443; VII, p. 240, 478; VIII, p. 234; IX, p. 49, 300; X, p. 229; XI, p. 52.

175. Derived from Recs.C.C., XI, pp. 290-293; XIII, p. 350; the figure for 1815 is a generous estimate — in that year the records of the Inspector General of Imports & Exports, Great Britain, were destroyed by fire.

176. See below, Ch. III, (iii)(b).

177. In 1825, when Cape wine exports to London had reached their peak, they accounted for less than 9 per cent of total British consumption — Leopoldt, op. cit., p. 93.

178. In July, 1834, for example, when Jamestown increased duties on Cape wines, the Commercial Exchange, Cape Town, protested that this "vexatious proclamation" would have "pernicious consequences" on the Colony's trade — Immelman, op. cit., p. 75.

(c)

The Cape had never been — and was never to become — an important grain-exporting colony: unreliable weather conditions, a low average degree of soil fertility coupled with unscientific and haphazard methods of cultivation, high production costs, and ~~bad~~ transport facilities meant that poor harvests and local shortages alternated with sporadic periods of surplus when some excess would be available for exportation.<sup>179</sup> On the other hand, the St. Helenians frequently experienced acute shortages of essential foodstuffs, when dwindling stocks of flour, grain, and rice would have to be supplemented by a careful rationing of the local potato supply until the arrival of the next Company store ship at the isolated island.<sup>180</sup> Although a large granary had been erected by Governor Beaton in 1806,<sup>181</sup> he was only too pleased to accept 200 barrels of redundant American flour from the Cape when the intended Madras arment was called off at the end of the following year,<sup>182</sup> and was continually badgering Pringle for shipments of wheat and barley:

"From communications I have had with Col. Beaton...., I think it very possible to establish a most advantageous connection between that Island and this Colony in the Article of Grain; but before any certain measures can be adopted, it will be necessary to ascertain what dependence the Island can place on such Supplies being furnished regularly and at moderate prices."

that the farmers  
And the Agent believed, in the neighbourhood of Mossel Bay might be persuaded to enter into annual contracts with the Company to meet this demand.<sup>183</sup> Trial shipments of Cape barley and flour were found to be about 20 per cent cheaper than the St. Helena authorities could procure from any other source.<sup>184</sup>

179. E.C.A. & C.M. Knowles, The Economic Development of the British Overseas Empire (London, 1936), Vol. III, pp. 103-105; Newark, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34; van Reenen's Journal, pp. 139-141; H.D. Teestra, De Vruchten Mijner Werkzaamheden (1830), Van Riebeeck Society, No. 24 (Cape Town, 1943), pp. 253-256, 341-342.

180. Gouss, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

181. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

182. Pringle to Beaton, 13 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

183. Pringle to Caledon, 19 July 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

184. Pringle to Ramsay, 15 Dec. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 13 Dec. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

Prior to his departure, Caledon seriously toyed with Pringle's suggestion, and went so far as to begin erecting a warehouse at Plettenberg Bay to store produce destined for Jamestown;<sup>185</sup> but nothing came of the scheme under his successors, partly because of irregular and deficient deliveries,<sup>186</sup> but partly also because the island government failed to furnish indents a year in advance to enable the Agent to make proper arrangements on favourable terms.<sup>187</sup> Thus the traffic was virtually a series of stop-gap arrangements to meet unforeseen emergencies: ten tons of oats reached St. Helena "most opportunely" in October, 1811, island fodder supplies having run out;<sup>188</sup> a few months later 600 sacks of flour were landed at a time when Beatson's bakers had been reduced to "a very few days' consumption";<sup>189</sup> and during April, 1812, Pringle was anxiously scouring the countryside for 800 bushels of barley after hearing that the island's stores of rice were nearly finished.<sup>190</sup>

In fact, barley — which Beatson found to be "such fresher, more nourishing (besides being cheaper) than the Old Paddy we receive from India" — turned out to be the Colony's most important grain export to St. Helena, something like 1,000 muids being shipped annually between 1812 and 1815.<sup>191</sup> Cape flour,

185. Pringle to Beatson, 8 March 1811, CGH.F.R., IVIII.

186. "...unless I purchase before March, the farmers then cease bringing up grain from the Country and the Prices rise very considerably until August or September, when they carry again" — Pringle to Beatson, 6 Dec. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

"The smallpox still continuing at this place, the farmers bring up no produce from the Country and I am consequently unable to send any further supplies to your Island for the present..." — Pringle to Beatson, 20 May 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

187. Pringle to Beatson, 25 April 1811, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Pringle to Ramsay, 20 March 1813; Pringle to Cobb, 24 Sept., 1814, CGH.F.R., VII; Pringle to Wilks, 30 April 1815, CGH.F.R., IX.

188. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 8 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

189. Beatson to Pringle, 3 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

190. Pringle to Beatson, 2 May 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 10 March, 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

191. Pringle to Beatson, 4 July 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 16 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Wilks, 20 Jan. 1814, CGH.F.R., XI; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 14 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Wilks to Pringle, 22 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 26 Sept. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX; Wilks to Pringle, 17 April 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII.

on the other hand, was less welcome, as it always seemed to contain "a quantity of grit or sand";<sup>192</sup> to avoid this, Pringle despatched an iron mill to the island in 1814, but the experiment co-incided with a particularly poor wheat crop, and the mill could be used only to grind oats for stock-feed;<sup>193</sup> soon thereafter the Agent received an urgent plea for 200 sacks of flour, "free from grit, if such can be procured".<sup>194</sup> It was a trade, therefore, which merely supplemented the island's supplies from Britain, India, and America; in an age of increasing pastoralism, the Colony's surplus grains were insufficient to gain absolute ascendancy in the St. Helena market as its wines had done.

Nevertheless, during this period the Cape made a useful contribution towards agricultural progress and afforestation on the island. Besides despatching seeds of wheat, oats, and barley,<sup>195</sup> Pringle took a great deal of trouble over selecting the largest and best quality turnip, carrot, and red clover seeds for the island government,<sup>196</sup> and also forwarded six boxes of fruit trees and vine cuttings;<sup>197</sup> with Cradock's co-operation, a request for a selection of Plettenberg Bay tree seeds was met as well.<sup>198</sup> However, after the Agent had been asked to inform local merchants that there existed a considerable demand for wooden planks on the island, to meet which "would probably prove a good speculation",<sup>199</sup> and a trial consignment of yellow-wood beams had been sent,<sup>200</sup> the

192. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 27 April 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

193. Memorandum submitted by Governor Wilks to his Council, 1 Nov. 1813, St. Helena Factory Records, Vol. 79; Pringle to Wilks, 9 March 1814, CGH.F.R., XI.

194. Wilks to Pringle, 21 Nov. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

195. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 13 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

196. Bontson to Pringle, 15 June 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 28 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

197. Luson to Wilks, 13 Aug. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX; Gazette, 28 May 1814.

198. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 14 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Cradock, 4 April 1814, CGH.F.R., IX — (the seeds forwarded included assagai, white pear, and stinkwood).

199. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 7 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

200. Pringle to Wilks, 11 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

Governor and Council were no longer "solicitous to receive a further supply of Cape timber".<sup>201</sup> From time to time, also, household items like tallow candles found their way to St. Helena from the Cape,<sup>202</sup> but some demands could not be met at all -- such as an urgent request for three bags of saltpetre, the Colony itself being periodically destitute of that essential article.<sup>203</sup>

## (4)

With more than 5,000 British troops and sailors stationed at the Cape from 1806 to the end of the Napoleonic struggle,<sup>204</sup> and no very marked upswing in livestock numbers over that period,<sup>205</sup> local meat demands pressed heavily on available supplies<sup>206</sup> and there was little prospect of cattle or sheep being exported in any large numbers. Thus it was with some misgiving that Pringle must have read the following letter from Jamestown which reached him in September, 1809:

"Finding that the Hon'ble Company's farm at Long Wood produces abundance of excellent hay & being desirous of augmenting our stock of cattle on the Island, we think it expedient to make an experiment of feeding Oxen according to the English mode under cover of sheds, & we have indeed succeeded in a small experiment and have no doubt it may be carried to great extent; many opportunities occur of sending Cattle from the Cape to this Island and especially when any of the Company's homeward bound Ships touch there, as in such cases they might be sent free of all expense except of fodder to maintain them during their short passage.

We cannot form an estimate of the charges in sending them on private Ships but we request that you will without loss of time send them both ways, and you might also give encouragement to individuals to import cattle here upon speculation. You can

201. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 22 July 1814, CGH.P.R., XIII.

202. Wilke to Pringle, 17 April 1815, CGH.P.R., XIII.

203. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 12 Feb. 1814, CGH.P.R., XI.

204. While the naval squadron is known to have been large, troop figures only are given in Recs.C.C., VII, p. 414; VIII, p. 138, 156; II, p. 135, 230, 497; X, p. 160, 323.

205. Recs.C.C., VI, p. 75, 243, 442; VII, p. 239, 477; VIII, p. 235; IX, p. 43, 299; X, 228; XI, p. 51; see also, table in Neumarck, op. cit., p. 127.

206. In 1803 meat retailed at the Cape at 3d. (3 stivers) per pound (van Reenen, op. cit., p. 280); in 1812 a Government contract price worked out at what was considered a moderate figure of 4½d. per pound. (Recs.C.C., VIII, p. 356).

of course form a judgment as to the price which the Company ought to pay, allowing the speculators a moderate profit. We understand that at the Cape the market price of the deadweight is 3d. — we would willingly allow this rate for the living weight provided the cattle are delivered here in health & in good condition which we are of opinion would be a very fair profit to speculators.... We are desirous of receiving some of sufficient size to answer for draft, & with regard to the number, we are of opinion that about 200 the first year will suffice."<sup>207</sup>

Convinced that the suggested price would be insufficient to attract speculators, the Agent went to the trouble of having "an ordinary bullock killed and carefully weighed"; the resultant 849 lbs. meant a price of £10.12.5 delivered at St. Helena, and, since the animal would cost at least half that sum, little would remain to cover "freight, feed, and risk of the passage".<sup>208</sup> Impressed by this argument, Jamestown raised its price to 4½d. and also requested a couple of waggons, to be accompanied by two Hottentot drivers whom Pringle was to engage on reasonable terms.<sup>209</sup>

Wilberforce Bird eagerly accepted the contract on the revised terms,<sup>210</sup> and his first consignment of livestock reached the island in such fine condition that Beatson and his Council resolved to pay "5d. per lb. instead of 4½d. as originally agreed".<sup>211</sup> Subsequent shipments, however, were less successful:

"The cattle lately received from the Cape owing to several tedious passages and a want of provender which had reduced them extremely, have incurred a considerable loss to the Company upon the whole of this transaction. The Governor & Council have therefore directed me to request that you will not consign to them any more of the Cape oxen."<sup>212</sup>

Moreover, the waggons had to be despatched sans Hottentot drivers:

"They are very capricious, promise to go, but are not to be found when the ship is announced ready to take them..."<sup>213</sup>

Thus, in the absence of vessels specially equipped for such

207. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 25 Aug. 1809, CGH.F.R., X.

208. Pringle to Beatson, 9 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

209. Brooke to Pringle, 24 Nov. 1809, CGH.F.R., K.

210. W.W.Bird to Pringle, 26 Dec. 1809, CGH.F.R., X.

211. Brooke to Pringle, 21 Feb. 1810, CGH.F.R., X.

212. Brooke to W.W.Bird, 15 Oct. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

213. Pringle to Beatson, 3 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

traffic, and with the masters of Company ships highly reluctant to receive livestock on board,<sup>214</sup> only sporadic consignments of bulls, heifers, and pack-oxen continued to find their way from the Cape to St. Helena.<sup>215</sup> The trade in slaughter fat-tailed sheep, however, became increasingly important, 30 to 40 Afrikanders being forwarded by Pringle at every opportunity, the average annual shipment rising from roundabout 300 in 1810 to more than 700 by 1815.<sup>216</sup>

In December, 1813, the Agent despatched twenty-two Spanish sheep on trial, each costing "only seven shillings sterling at the present rate of exchange".<sup>217</sup> These merinos were found to thrive remarkably well on the island pastures, and Governor Wilks became eager to cross them with South Down rams in the hope of producing "an excellent breed of sheep";<sup>218</sup> in spite of delays caused by the lambing season and an acute scarcity of shipping, a hundred yearling ewes had been sent up by November, 1814, and two further batches were forwarded early in the following year.<sup>219</sup> But Pringle was not slow in pointing out the difficulties of procuring sufficient Spanish sheep at the Cape to form an adequate breeding stock for the island:

214. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 26 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

215. Pringle to Wilks, 27 Oct. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 29 Oct. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX; Pringle to Wilks, 30 April 1815, CGH.F.R., XX.

216. Brooke to Pringle, 15 Oct. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI; Governor & Council, St. Helena, <sup>to Wilks</sup> 16 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; Mason to Wilks, 6 June 1815, CGH.F.R., XXI.

During this period, too, horse-dealers at the Cape periodically shipped small numbers of mares to the island on private speculation, while Pringle purchased several high-pedigree mares for the Company's stud-farm at Longwood — Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 25 Aug. 1809, CGH.F.R., X; Mason to Beaton, 15 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Wilks to Pringle, 21 Nov. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

In addition, a trial consignment of hogs was sent up and landed in good order, but Pringle was advised to desist from further shipments, "as we have already a good breed and in sufficient numbers" — Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 22 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

217. Pringle to Wilks, 11 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

218. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 14 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 7 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

219. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 29 Oct. 1814; 10 March 1815; 30 April 1815 — CGH.F.R., XX. Altogether, the Agent despatched about 500 merinos to St. Helena at an average price of 5 rixdollars (10s./-).

"...On the Subject of Spanish sheep, I must enter into more details. From the manner in which you write, I imagine you are not aware how scarce & difficult this breed is to obtain. I applied to the Secretary's Office for correct information of the numbers existing in the two districts of the Cape and Stellenbosch, where not only the majority are to be found, but the other parts of the Colony are by far too distant to bring them from. In the Cape District there are 3,746, in that of Stellenbosch 4,000, which of course includes rams, ewes, & lambs, and near 3,000 of them belong to the Government Establishment at Groote Post, of which some are annually selected and only sold in small lots for the purpose of extending the Breed thro' the Colony; and those Farmers who are careful to get good Wool will not part with any of their flock. Under these circumstances you will no doubt be convinced that it is altogether impossible to get this breed in such numbers as you want, and more especially at short notice...."220

In view of this sparse number of pure-bred woolled flocks in the Colony at the time, it is in fact surprising that the Agent was able to procure as many as he did for St. Helena. He went even further, entering into serious negotiations on the Company's behalf for the purchase of a farm along the banks of the Berg River,

"that being the only way in which I can ensure a certain number of these sheep annually, together with a few head of cattle occasionally."221

But death cut short Pringle's efforts in this direction, and they were not renewed by his successor.

Meanwhile, early in 1812, Cradock had accepted a tender from Messrs. Kersten and Pohl to supply the garrison with 3,000 barrels of salted beef from Algoa Bay,<sup>222</sup> and the Cape Governor offered to make similar arrangements on behalf of the Jamestown

220. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 10 March 1815, CGH.P.R., XX.

221. Pringle to Wilks, 30 April 1815, CGH.P.R., XX; Wilks to Pringle, 17 May 1815, CGH.P.R., XIII; Pringle to Alexander, 29 May 1815, CGH.P.R., XI; Mason to Wilks, 6 June 1815, CGH.P.R., XI.

222. Cradock to Liverpool, 7 March 1812, Recs.C.C., VIII, p. 356; Report of the Circuit Commission (Eastern Districts), Jan. 1813, Recs.C.C., IX, pp. 68-90.

DETAILS of this "very considerable salt provision manufactory" and of the resultant coastal trade between Algoa and Table Bays, are to be found in a pamphlet by J.C.Chase, Old Times and Old Corners -- The Founder of the Eastern Province Commerce and His Frontier Home (Port Elizabeth, 1868).

authorities.<sup>223</sup> Although, at first, there was such reluctance from the island to embark on such an experiment,<sup>224</sup> eventually it was felt that if such provisions could be sold at a rate considerably lower than the salted meats imported from Britain and the quality was found to be not much inferior, they might serve as rations for the Chinese workers and perhaps prove acceptable to the garrison as well.<sup>225</sup> But the Company soldiers had conservative palates, and their reception of a trial shipment was extremely lukewarm.<sup>226</sup> Thus, while the garrison continued to pay more for the privilege of eating meat salted in Britain — feeling, probably, that the salted rations should be of the very best quality as fresh meat was only available three or four times a year — the Cape beef and sheep-tails were found to "answer very well for the Chinese Establishment and the French Blacks", and regular orders came to be placed through the Agency with the Algoa Bay contractors.<sup>227</sup>

## (e)

One of the main difficulties confronting Pringle's efforts to promote trade with St. Helena was the securing of enough shipping facilities at reasonable freights; in turn, this gave rise to other problems (such as smuggling) and to at least one unfeasible project for developing an alternative port to Table Bay.

The Company's own privileged status had a boomerang effect in this connection, since private British vessels licensed by

223. Cradock to Beaton, 7 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII. During the First Occupation a few casks of salt provisions had been purchased by the Agency and sent to St. Helena — Pringle to Barnard, 29 Nov. 1799, B.O.9/259.
224. Beaton to Directors, 14 March 1812, St. Helena Factory Recs., Vol. 78; Beaton to Cradock, 17 Dec. 1812, G.H.13/2.
225. Beaton & Council to Pringle, 12 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; ditto to Cradock, 12 Aug. 1813, G.H.13/2; Pringle to Cradock, 14 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; Wilks & Council to Pringle, 16 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.
226. "We have opened on two successive weeks a Cask of each sort of Cape beef & mutton, informing the Garrison at the same time that it was left to their option to receive it at the rate of 1/6d. for 7 lbs. instead of Europe provisions at the Customary price of 2/- for 7 lbs., but no applications whatever were made for the Cape provisions, and a decided preference seemed to be given to the English provisions being issued in the usual way. We further beg leave to observe that all the Cape provisions we have seen opened appear to be good and wholesome..." — Memorandum of Storekeepers to Governor & Council, 15 April 1814, St. Helena Factory Records, Vol. 79.
227. Wilks & Council to Pringle, 2 May 1814, 23 Jan. 1815, 17 April 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII.

Leadenhall Street to visit specific ports to the east of the Cape and returning home with some empty hold space, were fearful of accepting cargo for St. Helena in case such action was "considered by the Hon'ble Company a deviation from the letter of the said licence".<sup>228</sup> Moreover, foreign ships putting in at Table Bay were precluded from taking on colonial produce for Jamestown as that would have violated a major tenet of the Navigation Acts.<sup>229</sup> On the other hand, the Company's own cutter, the Camperdown, which was attached to the island, was much too small for any but the lightest of cargoes,<sup>230</sup> while homeward-bound Company fleets either missed the Cape altogether, or, if they did happen to call, had little space (or inclination) to accept additional freight.<sup>231</sup> The Cape squadron, both under Beaton and his successors, Rear-Admirals Stopford and Tyler, proved unco-operative in allowing Pringle to make use of deck-space for livestock on naval vessels proceeding to St. Helena,<sup>232</sup> and (in order to make such a short voyage payable) the owners of condemned prize ships invariably charged rates which Pringle found "infinitely too great".<sup>233</sup>

The Agent, therefore, was largely dependent on the few small brigs operated by local shippers, and these vessels were poorly equipped for handling speciality cargoes, like wines, or for carrying sheep and cattle.<sup>234</sup> The Fancy (70 tons), chartered by Messrs. Hall and Rowe, made several voyages to the island

228. H. Duncan (master of the brig Adriatic) to Pringle, 9 Dec. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.
229. Order in Council, 1 Oct. 1811, Rees.C.C., VIII, pp. 157-158; Order in Council, 24 Sept. 1814, Rees.C.C., I, pp. 188-191; Bruner, op. cit., pp. 37-38; L.A. Harper, The English Navigation Laws (New York, 1939), pp. 394-405.
230. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 15 June 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.
231. Pringle to Ramsay, 22 March 1812, CGH.F.R., VII.
232. Bertie to Pringle, 28 Aug. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Stopford to Pringle, 16 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII; Luson to Tyler, 5 June 1813, XIX; Tyler to Pringle, 7 June 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.
233. Pringle to Wilks, 20 Jan. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX. (In this particular instance the captors of an American condemned prize — a vessel of 290 tons — quoted £10 per ton).
234. Pringle to Ramsay, 11 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., IV.

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during 1810-11 with grain and flour at remarkably low freight charges in view of the fact that the return trips were virtually in ballast.<sup>235</sup> Fairly moderate rates were also paid to the firm of Ross and Twycross, the owners of the brig Maria, a vessel which was kept constantly employed in the trade from the beginning of 1812, though not without some misgivings by Pringle: on one occasion he discovered that Indian piece-goods were being brought back from St. Helena and demanded stern action against the members of the crew concerned, "as ignorance of the laws of this Colony can never be pleaded in favour of a Vessel belonging to it"; the Agent was aware, too, that on return runs the Maria's master frequently put in at Saldanha Bay, where his father was the postholder, and was convinced that filial affection "was not the sole object" of such visits.<sup>236</sup> Meanwhile, Balcombe & Co., prominent St. Helena merchants,<sup>237</sup> had purchased the fast schooner, Bonetta, for the specific purpose of "keeping up frequent intercourse with the Cape",<sup>238</sup> and had contracted with Governor Beatson to carry freight at £4 per ton;<sup>239</sup> but, after several successful trips on this basis, Pringle became suspicious that the Bonetta was carrying on "an improper trade in smuggled East India goods to this place",<sup>240</sup> and in May, 1813, the ship was seized and condemned by the Customs,<sup>241</sup> and ~~was~~ ignominiously escorted out of Table Bay, to be no longer heard of in the St. Helena trade.<sup>242</sup>

235. Hall & Rowe to Pringle, 19 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., I; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 8 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

236. Ross & Twycross to Pringle, 2 Dec. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII; Beatson to Pringle, 10 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Alexander, 1 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 10 March 1815, CGH.F.R., IX.

In October, 1815, the Maria was again in trouble, having brought back a cargo of American plank and pitch from St. Helena — Somerset to Bathurst, 30 Oct. 1815, Recs.C.G., I, p. 365.

237. It was at the residence of the Balcombe family, The Briars, that Napoleon spent the first two months of his exile until Longwood was vacated and prepared for him — Jackson, op. cit., pp. 213-214; Gosse, op. cit., p. 269; Young, I, ch. vi.

238. Beatson to Pringle, 12 Aug. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Ross & Twycross, 24 Sept. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

239. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 16 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

240. Pringle to Beatson, 17 May 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

241. D. Danyssen (the Fiscal) to Pringle, 19 May 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

242. Pringle to Beatson, 19 May & 28 May 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

As commerce with the island increased in scale after 1813, the Agent made use of the services of the Suzanne,<sup>243</sup> a small converted cartel,<sup>244</sup> and frequently hired cargo space on the brig Brissott (owned by Edden & Watts) at 3 guineas a ton;<sup>245</sup> and when these vessels were unable to cope with bulk orders for wine and salted meats, Pringle, in desperation, was forced to accept "a most exorbitant" tender from H. Seeberg, the owner of the Good Hope (154 tons), who was to be paid 8,000 rixdollars<sup>246</sup> per round trip and be allowed to ship 10 tons free on his own account to St. Helena.<sup>247</sup> Leaving Table Bay on November 8th, 1814, on its third voyage under this contract, the Good Hope had not reached the island ten weeks later, and it was feared both in Cape Town and Jamestown that a serious accident had befallen her or she had been captured by enemy raiders; the brig finally hove in sight of Ladder Hill on January 31st, having originally missed the island, and sailed as far north as the Guinea Coast, the crew consuming most of the cargo of salted beef and yearling ewes en route. Poor navigational ability on the captain's part was only one (and perhaps not the most important) cause for this misadventure, for, on boarding the vessel, the St. Helena/<sup>pilot</sup> found both the master and helmsman intoxicated, and, in fact, could consider only the chief mate "as perfectly sober" — such were the temptations of shipping Cape wine! And when the Good Hope returned to her home port, Pringle heard that the captain, after putting all documents and despatches in his pocket, ~~was~~ had "thrown himself overboard in a fit of insanity" a few days out of Table Bay.<sup>248</sup>

243. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 26 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

244. A cartel ship was one commissioned to convey and fetch prisoners-of-war, and had to be unarmed, except for one signal gun; the Suzanne had been engaged in transporting French soldiers captured at Mauritius in 1810, taking them to Europe in exchange for British war prisoners.

245. Inson to Wilks, 13 Aug. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX; Inson to Cobb, 13 Aug. 1814, CGH.F.R., VII.

246. I.e., about £900 at the prevailing rate of exchange.

247. Seeberg to Pringle, 18 May 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Wilks, 19 May 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

248. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 23 Jan. 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle (enclosing an affidavit by the Master Attendant and a memorandum by Capt. Johnson of the Good Hope), 16 Feb. 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 10 March and 3 April, 1815, CGH.F.R., XX.

With all these problems arising out of the hire of private vessels, it is not surprising that one of Governor Wilks' first actions in taking over from Beaton was to make application to the Directors for two ships of about 160 tons each (unarmed and manned by lascars) to procure stores from the Cape "with regularity and certainty",<sup>249</sup> and to this request Pringle gave his whole-hearted support -

"I have stated to the Hon'ble Court<sup>250</sup> that unless your demand ...is complied with, it is totally impossible for me to be answerable for the supplies reaching you in a regular manner, since on occasion even money cannot command the means of transport from hence..."<sup>251</sup>

After innumerable delays and much correspondence, Leadenhall Street in somewhat niggardly fashion finally despatched one 200-ton schooner, the St. Helena;<sup>252</sup> and, to prevent any recurrence of what had happened with the Camperdown<sup>253</sup> and under private charter, it was laid down that no member of the new vessel's crew was to be permitted to trade privately under any consideration.<sup>254</sup> Pringle was disappointed with the ship when it arrived for the first time in Table Bay:

"The St. Helena arrived here on the 19th February [1815] and was loaded again as soon as practicable...but I am concerned to state that she carries a very small cargo indeed, not having taken in more than 30 tons of flour and salt provisions, independent of 20 of sheep and about 9,000 lbs. of hay for their use, which was all she could store.... It is evident that she is not able to carry the quantity of stock & stores which are wanted, even if she made six trips in the year, but I think five more likely to be the number."<sup>255</sup>

In fact, the schooner averaged only four round-trips in a year, but kept on the job until 1830, when it was captured and gutted by Spanish pirates.<sup>256</sup>

249. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 16 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

250. Pringle to Ramsay, 11 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., IV.

251. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 30 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XI.

252. Wilks to Pringle, 21 Nov. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

253. See above, Ch. II, (iii)(d).

254. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 23 Jan. 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII.

255. Pringle to Cobb, 4 April 1815, CGH.F.R., VIII.

256. Gosse, op. cit., pp. 298-300.

Another of Wilks' schemes to speed up the service from the Cape and at the same time effect a reduction of freight charges, was to make use of Saldanha Bay during the winter months, where he believed "stock and grain are much cheaper than in the vicinity of Cape Town".<sup>257</sup> Pringle was quick to enlighten the Governor:

"The idea you entertain about Saldanha Bay is erroneous; there are only two or three houses there, and the distance from the Corn Country is as great or nearly so as to Cape Town. The Farmers besides in general would not make a penny difference in the price for a little more or less Carriage — they argue their Waggon's have nothing else to do. Besides, it is not a shipping port, there is no Custom House there, and it is only frequented by small colonial coasters occasionally; and nothing can be produced in that neighbourhood except perhaps a little Barley."<sup>258</sup>

Wilks meanwhile had enthusiastically placed the project before East India House, with the result that the Directors gave instructions for the St. Helena to proceed to Saldanha Bay for winter stores "at rates not exceeding those of Cape Town".<sup>259</sup> On hearing this, the exasperated Agent did not mince his words:

"I must once more repeat that loading the Schooner in Saldanha Bay is totally out of the question... The St. Helena must therefore venture into Table Bay or else she need not come up to the Cape during the winter months of June, July, & August. Sheep may easily be shipped from Simon's Bay should she be ordered there, but the carriage of Wine or anything in casks would be very expensive and tedious. In short, the whole Trade and Supplies of this Colony may be said to be confined to Cape Town and Table Bay."<sup>260</sup>

Impressed at last by these arguments, the island government provided the St. Helena with extra-heavy cables and ground-tackle, hoping in this way to remove "any great risk to be apprehended from her riding in a particular part of Table Bay, even in the winter".<sup>261</sup>

257. Memorandum submitted by Wilks to his Council, 1 Nov. 1813, St. Helena Factory Records, Vol. 79; Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 15 Nov. 1813, CGH.P.R., XII.

258. Pringle to Wilks, 20 Jan. 1814, CGH.P.R., XX.

259. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 23 Jan. 1815, CGH.P.R., XIII.

260. Pringle to Governor & Council, St. Helena, 10 March 1815, CGH.P.R., XI; cf. V.R.S., Vol. 10, pp. 47-48.

261. Wilks to Pringle, 17 April 1815, CGH.P.R., XIII.

"Table Bay is resorted to only during the summer months, when the south-east wind prevails; during the winter season, the north-west pours in from the Atlantic a mountainous sea, that no force of tackle can resist, and which annually strews upon the shore one or more wrecks, the victims of its fury" — Notes on the Cape of Good Hope, p. 118; cf. above, Ch. II, n. 48.

(f)

By April, 1815, the St. Helenians had grown so dependent on procuring stores from the Cape that Governor Wilks envisaged the encouragement of private speculation among the merchants of Cape Town to furnish these supplies, thereby relieving an increasing burden on the Agency itself.<sup>262</sup> In fact, although the Company by that time had been stripped of most of its privileged trading powers, Pringle had been forced to continue the indent of chintzes and other piece-goods from Bengal in the hope of being able to dispose of them on favourable terms, thereby procuring funds to go on purchasing Cape provisions for the island.<sup>263</sup>

Five weeks after the victory at Waterloo, the Cape authorities were informed by Downing Street that

"it is probable in consequence of an arrangement now in contemplation that a considerable supply of fresh provisions and other Articles may be wanted for the public Service in the Island of St. Helena, which it may be advisable to obtain from the Cape... you are to adopt every measure in your power for furnishing...with the least possible delay, all such supplies..."<sup>264</sup>

From the time of these feverish preparations to receive Napoleon and his entourage until the exiled Emperor's death in 1821 — during which period the island's population increased "to double its previous numbers"<sup>265</sup> — St. Helena constituted the most important external market for Cape produce,<sup>266</sup> what had been a sporadic stream now became a steady flow;<sup>267</sup> that these stores were readily available was in no small measure due to the solid foundations laid by John Pringle and his Agency.

262. Wilks to Pringle, 17 April 1815, CGH.P.R., VIII.

263. Inson to Cobb, 14 June 1815, CGH.P.R., IXA; cf. Ch. V (iv).

264. Bathurst to Somerset, 28 July 1815, G.H.1/3 (also in Recs.G.C. I, pp. 323-324). Subsequently, the Cape Government was notified that, "consequent on the Arrival of General Buonaparte", all foreign and private British ships would be prevented "from resorting to St. Helena" — B.D. Brooke (Secy. to Govt., St. Helena) to Alexander, 18 Dec. 1815, G.H.13/2.

265. F.D. Brooke, History of the Island of St. Helena (2nd edn., London, 1824), pp. 388-91.

266. G.H.P.R., Vol. VIII, p. 229; Neusark, op. cit., pp. 127-132.

267. "...the immediate and continued necessity of supplying that island with flour, cattle, wine and other articles for the use of the navy, the army, and the captive, with his train of followers, operated with immense power on the Cape, and has been the hot-bed of its productions; forcing, by a continued demand, the utmost powers of its agriculture..." — W.W. Bird, State of the Cape of Good Hope in 1822 (ed. H.T. Colebrooke, London, 1823), p. 3; see also, ibid., pp. 119-124.

(iii) Remoter Commercial Links

## (a)

Although the growth of the South Sea whale fisheries had led to a modification of the area covered by the East India Company's charter,<sup>268</sup> the new Australian colonies still fell within the Company's sphere of influence and British shippers wanting to send goods to New South Wales had to procure its licence and furnish Leadenhall Street with a security bond.<sup>269</sup> While most vessels proceeding to Port Jackson put in at the Cape,<sup>270</sup> except for John Macarthur's celebrated importation of a few merinos from the Colony in 1799,<sup>271</sup> there was little direct trading intercourse before the Second Occupation; and even then, with a total population of less than 12,000<sup>272</sup> and still regarded as "Convict Country",<sup>273</sup> the Australian settlements had nothing to offer beyond timber and some coal.<sup>274</sup>

In fact, it was the Colony's shortage of timber which first prompted Pringle to urge the Directors to consider some relaxation of their control over traffic across the southern portion of the Indian Ocean,<sup>275</sup> and by March, 1810, negotiations on the subject were in progress between Downing Street and East India House.<sup>276</sup> As long as the Company was not directly prejudiced, the Directors did not insist on a strict adherence to the letter of their charter; on the other hand, they once again conveniently identified their own welfare with that of Britain as a whole, and feared that a commerce between the Cape and New South Wales "subject to no restrictions"

268. 35 Geo. III, c. 92, sec. 19 (1795).

269. A form of licence and bond is printed in Historical Records of New South Wales (Ed. Bladen; Sydney, 1893-1901), Vol. VI, p. 646; ironically, American vessels could carry unlicensed cargoes to New South Wales without risk of seizure.

270. cf. Recs.C.C., II, p. 314; VI, pp. 88-89.

271. A.G.L. Shaw, The Economic Development of Australia (Melbourne, 1944), p. 20.

272. The figure for 1810 was 11,566 — Australia, a Social and Political History (Ed. G. Greenwood; Sydney, 1957), p. 429.

273. Macquarie (Governor, New South Wales) to Bathurst, June 1813; Bathurst to Commissioner Bigge, Jan. 1819 — Historical Records of Australia (Sydney, 1914-25), Series I, Vol. VII, pp. 775-776; Vol. X, p. 4.

274. C.H.S.R., Vol. VII, Pt. I, p. 149.

275. Pringle to Ramsay, 11 July 1809, CGH.P.R., VII.

276. Liverpool to Caledon, 3 March 1810, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 262.

might be "injurious to the Nation at large".<sup>277</sup> The Court eventually resolved to allow direct trade to vessels licensed by East India House or the Cape Agency provided the traffic was limited "to Articles the produce of the Cape and New South Wales" and the ships did not proceed

"to the Northward of the South end of Madagascar upon the Coast of Africa, or to the Northward of one Degree of North Latitude on their return from Botany Bay or any Ports in New Holland".<sup>278</sup>

But the publication of these instructions at the Cape in April, 1811, resulted in no immediate clamour for licences on the part of local merchants.<sup>279</sup>

Meanwhile, the whole question had become more complex with the arrival from Port Jackson in July of the previous year of the "Country" ship Union carrying a cargo of Australian timber, but with no special licence for the voyage to the Cape, the captain merely holding a clearance to proceed from Calcutta to Sydney.<sup>280</sup> Asked for his views on the matter,<sup>281</sup> Pringle pointed out that, since the vessel was registered in Bengal, its owners should have been "particularly well acquainted with the Company's regulations", among which there was the absolute prohibition to trade to the Cape without specific permission; thus, with the "illegality of the voyage established beyond doubt", a dangerous precedent would be created by admitting the cargo. On the other hand, the Agent recognized the existence of several mitigating circumstances: the very nature of the article precluded all suspicion of intent to smuggle, while no shippers fully aware of the situation were likely to risk confiscation of both vessel and cargo in order to reap the relatively low profits likely to accrue from such a consignment; moreover, in Pringle's opinion, it was highly probable that the owners had been encouraged by the Bengal authorities' efforts to promote a timber trade to the Cape to believe that any irregularity

277. Wm. Astell (Chairman, H.B.I.C.) to Robert Dundas (President, Board of Control), 27 April 1810, CGH.P.R., XI (also in Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 277-278).

278. Correspondence Reports, Vol. 34; 9 May 1810.

279. Ramsay to Pringle, 3 Nov. 1810, CGH.P.R., XI; Pringle to Ramsay, 14 June 1811, CGH.P.R., VII; cf. Recs.C.C., XXIV, p. 450.

280. Pringle to Ramsay, 27 Aug. 1810, CGH.P.R., VII; Caladen to Liverpool, 27 Aug. 1810, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 359.

281. Alexander to Pringle, 10 Aug. 1810, CGH.P.R., XI.

would be overlooked "in the importance of furnishing a supply of that necessary article for the use of the Colony".<sup>282</sup> Thus the Agent was prepared to make a fair allowance for what appeared to be "the result of misapprehension & error rather than of bad designs", and recommended that the disposal of the timber be allowed and the ship released if the captain provided sufficient security while the case was referred to the Directors.<sup>283</sup>

Caledon, who firmly believed that no injury to the Company's interests had been intended, urged Pringle to reconsider the demand for security, since the delays experienced had resulted in heavy enough losses already, while the captain (who held only a quarter-share of the vessel) was limited in his power to pledge the Union.<sup>284</sup> But the Agent remained adamant:

"...although I concur in opinion with His Excellency that no harm was intended to the E.I. Company, still the breach of a positive law cannot be overlooked by those who like me have merely a delegated power -- I have done the utmost which I feel justified in doing; that is to agree to refer the matter for the final decision of my superiors if adequate security is given; but it is totally out of the question that I can consent to the Union being admitted to entry on any other terms..."<sup>285</sup>

As a result, after the King's Proctor had drawn up the necessary documents, the captain was compelled to furnish a bond of £2,000.<sup>286</sup>

282. In a petition addressed to Caledon (20 Aug. 1810 -- CGH.F.R., XI) Capt. Nicholls of the Union declared:

"Your Memorialist never entertained an idea that, by making the Shipment in question, he was offending against the law, or infringing in the smallest degree on the rights and privileges of the Hon. the East India Company, and he was confirmed in this persuasion by a knowledge that the Hon. Company had invited and encouraged the exportation of timber to this Colony...."

Moreover, the captain included in this petition a letter addressed to himself from Capt. Pasco of H.M.S. Hindustan (Sydney Cove, 1 March 1810), which mentioned the news that timber was urgently needed at the Cape, but included the significant phrase (which Pringle was to draw attention to) "should you be allowed to take the said spars".

283. Pringle to Alexander, 11 Aug. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

It should be observed that the High Court at the Cape had no authority to try breaches of the Company's charter, although such powers had been envisaged in Pringle's instructions from the Directors on his return to the Colony -- Pringle to Ramsay, 27 Aug. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

284. Alexander to Pringle, 21 Aug. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

285. Pringle to Alexander, 21 Aug. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

286. Alexander to Jennings, 25 Aug. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to Alexander, 7 Sept. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Alexander to Pringle, 11 Sept. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

While the Directors "highly approved of the measures adopted" by Pringle, they decided to take no further action in the matter and instructed the Agent to cancel the bond.<sup>287</sup> In the meantime, Captain Nicholls of the Union, having purchased Cape wines and other provisions out of the proceeds of his timber sales, was anxious to clear out for Port Jackson, where the disposal of such a cargo could not "interfere with the Company's interests";<sup>288</sup> but, ~~regarding~~ that "the utmost lenity consistent with duty" had already been extended to the vessel, Pringle would only grant a clearance for the Company's station at Penang.<sup>289</sup> Undeterred, the bold Captain Nicholls took his ship straight back to Sydney, where an irate Governor Macquarie, feeling that such

"presumptuous conduct and the double imposition practised on this Government as well as on that of the Cape was too flagrant to pass unnoticed, ... would not permit the cargo to be brought to entry, but immediately compelled the ship to leave the harbour with directions to proceed to her original destination at Penang..."<sup>290</sup>

The headstrong captain had found out that an officer of the Crown could be more concerned than the Directors themselves with upholding the Company's status in a remote commercial backwater.

Yet Macquarie was also anxious to promote the welfare of the merchants of Sydney, whom he found "by no means deficient in the spirit of trading enterprise", and who, if allowed to ship coal and timber to Table Bay, could then select those Cape articles best suited "to this young, but increasing Settlement". As matters then stood, however, with "the Trade exclusively confined to the shipping of the Cape of Good Hope or to ships sailing from thence", Sydney businessmen were debarred from deriving such benefit, and the Governor urged Pringle to seek from the Directors modifications which would place the trade "on an equal footing of privileges".<sup>291</sup>

287. Pringle to Bird, 9 May 1811, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

288. Nicholls to Pringle, 16 Oct. 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

289. Pringle to Nicholls, 20 Oct. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

Penang (or, as it was then called, Prince of Wales Island) off the west coast of Malaya was the Company's halfway house on the voyage between India and China; it commanded the route through the Straits of Malacca and served as an entrepôt for the neighbouring mainland — Sir Home Popham, A Description of Prince of Wales Island (London, 1805), pp. 8, 26.

290. Macquarie to Pringle, 25 March 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

291. Ibid.

Macquarie, however, had merely raised an academic issue, since, in fact, no significant commerce had sprung up as a consequence of the Company's partial relaxation of its exclusive privileges; between 1811-15, the few cargoes of planks and coal which did arrive from Port Jackson came in ships licensed by the Bengal authorities.<sup>292</sup> To Cape exporters, the New South Wales market was too far away and uncertain,<sup>293</sup> while, in the reverse direction, a long, slow haul of bulky commodities between such sparsely populated areas on a vessel specially chartered for the purpose was simply an uneconomic proposition. Hence, even without the shadow of East India House overhanging the South Indian Ocean during these years,<sup>294</sup> it seems improbable that any extensive trading links would have been forged between Cape Town and Sydney.

(b)

Had the Directors not loosened their grip on the Cape's commerce in another direction, the retiring Governor, Earl Caledon, might well have found himself the defendant in a civil action for damages, since, early in 1811, the owner of the Minerva had intimated to him an intention

"of seeking legal redress on account of injuries which he conceives he sustained in consequence of a decision of mine by which I prohibited the introduction of Eastern produce into this Settlement from Ceylon... I had no other object in the line of conduct I adopted than a just consideration for and observance of the rights of the Hon'ble East India Company..."<sup>295</sup>

Caledon was saved from this threatened suit by the opportune arrival of news that the Governor of Ceylon had been empowered to grant three licences annually "for ships belonging to Ceylon to trade between that island and the Cape"; if, however, articles were carried which were not the produce of those two regions ("as

292. Pringle to Chs. Blair, 3 Dec. 1812, 6 June 1813, 1 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

293. Messrs. Shortt & Barry to Pringle, 31 Dec. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

294. The various impediments to Sydney's trade with the outside world, which had been left as a legacy of the Company's charter, were only swept away in 1819 — C.H.B.R., Vol. VII, Pt. I, p. 79; yet, in 1822, imports from the Cape amounted to less than £4,000, those from Mauritius to more than £25,000 — N.S.W., Blue Book (1822), C.O. 206 (Public Record Office).

295. Caledon to Pringle, 4 March 1811, CGH.F.R., XI, cf. Ch. II, n. 20

for instance the coarse cloth of Tuttoom"), the assent of the Madras authorities became an additional requirement.<sup>296</sup> Cradock, having replaced Caledon, reacted to these measures as Macquarie had done under not dissimilar circumstances by demanding that the Colony "be placed on the same footing" as Ceylon, and that Cape shipping be allowed to proceed to Trincomalee or Colombo "under the same restrictions".<sup>297</sup> Pringle, on the other hand, fearful for his own indent business, warned Madras not to be too liberal in giving concessions for private Indian exporters to despatch goods via Ceylon:

"I apprehend you will receive applications from Individuals for licensing the Shipping of Coast goods; I therefore beg leave to acquaint you that the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Company has obtained very high prices for the Bengal coarse Calicoes, and that a large supply from that Presidency is daily expected to arrive here. Consequently, any considerable importation of coarse goods into this Colony must be greatly detrimental to their interest."<sup>298</sup>

The Agent was much less concerned about shipments of Ceylonese products, since Company officials at Trincomalee were no longer allowed to engage in trade on their own account,<sup>299</sup> cinnamon — the island's main export — was little in demand at the Cape, and the occasional cargoes of staves and tobacco from Colombo<sup>300</sup> did not interfere with the regular indents.<sup>301</sup>

296. Ramsay to Pringle, 3 Nov. 1810, G.H.P.R., XI (extracts in Recs.C.C., VIII, pp. 346-347); Pringle to C. Bird, 23 April 1811, G.H.P.R., XVIII, cf. Recs.C.C., XXIV, p. 450.

Such was the financial strain on the Company between 1807 and 1812 that the Directors were forced to appeal to the Government for aid, receiving loans totalling nearly £6,000,000 — P. Asber, An Analysis of the Constitution of the East India Company (London, 1826), p. 293; and it has been suggested (Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 156) that the concessions of this period (of which the Cape trade to Australia and Ceylon were only two of many instances) were the price which East India House paid for being allocated such funds during a period of great national expenditure.

297. Cradock to Robt. Willimott (Agent for the Cape in London), 10 Dec. 1811, Recs.C.C., VIII, pp. 345-346.

298. Pringle to Sir, G.H. Barlow & Council, Fort St. George, 11 May 1811, G.H.P.R., XVIII.

299. S.D. Bailey, Ceylon (London, 1952) p. 79; although the island was ~~still~~ governed as a crown colony and not a Company possession, it had close administrative and strategic connections with the Presidencies of Madras and Bengal — Parkinson, Trade in the Eastern Seas, pp. 64-68.

300. See above, (i)(e), n.102.

301. Pringle to Sir Thomas Baitland (Governor of Ceylon), 11 May 1811, G.H.P.R., XVIII. After the curtailment of the Company's charter, Ceylonese exports to the Cape became more frequent and variegated — John Rodney (Chief Secretary to Government, Colombo) to Alexander, 30 April 1814 (with encls.), G.H.13/1.

While the Directors were prepared to relax control over relatively unimportant trading channels, India itself remained an exclusive preserve, and Pringle was enjoined periodically to exercise particular caution in granting passages from the Cape to the Presidencies.<sup>302</sup> Thus it was only with the greatest reluctance that the Agent permitted a Cape Town firm to send its representative to Calcutta "for the purpose of recovering certain funds", and even then a £200 security bond had to be lodged to ensure that the traveller returned "with all convenient speed";<sup>303</sup> similarly, when Carel Pester wished to proceed to Bombay "to settle some family affairs", Pringle, after pointing out the fate awaiting speculators found in India, gave his consent in return for the usual bond and a promise that the colonist would return on the same boat;<sup>304</sup> even the influential Wilberforce Bird had great difficulty in securing passages to Madras for his two daughters.<sup>305</sup>

On the other hand, the Agent was anxious to promote an export trade to India, no matter on how small a scale, to alleviate his acute remittance difficulties, and in June, 1810, the H.C.S. Windham left Table Bay with 10 leagues "of the best Cape Madeira" for Madras and Calcutta, in the hope that the wine "might be advantageously used in the Hospitals, or perhaps find a sale in the market";<sup>306</sup> but this first trial shipment never reached the Bay of Bengal, French cruisers taking the Windham off Mauritius.<sup>307</sup> Governor Cradock wanted Pringle to persevere with these efforts:

"The exportation of the Wine of this Colony forms so important a branch of its commerce, & circumstanced as the Cape is under the restrictions that prevail, being I may almost say the only article of trade; I beg to express my anxious hope that every

302. Ramsay to Pringle, 16 Aug. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Alexander, 24 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

303. Pringle to Messrs. Shortt & Berry, 2 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

304. Memorial of Pester to Cradock, 21 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Alexander, 28 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

305. W.W. Bird to Cradock, 8 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Alexander, 12 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

306. Pringle to Lord Minto & Council, Calcutta, and to Sir G.H. Barlow & Council, Fort St. George, 9 June 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

307. Bertie to the Admiralty, 13 Oct. 1810, Recs.C.C., VII, p. 394.

favourable encouragement will be given if it should be found, as seems to be the case, that the exportation to the Eastward does not interfere with the interests of the Hon. East India Co."<sup>308</sup>

Accordingly, late in February, 1812, the Agent informed Lord Sinto and the Fort William authorities:

"I have sent six leaguers of Cape Madeira on the Friendship, the amount as p. invoice herewith being Rds. 1,400 -- or, at the present rate of exchange, very little above 4 shillings Sterling p. gallon consigned to Your Lordship; and as it would tend very essentially to the benefit of this Colony to extend the Cultivation of the Vine, I solicit your Lordship will order the above Wine to be reported on to ascertain whether it would answer for the use of the Hospital or otherwise and make me acquainted with the result for the information of H.M. Govt. here which is much interested on this Subject"<sup>309</sup>

A little while later a similar consignment went to Madras,<sup>310</sup> and Pringle was also prepared to ship a like quantity to Bombay if an opportunity arose.<sup>311</sup>

By the middle of the following year favourable reports had been received,<sup>312</sup> and the naval contractor, Calcutta, was anxious "to purchase a considerable quantity of Cape wine" for the use of the squadron based there.<sup>313</sup> Immediately the Agent arranged for a local wine-merchant, Mr. Robertson, to despatch 110 leaguers "for victualling His Majesty's Navy in India",<sup>314</sup> and raised no objection to Geo. Thomas shipping 80 leaguers for private sale in Calcutta,<sup>315</sup> while Clemens Matthieson, another local trader, received permission at the same time to forward 100 leaguers to Madras<sup>316</sup> -- thus, when the Resource<sup>317</sup> returned to India in September, 1813, it carried a record cargo of Cape wine.

308. Cradock to Pringle, 20 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

309. Pringle to Gov.-Gen.-in-Council, Calcutta, 27 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

310. Pringle to Sir G.H. Barlow & Council, Ft. St. George, 18 March 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

311. Pringle to Rensay, 20 March 1813, CGH.F.R., VII.

312. C.M. Ricketts (Secretary to Government, Ft. William) to Pringle, 19 Feb. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

313. Cradock to Pringle, 17 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

314. Pringle to Robertson, 8 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Alexander, 8 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

315. Pringle to Thomas, 3 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

316. Pringle to Matthieson, 7 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

317. A private British vessel licensed by the Board of Trade, Calcutta, to bring rice and timber to the Cape -- Stoll to Pringle, 6 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

However, as had so frequently happened in the past with Cape exports, the bulk shipment did not live up to the high standard of the original samples: the casks used were of poor-quality staves and (though highly priced) arrived in a damaged state,<sup>318</sup> while the wines themselves were a disappointment — as one Calcutta vintner subsequently put it,

"On arrival of your wines in India, three great objections were entertained. These were: the peculiar earthy flavour of some samples; excessive fieriness; and, in all, want of age and aroma. I am persuaded that if the earthy and saccharine flavour could be eradicated, there would be considerable markets in India for Cape wines..."<sup>319</sup>

And, although early in 1814 further consignments went to Bengal, Madras, and Trincomalee,<sup>320</sup> these and subsequent shipments never approached the peak load carried by the Resource; Cape wines, in fact, played a rôle of diminishing importance in the Indian liquor trade.<sup>321</sup>

Oats, strangely enough, were the only other Cape product in which the Indian authorities took an active interest during this period, and that was only because the superintendent of the Company's stud-farm at Poosah believed that oat culture

"may not prove more difficult or less productive than that of barley and...it would be likely to prevent or moderate the attacks of diseases, which such inquiry leads me to believe are in no slight degree connected with the method of feeding horses now in general use in this Country."<sup>322</sup>

Receiving a memorandum on the subject, Pringle promised to take the earliest opportunity after the next harvest "of sending to Bengal the supply of oats required for seed",<sup>323</sup> and in December, 1813, 667 bags were duly forwarded on the Lynx.<sup>324</sup> But, while Cape merinoes could breed prolifically on the pastures of New South Wales, this attempt at transplanting a cool temperate crop to the humidity of Bengal was doomed from the start.

318. Palmer & Co. (Calcutta) to R.C. Plowden (Secretary to Board of Trade), 31 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

319. Quoted by Leopoldt, op. cit., p. 90.

320. Pringle to Stoll, 14 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XI.

321. Even in the peak year of 1813, Cape wine exports to India were worth less than one-fifth of the value of liquors imported through Calcutta alone — see table in R. Dutt, The Economic History of India under Early British Rule (6th edn., London, 1942), p. 298.

322. Memorandum by Wm. Moorcroft, 7 Feb. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

323. Luson to Minto, 16 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

324. Pringle to Ricketts, 7 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

(c)

In 1811, Lord Minto, the Governor-General of Bengal, resolved to root out French influence from the Eastern seas by the conquest of Java,<sup>325</sup> and in October of that year Pringle was able to write to his counterpart at Rio de Janeiro -

"I have much pleasure in forwarding to you a copy of this day's Gazette containing an account of our very brilliant operations at Batavia..."<sup>326</sup>

With the Moluccas and Sumatra already in British hands, Janssens' surrender meant that the whole of the Indonesian Archipelago was now under the control of the East India Company,<sup>327</sup> and the stage was set for Raffles, as Lieutenant-Governor, to begin his famous if short-lived experiments in land-tenure and revenue reform.<sup>328</sup> Of more direct relevance to the merchants of Cape Town, however, was the new administrator's liberal commercial policy<sup>329</sup> and his refusal to place the Company's monopolistic net over the Java trade.<sup>330</sup>

In fact, no sooner had the news of Batavia's capture reached the Cape, than E.H. Tyser sought permission to send the brig Two Brothers there

"with such supplies as might tend to alleviate any deprivation which the Army or Navy on that expedition may be at present exposed to...."

promising, at the same time, to confine his returns to such articles "approved by the Hon. Company's Agent".<sup>331</sup> But Pringle made a

325. C.H.B.R., Vol. II, p. 595.

326. Pringle to Cunningham, 19 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX; cf. Recs.C.C., VIII, pp. 151-156, 188-189.

327. B.H.M. Vlekkes Nusantara - A History of the East Indian Archipelago (Harvard, 1944), pp. 242-243.

328. See C. Day, The Dutch in Java (New York, 1904), ch. v; J. Bastin, Raffles' Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java (The Hague, 1954).

329. "Commerce, like Liberty, (he believed) is a jealous power and refuses her blessings to all who restrain her course" - such assertions (probably derived from The Wealth of Nations) abound in his Memoir on the Administration of the Eastern Islands (London, 1819).

330. J.S. Furnivall, Netherlands India, A Study of Plural Economy (Cambridge, 1944), p. 69.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Directors subsequently complained that Raffles had "rendered the occupation of Java a source of financial embarrassment" and that he had failed to administer the island in such a way as to secure those advantages for the Company which he had himself held out from the possession of the colony - R. Coupland, Raffles, 1781-1826 (Oxford, 1926), pp. 58-59.

331. Tyser to Cradock, 28 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

sharp distinction between the previous year's Mauritius campaign (when the expedition "was known to depend almost entirely upon this place for supplies") and the present operation (where "no urgency whatever appears to exist that could justify such a departure from the law").<sup>332</sup> By the middle of the following year, however, the Agent had been instructed to use his discretion and grant permits for Cape merchants to ship local produce to Java in return for Indonesian goods, although "no general rule of commercial intercourse" had yet been established.<sup>333</sup>

Accordingly, the partnership of Shortt & Berry was allowed to charter the Ceres (350 tons) to carry wine, dried fruits, and other provisions to Batavia and to invest the proceeds in Javanese teak and flooring tiles for sale at the Cape.<sup>334</sup> (Once arrived in Indonesian waters, the Ceres was employed in the public service, and,

"in view of the peculiar circumstances under which the ship has been unavoidably detained in this Island",

Raffles gave his permission for a variety of articles not specified in Pringle's licence<sup>335</sup> to be taken back to the Cape, feeling confident that his indulgence "will not have been misplaced".<sup>336</sup>

Although some of the licences for the Java trade were issued by East India House,<sup>337</sup> they conferred no additional privileges on the merchants concerned, one of whom was bluntly warned by the Agent:

332. Pringle to C. Bird, 30 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX; the Company's attack on Java was, in fact, supported by supplies left at Fort Cornwallis, Penang, in August 1811, by the Canton-bound China fleet.

333. Pringle to C. Bird, 26 June 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

334. Shortt & Berry to Pringle, 9 Nov. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Shortt & Berry, 9 Nov. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Raffles, 21 Nov. 1812, (enclosing a copy of the licence for the Ceres' voyage), CGH.F.R., XIX.

335.	20 lbs. loaf sugar		30 bales Malay cloth
	1,200 bundles rattans		1 pikol (136 lbs.) Java tobacco
	2 leaguers arrack		4 lbs. nutmegs
	3 coyang rice		2 lbs. maces

336. Chs. Assay (Secretary to Government, Batavia) to Pringle, 15 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

337. For instance, the Cape Packet in Table Bay "may be engaged to take freight from hence to Batavia upon the authority of a licence granted in London..."  
—Advert. Cape Town Gazette, 6 Feb. 1813.

Pringle, after examining this document, found it to be "perfectly regular" — Pringle to Capt. Agnew (of the Cape Packet), 19 Feb. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

"Sir, Understanding from casual conversation yesterday that it is your intention to import a Cargo of Java Produce into this Colony without having in the first instance exported from hence a Cargo of Colonial Produce, I am to acquaint you that the Licence granted to you by the Hon'ble Court of Directors only authorises you to bring a Cargo of Java Produce being the actual Returns, and to no greater amount than the Cargo you may previously have exported from hence, and that the introduction of a Cargo from Java under any other Circumstances being illegal, you will subject the same to seizure."<sup>338</sup>

Nor, it would seem, did either Pringle or the British authorities in Java have any power to depart from such return-cargo clauses,<sup>339</sup> although (as Raffles' treatment of the Ceres suggests) the terms of the licences were not always strictly insisted upon, except in the case of articles of Chinese origin -- thus, when G. Martin was permitted to import an impressive list of Javanese items,<sup>340</sup> "500 lbs. of rhubarb the produce of China" were emphatically excluded from the certificate issued.<sup>341</sup>

By the end of 1813 the granting of licences for the Batavian trade had become a routine function of the Cape Agency, with the documents themselves tending to assume stereotyped features, of which the following were the most common: (1) only Cape produce was to be shipped to Java; (2) vessels were to make direct for Batavia, with no intermediate stoppages except through "unavoidable necessity"; (3) no unauthorised passengers were to be carried in either direction; (4) port-to-port trading in Indonesia itself was disallowed; (5) Javanese products only were to form the return cargo, to be disposed of in the Cape market with no subsequent re-exports.<sup>342</sup>

338. Pringle to Henry Home, 19 Oct. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX (italics in the original). Home replied on the same day that, in view of these limitations, "the particulars of which I was not before aware of...I shall in consequence abandon my intention of chartering a vessel at Batavia" -- CGH.F.R., XII.

339. Pringle to J. Berkhout (who was "about to depart to Batavia"), 12 Oct. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

340. Including the following: teak beams and planks, paving tiles, pickles and preserves, peppered spices, beetle-nuts, cocoa-nuts, coffee, tobacco, sago, sugar, rice, rattans, and tamarinds.

341. Pringle to Stoll, 19 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

342. Some of the licences, however, empowered the merchants to ship a portion of their returns to London for disposal through the Company sales -- Pringle to A. McDonald (agent for the Hope), 25 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to D. Messing & Co. (charterers of the Lord Nelson), 29 Aug. 1814, CGH.F.R., XI.

Nevertheless, the significance of this traffic should not be overdrawn: probably not more than ten licensed vessels left Table Bay for the Sunda Straits between 1812 and mid-1814,<sup>343</sup> and, although a few Batavian merchants showed interest in despatching their ships with Indonesian articles, they were not equally anxious to take on returns of Cape produce;<sup>344</sup> moreover, the Colony was not an important consumption centre for Java's chief exports — coffee could be procured more cheaply from the Isles of France, there was no local dyeing industry in need of indigo, and virtually no demand for the more exotic spices.<sup>345</sup> The trade, it is true, eased the shortage of some essential articles on the Cape market (especially timber,<sup>346</sup> rice,<sup>347</sup> and sugar), and to that extent ameliorated the restrictive influence of the Company, but Raffles' territory never provided anything more than a sporadic outlet for the Colony's own surpluses. Even after 1814, when a Dutch regime (which was apparently anxious to continue some of the more progressive aspects of Company policy)<sup>348</sup> had been restored in the East Indies, Batavia was never to regain that influential position which it had once held in the commercial affairs of the Cape of Good Hope.

343. References to only seven such sailings have been found in the Agency records for this period.
344. J. Dupuis (Deputy Secretary to Government, Batavia) to Pringle, 10 Dec. 1813, CGH.P.R., XII.
345. The Burgher Senate's indent of mace, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmegs from Bengal in 1808 (see above, Ch. II, n.100) lay in the Agency's stores "for four years without any demand for such goods"; finally, pronouncing them to be "unsaleable", Pringle shipped the spices to London on the Sarl St. Vincent in 1813 — Maude & Robertson to Caledon, 15 June 1810, CGH.P.R., XI; Pringle to Alexander, 6 July 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII; Pringle to Cracock, 31 Dec. 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX; Alexander to Pringle, 2 Jan. 1813, CGH.P.R., XII; Pringle to Capt. Pascall (R.O.S. Sarl St. Vincent), 8 Jan. 1813, CGH.P.R., XIX; Pringle to Karsay, 11 Jan. 1813, CGH.P.R., VII; see, also, below, Ch. V, (vii).
346. In 1814 Government House received a lengthy schedule of Javanese "teak timber for shipbuilding", and was asked to publish the details "for general information" — Lt. Governor in Council, Batavia, to Alexander, 5 May 1814, G.H.13/1; cf. Ch. V, n.156.
347. See below, Ch. IV, n.69.
348. Addressing the opening session of the States General at the Hague (7 Nov. 1814), the Prince of Orange optimistically declared: "Java in particular, that invaluable Colony, favoured with an enlightened Government and a free Navigation will soon open new sources to our Trade, and be productive of advantages more than sufficient to compensate for what the lapse of time has caused us to lose in other parts" — Rees.C.C., X, p. 203.

On the period of "reluctant liberalism" in the Dutch East Indies (which lasted until 1824), see H.R.C. Wright, Free Trade & Protection in the Netherlands: 1816-1830, (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 186-195.

#### IV. THE AGENCY AT WORK (1810-14)

Between 1810 and 1814, while the influence of the Cape Agency permeated almost every facet of the Colony's commercial life, John Pringle continued to be concerned with the tasks of furnishing supplies from the Company's exclusive preserves for the local market and upholding his employers' privileged status. It is the purpose of this chapter to indicate how he dealt with these closely related issues, and with what degree of success, as well as to describe briefly the organisational framework within which the Agency had come to function.

##### (i) The Indent Business

In a previous section<sup>1</sup> some account was given of the Agent's initial attempts, after his return to the Cape, to indent Eastern products on the Company's account; these efforts, it was seen, came up against a marked indifference towards the Colony's needs on the part of East India House and the establishments at Canton and Calcutta. Although they overlapped frequently, a clearer picture emerges if relations with the China factory are separated from the Agency's dealings with Bengal. None-the-less, since despatches eastwards were often lost through enemy action or delayed by the vagaries of war and weather, it is not always easy to piece together the story of Pringle's perseverance in this struggle for Asiatic supplies.

##### (a)

The first regular tea shipments of the Second Occupation, which had reached the Cape early in 1810, had been quantitatively inadequate, resulting in very high prices at the venue auctions, exorbitant (if unthought for) profits, and a great deal of dissatisfaction. Moreover, not only were the teas sent of an inferior blend, so that many chests arrived in a musty condition, but that part of the consignment which had come via Calcutta had provided opportunities for interference en route; thus, colonists purchasing at the public sales, discovered, on unpacking, that the chests were

<sup>1</sup> Ch. I, (ii)(d).

"partly filled up with Pieces of Brooms & other Staff and dirt and entirely unfit for use",<sup>2</sup>

or

"more than half empty, though to all outward appearance perfectly complete";<sup>3</sup>

however, having removed the tea from the Company's stores before examining the contents, these unfortunate buyers received no compensation.<sup>4</sup>

In June, 1810, Pringle sent a further indent to Canton,<sup>5</sup> accompanied by a detailed report of the spoilt chests, and made the following observations:

"By the accompanying extract of the Account Sales of what was recently landed from several ships, you will observe that the prices obtained here for China Goods, owing entirely to the limited supply, have exceeded the wishes of the Hon'ble Court... I beg leave to recommend if you are obliged again to send the Cape Stores by the way of Bengal, that the packages should be made much stronger as the damage arising from breakage & the double shipments in the last Investment was very great... If such double shipments could be avoided it would on every account be truly desirable & the profits of course greatly increased."<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, the Select Committee had received the Agent's earlier complaints of their alleged neglect and virtually challenged him to do his worst -

"By the American ship Asia we were favoured with your letter of 22nd Aug. [1809]<sup>7</sup> and extremely regret that any inconvenience should have been experienced at the Cape of Good Hope from the want of a due supply of China articles, but confident that every exertion consistent with our instructions from the Hon'ble Crt. of Directors has been made by us for the provision of such supply, we can have little to apprehend from any complaint of neglect on the part of the Company's Servants..."

Moreover, since Leadenhall Street had given specific directions that the shipments were to go through Calcutta, the Supercargoes saw no reason to depart from this procedure and were now sending "by

2. Fiscal J.A. Truter to Pringle (enclosing a sworn statement by Jacob Meyer), 22 Jan. 1811, CGH.P.R., XI.

3. L. Scholtz (Cape Town merchant) to Pringle, 14 Feb. 1811, CGH.P.R., XI.

4. Pringle to Scholtz, 14 Feb. 1811, CGH.P.R., XVIII.

5. It comprised mainly teas, silks, and nankeens, but also included a variety of miscellaneous items, such as ginger (500 jars), soy (20 jars), and sugar candy (100 tubs).

6. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 9 June 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII.

7. See above, Ch. II, n. 112.

a similar route" a further assortment of articles "to avoid a recurrence of the scarcity complained of".<sup>8</sup>

The next batch of letters from Canton were more conciliatory and promising in tone: from them Pringle learnt that the vessels Sir Edward Pellew and Hope had been despatched with China stores to Bengal,<sup>9</sup> "from whence we hope some speedy means may offer for their conveyance to you"; in addition, the Agent's suggestion that the teas be packed in chests similar to those provided for the London market had been adopted, while the prices of all articles were more or less unchanged, except for silk piece-goods -

"in which you will perceive we have been under the necessity of submitting to a very considerable increase in consequence... of the large demands made from Manila and America".<sup>10</sup>

But there had been an unfortunate hitch:

"...by some unaccountable mistake on the part of the Linguist to whom the 2nd Shipment was entrusted, the following teas<sup>11</sup> were altogether omitted, tho' the circumstance escaped notice at the time, as the Capt. of the Ship in the hurry of his dispatch and in the full confidence that every thing was correct, signed the Bills of Lading without making any exception..."

These omitted chests, together with additional silks and nankeens, were to be shipped on the returning fleet and taken off at St. Helena.<sup>12</sup> Small segments of the main consignment had been brought to the Cape from Calcutta by mid-1811 on the brig Daphne and the Company packet Georgiana,<sup>13</sup> while the Camperdown (much to the annoyance of Governor Beaton, who regarded the cargo as "far too bulky for so small a vessel"<sup>14</sup>) made a series of trips with the stores landed at Jamestown in the second half of that year.<sup>15</sup>

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8. Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 15 Feb. 1810, CGH.P.R., XI.
  9. The former vessel arrived at Calcutta on 13th April, the latter on 26th Nov., 1810.
  10. During the season 1810-11, 2,515 piculs of silken textiles were exported from Canton, American ships taking 1,490 (1 picul = 133 lbs.) -- H.B. Morse, The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China, 1635-1834 (Oxford, 1926), Vol. III, p. 158.
  11. 50 chests of Souchong, 230 chests of Hyson.
  12. Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 26 & 31 Jan. 1811, CGH.P.R., XI.
  13. The Daphne reached Table Bay in March, the Georgiana in June.
  14. Beaton to Pringle, 15 June 1811, CGH.P.R., II.
  15. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 8 Oct. 1811, CGH.P.R., XII; Pringle to Beaton, 2 Jan. 1812, CGH.P.R., XIII.

Taken together, these arrivals did not amount to very much,<sup>16</sup> and, with such uncertain shipping arrangements, the Agent found it increasingly difficult "to form a correct judgment of the probable demand for China produce", although he was able to report that local requirements for sewing silk and chinaware were "so very trifling" that no further supplies should be sent; at the same time (May, 1811) he forwarded hopefully a further indent for the next season.<sup>17</sup> In the meantime, the bulk of the consignments despatched to Calcutta in 1810 still awaited transshipment to the Cape,<sup>18</sup> and the consequences of this delay were "outlined in no uncertain terms when Pringle next had an opportunity to write to Canton:

"I have only to regret that the benefits that would have been derived to the Company and to the Settlement by your ready compliance with my indents have been frustrated by the detention at Bengal for nearly two seasons of all the consignments intended for this place, with the exception of a very few articles hardly worth mentioning. At the same time it is notified to me...that it is not certain, even now, when the Right Hon'ble the Governor General may have it in his power to send any Vessel to the Cape with these stores...

The results of this most serious disappointment are extremely unpleasant: the almost total want of every article the produce of China has been severely felt by all classes and a great deal of discontent has naturally ensued, with a probability of its leading to a serious discussion with the Government. But it is not this only that is to be deplored -- the investments of two seasons arriving together will of course be too much for the consumption of this Colony, since the Inhabitants have learnt in a great measure to substitute other articles instead of those in question; and, moreover, it cannot be expected that the packages after so much moving about will be found in good order or the contents uninjured.

From what precedes you will obviously see that it has been put completely out of my power to form any thing like an accurate estimate of the supply necessary for this Colony, since I have never had any means of meeting the demand with regularity for even a moderate length of time without interruption."<sup>19</sup>

16. All told, they comprised: 580 catty boxes of tea, 28 chests of Canton cloth, 32 boxes of sewing silk, and 10 chests of nankeens.
17. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 15 May 1811, CGH.F.R., XVIII. In brief, the enclosed indent comprised 500 chests of tea, 30,000 pieces of assorted nankeens, 1,000 pieces of Canton cloth, 500 jars of ginger, and 20 jars of soy.  
(Note: while one chest held approx. 250 lbs. of tea, a catty box comprised less than 7 lbs; cf. Ch. II, n. 116).
18. Pringle to Ramsay, 5 March & 14 June, 1811, CGH.F.R., VII; Price to Lord Minto, 13 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.
19. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 20 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

It was not until August, 1811, that the Bengal Marine Board made arrangements for three chartered vessels (each with a very limited storage capacity) to carry the accumulated China stores to the Cape;<sup>20</sup> by that time there was not an ounce of tea for sale in the Colony and local dissatisfaction was reaching breaking point;<sup>21</sup> but this total privation was overcome and an ugly crisis averted with the landing of more than 250 tons of Canton produce between October and mid-December,<sup>22</sup> most of which ("with some trifling exceptions" and such to Pringle's surprise) was found to be in a reasonably good condition.<sup>23</sup>

While the Supercargoes apologized for "the considerable inconvenience" caused by the delays at Calcutta, it was the Directors, they alleged, who were really to blame by having insisted on "so circuitous a voyage". In view of this unfortunate experience, the Select Committee resolved to supersede the arrangements laid down by the Court and despatch an "extra" ship, the Providence, direct to the Colony.<sup>24</sup> However, since Pringle's 1810-11 indents had reached Canton after a contract for Cape supplies based on previous orders had been concluded, it meant that when the Providence put in at Simons Bay in April, 1812, it brought not only tea and nankeens, but also considerable quantities of sewing and wrought silks — articles for which there was no local demand.<sup>25</sup> Yet the Agent raised no objection to the vessel's captain landing some miscellaneous items<sup>26</sup> for private sale<sup>27</sup> which did not "at all interfere with the Public Investment".<sup>28</sup>

20. Cargo returns and invoice details, Sub-Export Warehouse Keeper to Board of Trade (Fort William), 31 July 1811, CGH.F.R., II; Board of Trade to Col. Gen. Hewitt (Vice-President in Council, Fort William), 2 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

21. Pringle to Ramsay, 21 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

22. Pringle to Minto, 7 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX; Capt. H. Becher (of the Peggy) to Pringle, 24 Dec. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Ramsay, 3 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., VII.

23. Pringle to Governor General-in-Council, Fort William, 27 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

24. Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 31 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

25. "I am at a loss what to do with them here, nor are they adapted to the English or S. American markets" — Pringle to Ramsay, 20 May 1812, CGH.F.R., VII.

26. A few boxes of chinaware, some boots and shoes, table mats, several window blinds, a basket of umbrellas, and some crape.

27. On the extensive private trading activities of captains visiting Canton and the Company's attitude thereto, see E.S. Pritchard, "Private Trade between England and China, 1680-1835", Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 108-137, but especially pp. 122ff. (Aug. 1957).

28. Pringle to Alexander, 24 April 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

In acknowledging the consignment on the Providence — "the whole of which was delivered in good condition" — Pringle reported that the Colony was completely overstocked with Chinese piece-goods,<sup>29</sup> and subsequently informed the Select Committee that the importation of considerable quantities of coffee from the Mascarenes had served to greatly diminish the colonists' consumption of tea.<sup>30</sup> Thus, when another "extra" vessel, the Indefatigable, arrived from Canton in August, 1813, it carried no textiles for the Cape and a relatively moderate tea cargo;<sup>31</sup> the following season's consignment came in record time via Calcutta,<sup>32</sup> but included an even smaller quantity of tea and nankeens "only of the best quality";<sup>33</sup> the trade reached its lowest ebb in 1815 when the Sealeby Castle returned with an indent valued at little more than £1,000.<sup>34</sup> By this time the note of urgency had disappeared from the Agency despatches, the orders placed with the Supercargoes were highly selective, and (such were the changes brought about by the curtailed charter of 1813)<sup>35</sup> Canton was no longer the Colony's sole source of tea, some licensed private shipments from India having been permitted by the Bengal authorities.<sup>36</sup>

- 29. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 30 June 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX.
- 30. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 12 Feb. 1813, CGH.P.R., XIX; see above, Ch. III, (i)(c).
- 31. 512 chests of Congou, 150 of Souchoang, together with 84 boxes of ginger and some chinaware — Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 27 March 1813, CGH.P.R., XII; Capt. John Cross (Indefatigable) to Pringle, 5 Aug. 1813, CGH.P.R., XII.
- 32. "...in compliance with the instructions of the Hon'ble Court of Directors that the Cape Stores should always be transmitted via Bengal when freight can be obtained below 26 p. ton" — Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 21 Feb. 1814, CGH.P.R., XIII.
- 33. In addition to the tea (589 chests of Congou) and nankeens (100 boxes of brown and 100 of white), there were 84 boxes of sweetmeats and 45 boxes of sago in this shipment — abstract of invoices, 30 April 1814, CGH.P.R., IV.
- 34. The Cape stores shipped from Canton on the Sealeby Castle (3 April 1815) comprised:
 

Ryson Tea ... ..	542	teels
Gunpowder Tea ... ..	878	"
Pekoe Tea ... ..	272	"
Souchoang Tea ... ..	686	"
Sago ... ..	450	"
Ginger ... ..	677	"
	3,505	
- Note: The teel of currency was treated in the Company's books at Canton as equivalent to 6s. 8d. — CGH.P.R., IV.
- 35. See below, Ch. V, passim.
- 36. A. Trotter (Acting Secretary to Government, Fort William), 28 Feb. 1815, CGH.P.R., XIII; Luson to Trotter, 30 Aug. 1815, CGH.P.R., XI.

The following table not only illustrates the falling off in the China trade to the Cape after the arrival of the delayed double shipment (when, for a time, even St. Helena ranked before the Colony) but also the comparative insignificance of the Cape market when contrasted with the shipments to London:

Teal invoice values of EXPORTS FROM CANTON <sup>37</sup> (£1 = Fls. 3)				
<u>Season</u>	<u>To the Cape</u>	<u>Mode of Conveyance</u>	<u>To St. Helena</u>	<u>To London</u>
1809-10	64,018	<u>David Scott to Calcutta; Warren Hastings, Ocean, Tottenham to Cape; Walmer Castle to St.H.</u>	14,325	3,809,824
1810-11	84,332	<u>Sir Ed. Pellew and Hope to Calcutta; Peggy Mary, Friendship to Cape.</u>	1,627	4,196,857
1812-13	28,720	<u>Providence and Indefatigable direct</u>	—	6,425,608
1813-14	27,208	<u>Indian to Calcutta; Jane to Cape</u>	21,731	5,578,056
1814-15	3,505	<u>Scauby Castle direct</u>	28,537	5,899,545

By 1815, too, the shipping position having greatly improved, the Cape Agency was able to estimate the annual demand for teas and nankeens with reasonable accuracy and to place indents accordingly;<sup>38</sup> moreover, it felt strong enough to insist that only goods of the ~~highest quality~~ highest standard be sent and that the vessels be routed into Table Bay, "other wise the damage, difficulty, and expense of transport from Simons Bay are very considerable".<sup>39</sup> Thereafter, until the Company lost its monopoly of the tea trade in 1833,<sup>40</sup> the Colony's imports from Canton maintained a fairly steady average of roundabout 24,000 teals (£23,800) per annum.<sup>41</sup>

37. The figures for St. Helena and London are based on data in Morse, Chronicles, Vol. III, pp. 101, 131, 175, 190, and 206 the gap for the season 1811-12 reflects the shipping delay at Calcutta.

38. Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 6 April 1815, CGH.P.R., XX.

39. Ibid.

40. Yu-Kwei Cheng, Foreign Trade and Industrial Development of China (Washington, 1956), pp. 4-5.

41. Yearly figures in Morse, Chronicles, Vols. III, IV.

(b)

In order to save the expenses and trouble involved by procuring partial supplies from different presidencies, Pringle had concentrated his Indian indents on Bengal. By March, 1810, however, by no means all of the Burgher Senate's original order<sup>42</sup> had been fulfilled, the Cape market remaining particularly short of piece-goods.

A few months later, when placing a further indent for a large supply of Bengal manufactures, Pringle suggested that shipments in Europe-bound vessels should be avoided, since there was always the risk of damage — perhaps of a whole fleet — being incurred, and a much greater possibility of damage to the Cape stores by their being stowed "of necessity in improper places". Instead, a "Country" ship should be chartered for the purpose, and part of the great saving in freight which would result<sup>43</sup> could be used to insure the cargo;<sup>44</sup> table-rice, especially, would only cover its cost and carriage if used as ballast in this way.<sup>45</sup>

By March of the following year, the Colony was almost entirely destitute of Indian produce: although the Agent had rationed the sales very carefully, "and considerably below what the demand naturally is", only 10 bales of calico remained in the stores, while the exorbitant prices which plain, coarse muslins fetched<sup>46</sup> clearly indicated a wholly inadequate supply.<sup>47</sup> The Directors were kept fully informed of a rapidly deteriorating situation:

"I have written repeatedly to Bengal for a further supply of articles required for the use of the Colony, but as I have never received any answer, I do not know whether I may expect them or not... I beg leave most seriously to draw Your attention to these circumstances — the inconvenience to which the inhabitants are put for want of a sufficiency of Indian produce at a reasonable

42. See above, Ch. II, n. 100.

43. He believed that "there would be no difficulty in hiring a Country Ship for £12 stg. or thereabouts per ton", whereas freight on regular vessels often exceeded £20.

44. Pringle to Lord Minto-in-Council, 9 June 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII; Pringle to Ramsay, 1 July 1810, CGH.P.R., VII.

45. Pringle to Minto, 22 Nov. 1810, CGH.P.R., XVIII.

46. E.g., for a single piece of white gurrah as much as 20 rindollars was paid, although the invoice value was under 6 rupees (i.e., less than 4 rds.).

47. Pringle to Governor-General in Council, Bengal, 13 March 1811, CGH.P.R., XVIII.

price is very great, and it is almost impossible to describe how much this non-compliance with the Indents has subjected me personally to many reflections and unpleasant remarks, as if I were the cause of it, not to mention the loss the Company sustains by not extending this Trade as far as it would naturally go affording a reasonable altho' not exorbitant profit. The Inhabitants are also accustoming themselves to the substitution of many European for Indian Articles."<sup>48</sup>

In June, 1811, a casual note arrived from Calcutta with the promise that the articles ordered would be sent "by the first opportunity and if practicable by a Country ship", but added that the large tonnage recently taken up by the public service<sup>49</sup> made it extremely difficult to "obtain any vessel at present".<sup>50</sup>

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when the H.C.S.S. Alexander arrived from Madras a few weeks later and it was found she carried no supplies for the Cape, Pringle should be requested by Acting-Governor Grey to land such parts of her cargo

"as may meet the wants of the Inhabitants of this Colony as expressed in the indent of the Burgher Senate dated 7th July 1808..."<sup>51</sup>

After the vessel's commander had been furnished with a document in which the Agency accepted responsibility for any offloadings and promised the owners "the full freight as the ship would have been entitled to on delivering the same in England",<sup>52</sup> it was found that 100 bales of salamporee and 40 of blue cloth were the only items carried by the Alexander which would meet local needs,<sup>53</sup> and these were accordingly landed.<sup>54</sup>

48. Pringle to Ramsay, 5 March 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

It was not long before the great importation of British calicoes of various descriptions began to have "a marked detrimental effect on the Company's sales" — Pringle to Ramsay, 20 March 1813, CGH.F.R., VII; in 1812 alone the value of British cotton manufactures sent to the Cape amounted to £136,000 (Recs.C.C., XI, p. 294).

49. This shipping shortage, of course, was closely connected with the expeditions to Mauritius and Java — R. Thompson and G.T. Garratt, Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India (London, 1935), p. 246.

50. C.M.Ricketts to Pringle, 16 Feb. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; in reply, Pringle pointed out that "piece goods and linens are of the most urgent necessity...want of them occasions much distress and dissatisfaction" — 13 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

51. Alexander to Pringle, 18 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

52. Pringle to Capt. Wm. Younghusband, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

53. Pringle to Alexander, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

54. Younghusband to Pringle, 22 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

Although they obviated "at least a total want" of piece-goods, these articles made little difference to the position, and Pringle's readiness to comply with the authorities' wishes in this instance stemmed from an earnest desire to avoid an open clash with the local merchants rather than from any hope that such offloadings would genuinely improve matters. After explaining the Alexander incident to Leadenhall Street, the Agent went on to justify his own actions:

"I have had occasion so frequently to mention the extreme distress flowing from the nearly total want of all kinds of Indian produce, & the very great dissatisfaction and irritation produced in consequence, that I think the Hon'ble Court will be pleased at the very moderate manner in which Government has required me to take this step... I have besides good reason to believe that a Petition and remonstrance of the Inhabitants on the subject of their privations, has been discountenanced by some persons of influence amongst them, the production of which would have been very unpleasant. I could not of course hesitate a moment in complying to a certain extent with the desire of His Maje. Government without forcing the subject into serious agitation and discussion — a circumstance I am most anxious to avert, in hopes the ample supplies expected from Bengal may arrive in time to prevent it altogether..."

But, if the Alexander's timely arrival had staved off an immediate eruption, Pringle was fully alive to the long-term consequences of a continuing dearth:

"Not only is it a very unfortunate predicament in which I am placed, but the Hon'ble Company have also lost a very considerable profit which would certainly have ensued had the supply been regular; but it is obvious that the invariable effect of long privation is the adoption of substitutes, & then when this great arrears of Stores & Supplies of every kind shall arrive, the prices and demand will most probably be both very considerably diminished."<sup>55</sup>

The adverse results of dependence on a remote and uncertain monopolised source of supply could rarely have been more succinctly described: Nor was this all: the tariff changes gazetted in October, 1811,<sup>56</sup> would have the effect of raising import duties very considerably, and was thus "another bad consequence of the supply from India having been so long withheld".<sup>57</sup> In future, the Customs

55. Pringle to Ramsay, 29 July 1811, CGH.P.R., VII.

56. Craddock to Liverpool, 15 Oct. 1811, Recs.C.C., VIII, p. 178; duties on goods which did not originate in the British Isles were to be calculated at 10 per cent on the sale price instead of (as formerly) 5 per cent on the invoice value — see Craddock's Proclamation, 9 Oct. 1811, ibid., pp. 164-166.

57. Pringle to Ramsay, 21 Oct. 1811, CGH.P.R., VII.

officials were to levy their charges, as far as the Agency was concerned, on the basis of the monthly vendue rolls<sup>58</sup> — when, that is, the Company again had goods available for sale!

However, the position had eased by the end of that year, when the three chartered vessels, Mary, Peggy, and Friendship, which had been hired to bring the delayed China stores from Calcutta,<sup>59</sup> also carried to the Cape most of Pringle's mid-1810 Bengal indent.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the Directors had instructed the Bengal authorities to institute an inquiry about the shortages at the Cape and to regularly forward "a proper assortment" of Indian goods to prevent "any recurrence of distress".<sup>61</sup> With stocks likely to last for at least a year, and with the local demand for high-priced piece-goods much smaller than he had been led to believe,<sup>62</sup> Pringle was no longer under pressure, in framing a fresh indent, to order indiscriminately; thus, when the Friendship returned to the Cape in December, 1812, it only brought 46 bales of piece-goods for the Agency, but carried 1,500 bags of high-grade rice,<sup>63</sup> and a few hundred bundles of rattans, and teak planks as dunnage — all of which had been imported under licence from the Bengal Government by the firm Anyot & Co.<sup>64</sup>

58. Pringle to Cradock, 15 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII; Alexander to Pringle, 21 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Ramsay, 2 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., VII; cf. Cape Town Gazette, 19 Oct. 1811.

59. See above, n. 20.

60. Indian cargo landed off the three ships comprised: 473 bales of piece-goods, sugar, rice, rattans, and pepper, with a total invoice value of 75,295 sicca rupees (approx. £7,000); among the indented articles which did not arrive in these shipments were 974 pieces of Madras long-cloth and 200 pieces of muslin.

61. Pringle to Alexander, 3 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

62. Pringle to Winto, 12 Aug. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

63. The Colony at the time was amply supplied with inferior rice from Madagascar — Pringle to Winto, 25 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

64. Ricketts to Pringle (with enclosures), 18 Sept. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Ramsay, 18 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., VII; Pringle to Winto, 31 Jan. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

A storm in a teacup followed when it was discovered that the Friendship's cargo included 1,050 gunny bags and 99 new empty casks for which no permits had been issued; after much correspondence and with great reluctance, Pringle "ultimately permitted the landing of these Articles", but referred the matter to the Bengal authorities "in the event of it being deemed necessary as an example to found any proceeding thereon". Eventually, the ship's owners (Palmer & Co.) were able to offer a satisfactory explanation: "an error had been committed by listing the bags as a separate article on the invoice, whereas they were for the purpose of bringing the rice over", while the casks were to take back a return cargo of wine — Lason to Alexander, 18 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Anyot & Co. to Alexander, 19 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Ricketts to Pringle (with enclosures), 15 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

A further complication arose during the second half of 1812: with widespread drought threatening local grain supplies, Cradock had remitted all duties on rice imports,<sup>65</sup> and requested the Agent to give such facilities as was in his power to merchants anxious to procure rice from abroad, feeling confident that

"the Company will approve of all such relaxations as you may be pleased to make on their behalf...for the supply of a Colony so important to their General Possessions."<sup>66</sup>

Consequently, no objection was raised when Ebdon & Watt sent off the Prudent for a cargo of Indian rice from Mauritius;<sup>67</sup> yet Pringle did not feel competent to permit George Thomas to import directly from Calcutta without the prior approval of the Bengal Government.<sup>68</sup> By the middle of 1813 slump had replaced emergency: not only had the local wheat crop been less affected by drought than Cradock had feared, but, in addition to shipments on the regular indents and from Madagascar and Mauritius, unexpected rice supplies had also arrived from Batavia, and Wilberforce Bird was complaining bitterly that

"table-rice is now selling daily at the ridiculous price of less than twelve rixdollars per hundred wt."<sup>69</sup>

It was only after the crisis no longer existed that Pringle received authority from East India House "to give every facility" for the importation of rice "during the present exigency".<sup>70</sup>

At Fort William, in the meantime, the Board of Trade had at last given serious attention to the Court's instructions and was keeping the Agency well supplied with Indian manufactures: in May, 1813, the licensed ship Swan delivered 260 bales of piece-goods,<sup>71</sup> in September the Severn detached herself from the homeward-bound fleet, putting in at the Cape to

65. Government advertisement, Cape Town Gazette, 14 Aug. 1812; G.Bird to Barry (Mauritius), 14 Aug. 1812, G.R.34/2.

66. Alexander to Pringle, 8 Sept. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

67. Ebdon & Watt to Cradock, 2 Sept. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Alexander, 12 Sept. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Farquhar to Cradock, 5 Oct. 1812, G.R.13/3.

68. Thomas to Cradock, 7 Nov. 1812, CGH.F.R., III; Pringle to Lt.Col. Forster (Act. Dep. Secy.), 9 Nov. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

69. W.W.Bird to Pringle, 8 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

A few weeks later the arrival of the private vessel Resource from Bengal with a licensed cargo of 4,700 bags of rice could not have been very conducive to Bird's happiness! — Stoll to Pringle (with encls.), 6 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

70. Ramsay to Pringle, 12 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., III.

71. Pringle to Minto, 20 May 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

offload a considerable mixed cargo,<sup>72</sup> and the "Country" ship Jane anchored in Table Bay in April, 1814, with what proved to be the last regular indent before the curtailment of the Company's charter began to have an effect on the Indian-Cape trade.<sup>73</sup>

72. The value of the Severn's cargo for the Cape was invoiced at 117,730 s. rupees — Ricketts to Pringle (with enclosures), 6 Feb. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.
73. The total value of the Jane's cargo was 326,681 s. rupees (i.e., more than £32,000), but a portion (invoiced at 87,541 s.r.) comprised Chinese articles routed to the Cape via Calcutta (see above, n. 32).

The following abstract (derived from the invoices) of Indian piece-goods landed by the Jane gives some idea of the variety and quantities of such articles then being absorbed by the Cape market:

<u>Goods</u>	<u>Bales</u>	<u>Pieces</u>	<u>Rupees</u>
Doosooties	96	6,565	36,291
Sannoes	128	11,968	64,121
Chintzes	50	11,422	20,511
Cushtaes	13	1,600	3,774
Rocals	28	4,600	15,495
Dissooksoys	14	1,878	5,496
Ginghams	15	2,122	6,099
Hushams	41	3,310	16,025
Cossacs	34	2,628	15,177
Table Cloth	11	1,102	8,662
Towels	2	2,820	1,436
Palampores	1	100	300
Shillacs	5	730	2,164
Carradarries	4	200	1,350

The Jane's owners (Scott & Co., Calcutta) received 35,617 s. rupees for freight on these articles, and an additional 9,583 s.r. for carrying the China stores; moreover, it would seem that the Bengal authorities envisaged the emergence of a new triangular commerce, since Scott & Co. were allowed to ship rations and rice to the Cape (total value, 6,622 s.r.) "with a view to procure funds for the purchase of a returning cargo of Teak Timber in Java".

As regards the piece-goods themselves, while Pringle felt confident of being able "to dispose of this investment to advantage", he urged that "nothing more whatever" should be consigned until he was in a position to judge the effects of the charter's curtailment.

— Scott & Co. to Secretary, Marine Board (Fort William), 18 Jan. 1814; Board of Trade to Earl Moira-in-Council, 27 Jan. 1814; Ricketts to Pringle, 31 Jan. 1814 (all in CGH.F.R., XIII); Pringle to Ricketts, 13 April & 5 May, 1814, CGH.F.R., XI; Capt. Alex. Brown (of the Jane) to Pringle, 13 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Ramsey, 30 April 1814, CGH.F.R., VII; Trotter to Pringle, 26 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

Throughout this period, Pringle kept a vigilant watch on all attempts to dump inferior piece-goods on the Colony, and in 1810 successfully resisted an effort by the Bombay Government to send out Surat manufactures which had been "rejected as falling below the standard quality required by the London Market". There was only one occasion when direct business was done with that presidency: in 1813 the Agent indented 10,000 pieces of Bombay chelloes, which he believed would "answer extremely well" for local consumption, and this consignment (as noted above, Ch. III, n. 103) was despatched via Fort Louis; sample shipments of Surat articles intended to meet the needs of the Colony's slaves proved unsuccessful.

— J. Warden (Chief Secy. Bombay Govt.) to Pringle, 28 June 1810, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to Warden, 13 March 1811, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Pringle to Governor-in-Council, Bombay, 30 June 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Warden to Pringle, 17 Sept. 1812 & 26 April 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

## (c)

From the foregoing survey and the account of earlier developments given in Chapter II, it will be observed that the broad pattern of the China indents was not dissimilar to the Agency's indent business with India. At the beginning of the Second Occupation, as a legacy of Batavian rule in the prevailing wartime circumstances, the Colony was almost destitute of articles from both areas; then, until towards the close of 1811, although the dribblets which sporadically arrived were supplemented by small scraps of prize articles, the shortage remained chronic and dissatisfaction was widespread. There followed a marked improvement in the flow of supplies, and, by the end of 1813, the Agency had become overstocked with some lines and was being selective in its indents. By the time the limitation of the Company's charter became effective, Pringle was in the position of being able to roughly assess probable consumption for the ensuing season and to place his orders accordingly with the reasonable expectation that these would be duly fulfilled.

It is no easy matter to distinguish clearly between, on the one hand, the impact of sheer distance and imperfect sea communications on the provisioning of the Cape market with Asiatic goods, and the specific influence of the Company in this respect on the other. Even under the most liberal of marketing arrangements, with supplies freely forthcoming and selling outlets unrestricted by monopolistic trappings, there can be little doubt that the Colony would have still experienced periodic shortages and occasional gluts — yet it would have been spared the almost absolute neglect which it suffered at the hands of John Company during the years 1807-11. Pringle was always being badgered by venturesome Cape Town merchants anxious to send their own vessels to India or to indent from that peninsula subcontinent on private account;<sup>74</sup> and even if direct shipments from China had remained few and far between, without restrictions, teas, nankeens, and other Celestial products would almost certainly have

<sup>74</sup> Such speculations, had they been permitted, were not likely to have been greatly affected by the naval expeditions mounted in India against the Mascarenes and East Indies which played such havoc with the Company's own shipping activities.

found their way to the Cape in much greater profusion than they did through the tardy and often cumbersome arrangements made by the Select Committee.

This question of apportioning responsibility for the dearth of Eastern articles in the Colony between natural and contrived scarcities is complicated further by the fact that the Directors were not primarily interested in reaping exorbitant profits from the deliberate creation of shortages. Instead, theirs were rather the sins of omission: at the outset, had firm, unequivocal instructions been sent to Calcutta that "Country" vessels should be used for supplying the Cape at every opportunity, supplemented, when necessary, by the issue of private licences,<sup>75</sup> and had the Supercargoes been ordered to forward shipments direct instead of via Bengal (in a misguided attempt to save on freight),<sup>76</sup> Pringle would have been saved a good deal of vexation and embarrassment and the settlement could have been kept reasonably well stocked within the framework of the charter. As things turned out, however, direct shipments from Canton and licensed cargoes from India began to arrive only after persistent pestering by the Agent and at a time when the charter itself was about to be severely truncated.

Meanwhile, some of the Chinese articles sent through Calcutta, after nearly two years in coming, reached the Colony in a mouldy condition or had been damaged by repacking, while others failed to arrive at all since this circuitous mode of despatch encouraged pilfering en route; and even Bengal piece-goods were not always landed in an unspoilt state. The inevitable short-term consequence of such treatment, as Pringle continually reminded his superiors, was that the Company threw away innumerable opportunities of reaping excellent profits from the Cape trade; and,

75. To exporters of Bengal piece-goods, the Cape market may well have afforded a welcome diversion, since protective duties on calicoes coming into Britain were then as high as 78 per cent — "Minutes of Evidence, &c., on the Affairs of the East India Company", Parliamentary Papers (1813), pp. 463-467.

76. The Select Committee had no excuse for waiting until 1812 to arrange for direct consignments, since one of its primary functions was to serve as agent for the private "Country" traders of India (Greenberg, op. cit., pp. 19-20); the Supercargoes, in any case, were sufficiently remote from East India House to have ignored the Court's shipping directions in this instance without any qualms — they took an independent line on such more important issues (cf. Morse, Chronicles, Vol. 111, pp. 181-182, 232-233).

in the long-run, local consumers just as inevitably developed substitute tastes (particularly for Bourbon coffee and British-made calicoes), or had their wants met increasingly by alternative sources of supply which the Company had allowed to emerge (such as sugar from Mauritius and teak from Java). It is remarkable that the colonists put up with this state of affairs for as long as they did, although Fringle's unsought for rôle of scapegoat, in which he must have endured a good deal of personal disparagement and have been widely regarded as the incarnation of shortages and inflated prices, served as a convenient lightning-conductor. There can be little doubt, however, that throughout these years the Agent genuinely did all that was possible to improve the position, and that without his continual exertions the situation would have become even worse.

Viewed in historical perspective, there is yet another, if less obvious, aspect worth mentioning. With wine exports still in their infancy, the Cape settlers had not yet developed any really profitable external commerce. Moreover, although the Company's monopoly made it virtually impossible for them to reap any direct benefits from an Eastern trade which they had to passively watch flowing past Table Bay to meet the needs of distant markets in Europe and the New World, developments after 1815 suggest that, even without the trammels of the charter, the Cape would not have become a major entrepôt, with earnings from middleman and shipping services speeding up the production of export staples. The prevailing circumstances, therefore, may well have been a blessing in disguise: in the early 19th century, the silks, muslins, and other exotic products of Asia were still avidly sought by most communities of the West, and the colonists of the Cape were no exception in this respect. But the settlement not only produced nothing acceptable in exchange for such articles — it was virtually a one-way trade catering exclusively for direct consumption, the goods serving neither as a basis for any local finishing industry nor as processed re-exports. Unrestricted indulgence in such a trade, therefore, might well have aggravated a balance of payments problem which was already acute. Cape housewives and their daughters, however, starved of lancees, baftaes, flowered mullis, and a hundred and one other colourful articles of adornment, could hardly have been expected to consider the situation in this sober light.

(ii) In the Counting-House

## (a)

One measure of the Cape's growing significance in the Company's affairs was the Court's decision, soon after Pringle's return, to send out an Assistant-Agent,<sup>77</sup> and before the end of 1808 Joseph Luson had arrived to fill this new post. Luson had first entered the Company's service by way of the Examiners' Department in 1795, and had been transferred on promotion to the Accountant's Office four years later;<sup>78</sup> and it was a highly satisfied Accountant-General who had recommended him to the Directors when asked to select someone from his staff for the Cape appointment.<sup>79</sup> Almost from the outset of his second spell in the Colony, therefore, the Agent was assisted by one who for many years had served East India House in a responsible clerical capacity, and it was not long before Pringle himself was quite confident that

"in the person of Mr. Luson the Company has not a servant who is more zealously attached to their Interests or who performs his duty better..."<sup>80</sup>

This was all to the good, since, in view of the many bouts of ill-health which Pringle experienced during this period, the presence of a competent Assistant proved to be most important for the smooth running of the Agency's business.

It was also imperative that a couple of reliable local people be found to help with the more prosaic aspects of office routine and to receive, supervise, and see to the disposal of the indented stores; but Pringle found it no easy matter to fill these posts -

"persons at once capable and trustworthy...are not to be found here, except by mere chance, and no other can possibly be even thought of..."<sup>81</sup>

77. Ramsay to Pringle, 7 June 1808, CGH.F.R., I.

78. Luson to Court of Directors, 7 Aug. 1815, CGH.F.R., VIII; the Examiners' Department was responsible mainly for the preparation of answers to the letters received from India.

79. T. Cartwright to Committee of Accounts and House, 2 June 1808, Home Miscellaneous Series, Vol. 494, p. 198.

80. Pringle to Ramsay, 2 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

81. Pringle to Caledon, 29 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

This difficulty goes a long way towards explaining the Agent's reluctance to assume too much direct responsibility for equipping the transports during the Madras armament emergency towards the end of 1809.<sup>82</sup> As the first regular indents came in from the East, however, Pringle was fortunate in again securing the services of Joseph Gibson, who had helped him in a casual capacity during the First Occupation; it was he who now watched over the porters and took care of the out-of-doors work. In addition, John Conrad Gie,

"a Young Gentleman, the son of a most respectable Inhabitant of this Colony",

was taken on as clerical assistant.<sup>83</sup>

In spite of these subordinate appointments, the spasmodic character of the Agency's business at the Cape created a further problem of slack alternating with bottleneck in office and warehouse routine:

"If the Hon'ble Company's operations here could be distributed into daily portions, much more might certainly be done; but from the nature of it, very much depends upon contingencies — at one time there is little or nothing required, at another there is employment for many, but additional persons cannot be had here upon an emergency unless constantly retained..."<sup>84</sup>

Yet, by the beginning of 1812, as more regular and larger consignments started arriving from Canton and Calcutta, the Agency staff enjoyed fewer breaks: in addition to the correspondence, which was "far from being inconsiderable", all the stores without exception were disposed of at the vendue auctions, and two or three days were taken up before each sale<sup>85</sup> with sorting the goods into small lots;<sup>86</sup> at that particular time there were

"three large cargoes of Bengal and China Goods besides the Orient's Cargo, occupying ten large stores & frequent supplies for St. Helena to be attended to..."

and the Directors were assured that

"there is not even a petty Merchant here but employs more assistants in his business than the Company's Establishment".<sup>87</sup>

82. See above, Ch. II, (iv) (a).

83. Pringle to Ramsay, 31 March 1810, CGH.P.R., VII.

84. Pringle to Ramsay, 30 June 1810, CGH.P.R., VII.

85. During the year ending 31 August 1812, the Agency participated in 49 vendue sales — auction figures in CGH.P.R., III.

86. Pringle to Beatson, 2 Jan. 1812, CGH.P.R., XIX.

87. Pringle to Ramsay, 3 Jan. 1812, CGH.P.R., VII.

Thus overwork may well have been the cause of the "sudden seizure" which resulted in Gibson's death in April, 1813, and was almost certainly the reason for young Gie switching to a job at the Discount Bank a few months later at a salary 200 rixdollars below what he had been receiving. Thereafter, the storerooms were supervised by J.C. Mistaer and S. Oliver was appointed to the junior clerical post;<sup>88</sup> no further changes of staff occurred until after Pringle's death.

Since the Bengal authorities and particularly the Canton factory persisted in sending many consignments to Simon's Bay, and it was not always feasible to redirect such vessels to Table Bay,<sup>89</sup> storerooms had to be maintained at both ports. At first, military sentinels were provided to guard the stores in Simonstown, but these were removed in 1812, and on the night of June 2nd, 1813, "a very considerable robbery" of piece-goods and sewing silk took place in the Agency's Simonstown warehouse.<sup>90</sup> Within a week "a large quantity" of the stolen articles had been recovered and thirty suspects arrested,<sup>91</sup> but the episode had led to the discovery of irregularities, in which Eastern goods bonded for export were being disposed of locally with the apparent connivance of certain Customs officials.<sup>92</sup> After the incident had been investigated in detail by Luson,<sup>93</sup> arrangements were made with the Burgher Senate to provide a night-watchman at a cost of 50 rix-dollars per month —

"a sum too small to be put in competition with the probable security it will afford..."<sup>94</sup>

88. Pringle to Ramsay, 6 May & 14 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., VII; Civil Establishment list (1815), Recs.C.C., I, p. 270; Oliver, according to the Agent, "has been several years employed in a public department in this Colony".

89. Pringle to Alexander, 27 April 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, to Pringle, 27 March 1813, CGH.F.R., XII; Pringle to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 8 April 1815, CGH.F.R., XI.

90. Luson to Sir Ed. Butler (Commandant, Simonstown), 1 Aug. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Cradock to Pringle, 18 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., III; Pringle to J. Brandt (Fiscal, Simonstown), 3 June 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

On the same evening a similar "depredation" had been made on the private stores of Messrs. Ebdon & Watt, which adjoined those of the Company's — Cape Town Gazette, 5 June 1813.

91. Pringle to Ramsay, 12 June 1813, CGH.F.R., III.

92. Pringle to Cradock, 10 June 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

93. "Narrative of Circumstances attending the Robbery committed on the H.M.E. Company's Stores in June 1813" (22pp.), 14 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., III.

94. Pringle to Ramsay, 27 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., VII.

A few weeks later Pringle took the weekly bullock wagon along the bumpy 22-mile trail to the other bay to check-up on the guards and security measures himself, and returned to Cape Town

"not very sanguine in expecting very great vigilance in the class of people who can be found there for such a service..."<sup>95</sup>

Nonetheless, there was no danger of the same robbers repeating their performance: on 24th September twenty of the suspects were found guilty, and "the executions took place the same day".<sup>96</sup>

In Cape Town itself the Agency rented an office and storerooms in premises owned by Charles Hughes near the foreshore-end of Berg (present-day St. George's) Street at an annual cost of 5,000 rixdollars.<sup>97</sup> In 1814, when this building came on the market, Pringle declined an option to purchase, gave the necessary six months' notice of quittal,<sup>98</sup> and spent £5,000 of the Company's surplus funds to buy offices with "several excellent stores attached" in the same vicinity.<sup>99</sup>

(b)

During the First Occupation the Company had taken a long time over determining Pringle's salary, and this desultory treatment had led directly to the Agent losing heavily.<sup>100</sup> When he returned to the Cape, he received a fixed income of £2,500 per annum, but was soon complaining about the difficulties of making ends meet:

"This is a very expensive Station, and I can with perfect truth state that, altho' my Salary may appear in England a very liberal one, it is totally impossible to save any part of it, & keep up the common appearances which my Station here requires, & a moderate extent of Civility to the numerous Strangers so frequently touching here... Half the sum in England would be a handsomer allowance in reality, to say nothing of the privations which such a distant residence

95. Pringle to Ramsay, 18 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., III.

96. Pringle to Ramsay, 12 Oct. 1813, CGH.F.R., VII.

97. Hughes to Pringle, 13 Aug. 1810, CGH.F.R., II.

98. Hughes to Pringle, 12 Oct. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Hughes, 12 Oct. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

99. Pringle to Ramsay, 15 Jan. 1815, CGH.F.R., VIII; the Agent had toyed with the idea of purchasing premises several years earlier — Pringle to Ramsay, 21 Oct. 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

100. See above, Ch. I, (x).

naturally entails, and which surely will not escape the discriminating justice of the Hon'ble Court, as far as a reasonable compensation can make up for them."

Having thus stated his case for a rise, Pringle went on to assure the Court that this application was made

"From a sense of the Duty I owe myself & family, but that whatever their decision may be, I shall ever feel the due gratitude I owe for their kindness to me, and that I shall never relax in my exertions to merit their Esteem."<sup>101</sup>

Sycophancy had its rewards in this instance, and by 1812 Pringle's salary had been stepped-up to £3,000,<sup>102</sup> while, in addition, he now received a commission amounting to 5 per cent of the yearly profits gained from the Agency sales,<sup>103</sup> with indents arriving regularly, and while the Company's monopoly remained intact, this could well mean an additional £2,000; thus, during the closing years of Pringle's tenure, his gross income was roundabout the £4,500-mark, which compared very favourably with the salaries of senior officials on the civil establishment,<sup>104</sup> but was not particularly high on the Company scale, where the chief post at Canton was said to be worth £20,000 annually,<sup>105</sup> and the head of the board which controlled the Bengal salt office received £18,480<sup>106</sup> — although, admittedly, only Directors' relatives had such chance of securing such positions!

101. Pringle to Ramsay, 22 Nov. 1810, C.H.S.F.R., VII.

102. Staff salaries were paid quarterly in rixdollars adjusted to the current sterling rate of exchange; during the year ending June, 1813, Pringle's salary-withdrawals were the following:

Sept. 1812:	at 61½% premium =	6,060 rds.
Dec. 1812:	at 65% premium =	6,137 rds., 4 schillings
March 1813:	at 70% premium =	6,373 rds.
June 1813:	at 55% premium =	5,812 rds., 4 schs.

103. The Agency's books were closed every year at the end of August, and for the 1811-12 season Pringle's commission on sales totalled 12,566 rds., 4 sc. The continued depreciation of the local currency raised difficulties of assessment, and the Company subsequently laid down the following formula:  
 "...the cost of the goods received at the Cape from India and China is to be calculated according to the rate of exchange prevailing between the places where the goods may be consigned from and London, and to convert this cost into Rixdollars for the purpose of ascertaining the profit on the Sales, the Rixdollar be calculated at the average rate of exchange at which the bills remitted to the Company by Mr. Pringle were drawn on England in each Year from 1811"  
 — Extract of Minutes, Committee of Accounts, 18 Jan. 1815.

104. In 1815 Somerset was drawing £10,000, the Colonial Secretary £3,500, the Lt.-Governor £3,000 — Recs.C.O., I, p. 268.

105. Philips, op. cit., p. 14.

106. C.H.S.F.R., Vol. IV, p. 213.

Although Luson had also been given a rice after Pringle had urged the Directors

"to take his case into their consideration and make such an increase to his pay as his merit and attention may in their opinion deserve, and which I think him so justly entitled to..."<sup>107</sup>

the Assistant-Agent, nonetheless, received a salary which amounted to only one-sixth of Pringle's own; but to this £500 must be added a 2½ per cent allowance on the profits of sales, so that in good years Luson's commission earnings exceeded his salary,<sup>108</sup> while his average annual income was in the neighbourhood of £1,000.<sup>109</sup> (Where "single monopolies" exist, Adam Smith once asserted, "the people engaged in them make the price what they please",<sup>110</sup> and it might well be suggested that, since so much of their earnings depended on maximising profits, the two agents had a natural incentive to ration strictly the quantity of Company stores coming onto the Cape market; but there is no direct evidence of this happening. In fact, such was the nature of the Eastern indents and the local demand for the goods concerned, that over the period 1810-14, at any rate, there appears to have been a very marked correlation between profits and turnover).

The auxiliary members of the staff received mere pittance. The storekeeper, Gibson, was taken on at 100 rixdollars a month — which was "as little as any decent person can exist upon in this Colony"<sup>111</sup> — and was receiving the same wage at the time of his death; Mistaer, who replaced him, started off at the same figure.<sup>112</sup> John Gie, at the start, received no salary at all, but was promised "encouragement in due time" if he proved "attentive and useful",<sup>113</sup> and by the beginning of 1812 he was being paid 1,000 rixdollars per annum.<sup>114</sup>

107. Pringle to Ramsay, 21 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

108. Luson's commission for the 1811-12 season totalled 6,285 rds. 2 sb., whereas his salary over the same period amounted to 4,072 rds. — data in CGH.F.R., III.

109. In terms of adjusted rixdollars, this still amounted to roundabout 8,000 rds., which exceeded the salary of the Chief Justice (6,000 rds.) and was not much below the Fiscal's income (10,000 rds.) — Recs.C.C., I, pp. 268-269.

110. Lectures of Adam Smith, ed. Cannon (Oxford, 1896), p. 179.

111. Pringle to Ramsay, 31 March 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

112. Luson to Cobb, 20 May 1816, CGH.F.R., IXA.

113. His position was analogous to that of an articled clerk in an accountant's office.

114. Pringle to Ramsay, 3 Jan. 1812, CGH.F.R., VII.

Since the wages of these underlings were not adjusted to sterling rates, and with the purchasing power of the local paper currency continuing to shrink visibly, it was only a matter of time before the subordinate Agency employees became restive, and in April, 1814, Messrs. Oliver and Mistaer made a joint-appeal to Pringle:

"Sir, the rate of exchange having remained for a length of time so very high, with no immediate prospect of its falling, has occasioned a very considerable difference in the price of every article of consumption in this Colony. We therefore request that you will take the Circumstance into consideration and if you think proper, recommend to the Hon'ble Crt. of Directors that we may be allowed our Salary in Sterling Money as in the case of the Civil Servants of this Colony;<sup>115</sup> and also that you will be pleased to grant us some immediate relief subject to the future approbation of the Hon'ble Court; it will be a most essential object to us, and we trust the request will not appear an unreasonable one when the present Exchange is compared with what it was when these Salaries were fixed."<sup>116</sup>

The Agent took a sympathetic line and granted immediate increments based on the current rate of exchange,<sup>117</sup> informing East India House at the same time of the relatively negligible additional amounts involved.<sup>118</sup>

(c)<sup>119</sup>

The details provided by the Agency accounts vary so much from year to year that no very significant conclusions can be reached. Some indication of the enormous rate of profit derived from the early vendue sales has already been given.<sup>120</sup> By 1812-13 the position had become more stabilised, and an examination of the receipts and expenditures for the year ending 31 August 1813 reveals the following salient features:

115. The Agent appended the following note for the Directors' information: "The Salaries of all Civil and Military Servants of the Crown & the Salaries also of Mr. Pringle and Mr. Luson are paid in Sterling money". In actual fact, only the salaries of senior Government officials were paid in sterling — cf. Accs.O.E., X, pp. 268-277.
116. Oliver & Mistaer to Pringle, 30 April 1814, GH.F.R., XIII.
117. With sterling at a premium of 65%, Oliver's quarterly pay-packet shot up from 250 to 412½ rds., and Mistaer's from 300 to 495 rds.
118. Pringle to Ramsay, 30 April 1814, GH.F.R., IV.
119. To avoid cluttering-up this section unduly, specific references to the Factory Records are omitted; most of the facts and figures are derived from the accounts reproduced in GH.F.R., III and IV.
120. See above, Ch. II, (ii)(d).

- (1) There was a gap of three months between actual sales and the recording of them in the books — thus business done during the month of June would be reflected in the September accounts; this time-lag was the result of the vendue-master having up to ninety days to make his payments.<sup>121</sup>
- (2) In the course of that year the Agency participated in fifty-three vendue sales, the number of which varied greatly from month to month (while seven were held in October, for instance, there were only two during December); the average gross intake at each sale was roundabout 11,500 rixdollars.
- (3) Of the expenses, the vendue charges of 5 per cent and custom duties of 10 per cent on sale prices were the most regular and considerable; besides warehouse rentals and salaries, other payments were mainly of a petty nature (e.g., printing, postages, and the hiring of porters).
- (4) There were also occasional outlays which were not directly connected with the indent business, such as freighting on St. Helena shipments, the purchase of wine casks, and the maintenance of lascars stranded at the Cape.
- (5) From time to time, too, the Agent used his discretion to make small advances to "officers on the Indian establishment" who were spending some time in the Colony on sick-leave.

Separate accounts<sup>122</sup> were maintained for the main categories of

121. Cf. "Regulations and Instructions for the Vendue Master in the District of the Cape", 1 June, 1808, Recs. C.C., VI, p. 355.

122. There were fifty-six open accounts in the ledger as at 31 August 1813, viz. [cf. Appendix II, below].

Account Current London	Doeseeties	Pepper
Baitaes	Factory Bengal	Pipe Packs
Balance	Factory Canton	Profit & Loss
Bird, W.W.	Ghillaes	Rouals
Calico Wrappers	Goods Unsold	St. Helena
Canton Cloth	Gurrehs	Sannoes
Carradarries	Hushams	Satins
Cash	Hyson	Sewing Silk
Charges General	Hyson Skins	Silk Handkerchiefs
Charges Merchandise	Longcloth	Silks
China Ware	Mace	Souchong
Chinchen Cloth	Mauritius	Stolen Goods
Chintz	Mullmulls	Sugar
Cinnamon	Nainsocks	Sugar Candy
Cloves	Nankeens	Sweet Meats
Coffee	Nutmegs	Table Cloths
Congou	Palampores	Towels
Cossaes	Paunch	Vendue Master
Cushtaes	Pekce	

[The appearance of Wilberforce Bird's name in the books was the result of a bill for £2,000, which he had drawn to the order of the Company on Messrs. Wheeler & Farnworth (London), not having been met; until Bird could settle this outstanding amount (together with interest thereon), 22 bags of rice were handed over to the Agency as security.]



Indian piece-goods and the various types of tea, but most expenditures (including salaries) were debited to a composite "Charges Merchandize" account.

During that particular year goods invoiced at 131,031 rixdollars were sold for 605,842, and, after all expenses had been met and the agents had deducted their commissions, there remained a net profit of 212,436 rixdollars for transfer to the London account.<sup>123</sup> Thus, in spite of the deflation which such earnings suffered in the process of being converted from local paper notes into sterling, an enormous gap persisted between the minimum 6 per cent return which the Directors had laid down and the actual gains which they reaped from the Cape investments.

(d)

Nevertheless, the progressive over-issue of inconvertible paper money<sup>124</sup> meant that Pringle's most persistent problem remained the devising of methods to transfer the Agency's profits to East India House. To a very small extent, as has been noticed, he was able to short-circuit this difficulty by investing some of the surplus funds in the St. Helena supplies, in the purchase of local storerooms, and in occasional shipments of Cape produce to Bengal. For a time, too, he toyed with an elaborate project for transferring Spanish dollars from St. Helena to Mauritius via the Colony, believing that in a single astute operation the Jamestown authorities could be relieved of their surplus specie, the Agency of its remittance dilemma, and Governor Farguhar of his shortage of cash.<sup>125</sup> When nothing came of this scheme — the full implications of which Pringle himself did not wholly grasp — he began to devote his efforts to the logical expedient of putting Agency money into wine for consignment to Leaderhall

123. This figure exceeded total customs revenue earned during 1813 (cf. Rep. C. C., IX, p. 296), and, at the prevailing rate of exchange, represented more than £27,000.

124. Rixdollar notes in circulation increased from two to three million between 1806 and 1814 and fell in sterling value from 4s. to 2/3; — see table, p. 158a, below. For an analysis of the deteriorating monetary position during this period, see R. Leslie, "Paper Money and the Gold Exchange Standard at the Cape", South African Journal of Science, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (Nov. 1916), pp. 157ff.

125. The essence of this plan was outlined in a letter to Farguhar, 15 Feb. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

Street. Accordingly, in May, 1812, he despatched on the Providence a few pipes of

"the best Cape Madeira, for the sole purpose of enabling the Hon'ble Court to judge whether or not any quantity of the same kind will answer for home use, as the Exchange, having risen to the extravagant rate of 55 to 57 p. cent, all means of advantageous remittance for the present seems at an end..."<sup>126</sup>

The Directors encouraged this experiment by promptly ordering a further fifty pipes of the same quality,<sup>127</sup> which were shipped in the General Miranda during August of the following year.<sup>128</sup> Thereafter, while the Company remained anxious to continue the traffic, high-grade vintages could not be procured in bulk,<sup>129</sup> and thus yet another plan to overcome the remittance problem petered out before it had really got under way.

The Court itself had foreseen the difficulty and from the outset had sought a preferential status in the transmission of bills from the Cape to London; the assurances received from the Treasury on this score had, however, been nullified by Caledon's fear that his own officials would be placed at a serious disadvantage.<sup>130</sup> Consequently, early in 1809, the Directors protested to the Secretary of the Treasury against what they regarded as a breach of faith:

"The East India Company having engaged to supply the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope with commodities the produce of India and China..., and it having been stipulated...that the Paper Currency received by the Company's Agents on account of the Sales of the Articles in question should be received by the Government Officers, they giving their bills on England..., We have to request you to submit to the...Treasury that directions be given to the Commissary and Deputy Paymaster at the Cape of Good Hope to receive whatever Paper Currency the Company's Agent may tender them, they giving their Bills on England..."<sup>131</sup>

While protracted negotiations continued in London to establish a

126. Pringle to Ramsay, 20 May 1812, CGH.F.R., VII.

127. Ramsay to Pringle, 20 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., III; Pringle to Ramsay, 20 March 1813, CGH.F.R., VII — (1 pipe = 126 gallons).

128. The total amount of the invoice (including casks and freight) was 9,871:3 rds., which worked out at about 4/6d. a gallon — Luson to Ramsay, 14 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., VII.

129. Pringle to Cobb, 3 May 1815, CGH.F.R., VIII.

130. See above, Ch. II, (1)(c).

131. Grant & Astell to Huskisson, 4 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., I (also in Recs.O.C., VI, pp. 446-447)

fixed rate of exchange for Agency bills, Pringle was offering paper currency "at the highest rate" to procure sterling drafts, but with little success.<sup>132</sup> And by September, 1810, the situation, if anything, had deteriorated further:

"A few weeks ago I offered a 25 p.c. cut premium to the Commissary General for £3,577:3:10½ but without being able to procure any, the premiums offered on that day having varied, as I afterwards learnt, from 25 to 27 p.c.; and this day I tendered to the Agent Victualler for £6,000 at 28 p.c. premium with no better result. I have before called the attention of the Hon'ble Court to the necessity of coming to some arrangement with His Majs. Ministers at home on this subject, so that the Company may either have a proportion of the Bills drawn at a fixed premium, or at the average rate of the day; and to this, if it were represented to the Government, I should think there would be no objection as I understand the Money from the Admiralty Court is remitted at an average rate; but which has been refused to me."<sup>133</sup>

In these circumstances, it was only natural for the Agent to have his own pet theory about the continued injury which the rixdollar suffered in foreign exchange: "the principal cause of the present high premium" was due, he believed, "to the smallness of the Garrison", and the imminent arrival of another regiment was bound to effect a reduction of "the rate upon Bills".<sup>134</sup>

Yet, as the local currency continued to depreciate in terms of sterling and it became increasingly apparent that neither the colonial authorities nor the home government intended doing anything constructive towards easing the remittance problem, Pringle tried a few schemes himself. Special arrangements were made with some of the local business houses (particularly with the firm of Ebdon & Watt) to procure 30-day sight-drafts on the Paymaster General, and, when linked up with a complicated juggling in Spanish dollars, the stratagem yielded £30,000 in sterling bills at 45 per cent instead of the prevailing rate of 62½.<sup>135</sup> However, this proved to be only a short-lived windfall, and by the close of 1812 the Agent was forced to confess -

132. Pringle to R.Hill (Deputy Controller General), 17 July 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

133. Pringle to Ramsay, 26 Sept. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

134. Pringle to Ramsay, 14 June 1811, CGH.F.R., VII. This "garrison theory" was to be echoed by later observers, such as John Trotter (of the Bengal Civil Service), in a Memoir prepared for the President and Committee of the Cape Commercial Exchange (Cape Town, 1825), pp. 41-42.

135. Ebdon & Watt to Pringle, 10 Sept. 1812, CGH.F.R., III.

THE DEPRECIATION OF THE CAPE RIXDOLLAR  
IN TERMS OF STERLING, (1806-16)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Rixdollars in Circulation</u>	<u>Premium per cent on the Exchange</u>	<u>Sterling Value</u>	
			s.	d.
1806	2,086,000	26	4	: 0
1807		30	3	: 9
1808		20	3	: 3½
1809		18	3	: 4
1810	2,586,000	24	3	: 2½
1811		45	2	: 9½
1812		60	2	: 8½
1813		65	2	: 6½
1814	3,171,204	80	2	: 3½
1815	3,226,204	82	2	: 3
1816		93	2	: 1

The depreciation continued unchecked until 1825, when Governor Somerset received instructions "respecting the introduction of the British System of Currency into the Settlements of the Cape of Good Hope"; the rixdollar was declared the equivalent of 1s. 6d. (which had been its average sterling value since 1821), and was to be at all times exchangeable" at the rate of £105 for every £100 bill (the 3 p.c. charge being merely to cover costs of transfer).

[Data derived from Grant, op. cit., pp. 52-53, 76; Recs.C.D., XIX, p. 389; XXI, p. 5, 409; XXII, pp. 124-126; Arndt, op. cit., pp. 13-14, 38-39, 48-49.]

"My arrangement with some of the Merchants here in the hope of reducing the Exchange has not succeeded... I am sorry to say it has again risen to near its former rate and there is no immediate prospect of its falling..."<sup>136</sup>

Undaunted, Pringle accepted a tender from a Mr. Muller ("the chief money dealer at this place") to negotiate the transmission of bills at 5 per cent below the current rate, and was able, in this way, to forward £13,000 to London.<sup>137</sup> But, by September, 1813, matters were really getting out of hand:

"I have been a bidder for most of the Bills that have been advertized of late with little success -- it is quite an impossibility to make any calculation as to the possible rate, 6, 8, & even 10 p.c. difference frequently occurring at the same bidding..."<sup>138</sup>

A few months later the exchange was at the "unprecedented rate" of 90 per cent premium.<sup>139</sup>

Under such conditions, the only alternative left was to place the Agency's surplus rixdollars in the Lombard Bank in the hope that the interest earned<sup>140</sup> would at least counterbalance the steady fall in value of the paper notes.<sup>141</sup> Thus, by the end of April, 1814, 350,000 rixdollars had been deposited,<sup>142</sup> and the Company held more interest-bearing money in the Bank than all the other clients put together.<sup>143</sup> Pringle's action co-incided with the arrival of Somerset, a Governor who was convinced that the Bank's outlays of yearly interest payments was a "matter of very questionable policy";<sup>144</sup> hence, two months later, the Agent was notified that

"at the expiration of the twelve months agreed upon, no further interest will be given..."<sup>145</sup>

136. Pringle to Ramsay, 18 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., VII.

137. Pringle to Ramsay, 6 May 1813, CGH.F.R., VII. (It is possible that this was the same Muller who had served as Collector of the Customs during the Batavian regime -- cf. van der Merwe, op. cit., p. 39; Recs.C.S., VI, p. 297).

138. Pringle to Ramsay, 4 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., VII.

139. Pringle to Ramsay, 11 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., IV.

140. Five per cent was paid on yearly deposits.

141. Pringle to President and Directors, Lombard Bank, 29 April 1814, CGH.F.R., IX.

142. Pringle to Ramsay, 30 April 1814, CGH.F.R., VII.

143. Interest was being paid at the time on 673,000 rds. out of a total deposit of 1,268,543 -- Arnst, op. cit., p. 407.

144. C. Bird to President and Directors, Lombard Bank, 10 June 1814, Recs.C.S., I, pp. 121-122.

145. Circular letter from Robt. Crozur (Cashier, Discount Bank), 20 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

Consequently, left "in more want of remittances" than ever before, Pringle had exhausted all possible palliatives and saw no prospects of any future easing in "the difficulty of effecting exchange"; on the other hand, during this period, whenever the Agency did succeed in transferring funds to London, it was helping in some measure to aggravate the Colony's foreign exchange troubles.<sup>146</sup> By the time of the Agent's death, the premium level had topped the 80 per cent mark (it was never again to fall below it), but John Company's remittance problem was on the verge of being solved through the combined influence of the new Charter Act and the augmented export trade to St. Helena.<sup>147</sup>

(e)

As regards the Agency's relations with East India House, enough has already been written to suggest that, more often than not, Pringle was left very much to his own devices. From the moment he returned to the Cape, he was confronted with difficulties about which he had no specific instructions: how was he to act when the Company's preserves were breached unintentionally? to what extent could he relax the charter to aid the local authorities? under what circumstances could trade be allowed with the captured Mascarenes? — these and many other questions remained unanswered, or, if the Directors did bestir themselves and send detailed information, such tidings often arrived too late to be of much help. Had he been of strongly independent character, Pringle might not have hesitated to follow his own judgment by applying the adage "silence gives consent", and if unsuitable instructions were available, modifying them to meet local conditions. But the Agent took a very limited view of his own discretionary powers and was loath to assume too much direct responsibility.

His task was made all the more difficult by the frequency with which new acts were promulgated and old ones modified or rendered obsolete through war or the groping movement towards freer trade; and, since the gentlemen of Leadenhall Street had more pressing problems on their hands, sometimes Pringle's heard of such changes by mere chance. Consequently, a note of implied censure rings through the following request:

146. Pringle to Ramsay, 21 June 1814, CGH.F.R., IV; cf. W.W.Bird, op. cit., Ch. VI, section (v).

147. See below, Ch. V, (iv).

"Having frequent occasion of reference on many points connected with the Hon'ble Company's service & having often for want of regular information and authority been at a loss how to act; it would be extremely desirable if you would be kind enough to send me the accompanying List of Books, etc.,<sup>148</sup> or any other as you may think will best answer the purpose."<sup>149</sup>

But even this very modest plea was disregarded, and it was from the Comptroller of Customs that the Agent first learnt of the regulations for commerce with the French Islands eighteen months later.<sup>150</sup>

Not only did such lack of essential information place Pringle at a great disadvantage in his dealings with both the local authorities and some of the more knowledgesable merchants — it meant, too, that such routine business on behalf of the Company was badly hampered. For instance, in March, 1813, he reported to the Directors:

"There are laying here for adjudication in the Vice Admiralty Court three American Ships,<sup>151</sup> laden with India produce; and one other from China laden with Teas has been sent into the Isle of France leaking; it is probable, however, that the latter Ship, when repaired, may be sent here with her cargo for condemnation and Sale. I should be inclined to purchase such part of their Cargoes as may promise to answer by way of remittance; but as I have not been furnished regularly with "Price Currents" which I had formerly requested, I shall have a considerable difficulty to overcome in obtaining information on which I can depend..."<sup>152</sup>

This slovenly neglect of its representative at the Cape was symptomatic of an Hon. Court which had become incapable of effectively looking after its own interests.

148. "Acts of Parliament relating to the Company.  
Mr. Cartwright's book containing regulations respecting Trade on India Ships.  
Code of Signals as used in the H.C. Ships.  
India Kalender and Lists of Ships as they are published.  
Price Currents."

149. Pringle to Ramsay, 31 March 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

150. W.W.Bird to Cradock, 26 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

151. The Anglo-American War of 1812-14 (a result of the dispute over British contentions about the right of search and seizure of neutral ships) spasmodically projected itself into Cape waters and the Indian Ocean — for details, see A.T. Mahan, Sea Power and its Relation to the War of 1812 (London, 1905), 2 vols.

152. Pringle to Ramsay, 20 Mar. 1813, CGH.F.R., VII.

Subsequently, the Agent informed the Court: "The Prices given for the Prize goods appeared to me so high, and the risk of the Voyage so greatly increased by American Cruisers, that I gave up the plan I had once entertained of making some purchases on account of the Company" — letter to Ramsay, 4 Sept. 1813, CGH.F.R., VII.

(111) Public Relations

Although weeks could go by during which the Agency's routine would maintain an even tenor, there were also hectic days when Pringle's services were required urgently by harassed ship-chandlers, when his advice was sought anxiously by some distressed captain, when irate local merchants found that his consent was essential for a particular trading venture, and meek colonists needed his permission for the entry of a few trifling gifts sent from the East. In short, much of the Agent's time was taken up serving as public relations officer on behalf of the Company.

(a)

Besides having to fit out vessels for emergency duties and receive and transmit intelligence of enemy and neutral shipping-movements, Pringle was involved frequently in the business of repairing ships damaged by storm or naval action, especially when ropes or other basic equipment could not be procured from private traders in Cape Town and the naval stores had to be tapped.<sup>153</sup> Nor was it uncommon for a fleet of East Indians to straggle into Table Bay with crews greatly depleted by scurvy after being at sea for more than a hundred days<sup>154</sup> — an event which would transform the Agency into a hive of activity as hurried arrangements were made for hospital treatment and revictualling. There was at least one occasion, too, when a vessel arrived "with the smallpox raging on board", and Pringle was left to sort out the panic.<sup>155</sup>

Such untoward happenings created work in other directions as well: the Agent's help would be needed to arrange for the off-loading or repacking of storm-damaged cargo;<sup>156</sup> where papers had been lost in severe gales, Pringle would be called upon to frame the charter-party afresh<sup>157</sup> or to furnish copies of missing

153. Capt. Fillinghurst (Bombay Merchant) to Pringle, 4 Dec. 1810, CGH.P.R., III.

154. This fate overtook the homeward-bound convoy from Madras, for example, in 1812; it put in at the Cape in the last week of December instead of proceeding direct to St. Helena.

155. Pringle to Caledon, 12 May 1810, CGH.P.R., II.

156. Capt. Hudson, (H.C.S. Ceylon) to Pringle, 21 Jan. 1809, CGH.P.R., I.

157. Capt. Macdougall (H.C.S.S. Tigris) to Pringle, 30 Jan. 1809, CGH.P.R., I.

receipts;<sup>158</sup> and when troops were unavoidably embarked on Company vessels, the commander would require an assurance that equitable arrangements would be made for meeting the additional expenses involved.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, the Directors themselves — though lethargic on many important matters — were pressed by mercantile interests at home into insisting on the regular receipt of

"early and correct information relating to the arrival and departure of all shipping at the Cape of Good Hope...";<sup>160</sup> accordingly, a good deal of correspondence was involved in procuring such data from the Harbour Master and transmitting it to London.<sup>161</sup>

In view of the prevailing wartime circumstances, Pringle was intimately concerned with the frequently complex convoy arrangements which the Admiralty laid down for the Company's fleets.<sup>162</sup> Although French raiders had been swept from the Indian seas with the capture of the Mascarenes, the entry of the United States in the struggle broke the lull since American privateers were known to be active between the Cape and Calcutta; hence, the traditional escort procedure to the east of the Colony was maintained,<sup>163</sup> but for the South Atlantic warships attended Company vessels only when a specific request for such protection was made.<sup>164</sup>

As late as May, 1815, when the H.C.S. Surat Castle — heavily laden with a valuable cargo<sup>165</sup> — sailed out of Table Bay to await the homeward-bound Indian fleet in Simons Bay, the following urgent message reached the Agency from her captain:

158. R.M. Atty (owner of the Indefatigable, London) to Pringle, 27 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

159. Capt. Stewart (H.C.S. Windham) to Pringle, 28 May 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

160. Ramsay to Pringle, 9 Oct. 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Pringle to Alexander, 4 Jan. 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

161. Mason to Ramsay, 14 April 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

Nevertheless, these arrangements facilitated the checking of the credentials of those vessels which put in to port and were suspected of intending to proceed eastwards without the Company's licence — Pringle to Capt. Fotheringham (Earl Lonsdale), 7 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XI.

162. The details are to be found in the Admiralty Records, especially in Ad. I/180-181, P.R.O.

163. After the middle of 1814 "Country" ships and other private vessels were no longer compelled to make use of warship protection in the Indian Ocean — Trotter to Pringle, 27 Aug. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

164. Pringle to Vice-Admiral R. Stopford (Commander, Cape Squadron), 12 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

165. Pringle to Capt. A. Robertson (Surat Castle), 1 May 1815, CGH.F.R., XI.

"A Ship off the Cape with Courses up and Mizen topsail aback alarms me a little — I am therefore returning to Table Bay, being not at all disposed to encounter one of those American Gentlemen when it can be avoided, nor to visit that Country at present... It would look odd to be taken in so short a passage, yet much more improbable things than this are not uncommon; off the Cape would be a good cruising ground for a few days to an American destined ultimately for the Indian Seas. To ask Convey or that one of the Frigates might be sent off the Cape while I go round may appear ridiculous — still, I leave it for your consideration whether such a prudential measure would not be advisable; the value of this Ship is very great, and even the Company would feel the loss."<sup>166</sup>

Not only did Pringle fully endorse the master's action — he also arranged with Vice-Admiral Tyler to send the H.M.S. Niger and Chesapeake "to go in quest of the suspicious ship";<sup>167</sup> and, although it was "very unpleasant" to have a large ship<sup>168</sup> riding at anchor in Table Bay with the winter gales imminent, when there was risk both ways, "the least danger" was preferable.<sup>169</sup> A few days thereafter the news arrived of the ratification of the Treaty of Ghent in Washington;<sup>170</sup> but, just as the Agency had reached agreement with the Navy on the suspension of all further escort arrangements,<sup>171</sup> information was received "that Bonaparte had landed in France from Elba", thereby entailing the retention of the convoy system for a little while longer.<sup>172</sup>

Since storm damage was at least as important a disruptive factor to Company shipping as the war at sea itself, Pringle was actively interested in providing a safe roadstead along the south-eastern coast for vessels obliged to anchor by stress of weather. Thus, early in 1814, he was mildly excited when Captain Hornby, of H.M.S. Stag, reported the discovery of a protected anchorage under shelter of the Bird Islands.<sup>173</sup> In urging Tyler

166. Robertson ("off Table Bay") to Pringle, 2 May 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII.

167. Pringle to Robertson, 2 May 1815, CGH.F.R., XX.

168. The Surat Castle was an 1,140-ton Indiaman with a 130-ft. keel.

169. Pringle to Cobb, 3 May 1815, CGH.F.R., VIII.

170. Tyler to Pringle, 11 May 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII.

171. Exchange of letters, Pringle & Tyler, 1 June 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII/XX.

172. Luson to Wilks, 12 June 1815, CGH.F.R., XI.

173. A cluster of three small islands situated about five miles from the mainland in the north-eastern extremity of Algoa Bay.

to have the matter investigated further, the Agent declared:

"It is not for me to point out to you the vast importance of such a discovery to Navigation in general, but the immediate relation it has to the concerns of the Hon'ble East India Company... I am confident it would be considered by them a most essential service."<sup>174</sup>

Fully agreeing with Pringle that it would be of the utmost consequence to East-Indians "if a good sheltered anchorage" could be made available on that part of the coast, the naval commander promised to have the spot carefully surveyed as soon as possible.<sup>175</sup> This was duly undertaken,<sup>176</sup> and a copy of the survey-report was sent to Bengal with a request that it be published "for the general information of all mariners".<sup>177</sup>

Over this period — which witnessed a progressive improvement in relations between the Agency and Admiralty House<sup>178</sup> — the old antagonism<sup>179</sup> towards the Vice-Admiralty Court persisted. The introduction of prize goods on the local market under special circumstances was a constant source of irritation to Pringle, particularly when such articles materially interfered with the Company's own investments;<sup>180</sup> but the Agent was also anxious to preserve what he regarded as equitable trading opportunities in general, and on one occasion objected strongly to the release for local consumption of a considerable quantity of captured American sugar on the grounds that it would

174. Pringle to Tyler, 25 Jan. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX; (italics in the original).

175. Tyler to Pringle, 25 Jan. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIII.

176. Hornby to Tyler (with enclosed report), 26 March 1814, Recs.C.C., IX, pp. 443-445 (also in CGH.F.R., IV).

Such of the potential value of the anchorage disappeared with the discovery that, because of the high surf, it was virtually impossible to reach the mainland at that spot.

177. Pringle to Ricketts, 13 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XX; at the same time Tyler urged the Admiralty to revise its charts for that stretch of coast, the survey having revealed "a considerable error" — Recs.C.C., IX, pp. 498-499.

178. While Pringle had often found Bertie (in command of the Cape squadron, Aug. 1808 - Jan. 1811) a difficult and overbearing person to work with, Stopforth (Jan. 1811 - Feb. 1813) was fairly tolerable, and Tyler (Feb. 1813 - Oct. 1815) proved to be extremely co-operative.

179. See above, Ch. I, (viii) and Ch. II, (iii)(b).

180. Pringle to Jennings, 16 March 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII; on this occasion Pringle had received a lengthy schedule of articles which the Court proposed should be sold for colonial consumption to defray the adjudication expenses incurred on property taken during the capture of Bourbon.

"prove extremely detrimental to the Merchants engaged in the licensed commerce between this Colony and the Mauritius who depend much upon Sugar as a return for Cape Produce..."<sup>181</sup>

Moreover, if one considers the following extract of a despatch to Leadenhall Street, it appears that much of Pringle's vexation with the Admiralty Court was perfectly justified -

"...this Court is beyond all control, nay, even beyond enquiry: they do what they please..., their charges are exorbitant and unjust; but I can find no remedy here, & unless the Superior Court at home should interfere, I am ignorant where to look for redress... To give you some idea of their charges, I shall just mention that Captn. Beare of the American Ship Monticello arrived here a month ago to receive Rixdollars 17,850 awarded on the 25th April 1808 for Freight of property landed from the Martha, and condemned in the Vice-Admiralty Court, but instead of receiving this money, he found the whole of it absorbed in Law Charges and 4,000 Rixdollars in addition which he was obliged to pay before he could leave the Colony..."<sup>182</sup>

In addition, the Agent continued to receive little co-operation from the Customs, especially in the matter of prize exports, about which he complained of "deliberate misunderstandings".<sup>183</sup>

(b)

In his dealings with ships' personnel, it was Pringle's job to settle disputes between seamen and their officers, to appoint incumbents to posts fallen vacant by death or some other mishap at sea, to pacify private passengers who alleged ill-usage, and to hold inquiries in cases of insubordination or suspected mutiny; if a Company vessel was to carry troops, there was the further business of apportioning responsibility for the soldiers' welfare and good conduct between the captain and senior military officer on board. It was not unusual, either, for the Agent to be busy arranging the arrest and return of deserters.<sup>184</sup> All these were tasks involving much correspondence and a good deal of wearisome investigation.

181. Pringle to Alexander, 12 July 1813, CGH.F.R., III; Gradock evidently resented being made a shuttlecock between the Agency and the Court, and his secretary replied that Pringle's protest had "left an embarrassment upon His Excellency's mind" — Alexander to Pringle, 23 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

182. Pringle to Ramsay, 5 March 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

183. Pringle to Alexander, 26 July 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

184. This problem became more complicated when colonists deliberately enticed sailors to desert, as when the captain of the Astell alleged that his cook had been inveigled to abscond by a local baker, Atchison; such conduct, if allowed to go unpunished, Pringle believed, might deter commanders of Company vessels from putting in for refreshments through fear "of losing their most useful men" — Pringle to Fiscal Truter, 12 June 1810,

A persistent difficulty directly affecting the Company's local monopoly of Eastern produce was how to deal with petitions from captains to be allowed to sell a portion of their cargoes, thereby procuring funds for meeting their vessels' expenses in port. Pringle's handling of such requests varied in accordance with the type of difficulty in which the ship was placed and whether or not it was connected with the Company. Thus, the master of the cartel, Lady Barlow, having been unable to offload a cargo of Eastern produce<sup>185</sup> on the Company's account at Port Louis, was allowed to land the articles in Cape Town to meet refitting charges, the sales being handled by the Agency;<sup>186</sup> this, in essence, was also the story of the Portuguese vessel, Princesa de Brasil, delayed at the Cape for extensive repairs;<sup>187</sup> in neither instance was there any question of direct sales to the public. Such concessions were given only where the Agent was certain there existed "a total want" of any other means to procure funds, as in the case of the "Country" ship Claudine, which arrived in Simons Bay from Java with hull and rigging badly damaged by gale winds and in need of renovations estimated at 10,000 Spanish dollars.<sup>188</sup>

185. The cargo comprised Hyson tea (30 chests), sugar candy (48 tubs), wax candles (14 boxes), 225 bags of rice and 80 of sugar, and 20 cases of unbleached linen — valued in all at 3,900 Spanish dollars.
186. Capt. McAskill (Lady Barlow) to Pringle, 5 Jan. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; Pringle to Blair, 9 Jan. 1811, CGH.F.R., XVIII.
187. Two bales of linen were landed to defray the ship's expenses, the Agency allowing "freight and a small percentage on the invoice price" — Pringle to Bird, 11 Jan. 1811, CGH.F.R., XVIII.
188. Although Pringle gave permission for sugar, coffee, and 8 half-leaguers of arrack to be landed from the Claudine, he was fearful of "the very great detriment that must ensue to the Cape merchants" if similar indulgences became habitual in the future; he was again probably thinking of the return cargoes in the Mauritius trade — Bird to Pringle, 23 June 1812, CGH.F.R., XII; Capt. J. Williams (Claudine) to Pringle, 24 June 1812, CGH.F.R., III; Pringle to U. Bird, 26 June 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Stopford to Pringle, 24 July 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

On at least one occasion, however, the criterion of lack of alternative means was not employed: early in 1814, when the General Wellesley, bound for London from Bengal, put into Table Bay for repairs, her commander was anxious to avoid drawing on the ship's agents in England; thus, finding that the quantity of rice carried as provisions exceeded what was likely to be needed over the remainder of the voyage, he requested his local agent, Wm. Robertson, to secure permission for the landing and disposal of 100 bags, and to this petition Pringle raised no objections — Robertson to Craeock, 7 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Alexander, 9 Feb. 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

The plight of Captain Hammon (Countess of London) involved a further refinement of the same difficulty: having gained permission to land goods to cover expenses, to what extent could a master select items from his cargo for sale? Hammon, finding "the necessary expenses of this port" beyond his expectations,<sup>189</sup> had been allowed to offload cheroots and cocoa-nut oil, but Pringle would not agree "to any kind of piece-goods being admitted".<sup>190</sup> Pointing out, however, that he had an insufficient quantity of the two sanctioned articles, the Captain wished

"to land five hundred ready-made shirts as necessary to bear my Expenses... and trust so small an amount will not be considered a trading injurious to the Company's Interest — or more than what would be admitted in any Port at Peace with Great Britain; had I had any intention of coming here, I should have procured a licence at Calcutta. The estimated Value of the Shirts required to be landed does not exceed 750 rixdollars, & I have been obliged to obtain Naval Supplies from the Commissioner, which, with other supplies, require ready money to pay my engagements — otherwise I should not press such a trifle."<sup>191</sup>

But the Agent objected strongly to the idea that Hammon was entitled to make his own selection for sale — once this practice was permitted,

"the most pointed regulations and enactments might be evaded in many ways, and a considerable private trade carried on under such pleas, which every ship arriving in this Port would have an equal right to engage in, and the aggregate would of course be very considerable;"

moreover, all outlays under such circumstances had to be expended on essential repairs and not (as Pringle suspected in this instance) on the expenses "of the Captain and Passengers for their Table, etc." Having disposed of the matter in principle to his own satisfaction, and since Hammon's request was of such a petty nature, he did not press the matter any further and the Countess of London continued her voyage sans five hundred shirts.<sup>192</sup>

While such unanticipated ship-repair disbursements created something of a problem, it was the dumping of stranded lascar crews literally on his doorstep which gave the Agent a real

189. Capt. W. Hammon's 1st memorial to Cradock, 22 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., III.

190. Pringle to Stoll, 22 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX — Hammon wished to land "6 doz. towels & 3 doz. common table cloths".

191. Hammon's 2nd memo. to Cradock, 22 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

192. Pringle to Alexander, 22 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

headache.<sup>193</sup> In July, 1809, for instance, there was the "unfortunate case" of a number of Bengal seamen taken by the French but subsequently rescued by a British warship and brought to Cape Town, there to await an opportunity of returning home; in the interim, it cost the Agency seven shillings a week each for their maintenance, and when Pringle tried to prevail on the Cape Government to take over the responsibility, his plea was refused on the grounds that the lascars were subjects of the Company, which

"having all the advantages must also take the disadvantages of its exclusive Privileges at the Cape".<sup>194</sup>

In view of this experience, it is hardly surprising that when the "Country" ship Rhander Box was recaptured and brought to the Cape with eighty-seven lascars on board "destitute of every necessary of life", the Agent should refuse most emphatically to meddle in the matter, arguing that there was no proof they were subjects of British India, and that Alex. Robertson, the captors' agent, was liable for their subsistence;<sup>195</sup> in the end, Caledon himself, finding it "impossible to permit the Individuals to starve", had to make provision for them, and urged the Colonial Department to reach some agreement with the Directors on the subject, it having become an issue of "great importance".<sup>196</sup> This tit-for-tat game took a further twist a few months later when Pringle drew the Governor's attention to a fresh crisis:

"Upon returning home on the afternoon of 26th June [1810] I found some poor Lascars to the number of 31 collected round the House, imploring food & lodging, stating that they were sent to me from the Leopard & know no where else to apply. I immediately wrote a letter to Vice Admiral Bertie in which I expressed my surprise that the commanding officer on board that Ship should have sent so many people so circumstanced, adrift without letting me know on what grounds their claim of being supported by the Hon'ble Company rested, or indeed making any communication whatever on the Subject... I have always resisted being burthened with every black man found on board Enemy Ships... Here My Lord the matter rests — I have continued to support these poor people for the present, as they must otherwise literally starve..."<sup>197</sup>

193. On the use of Lascars in the Company's service and on "Country" ships, see Parkinson, Trade in E. Seas, pp. 213ff., 335.

194. Pringle to Ramsay, 11 July 1809, CGH.F.R., VII.

195. Pringle to Caledon, 11 & 16 March 1810, CGH.F.R., II.

196. Caledon to Liverpool, 21 March 1810, Recs.C.C., VII, pp. 267-268.

197. Pringle to Caledon, 4 July 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

The Agent's humanitarian leanings were equally apparent when it came to the treatment of lascars on board: for example, when the "Country" ship Portsea put in from Europe carrying a large number of Bengalis back to India, and Pringle learnt that at least twenty of these passengers had so far died at sea, he insisted that the captain provided

"an adequate supply of all the Kinds of Provisions usually issued to Natives of India before sailing from this place," and that he took every possible care in future to comply with the Company's wishes "by a kind and conciliating treatment" of all lascars under his charge;<sup>198</sup> the Agent was probably fully aware that much of the savage mishandling of lascars by ship's officers was frequently lost sight of because of the widespread belief that all "coolies" were physically frail.<sup>199</sup>

There were occasions, too, when Pringle was called upon to make special arrangements and close his eyes to numerous irregularities in order to meet the particular needs of persons especially favoured by the Directors. One such individual was Captain Harrington of the H.C.S. Scaleby Castle,<sup>200</sup> who had intended establishing a merchandising business in Jamestown but relinquished the plan upon hearing of the changes to the Company's charter; however, having already brought China goods valued at £2,500 to St. Helena, the Captain applied for their re-consignment to the Cape, and, in urging the Agent to meet this request, the Island governor referred to

"The disposition of the Hon'ble Court of Directors to favour the views of Capt. Harrington; this is sufficiently manifested by their instructions on the peculiarity of his case and the unprecedented extent of freight he has been allowed to occupy on the Scaleby Castle... From these circumstances we are disposed to go to very great lengths for the accommodation of Capt. Harrington -- a sentiment which we are persuaded will be in unison with the wishes of the Hon'ble Court... and in the meantime we beg to recommend him to your general patronage and protection."<sup>201</sup>

198. Pringle to Capt. V. Burgh (Portsea), 15 Dec. 1813, COH.F.R., XIX.

199. In his History of European Commerce with India... (London, 1812, p. 235), David Macpherson wrote that lascars "from their feeble habit of body, and being accustomed only to short voyages during the fine-weather season upon the tranquil seas of India, are unable to bear the cold, and utterly incapable of the vigorous exertion and rapid movements necessary in the boisterous seas of Europe..."

200. An Indiaman of 1,250 tons which participated in the regular trade to Bengal as well as the "Country" trade to China.

201. Wilks to Pringle, 2 May 1814, COH.F.R., XIII (with encls.).

Consequently, Pringle could do no less than afford the Captain "every facility, indulgence, and assistance" when the Scaley Castle arrived in Simons Bay at the end of May, 1814.<sup>202</sup> The Agent soon learnt, however, that besides bringing his Chinese investment for disposal in the Colony, Harrington had smuggled on board forty-two Chinese deserters from St. Helena; having now resolved to settle down at the Cape after completing the current round-voyage, the scheming Captain had hit upon the bright idea of inducing the runaways to build a home and several warehouses for him as the price of their passage back to Canton.<sup>203</sup> Although the Jamestown Government was incensed at this breach of the strict rules on "the receiving of passengers without the necessary authority", Pringle was cautioned to treat the incident "with discretion"<sup>204</sup> — advice which did not resolve the likelihood of the ship sailing without some of the Cantonese, who would become a burden on the Agency "in the event of those people not being able to earn their permanent subsistence".<sup>205</sup> But Harrington was in no great hurry to leave for China; bad weather had interfered with the landing of his merchandise and had held up his building operations, and to depart on schedule would have meant

"a sacrifice of Property which I flatter myself under the peculiar circumstances of my case, the Hon'ble Court would never require me to make..."<sup>206</sup>

Nor would he budge when reminded that "other interests" were involved, "at least of equal importance", and that if he delayed further he would fail to reach Canton in time to join the next homeward-bound fleet.<sup>207</sup> Against such arguments, the Captain had his answers ready:

"I am too old and I may venture to add, too faithful a servant of the Hon. Company not to weigh their interests as well as my own at the present juncture; but as the situation in which I now stand was not originally of my own seeking — as it may be

202. Pringle to Ramsay, 14 June 1814, CGH.F.R., IV.

203. Harrington to Pringle, 25 May 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Wilks, 7 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

204. Governor & Council, St. Helena, to Pringle, 22 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

205. Pringle to Alexander, 16 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

206. Harrington to Pringle, 25 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

207. Pringle to Harrington, 27 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XI.

attributed solely to the disappointment I experienced at St. Helena, & as that disappointment was alike unexpected, unmerited, and severe — I cannot but entertain a confident hope that my prolonged stay here, arising from unfavourable circumstances beyond my Control, will readily be excused..<sup>208</sup>

When the Scaleby Castle did finally weigh anchor, it carried a request to the Select Committee to ship the Cape stores on the return voyage.<sup>209</sup> Subsequently, Harrington retired from the sea as planned, became a leading Cape Town merchant, took an active interest in the early operations of the Commercial Exchange (being elected a committee member in 1818),<sup>210</sup> and even got himself appointed by the Czar as the first Russian consular representative in the Colony.<sup>211</sup>

(c)

There would be little value in embarking on a comprehensive examination of the numerous requests which poured into the Agency over these years seeking a relaxation of one or more of the Company's chartered privileges in favour of the petitioner; such a survey would rapidly become a tedious and repetitive catalogue in which the trees would obscure the wood. Nonetheless, a small sample of representative cases will help to indicate the lines along which Pringle worked in his dealings with the local mercantile community.

One principle which the Agent tried to enforce was that no trader should derive any windfall advantage through some special dispensation by the Company. Thus, when Hamilton Ross found 800 lbs. of pepper on his hands — "the sweepings of the stores" and "totally unfit for exportation" — and asked permission to sell it locally,<sup>212</sup> he was tartly told that

"If the Pepper can be made fit for use here, it can be so for exportation".<sup>213</sup>

When Ross persisted in his application, giving further details

208. Harrington to Pringle, 27 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

209. Luson to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 20 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XX. The vessel sailed on 21 July 1814, reached Batavia in September, where it was delayed, and only arrived at Canton in March, 1815; it left that terminal on April 12th, and had returned to Simons Bay by the 28th July.

210. Immanuel, op. cit., pp. 29-30; cf. Recs.C.C., XII, p. 324.

211. Earl Bathurst to Somerset, 20 Feb. 1815, Recs.C.C., II, p. 461.

212. Ross to Galeson, 2 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

213. Pringle to Alexander, 4 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XVII.

of the spoilt pepper's history,<sup>214</sup> Pringle still refused to budge, using the opportunity to remark that

"every Merchant in this Colony seems to think a failure in any Speculation he makes a sufficient reason to expect an immunity of the Laws in his favor in order to indemnify him for the loss he is likely to incur & conceives himself hardly treated if he is refused, which is certainly a most erroneous opinion."<sup>215</sup>

In similar fashion, a request from Edden & Watt to dispose of damaged prize piece-goods was turned down on the grounds that

"it would be a great injustice to the Captors to permit things sold for exportation to be used for consumption here by merely petitioning afterwards, as no doubt the price paid was in proportion to the quality of the goods and the conditions on which they were actually sold",<sup>216</sup>

And when Reynolds & Murray were unable to get rid of five small bales of prize articles (total value 2,700 rds.) on the Brazilian market and wished to retail them at the Cape,<sup>217</sup> they were reminded that it was

"by no means to be expected that the sale of goods for exportation should guarantee a profit to the exporter..."<sup>218</sup>

Although there was a good deal of commonsense logic in the Agent's dicta,<sup>19</sup> Pringle did not wholly escape allegations of indulging in petty red-tape,<sup>219</sup> while there was at least a hint of favouritism in permitting John Osmond to sell forty-one bags of Malabar pepper for local consumption<sup>220</sup> on the grounds that the Simonstown shipwright had "rendered upon many occasions very great service to the Hon'ble Company".<sup>221</sup>

A touch of comic opera was not unknown in these matters. For example, when a petition from W.F. Roper to sell fifty-nine bags of damaged pepper by public auction<sup>222</sup> was rejected because the article had been imported without an Agency licence,<sup>223</sup> Roper

214. Ross to Alexander, 25 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

215. Pringle to Alexander, 30 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

216. Pringle to Alexander, 4 April 1810, CGH.F.R., XVIII.

217. Reynolds & Murray to Pringle, 12 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

218. Pringle to Reynolds & Murray, 12 Dec. 1812, CGH.F.R., XII.

219. Gray & Holding to Pringle, 13 July 1810, CGH.F.R., XI.

220. Osmond to Cradock, 15 May 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

221. Pringle to Alexander, 13 May 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

222. Roper to Gray, 22 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

223. Pringle to C. Bird, 23 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

appealed directly to Acting Governor Grey (who was not unduly sympathetic towards the Company),<sup>224</sup> pointing out that the Agency's own stocks of pepper were completely exhausted.<sup>225</sup> This move had the desired result: without "intending to establish a precedent", Grey resolved under these circumstances to override Pringle's decision and to "admit the sale".<sup>226</sup> But, showing great sangfroid, the Agent held his ground:

"I have only to say that it of course depends upon His Excellency to take such measures as he may think proper, but I must abide by what I consider a proper discharge of the duty entrusted to me by my Superiors, & consequently that as the Merchant in Question has chosen to exceed the terms of his permit by importing Pepper into this Colony, I consider it a matter of no consideration whether it is damaged or not (which, by the way, is an accident that Pepper is very little liable to) and that therefore I cannot on this account grant an indulgence on the part of the Company to one individual which has been uniformly refused others... That the Colony may be in no want of Pepper, I shall immediately purchase some and sell it on the Company's account."<sup>227</sup>

In view of this stand, the Acting Governor had second thoughts about the matter, and, not wishing "to injure the Company's interests", agreed to the compromise scheme.<sup>228</sup> Accordingly, tenders were called for to supply the Agency with 10,000 lbs. of pepper, and, out of seven applicants,<sup>229</sup> Roper was the successful one.<sup>230</sup>

There were occasions, however, when the strict letter of the law was waived on compassionate grounds. Such was the case of J. Callander, a colonist who had been detained by ill-health in Java for several years; being totally unaware of the Company's regulations, he had eventually returned to the Cape with 200 bundles of rattans and 300 canisters of Batavian sugar candy, and, if prevented from selling these articles locally, it would mean "a total loss of his honest earnings".<sup>231</sup> Since Cradock himself

224. See below, Ch. V, (1).

225. Roper to Grey, 24 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., II.

226. Alexander to Pringle, 26 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

227. Pringle to Alexander, 27 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

228. Alexander to Pringle, 31 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., II.

229. Besides one from Roper, tenders were received from: Hall & Rowe, J. Zeigler, A. McDonald, Ranken & Scott, W. S. Bird, and Bden & Watt — circular letter, 17 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

230. Pringle to Roper, 18 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

231. J. Foster (Secretary's Office) to Pringle, with enclosures, 7 Nov. 1812, CGH.F.R. XII.

was disposed towards leniency in this instance and the facts were "attended with some circumstances which recommend them to indulgence", Pringle raised no objections to Callander selling his goods.<sup>232</sup>

As the colonists were generally permitted to receive presents of small value from the East for their own use, a good slice of the Agent's time was taken up with trivialities: two planks of Seychelle wood were the sole items in one landing-permit,<sup>233</sup> Francis Shortt was granted leave to receive a teapot and an ivory backgammon board from Bengal,<sup>234</sup> while even four jars of pickles sent to A. Faure by his fond mother-in-law in Batavia merited a separate application.<sup>235</sup> Nevertheless, Pringle harboured strong suspicions that by no means all such requests concerned legitimate gifts; for instance, in acknowledging a memorial received from the Secretary's office in which Mrs. Bletterman sought permission

"to land from the Maria sundry articles,<sup>236</sup> being presents from her son at Canton",

the Agent, while he did not object to the petition, dryly added that he

"must at the same time remark that Mrs. B. receives presents very frequently".<sup>237</sup>

With a view to checking abuses in this connection, the Calcutta authorities took the prudent measure of drawing a sharp line between presents and goods "declared to be for family use"; in future, articles falling into the latter category were to be prohibited entry "unless a previous application for their importation" had received the Agency's sanction.<sup>238</sup> No sooner had this regulation been published, than George Thomas sought leave to indent a considerable quantity of merchandise<sup>239</sup> from

232. Pringle to Forster, 10 Nov. 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

233. Pringle to Alexander, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX (the applicant was E. Stuart).

234. Pringle to Shortt, 4 Jan. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

235. Faure to Gradock, 22 March 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

236. 3 boxes of tea, 1 jar of pickles, and 2 chests of Nankeen Pantaloon.

237. Pringle to C. Bird, 13 March 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX.

238. Ricketts to Pringle, 14 May 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

239. His schedule contained 36 categories of articles, including: 200 horse blankets, 20 reams of writing paper, 2,000 gunny bags, 40 lbs. of sealing-wax, 12 doz. ladies' shoes, and 20 doz. towels -- Thomas to Pringle, 25 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

India "for family use", and when the request was turned down on the grounds that the bona fide implications of the enactment were being contemptuously ignored,<sup>240</sup> Thomas amplified his petition:

"I am very sorry that my application should have given you any cause of Surprise; the articles may appear numerous but when you consider the difficulty of meeting with freight to the Cape and that I calculated at more than a year's Supply not only for myself but I included in the application the wants of a few of my relations — and when you also take into consideration what it takes to cloath (sic) 50 or 60 Slaves and Servants, I do not think you will conceive my application so large; for I estimate that the whole may be purchased (excepting in the shawls) in Calcutta for 2,500 Rupees. Some articles have the appearance certainly of merchandise — such as the Gunny Bags — but I have been obliged to pay a great price for them here when I require them, which I continually do, that I wished to have a few always by me."

In any event, Thomas alleged, there was an ambiguity in the wording of the regulations which suggested that Pringle had the power to authorize the entry of any goods into the Colony "that did not interfere with the Company's investments".<sup>241</sup> But the Agent was not going to allow the wool to be pulled over his eyes so easily —

"The obvious meaning of words cannot be mistaken unless intentionally, and everybody must understand Articles for Family Use to be such as are for Family consumption, and certainly not directly or indirectly for sale or traffic of any kind, and I am confident there is not a family in the Cape of Good Hope that would consume the articles enumerated in your list in many years. If you wish to petition the Bengal Government for permission to bring small articles for sale such as the Company do not meddle in, I shall have no objection to forward such an appeal; but once for all I must decline sanctioning any that is not clearly and decidedly intended for what it purports to be."<sup>242</sup>

Such an opening was too good to be missed, and Thomas had soon compiled a much more extensive schedule,<sup>243</sup> but no longer under the cloak of "articles for family use".<sup>244</sup>

240. Pringle to Thomas, 26 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

241. Thomas to Pringle, 26 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XII.

242. Pringle to Thomas, 27 Nov. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX.

243. There were now 54 groups of items, the order for gunny bags had shot up to 10,000, and among the additional articles were 50,000 cheroots and 10 pipes of Bengal rum — Thomas to Pringle, 7 March 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

244. By this time, however, the Indian trade had been thrown open, rendering Thomas' exertions superfluous — Trotter to Pringle, 26 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XII. See below ch. V, n. 58.

Since many of the concessions which local merchants sought had directly or indirectly concerned trade with the Mascarenes, the Court's explicit instructions on that subject<sup>245</sup> relieved the Agency of a heavy burden, although Pringle was still called upon from time to time to exercise dubious discretionary powers in cases where the Cape served merely as an entrepôt for traffic between Mauritius and the United Kingdom.<sup>246</sup> But, in general, the business of granting or refusing applications for exemptions or special permits by no means fell away entirely until news had been received that the East India Company's monopoly had been drastically curtailed.<sup>247</sup>

Having thus approached the end of the period under review, attention must now be directed to the background and consequences of the change in John Company's status in so far as it impinged upon the Colony's economic life.

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245. See above, Ch. III, (1)(e).

246. Pringle to C. Bird, 15 June 1812, CGH.F.R., XIX; Pringle to Ebdon & Watts, 9 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

247. The full details of the revised charter were not made public at the Cape until mid-April, 1814.

V. END OF AN ERA

Events marched swiftly during the closing years of Pringle's tenure. The limitation of the Company's charter after 1813 transformed the Agency's character and modified the pattern of commerce at the Cape. These developments coincided with the restoration of peace in Europe, the beginning of Napoleon's St. Helena exile, the introduction of preferences for the Colony's wines on the British market, and a slow but steady relaxation of the more onerous burdens of the Navigation Laws. The settlement was passing out of the chrysalis stage and moving towards a fuller and more variegated economic existence. Thus, the death of John Pringle in 1815 marked the end of an era.

(i) Views from Government House

Although he had mildly criticised the Company's inept handling of the Eastern indents, the first Governor of the Second Occupation held views on British India and John Company's national importance which were as orthodox as those of the Directors themselves; and it must have been with a sense of some misgiving that the Agent reported Caledon's decision to give up his post at the Cape —

"The purport of this is merely to acquaint the Hon'ble Court that His Excellency the Earl of Caledon having resigned the Government of this Colony proceeds to England on His Majs. Ship Curacoa. His Lordship has assured me that he will be extremely happy to have the honour of communicating to the Hon'ble Court of Directors any information that may be desired concerning this Colony or related to India, or to the Company's concerns, and as His Excellency has ever been extremely solicitous to forward these Interests, I am convinced much satisfactory Elucidation will thus be obtained for the Hon'ble Court."<sup>1</sup>

For the next two months (4th July - 5th September, 1811) the local military commander was at the head of affairs, but, while Pringle had at first believed that Lt.-Genl. Grey would follow "the example of Lord Caledon",<sup>2</sup> the Acting Governor was in fact much less favourably disposed towards the Agency. It was Grey who had

1. Pringle to Ramsay, 2 July 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

2. Pringle to Ramsay, 13 July 1811, CGH.F.R., VII.

insisted on the forced offloadings from the Alexander,<sup>3</sup> who felt "the strongest disposition to relieve by all the means in his power" those merchants who had furnished supplies to the Mascarenes but could not dispose of their returns because of the Company's restrictions,<sup>4</sup> and who had openly clashed with Pringle over the sale of damaged pepper.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, when the Agent asked for a remission of export dues on seven barrels of gunpowder and a few kegs of musket-balls — a not unreasonable request, since duties on these items had been paid previously<sup>6</sup> — Grey did not think it "proper" to comply with the application.<sup>7</sup>

Yet things seemed to augur well for the Agency when, a few days after taking over, Sir John Cradock asked for some general account of the Company's position at the Cape, since it was the new Governor's

"constant wish to promote the Interests of the East India Company as they are connected with the administration of H.M. Government...to the best advantage."<sup>8</sup>

Certain that such sentiments would "afford much satisfaction" to the Court, Pringle explained that

"It is not perhaps possible for me to point out beforehand what circumstances may occur which will require Your Excellency's support or interference: such have been of late both frequent and of considerable importance as connected with H.M. Government here relative to the operations of the War, & to the transport of Troops to India, etc., but I cannot anticipate the recurrence of similar events. With respect to the more common and daily transactions, they relate almost entirely to the execution of that Part of the King's Order-in-Council regarding the trade and supply of the Cape of Good Hope with articles being the produce or manufacture of countries to the Eastward<sup>9</sup> and have hitherto been conducted on an established plan thro' the Channel of the Colonial Secretary's Office."<sup>10</sup>

3. See above, Ch. IV, n.51.

4. Alexander to Pringle, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI; C.Bird to Pringle, 19 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

5. See above, Ch. IV, (iii)(c).

6. Pringle to Grey, 31 July 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

7. C. Bird to Pringle, 2 Aug. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

8. Cradock to Pringle, 12 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XI.

9. A copy of the Order-in-Council of December, 1796, had, in fact, been attached to Cradock's instructions, together with French and Dutch translations — Rece.O.C., VIII, p. 35.

10. Pringle to Cradock, 16 Sept. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

The Agent, however, was to be disillusioned soon enough: a month later the astute Cradock had become convinced that the Colony was not deriving many commercial benefits from its unique geographical situation, and that greater prosperity could only come about

"were the Restrictions imposed by the East India Charter relaxed or modified. As they stand at present, It forms a lamentable view to behold the natural Advantages of this Station so entirely overthrown."<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, while prepared to flutter the cloak of commercial freedom, he was not yet ready to take the bull by the horns; no matter how injurious these limitations were, as long as they remained the law, the Governor argued that it was his duty "to regard them as sacred and in no shape to countenance their infringement..."<sup>12</sup>

But, towards the end of 1811, after Cradock had had further opportunities to view the Agency at work, he began urging the Colony's representative in London to impress upon Whitehall the critical need for reconsidering the settlement's position in relation to the Company, broadening the issue by linking it to the problem of encouraging commercial farming:

"...these injurious restrictions that prevail at present, ... though so destructive to the prosperity of this place, are not at the same time of positive value to the East India Company, but in a great measure proceed upon the principle to keep in full force the exclusion established by their charter.

It is so well known that it is scarcely necessary to state, that little or nothing can be undertaken for the advantage of the Cape while it labours under the existing restrictions, for, as the export to England, from the distance and expence of freight, is in most respects out of the question, and the communication with South America is of no avail, if all intercourse with the Eastward be debarred, there can be no means for the farmer to dispossess himself of either the excess in wine or corn beyond domestic consumption. It is but barely permitted at present, and often subject to refusal, to export either wine or corn, the produce of the Cape, and, as the inhabitants of the Isles of France and the other possessions of His Majesty in the East, either have not money to return, or would certainly prefer a repayment by the exportation of their own produce. As the case stands at present

11. Cradock to Liverpool, 15 Oct. 1811, Recs.C.S., VIII, p. 179.

12. Cradock to Pringle, 7 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XII.

the occasional relaxations granted by the agent of the East India Company, who will not altogether sanction the mutual interchange, are of little or no avail. It is very necessary that all this should be well understood, for the anxiety at home to promote agriculture at the Cape cannot take place with spirit, or even safety, unless the power to dispose of the surplus produce be secured."<sup>13</sup>

These views, transmitted to the Under-Secretary for the Colonies,<sup>14</sup> were passed on to the Privy Council Committee for Trade; and those gentlemen, after some correspondence with Leadenhall Street, resolved to postpone further consideration of the subject because the whole question of the Eastern Trade was about to be taken up by Parliament; Cradock, accordingly, experienced the well-worn civil service delaying tactic of being asked for "further observations".<sup>15</sup> If the initiative had not happened to shift at this time from East India House to Westminster, it is doubtful whether such real progress would have been made.

#### (ii) The Charter Act of 1813

By the opening decade of the 19th century, most of the traditional excuses for persevering with John Company's exclusive trade with India had lost their potency. So successful had the Company been in the exercise of its military and administrative powers, that it had become possible for private merchants to have direct dealings with the sub-continent without danger of causing political upsets.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it seemed apparent that the rigours of the Berlin Decrees could be withstood only by a notable expansion of the colonial trade,<sup>17</sup> and India began to figure prominently as a potential outlet for home manufactures,<sup>18</sup> although Marx was to over-dramatise the

13. Cradock to Willimott, 10 Dec. 1811, Recs.C.C., VIII, pp. 345-346. Nor was Cradock interested only in fostering trade with other British colonies, and he soon was "not without expectation that the new arrangements" contemplated between "the Parliament and the East India Company" would "open a freer intercourse" between the Cape and Mozambique — Alexander to Governor of Mozambique, 20 July 1812, G.H. 34/2.

14. Willimott to Peel, 29 Feb. 1812, Recs.C.C., VIII, p. 345.

15. Lord Chetwynd to Peel, 28 July 1812, Recs.C.C., VIII, p. 474; cf. Recs.C.C., IX, pp. 197-98, and Manning, op.cit., p. 430.

16. S. Halevy, England in 1815 (2nd rev. edn., London, 1949), pp. 320-322; W. Cunningham, Growth of English Industry and Commerce (Cambridge, 1907), Vol. III, p. 818.

17. Dutt, Icon. Hist. of Br. India, Vol. I, pp. 268-269.

18. R. Mukherjee, The Rise and Fall of the East India Company (Berlin, 1955), pp. 234-235; cf. Knowles, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 293; P. Mackesy, The War in the Mediterranean, 1803-1810 (London, 1957), p. 9.

situation when subsequently he referred to a conspiracy by the "British millocracy" to "inundate" the East with its fabrics.<sup>19</sup>

The charter was due to expire in March, 1814, and ever since 1808 negotiations had been in progress between the Directors and the President of the Board of Control (Viscount Melville, the son of Henry Dundas) to settle the conditions under which the contract should be renewed. The Company's spokesmen claimed that:

"...the unlimited freedom, for which some persons have, of late years, contended, would have political consequences more injurious to the power of this country and of British India, than the advantages anticipated by sanguine minds, from an enlargement of the commerce, could compensate, if those advantages were to be realized; and that, moreover, the expectation of such advantages is unfounded, resulting from general presumptions, which are contradicted by the nature of the Indian people, climate, and productions, and by the experience of more than two centuries."<sup>20</sup>

But such woolly arguments received scant sympathy from the Board: the provisions of 1793, allowing private merchants to participate in the trade, had been proved defective, and it was the Government's declared intention to severely curtail the Company's monopoly.<sup>21</sup> And when, in March, 1812, the presidency of the Board passed to Lord Buckinghamshire — who, as Governor of Madras (1794-98) had been at constant loggerheads with the Court<sup>22</sup> — the negotiations as far as the Company was concerned began to take a distinctly ominous turn.

Moreover, as American and neutral shippers were now enjoying an increasing share of the Eastern carrying trade, the existing charter came in for a great deal of criticism from provincial and Scottish ports;<sup>23</sup> the merchants of Liverpool, adversely affected by the outbreak of war with the United States, were especially vehement in this agitation,<sup>24</sup> despite the fact that such of their

19. Karl Marx, "The East India Company", New York Daily Tribune, July 11, 1853; cf. Capital, Ch. xxiv (6).
20. Chairman and Deputy Chairman to Robt. Dundas, 13 Jan. 1809 — Court to Board Letters, IV, f.1.
21. Robt. Dundas to "the Chairs", 21 March 1812 — Correspondence and Proceedings in the Negotiation for a Renewal of the East-India Company's Charter (London, 1812), p. 49.
22. Philips, op. cit., p. 183.
23. Wm. Smart, Economic Annals of the Nineteenth Century: 1801-20 (London, 1910), pp. 335-336; for a typical example, see the Glasgow petition, 19 March 1812, Hansard, XIII, 89-92.
24. Petitions from the merchants, corporation, and docks trustees of Liverpool, 23 March 1812, Hansard, XIII, 111-119.

shipping was wholly inappropriate to East Indian waters.<sup>25</sup> Although the shareholders resolved unanimously to stand by the Directors in exposing

"the danger which would await the British empire, from opening the trade of India,..."<sup>26</sup>

petitions against the renewal of the monopoly continued to be sent to Parliament

"from every seaport and commercial and manufacturing town of the least consequence...enforced by all the arguments, general and local, that occurred to the petitioners".<sup>27</sup>

The great debate continued into the session of 1813, with weighty and trivial arguments being flung into the arena from all sides,<sup>28</sup> while outside the House there was an unprecedented spate of pamphleteering.<sup>29</sup> As in the days of the Merchant Adventurers, the main issue at stake was not monopoly versus free trade but London versus the outports, and in a last-ditch stand the Company agreed, "although with reluctance", to free intercourse with India provided that all imports were "confined to the port of London".<sup>30</sup> But the opposition proved much too strong, and, in

25. S.G. Checkland, "American versus West Indian Traders in Liverpool, 1793-1815", Journal of Economic History, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (June 1958), p. 158.

26. General Court Deliberations, 2 April 1812 — Correspondence and Proceedings... p. 59.

27. Annual Register, LIV (1812), p. 112.

28. "Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the East India Company's Affairs", 14 April 1813 — Hansard, XXV, 825-1083.

29. Among the scores of pamphlets published at this time, the most interesting, although not necessarily the most influential, were the following:

Anon. A short conversation on the present crisis of the important trade with the East-Indies (London, 1813).

Anon. Remarks on the Charter of the East India Company (Cambridge, 1813).

Anon. The present system of our East India Government and Commerce considered; in which are exposed the fallacy, the incoherability and the injustice of a political and despotic power possessing a commercial situation also within the countries subject to its dominion (London, 1813).

G. Grant, State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain (London, 1813).

Charles Maclean, A view of the Consequences of laying open the trade to India, to private ships; with some remarks on the Nature of the East India Company's Rights (London, 1813).

R. Twining, Observations on the Renewal of the East India Company's Charter (London, 1813).

30. Anon., East India Question: a short abstract of the Argument in support of the East-India Company's Petition to Parliament for a Renewal of their Charter (London, 1813), p. 5; cf. the petition from London shippers to confine the India trade to the port of London, 18 March 1813, Hansard, XXV, 200-201, and the comments of Richard Pares, King George III and the Politicians (Oxford, 1953), p. 193.

spite of further delaying tactics,<sup>31</sup> a new Charter Bill, based on the select committee's recommendations,<sup>32</sup> passed its third reading on July 13th. Neither the parliamentary records nor the pamphlet literature throughout these proceedings, however, leave the faintest suggestion that the Cape's status in relation to the Company was ever raised as a matter for serious discussion; and even the Colony's own agent in London, Thomas Courtenay,<sup>33</sup> who on two occasions spoke up strongly in the Commons against the privileges of East India House,<sup>34</sup> had nothing whatever to say on the topic of Joint Company at the Cape.

In terms of the new act,<sup>35</sup> the Indian trade was thrown open to all British subjects using enumerated home ports and vessels of 350 tons and upwards<sup>36</sup> on procuring a licence from the Directors — an empty formality, since anyone refused such a licence could appeal directly to the Board of Control. Moreover, although the Company was again entrusted for the next twenty years with the administration of British India (and its vigilant control over European settlement there was also retained), the territorial and commercial accounts were to be kept separate, the Board gaining the right to appropriate all territorial revenues and surplus commercial profits.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, as both the

31. A last-minute plea from a Company spokesman "to allow the Court of Proprietors a reasonable time to read and consider the Bill in its amended shape" was emphatically rejected — Hansard, XXVI, 1201.

32. 3 June 1813, Hansard, XXVI, 555-563.

33. Thomas Peregrine Courtenay (1782-1841) was first returned to Parliament as the member for Totnes in 1810, holding that seat until 1831; between 1812 and 1828 he also served as secretary to the Board of Control, and thereafter became vice-president of the Board of Trade — Dict. of Nat. Biog.

34. 3 & 16 June, 1813, Hansard, XXVI, 541-544, 1253-1256.

35. 53 Geo. III, c. 155, an abstract of which is given in the Annual Register, LV (1813), pp. 315-319.

36. Smaller craft were likely to be more readily used for smuggling activities, whereas large ones, in the Company's view, were more apt to maintain British maritime prestige — J.H. Clapham, An Economic History of Modern Britain (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1930), Vol. I, p. 251.

37. The offices of governor-general, governor, and commander-in-chief were now made subject to the approval of the Crown, which meant in effect that the Crown made these appointments — Wilbur, op. cit., pp. 378-379, Reid, op. cit., pp. 162-163.

Directors and their stockholders were fully aware,<sup>38</sup> it was the traffic in tea which had become the only really worthwhile branch of trade handled by East India House, and the act renewed the Company's monopoly of tea imports and its exclusive authority over the Canton commerce.<sup>39</sup> In fact, everyone seemed satisfied: the anti-Company factions believed that a new era in the history of British trade had begun, while the Court of Proprietors congratulated the Directors

"upon the attainment of a charter which, in some instances, had exceeded their most sanguine expectations".<sup>40</sup>

A supplementary measure, the East India Circuitous Trade Bill,<sup>41</sup> was passed in December, 1813, and was designed to make a reality of the long-cherished scheme<sup>42</sup> of promoting a triangular trade between Asia, the Americas, and Europe.<sup>43</sup> And, as a consequence of these statutes, private merchants soon showed that they could conduct the Indian commerce on a much more extensive and profitable basis than the Company had been willing or able to do<sup>44</sup> — a trend which was reflected in a notable upswing of the number of vessels plying between the East and Britain;<sup>45</sup> as a commercial enterprise, John Company, from 1814 onwards, progressively confined its activities to the China trade.

38. Deputation (appointed by the Directors) to Buckinghamshire, 29 April 1812, Correspondence and Proceedings, p. 84.

39. The Government's decision to leave the China monopoly unscathed followed discussions between the Board and Sir George Staunton, an acknowledged expert on the views of the Peking authorities — Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187, Morse, Chronicles, Vol. III, p. 165, 169.

40. Annual Register, LV (1813), p. 103.

41. 54 Geo. III, c. 54 (the text is in Recs. G.C., IX, pp. 484-486).

42. See above, Ch. II, (i)(b).

43. In opposing the plan on the Company's behalf, Charles Grant alleged: "The effect of this would be, to enlarge the direct intercourse between India and North and South America, and to deprive the United Kingdom of part of the Indian trade which it now enjoys" — 9 Dec. 1813, Hansard, XLVII, 266-269.

44. "It appears certain that the trade with India, whether of import or export, has materially increased since 1814, and that the increase has been effected by private merchants, while the trade of the Company has experienced a diminution" — Rep. of Commons' Committee on Foreign Trade, 1821, VI, No. 186, p. 197. The Company's trade with India shrunk from 4808,975 in 1812 to 4398,469 in 1828, whereas, as early as 1815, Indian goods to the value of 24,607,152 were sold in London through private channels — Rep. of Lords' Committee into Affairs of E. I. Company (1830), Appendix, p. 1174. Most remarkable of all, was the expansion in the export to the East of British cotton goods (818,208 yds., 1814; 57,568,161 yds., 1832) — cf. table in A. Redford, Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade, 1794-1858 (Manchester, 1934), p. 112.

45. See table in C. A. Payne, A Short History of the World's Shipping Industry (London, 1933), p. 223; cf. C. Day, A History of Commerce (London, 1934), pp. 363-364.

(iii) Ambiguities and Anomalies

When the revised charter was about to receive parliamentary sanction, it suddenly struck the Cape Colony's agent in London that the settlement's trading status would need clarification in terms of the new arrangements;<sup>46</sup> but there was no immediate response to Courtenay's request that Whitehall should consider the expediency of amending the orders affecting the Cape

"with a view to such an arrangement as may tend most effectually to the encouragement of its agriculture and internal prosperity."<sup>47</sup>

Once the Circuitous Trade Act had been passed, the Colony's position was rendered more anomalous than ever before; in some respects (in so far as Courtenay could unravel the situation), the settlement was now

"placed upon a footing of inferiority in regard to other Possessions of His Majesty, which cannot have been intended by the Legislature..."<sup>48</sup>

After further delay, the Committee for Trade promised to consult the Government's legal advisers.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, Pringle, fearful that the Directors were going to leave him in the lurch, had been writing to Leadenhall Street:

"As the Company's Charter may probably undergo some alterations, I trust the Hon'ble Court will give me early information of any change that may affect their interests in this Colony; and such instructions as may be requisite, otherwise I shall probably be placed in an embarrassing situation."<sup>50</sup>

East India House behaved true to form: a despatch from the Assistant Secretary, sent off at the end of 1813, made no mention whatsoever of the Circuitous Trade Act nor conveyed any instructions on the altered position as a whole;<sup>51</sup> as had happened in the past, the Agent first got to know of some of the changes made from information supplied by Government House.<sup>52</sup>

46. The Charter Act did not specifically abolish the Company's privileges at the Cape, and the regulations for re-exporting Eastern produce to Europe remained highly ambiguous.

47. Courtenay to Henry Goulburn (Bathurst's secretary), 18 June 1813, Recs.C.C., IX, pp. 197-198.

48. Courtenay to Goulburn, 11 April 1814, Recs.C.C., IX, pp. 465-467.

49. Thomas Lack (secretary, Privy Council Committee for Trade) to Goulburn, 10 Aug. 1814, Recs.C.C., X, p. 156.

50. Pringle to Ramsay, 20 March 1813, CGH.F.R., VII.

51. Cobb to Pringle, 28 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., III.

52. C. Bird to Pringle, 18 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Ramsay, 30 April 1814, CGH.F.R., VII.

Once the details of the new legislation had been published at the Cape,<sup>53</sup> Messrs. Ross & Twycross became anxious to be the first off the mark by procuring from St. Helena on their brig María

"such India goods as their Agent may ship on board..., not being of the Produce of the Dominions of the Emperor of China."<sup>54</sup>

While he raised no objections to this request, Pringle reminded the local authorities that the Colony, apparently, was now subject to various provisions of the Navigation laws which had never applied before, and that the enforcement of these measures "rests of course with His Majesty's Government here".<sup>55</sup>

The Calcutta officials, in the meantime, remained just as ignorant as Pringle himself was about the Directors' future intentions, although they felt that the Company's own traffic from Bengal to the Cape had been rendered obsolete; nonetheless, although trading contacts were to be liberalized, the Agent was urged to remind the colonists that they were

"not to consider themselves to be at liberty to establish themselves permanently in any of the Company's Settlements... but that they must return to the Cape as soon as the immediate object of their voyage is accomplished..."<sup>56</sup>

The first private shipment of goods from India to the Cape in terms of the new dispensation was on the "Country" vessel Hunter, owned by the prominent Calcutta shippers, Fairlie, Fergusson & Co.,<sup>57</sup> who despatched goods on their own account as well as the articles indented by George Thomas.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout 1814 there remained much uncertainty in the Colony about the implications of the revised charter,<sup>59</sup> while

53. Cape Town Gazette, 16 & 23 April 1814.

54. Ross & Twycross to Somerset, 26 April 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

55. Pringle to C. Bird, 27 April 1814, CGH.F.R., IX; three months later Ross & Twycross were busy disposing of "a large assortment of Eastern articles landed from St. Helena — Cape Town Gazette, 30 July 1814.

56. Trotter to Pringle, 12 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

57. On this firm's worldwide business interests, see W.H. Coates, The old 'Country Trade' of the East Indies (London, 1911), passim.

58. Trotter to Pringle, 26 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; the Hunter left Calcutta on 2 Sept. 1814 and arrived in Table Bay 25 Nov. Wm. Robertson served as agent for the Bengal firm — Cape Town Gazette, 3 & 31 Dec. 1814; see above, Ch. IV, n.243.

59. Lamon to Cobb, 13 Aug. 1814, CGH.F.R., VII.

conflicting interpretations of some doubtful provisions in the Circuitous Trade Act had led the Government to advise merchants "to defer any intended exports" of Eastern articles until further explanations were received from the Cape's agent in London.<sup>60</sup> Still lacking explicit instructions from the Directors, Pringle was forced to improvise when, in October, Marsh & Cadogan applied to send the Siren<sup>61</sup> to Calcutta "for a return Cargo to the Cape".<sup>62</sup> Thus, in reply, he neatly shifted the responsibility for making a decision onto the Colonial Government:

"...I have only to state that not being provided with instructions on the subject of Ships proceeding from here to India, I cannot grant any licence or permission for such purpose until I shall receive them. I may remark, however, that the Siren not being 350 tons burthen could not be licensed to proceed to India even by the Hon'ble Court of Directors or the Hon'ble the Commissioners of the Board of Control with whom only such Licence can originate — and that therefore if the Siren may legally be sent there at all, it can only be on the authority of 53 G.3 G.155 [ i.e., the 1813 Charter Act ] which His Majesty's Government at this Settlement will decide upon. If, therefore, under such circumstances you send the Siren to India, I beg that it may be clearly understood to be done entirely at your own risk as far as the Hon'ble Company is in any way concerned, and without any kind of Guarantee on my part of the legality of the voyage."<sup>63</sup>

Eventually, the Siren was allowed to proceed on her voyage after the Customs had been provided with a list of the crew and the owners had entered into an engagement for the return of these persons to the Cape;<sup>64</sup> and by the middle of 1815 Marsh & Cadogan were busy disposing of "a choice assorted Cargo" that had been "just landed from Bengal".<sup>65</sup> Another colonist, meanwhile, had

60. Government Advertisement, 25 July 1814, Cape Town Gazette.

61. An American brig captured by H.M.S. Hodway and sold as a prize vessel at the Cape.

62. Marsh & Cadogan to Pringle, 18 Oct. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

63. Pringle to Marsh & Cadogan, 19 Oct. 1814, CGH.F.R., IX.

64. These statutory formalities (section xv of the new Charter Act) were brought to light by Pringle, who added that "no person is allowed to remain in India in the seafaring line unless he has free mariner's indentures granted to him by the East India Company" — Pringle to Alexander, 28 Oct. 1814, CGH.F.R., IX; C.Bird to Marsh & Cadogan, 28 Oct. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; C.Bird to Pringle, 2 Nov. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

65. Advertisement, 1 July 1815, Cape Town Gazette.

secured the Agent's permission to ship 20,000 lbs. of prize pepper on the brig Findlay provided that vessel was "of the requisite burthen" for "carrying home East India produce".<sup>66</sup> At the same time, Cape merchants were now indenting Indian goods from St. Helena as a matter of course.<sup>67</sup>

After the Government lawyers had studied the Cape's ambiguous position in terms of the new legislation, an Order in Council was issued<sup>68</sup> which helped somewhat to clarify matters: Eastern goods (excluding tea) could be re-exported from the settlement in British vessels of 350 tons or more, while the ships of countries at peace with the United Kingdom could put in at Cape ports for repairs and refreshments and sell portions of their cargoes to defray such expenses, but all other imports in foreign bottoms had to receive the Governor's licence; moreover, since vessels plying between India and the Colony now had to be navigated "according to law",<sup>69</sup> it appeared that "Country" ships not registered in Britain were excluded from such traffic.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, although the Charter and Circuitous Trade Acts helped to release the settlement from some of the more irritating restraints enforced previously, the Cape had not yet by any means secured that degree of commercial freedom which, it has been argued,<sup>71</sup> it had a right to expect.

#### (iv) The Agency's Functions Circumscribed

The new statutes had no immediate impact on the Agency's indent business. In September, 1813, before any news had reached the Colony of the charter revisions, Pringle had ordered a large

66. P. Woutersen to Pringle, 27 Dec. 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII; Pringle to Woutersen, 30 Dec. 1814, CGH.F.R., IX.

67. E.g., advertisements of Ebdon & Watts (10 Sept. & 8 Oct. 1814) and Edw. Smith (3 Dec. 1814) in Cape Town Gazette.

68. 24 Sept. 1814, Recs.C.C., X, pp. 188-191; the Order was published at the Cape on 25 Feb. 1815.

69. In terms of the Navigation Acts (26 Geo. III c. 60; 27 Geo. III c. 19) such a vessel had to have a British Plantation Registry.

70. This was the considered opinion of the Advocate-General, Bengal — Trotter to Pringle, 28 Feb. 1815 (with encls.), CGH.F.R., XIII; although the Company itself in later years was to fall foul of other Navigation Laws applied at the Cape — Luson to Jas. Dart (Company Secretary), 5 March 1821, CGH.F.R., IX — the Agency records make no mention of any dispute involving a "Country" ship built and registered in India

71. cf. C.H.B.E., Vol. VIII, pp. 231-232. It was only in 1823 that goods of Eastern origin, re-exported from the Cape, were put on an equal footing with articles exported to Britain from the East direct — Order in Council, 19 Sept. 1823, Recs.C.C., XVII, pp. 91-93.

consignment of printed cotton fabrics from Fort William,<sup>72</sup> and, after hearing details of the statutory changes, he still hoped that these goods would "soon arrive" as they were "much wanted".<sup>73</sup> By the middle of 1814, although he had resolved to suspend further indents until the effects of the liberalized system could be properly assessed,<sup>74</sup> the Agent was reporting that, in spite of

"the Change occasioned by the New Charter, the Sales continue pretty much as usual, & hitherto nothing of any consequence has been imported from India by individuals."<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, Pringle expected most local merchants to find that orders placed through the Agency would prove more convenient than direct private indents.<sup>76</sup>

The Bengal authorities, however, were much less optimistic. The goods ordered the previous year had been duly purchased, but despatch to the Cape had been delayed through difficulties in procuring tonnage; in the interim, it was deemed prudent to try to get rid of the articles, but the Board of Trade discovered that they could not be disposed of in Calcutta itself except at a heavy loss. Eventually, it was resolved to send the consignment to London in view of

"the late favourable change of affairs in Europe and the demand which the Board observes is known to exist there for every description of piece-goods..."

Yet it is significant to note that these items originally destined for the Cape market were now to be labelled "inferior — ready-made Bazaar purchases" so as not to prove "injurious to the character of the Hon. Company's goods".<sup>77</sup>

By the beginning of 1815 the Company's officials at Fort William had swung round to believe that the impediments of the Navigation Laws were likely to limit severely the participation

72. The two main items of which the Colony was "now in great want, none remaining in the Company's stores", were chintzes (20,000 pieces ordered) and sannoes (5,000 pieces) — Pringle to Lord Minto & Council, 20 Sept. 1813, CGH.P.R., XIX.

73. Pringle to Ricketts, 9 April 1814, CGH.P.R., XX.

74. Pringle to Ricketts, 5 May 1814, and to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 22 May 1814, CGH.P.R., XI.

75. Pringle to Ramsay, 14 June 1814, CGH.P.R., IV.

76. "Schedule of Rates charged by the East India Company for the Management of Goods Imported by Private Merchants", 20 Aug. 1814, Cape Town Gazette.

77. Board of Trade to Gov.-Gnl.-in-Council, 12 Aug. 1814; Trotter to Pringle, 23 Aug. 1814; Sub-Export Warehouse Keeper to Board of Trade, 14 Sept. 1814; Trotter to Pringle, 27 Sept. 1814 — CGH.P.R., XIII.

of private merchants in the India-Cape trade; accordingly, Pringle was advised to

"take measures to secure from Bengal any articles necessary for the use of the Colony, which it is requisite should be regularly imported into the Cape and the supply of which cannot be left to depend on the casual speculations of Individuals."<sup>78</sup>

But neither the Calcutta authorities nor the Agent himself had set sufficient store on the Cape traders' ability to by-pass successfully the more galling restrictions in the Acts of Trade, and during the second half of that year stocks of Eastern produce were being regularly acquired, to be disposed of quite openly from private warehouses to the public.<sup>79</sup> And, in the long run, the Agency's own indents from the East were to be completely overshadowed by goods imported directly on private account: in 1821, for instance, the custom-house valuation of Company indents (including teas) amounted to less than 300,000 rixdollars, whereas private traders during that year imported Eastern articles valued at more than 1,250,000 rds.<sup>80</sup>

That the Agency continued to indent from Calcutta at all was due to the pressing need for local funds with which to purchase Cape supplies for St. Helena,<sup>81</sup> and Pringle was sufficient of an optimist to believe that

"notwithstanding the open trade, there is every expectation such articles will be disposed of to advantage..."<sup>82</sup>

Paradoxically, therefore, although the Colony's foreign exchange position had, if anything, deteriorated further,<sup>83</sup> the revised charter, coupled with the steady upswing in the Agency's exports to St. Helena, brought about a notable change in the Company's balance of trade with the Cape; and the resittance

78. Trotter to Pringle, 28 Feb. 1815, CGH.F.R., XIII.

79. See, for example, the advertisements of A. Watts (29 July), Anyot & Co. (26 Aug.), Wm. Robertson (16 Sept.), Sbden & Watts (14 Oct.), and W. Fergusson (11 Nov.) — Cape Town Gazette.

80. W. S. Bird, op. cit., p. 324; Teenstra, op. cit., p. 271.

81. In 1815 Pringle estimated that at least 200,000 rds. annually were required for this purpose — Pringle to Ricketts, 9 May 1815, CGH.F.R., XX; but the subsequent arrival of Napoleon and his entourage must have raised this amount by at least 50 p.c.

82. Ineson to Court of Directors (but in which he expressed Pringle's views), 14 June 1815, CGH.F.R., IIA.

83. P. Warden Grant, op. cit., p. 77.

problem, which for so long had plagued Pringle,<sup>84</sup> automatically resolved itself after 1815 — with smaller indents from the East and larger outlays on Colonial produce, there were no surplus rixdollars left over to be converted into sterling bills on London.

As regards the still-reserved China trade, as soon as the details of the Circuitous Trade Act had been published locally, the Agent requested

"that very strict orders may be given to the Principal Officers of His Majesty's Customs to prevent any illegal traffic in Tea, as the due enforcement of the regulations becomes more imperious in proportion to the greater facility which is now likely to be afforded to their evasion."<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, with funds urgently needed to purchase the supplies for St. Helena, Bengal was advised to refrain from licensing tea shipments by private Indian merchants,<sup>86</sup> otherwise

"a considerable reduction in the Company's sales here must necessarily be the consequence."<sup>87</sup>

Such shipments, however, were to remain negligible while the Company held the Canton monopoly, and over the next two decades the question of tea imports became the main bone of contention between the Agency and local merchants (now effectively organised into the Commercial Exchange).<sup>88</sup>

The ultimate effect, therefore, of parliamentary action in 1813 was to whittle down the scope of the Agency's functions. As a commercial institution, its chief concern became the China trade, in which silks and nankeens supplanted the tea indents, with sugar and rice as dunnage, while irregular imports of Bengal piece-goods served merely to top up the funds for the St. Helena supplies;<sup>89</sup> and even in that respect, the Agency changed more and

84. See above, Ch. IV, (11)(d), cf. W.W.Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

85. Pringle to G.Bird, 18 April 1814, *CGH.F.R.*, IX. The port authorities were not always very vigilant in this respect in subsequent years, and on one occasion it was alleged that they "permitted an uncollected landing and disposal" of the *Lady Flora's* cargo, "although she was unprovided with any manifest duly authenticated at the Port of Canton" — Luson to Donkin (Acting Governor), 10 March 1821, *CGH.F.R.*, XXIII.

86. See above, Ch. IV, (1)(a). James Scott & Co., of Calcutta, were especially interested in developing such a traffic — Scott & Co. to Trotter, 18 Jan. 1815, *CGH.F.R.*, XIII.

87. Luson to Trotter, 30 Aug. 1815, *CGH.F.R.*, XI.

88. Immanuel, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-85.

89. See Agency advertisements of sales from the Company's stores, *Cape Town Gazette*, 15 Feb., 29 March, 27 Sept., 1817; 6 Jan., 31 March, 21 July, 1821; 23 March, 7 Dec., 1822.

more into a co-ordinating body for private traders who wished to send goods to the island, exporting diminishing quantities on its own account;<sup>90</sup> in general, however, after 1815 it had very much less influence than previously on directing or restraining the activities of Cape Town's business community. The traditional task of seeing to the welfare of Company vessels in Cape ports remained unaltered, while there were occasions, too, when the Agency was plunged into the flurry and bustle of arranging the despatch to India of segments of the local garrison to reinforce the Company's army.<sup>91</sup> In this truncated form the Agency was kept functioning until the expiration of the revised charter; but in 1835, once the China trade had been thrown open and the Canton fleets disposed of, John Company ceased to maintain any representative at the Cape.

#### (v) The Cape as an Entrepôt

Ten years before the outbreak of the American War of Independence, the free port system had been established in the British West Indies, where it was to flourish for nearly half a century.<sup>92</sup> The broad effect of this arrangement was to admit small vessels from neighbouring foreign colonies into certain

90. Luson to Dart, 16 May 1819, CGH.F.R., IV.

91. For example, the outbreak of the war against Nepal (Thompson & Garratt, *op. cit.*, Bk. III, ch. vii) precipitated a crisis at the Cape reminiscent of the Madras armament emergency, and throughout June-July, 1815, the Agency was embroiled in the feverish preparations to embark the 72nd Regiment — Luson to Cobb, 7 July 1815, CGH.F.R., VIII, and numerous letters at this time from the Agency to Osmond, the Simonstown shipwright, CGH.F.R., XI; cf. Moira to Somerset, 9 Feb. 1815, Recs.O.C., I, pp. 249-251; Cape Town Gazette, 8 July 1815, (shipping notes).

Overall strategic considerations had not altered very much since the days of Macartney and the First Occupation: writing at this time to the Chairman of the Company, Somerset expressed the view that "the great importance" of the Cape to Britain consisted "chiefly in its being the outwork of India"; hence, there was a strong case for stationing additional troops in the Colony "ready to meet the emergencies from time to time arising in the Eastern Empire" — Somerset to Niphistone, 19 June 1815, CGH.F.R., IV.

92. The main free port acts were: 5 Geo. III, c. 49 (1765), which related principally to the French trade with Dominica and the Spanish trade with Jamaica; 27 Geo. III, c. 27 (1787), in which the range of British exports was extended, and new ports were added, one in Grenada and one in New Providence; 30 Geo. III, c. 29 (1790), whereby restrictions on the size of vessels entering the free ports were removed; 37 Geo. III, c. 77 (1797), which allowed Trinidad to develop as an entrepôt for the Spanish mainland colonies; 45 Geo. III, c. 57 (1805), which consolidated previous statutes and extended the system to other islands.

West Indian ports with the privilege of trading in specified categories of goods. Far from departing from the basic principles of the Navigation Acts, the system was rather a further elaboration of them: the commodities imported were complementary to those produced in Britain and the colonies and did not compete with them, the goods exported were restricted mainly to British manufactured articles which would not otherwise have found outlets in foreign colonial markets, while the carrying trade between the mother country and the islands remained firmly in British hands.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, a traffic of considerable proportions was promoted, and by 1791 the value of Jamaica's imports alone, under the free port system, has been estimated at £350,000,<sup>94</sup> although such activities were regarded as "contraband in the eyes of every conscientious Spanish official".<sup>95</sup>

The idea that the Cape might be developed into a free port, serving the West as a distributing base for Eastern products, probably owed a great deal to such successful experiments in the Caribbean. As early as 1795 a serious suggestion had been made to the War Department that the Colony should become an emporium for the Americas in Asiatic goods,<sup>96</sup> while Baron van Pallandt during the Batavian era had also considered the potentialities of Table Bay as an entrepôt;<sup>97</sup> and certainly the image of the settlement as a vital link joining the Orient to South America and Europe in one vast commercial triangle had played some part in the British re-occupation of 1806.<sup>98</sup> However, there was little prospect of such schemes materialising while the Company controlled the Colony's trading contacts with the East: not only had Pringle clamped down firmly on re-exports to Brazil,<sup>99</sup> but

93. Frances Armytage, The Free Port System in the British West Indies (London, 1953), ch. 1; F.E. Hyde, "The Growth of Liverpool's Trade", Merseyside, A Scientific Survey (ed. Wilfred Smith, Liverpool, 1953), pp. 157-158; W.L. Burn, The British West Indies (London, 1951), pp. 32-33; Sir Alan Burns, History of the British West Indies (London, 1954), pp. 516-517, 596-597; Schuyler, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

94. Armytage, ibid., Table O, p. 157.

95. D.B. Goebel, "British Trade to the Spanish Colonies, 1796-1823", American Historical Review, Vol. XLIII (1938), p. 290.

96. See above, Ch. I, n.45.

97. See above, Ch. II, n.9; cf. Recs.C.C., X, p. 222.

98. See above, Ch. II, n.25.

99. See above, Ch. II, (111)(d).

he had also staunchly resisted all proposals for the Cape to act the very limited rôle of entrepôt between the captured French Islands and Britain itself.<sup>100</sup>

Yet, once the details of the 1813 legislation became known, the Agent was the first to admit that

"the Cape is likely to become a great depot for Indian and China produce of all kinds but Tea..."<sup>101</sup>

That Governor Cradock had been thinking along the same lines is suggested by his reply to a farewell address from the merchants of Cape Town,<sup>102</sup> when he declared, optimistically:

"His Majesty's Government has lately granted such signal advantages that every commercial prospect lies before you, and the Cape of Good Hope may become the station that nature seemed to mark out in her destiny."<sup>103</sup>

In Bengal, too, there was the same feeling: since all outward and homeward bound ships henceforth were to be allowed (in most circumstances) to trade with the Cape, such a state of affairs would

"in all probability render the Colony a great entrepôt for Indian and European produce..."<sup>104</sup>

Once preferences for Cape wines had been introduced and the September, 1814, Order in Council had clarified some of the legal obscurities, Thomas Courtenay also came out strongly in favour of the free port idea: if the Navigation Laws were modified in the Colony's favour, foreign vessels (he believed) would have less incentive to proceed further eastwards, and, by paying regular visits to Table Bay to collect Asiatic produce, would help at the same time to alleviate the settlement's external exchange difficulties. Even if things did not work out according to plan, such an indulgence would be nothing more than "a harmless experiment".<sup>105</sup>

In fact, experimentation was already in progress, Lord Somerset, soon after his arrival at the Cape, having taken the first step in the direction of creating free port facilities. The

100. Fringle to Alexander, 11 Nov. 1811, CGH.F.R., XIX.

101. Fringle to Ramsay, 30 April 1814, CGH.F.R., VII.

102. Rees.C.C., I, pp. 103-104.

103. Ibid., p. 105 (30 April 1814).

104. Trotter to Fringle, 12 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

105. Courtenay to Maj.-Genl. Buxbury (Bathurst's secretary), 29 Dec. 1814, Rees.C.C., I, pp. 221-224; cf. C.H.B.C., Vol. VIII, p. 231.

Company's Agent, during June, 1814, was asked by the new Governor for his views on a draft proclamation aimed at

"relieving the Merchants of this Place from the duties now payable on the export of goods, wares, & merchandize coming to the Colony from the Eastward, under the Provisions of the late Act..."

The scheme envisaged allowing Asiatic produce to be bonded with the Customs (for a maximum period of twelve months) and subsequently re-exported duty-free; in the interim, should the trader decide against re-exporting, the articles in question would be released for local sale on payment of the normal duties.<sup>106</sup> While raising no objections on the Company's behalf, Pringle offered some constructive criticism:

"...the period of 12 months appears to me rather too short to admit of such Speculations as the distance of the places from hence may require to which Merchants may be expected to trade; and further, that the intentions of His Excellency will probably prove altogether ineffectual unless the provisions of the proclamation extend to what is ultimately to be done with goods remaining under the charge of the Custom House when the limited time shall have expired."<sup>107</sup>

Accordingly, when the plan was made public,<sup>108</sup> the limit had been extended to eighteen months, the procedure to be adopted at the end of the period was clearly specified,<sup>109</sup> and the stage appeared to be set for the rapid development of the Cape as the centre of an extensive transit trade.<sup>110</sup>

106. C. Bird to Pringle (with enclosures), 17 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XIII.

107. Pringle to C. Bird, 18 June 1814, CGH.F.R., XX.

108. Cape Town Gazette, 25 June 1814; also in Recs.C.C., X, pp. 125-127.

109. "But at the expiration of the eighteen months aforesaid, such proportion of the Goods, Wares, or Merchandize as shall not have been exported, but shall remain in the Stores of His Majesty's Customs, shall be charged with the usual Colonial Duties on Imports from the Eastward; and the Owners thereof, or Persons interested therein, shall be called upon forthwith to remove the same, paying the usual expences, which shall have been incurred, in default whereof, after due notice, His Majesty's Collector, or the Chief Officer of the Custom Department, shall put such Goods, Wares, or Merchandize, up to Public Sale, on account of those interested therein, and account to them for the proceeds thereof; deducting, however, the aforesaid customary Duties and Expences."

110. Pringle to Ramsay, 14 July 1814, CGH.F.R., IV; Pringle to Governor General-in-Council, Port William, 17 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XX. Yet, even at this stage, the Foreign Office, while conducting peace negotiations with Holland, remained convinced that the Colony was "of no real commercial value" — Castlereagh to Earl Clancarty (British ambassador at the Hague), 30 July 1814, Recs.C.C., I, p. 145.

In actual fact, far less advantage was taken of Somerset's duty-free re-export scheme than anticipated — a phenomenon observed by later historians,<sup>111</sup> who fail, however, to account for the plan's dismal results. Yet the reasons why the Colony's commercial status was not enhanced become fairly obvious if the prevailing circumstances are carefully scrutinised. Since all goods from the East, with the exception of tea, could now be imported into the United Kingdom without much difficulty, and long-established agency houses at Calcutta and elsewhere were only too ready to handle such indents, British merchants could derive little benefit from using the Cape as an entrepôt. As far as local traders were concerned, although duties were avoided, there were other considerable expenses attached to the landing and re-exportation of such cargoes which could not be saved: double freights had to be arranged, wharfage and warehouse charges met, and a whole array of costly legal documents drawn up.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, so many changes had been recently made in the maritime laws relating to the Colony that a good deal of obscurity surrounded the topic; and, in the absence of expert legal advice available locally, Cape merchants were chary of participating in a scheme where some inadvertent infringement of the regulations would subject them to heavy penalties and confiscations.<sup>113</sup> Even if such a merchant overcame his timidity, he might find himself still precluded from the project by the minimum tonnage clause, since most Cape-owned vessels did not exceed 200 tons.<sup>114</sup> It would also appear that the settlement's Customs authorities were by no means anxious to handle the additional burden of accepting and re-issuing bonded articles, partly owing to the fear it might lead to an extension of smuggling activities (on which score the subordinate revenue clerks

111. Theal, *Hist. S.Af. since 1795*, Vol. II, p. 34; Brewer, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38; N.H. de Kock, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

112. See comments by the Commissioners of Enquiry, *Financial Report*, Sept. 1826, *Recs.C.C.*, XXVII, p. 450.

113. Somerset himself recognised this drawback, and urged the Colonial Secretary to have the numerous decrees clarified and consolidated, thereby relieving "the doubts which at present are so embarrassing to all concerned" — Somerset to Bathurst, 30 Oct. 1815, *Recs.C.C.*, X, p. 365.

114. W.W.Bird, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131; Courtenay to Robt. Wilmot (Bathurst's secretary), 20 Feb. 1823, *Recs.C.C.*, XV, pp. 282-283.

were themselves not always above suspicion),<sup>115</sup> but mainly because they were over-burdened already with enforcing the many petty and troublesome restrictions of the Navigation Acts, the detailed provisions of which they frequently did not possess.<sup>116</sup>

Consequently, with British traders uninterested in Table Bay as a free port, and Cape merchants hampered gravely in their use of such facilities, there remained only foreign shippers; but, in that direction, Somerset's scheme came up against clauses in the Navigation Laws which still prohibited foreign vessels from trading in Eastern goods at the Cape.<sup>117</sup> Although the Governor argued vigorously against this limitation, reasoning along lines similar to those used by Courtenay,<sup>118</sup> he had to contend with a Committee for Trade which remained staunchly mercantilist in outlook and believed, in any case, that more than enough had already been done for the Colony through the granting of preferences on its wines.<sup>119</sup> If the free ports of Jamaica and Trinidad opened up valuable markets for British manufactures, there was little to suggest that the Cape, by being allowed to welcome the ships of all nations, would confer like benefits — in fact, such a step might well nullify some British maritime advantages in the carrying trade between Indian and Euro-American waters.<sup>120</sup>

115. Somerset to Bathurst, 5 June 1814, Rees.C.C., X, p. 119.

116. Collector (Chs. Blair) and Comptroller (W.W. Bird) of Customs to Alexander, 6 May 1818, Rees.C.C., XI, p. 484.

117. By an Order in Council adopted on 1 October, 1811 (which took effect from 12 April, 1812), some of the principles embodied in 12 Car. II, c. 18 (1660) were applied, all trade to and from the Colony being restricted to British vessels (Rees.C.C., VIII, pp. 157-158) "in consequence of the number of Foreign Ships employed in that Trade" (Bathurst to Cradock, 29 July 1812, ibid., p. 474).

118. "...I trust however that the permitting Neutrals to trade here for India produce may yet become a subject of consideration with His Majesty's Government. The advantages that would result from that measure to this place are incalculable, and I should hope that it might be considered of more than equal benefit to Great Britain by conducting, more powerfully than any other measure, to prevent (by rendering unnecessary) the resort of Foreigners to India. The Merchants of both the Americas... the Portuguese, Spanish, and those of other European States having settlements on the other side of the Atlantic, would exclusively come to this place for India produce, and would cheerfully allow an ample profit to the trade here upon their Eastern Imports, in order to save the protracted and often dangerous voyage to India." — Somerset to Bathurst, 11 March 1815, Rees.C.C., I, p. 267.

119. Leck to Goulburn, 6 Feb. 1816, Rees.C.C., XI, pp. 69-70.

120. This kind of reasoning was to prevail as late as 1857: "...with respect to trade it has always been admitted that an imperial legislature has the right to... restrict a colony in its commerce with other nations" — Lord John Russell's speech on Canada, 16 Jan. 1857 [quoted by H.J. Bonn, The Crumbling of Empire (London, 1938), p. 93].

Thus, although further facilities were given to the re-exportation of Eastern goods by an Act published at the Cape in September, 1815,<sup>121</sup> these could not amount to very much while the ban on foreign ships remained operative. A newspaper campaign to

"Make the Cape a free port for the nations of Europe, and... banish North America from the Indian Seas..."<sup>122</sup>

and further badgering by Courtenay,<sup>123</sup> led eventually to a partial lifting of the restrictions on non-British vessels,<sup>124</sup> but as late as 1822 Table Bay was still not regarded by its own merchants as "a real free port".<sup>125</sup> Hence, in spite of confident expectations, the waning of John Company's influence over the Colony's commercial affairs had resulted in no significant upsurge of Eastern entrepôt business.

#### (vi) John Pringle (1769-1815) and his niche in History

The Scottish Border surname of Pringle was to figure prominently in the story of the 1820 Settlers,<sup>126</sup> but the Company Agent was not directly related to or connected with that emigrant family. John Pringle's forbears had been prominent men of Selkirk: his grandfather, after representing that county in Parliament, had been raised to the bench of the Court of Session as Lord Haining, and his father, before succeeding to the family estate in 1754, had made an ample fortune as a merchant in Madeira; but John Pringle Sr., though "a most useful and public spirited county gentleman", never married, so that the future Agent, born in 1769 at the family seat close to the edge of the Strick Forest, was a natural son.<sup>127</sup>

121. 54 Geo. III, c. 10 (1814): "...to make further Provision respecting the Duties payable upon East India Goods, and to allow Bond to be given for Payment of the Duties upon such Goods, when imported by private Traders;" Government Advertisement, 2 Sept. 1815, Cape Town Gazette.

122. The Times, 18 June 1819, Recs.C.C., XII, p. 234.

123. See, especially, Courtenay to Goulburn, 18 Aug. 1819, Recs.C.C., XII, pp. 287-289.

124. Order in Council, 12 July 1820, Recs.C.C., XIII, pp. 181-184; see also comments thereon by Haining, op. cit., pp. 434-435.

125. W.W.Bird, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

126. In the party from Roxburghshire, led by the poet-journalist Thomas, there was in fact a younger brother, John, who subsequently built the Presbyterian church near Adelaide — H., W., & J. Pringle, op. cit., Ch. VI.

127. R.E.H., pp. 173-176.

Two or three years before the essayist, Charles Lamb, obtained a place in the Accountant's Office at East India House, John Pringle joined the Company's service as a clerk, and almost immediately thereafter (1790-93) had a short spell of duty in India<sup>128</sup> — probably at Calcutta, since he was most familiar with the fabrics and other productions of the Bengal region. When John Pringle Sr. died in 1792, the Haining lands passed to a grand-nephew, but the base-born child had not been treated ungenerously:

"In the first place I bequeath to my reputed natural son John Pringle, now in India as a Writer in the Hon. East India Co.'s service, and to his children or assigns..., £500 sterling, which I leave to my said natural son as a remembrance of me, besides the £2,000 advanced by me to him, and over and above the £10,000 sterling lately remitted by me to him in India by the hands of David Scott in London, and over and above my advances for his education and outfit; ...and all the rest of my estate within Gt. Britain, Madeira, or elsewhere to the said Mark Pringle of Fairmile and his heirs or assigns."<sup>129</sup>

Almost as soon as he had returned from the East, Pringle was instructed to take up the newly-established post at the Cape, and his appointment to such a highly responsible position at such short notice and at the age of twenty-four suggests that he was not without good friends or possibly relations with influence in Leadenhall Street.<sup>130</sup>

128. Pringle to Ramsay, 22 Nov. 1810, CGH.F.R., VII.

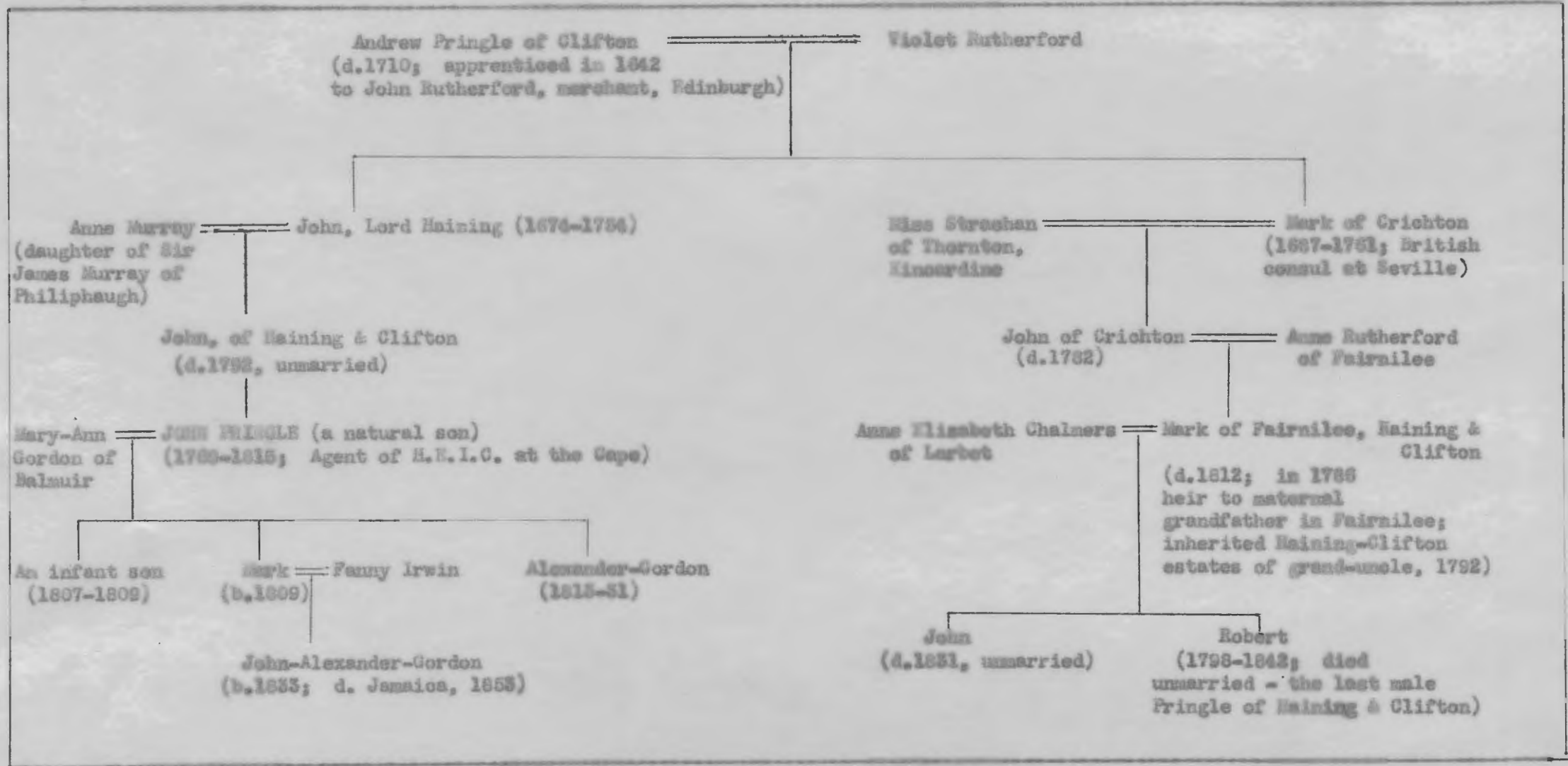
129. Will and Inventory of John Pringle of Haining and Clifton, 25 Dec. 1790 — Books of Testaments, Council and Session Records, General Register House, Edinburgh.

The main legatee, Mark Pringle, was trained for the bar and became Clerk of the Courts Martial, Scotland, and subsequently (1786-1802) was M.P. for Selkirkshire; he died at Bath, aged 58, in 1812 — R.F.H., p. 178.

130. It seems probable that a kinsman, Alexander Pringle (1747-1827), had something to do with John's sudden promotion: Alexander had been a prominent Senior Merchant in the Company's employ at Masulipatam before retiring to his estate at Whytbank in 1790; at that time, the system of patronage in the Company was such that appointments were freely bought and sold, often with the Directors' connivance, and advertisements for writerships made regular appearances in the newspapers — R.F.H., pp. 241-242, 333; Burke's Landed Gentry (London, 1939), pp. 1853-54; Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Abuses of Patronage of the English East India Company (Parliamentary Papers, 1809), pp. 2-8, 17. Sir Walter Scott was a close friend of Alexander Pringle, and refers to him and his two sons (both of whom were to obtain writerships in Bengal) in the Introduction to Canto 2 of Marmion.

JOHN PRINGLE'S FAMILY TREE

(Simplified and abridged; data from R.P.H.)



During the Agent's first spell in the Colony he also served as Commissary General, a job which embraced a variety of tasks: he negotiated local bread and meat contracts and procured grain from the interior districts; he checked the accounts and vouchers of the General Hospital, and made payments to the "artificers" engaged on the public works; he investigated thefts from Government store-rooms and had much to do with the management of the experimental farm at Groenskloof<sup>131</sup> — none of which duties interfered with his work on the Company's behalf. The Barnards' jottings help to fill out the picture of Pringle's social life during this period, which is fortunate, since business memoranda, account books, and official despatches are not very promising sources for biography.<sup>132</sup> While back in Britain on leave, he married a Scottish girl, Mary-Ann Gordon, in London, January, 1807.<sup>133</sup>

Skimpy bits of information which can be pieced together from incidental references dotted about the Factory Records, supplemented here and there by occasional scraps in the local Gazette, provide almost all that is known about John Pringle's private life during the Second Occupation. When the Agent returned to the settlement, he was accompanied by his wife and their first son, but this period of service was to be an unhappy one domestically: the infant died in April, 1809, and Mrs. Pringle was soon a chronic invalid.<sup>134</sup> The Agent himself suffered periodic bouts of severe illness, the state of his

131. Letters and documents in B.O.9, passim.

132. See above, Ch. I, (x).

It is quite likely that Lady Anne made a sketch of Pringle during the First Occupation, as she did of so many other local personalities; such a portrait may still be extant, but the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, who owns most of the surviving drawings, has been unable to identify it among his collection.

No documents have been found in the India Office Library which shed any further light on Pringle's personal background; searches in the Public Record Office unearthed a number of references to him among the early War Office archives ("In-Letters, Cape of Good Hope, W.O.1/13782), but these relate solely to his official duties.

133. R.P.H., p. 336 (quoting The Scots Magazine).

134. See above, Ch. II, n.62; Luson to Ramsay, 14 April 1809, CGH.F.R., I; Luson to Ramsay, 14 Aug. 1813, CGH.F.R., VII (in which the Assistant Agent mentions "the extreme distress Mr. Pringle now suffers, occasioned by the dangerous and almost hopeless state of Mrs. Pringle's health").

The Pringles had two more sons, Mark and Alexander-Gordon, both of whom subsequently returned to Britain with their widowed mother, Mary-Ann having survived her spouse. — cf. genealogy, above, p. 210a.

health becoming progressively worse, in spite of enforced rest-cures at the Caledon Hot Baths, and the purchase of a small estate, "Cowfold", near the Camp Ground, Rondebosch, "away from summer heat".<sup>135</sup> The end was very near when, in mid-June, 1815, Luson informed the Lombard Bank authorities that Pringle was too sick to continue "bearing the responsibility of his official duties",<sup>136</sup> and a few days thereafter the Assistant Agent communicated to London that,

"...after very great suffering, Mr. Pringle departed this life at one o'clock in the morning... He had himself been some days prepared for such an event, & had desired me to attend in future to the official duties of his office..."<sup>137</sup>

A brief notice in the next Gazette gave Pringle's age as forty-six,<sup>138</sup> and the disposal of his home and personal effects over the following weeks revealed that the Agent had been a man of substance, with elegant tastes.<sup>139</sup> After a decent interval, Luson put in an application for the vacant post,<sup>140</sup> to which the Directors gave their approval,<sup>141</sup> while Mister was promoted to the better-paid rank of "confidential clerk".<sup>142</sup>

135. Luson to Alexander, 19 Jan. 1809, CGH.F.R., XVIII; Luson to Ramsay, 14 April 1810, CGH.F.R., VII; Luson to Farquhar, 16 Dec. 1811, to Bentson, 15 Jan. 1812, to Wilks, 16 Oct. 1813, and to President of Lombard Bank, 24 Dec. 1813, CGH.F.R., XIX; Luson to Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton, 20 July 1814, CGH.F.R., XI; Luson to Cobb, 13 Aug. 1814, CGH.F.R., VII.

136. Luson to President, Lombard Bank, 20 June 1815, CGH.F.R., XI.

137. Luson to Cobb, 24 June 1815, CGH.F.R., VIII.

138. Cape Town Gazette, 1 July 1815.

139. Among his possessions were ornate chinaware, "a grand upright Piano Forte", and "elegant household furniture", while lists of wine and a catalogue of books were available to prospective purchasers; from the stables of Cowfold, carriages, horses, saddlery, and other equestrian equipage were offered for sale, all in "capital" condition; the homestead itself was in a state of "thorough repair" and set in "valuable and fertile" grounds — auction notices, 8, 15, 22 July, Cape Town Gazette.

140. "It is with great deference that I beg leave to request, when the proposed arrangements for settling the office of Company's Agent in this Colony shall come before the Hon'ble Court, that the length of my service in the Company's employ may be taken into consideration" — Luson to Court of Directors, 7 Aug. 1815, CGH.F.R., VIII.

141. Cobb to Luson, 14 Feb. 1816, CGH.F.R., IV; Luson to Court of Directors, 18 May 1816, CGH.F.R., VIII.

Joseph Luson died in January, 1822, and was succeeded as Company Agent by William Hawkins, an energetic personality who was active in the campaign for a free press, chairman of a committee to improve the quality of Cape wines, and a collaborator with J.B. Ebdon in the scheme to establish a private bank; long after the Agency had been wound up, Hawkins was appointed (1851) a member of the Colony's legislative council — Recs.C.C., XIV, p. 263; XVIII, p. 53; XXV, pp. 372-373; Inselsan, op. cit., pp. 62-63; Theal, Hist. S.Af. since 1722, Vol. III, p. 126.

142. Luson to Cobb, 20 May 1816, CGH.F.R., IXA.

What manner of man was John Pringle? From the Agency records, although the evidence is slender, it is possible to infer certain reasonably clear impressions. That he was a conscientious servant of the Company is pretty obvious; in spite of the very poor state of his health, he continued to carry out his duties almost to the end with remarkable fortitude. That he was of a sympathetic and benevolent disposition is indicated by his treatment of his own underlings in the Agency office, by his concern for the wretched stranded lascars, and even by an advertisement for a gardener, in which he promised that

"any one who can be well recommended will meet with good encouragement".<sup>143</sup>

His despatches reveal a person of sound education, with an extensive knowledge of the Company's affairs, and any lack of specialised legal training (a defect which he always readily admitted) was not much of a drawback to one who instinctively tended to view the problems at hand through juristic eyes, displaying the irritating reluctance of a learned lawyer to pronounce clearcut opinions on dubious issues. Yet, though a stickler for legal proprieties, and inclined to be a little pompous in this respect on occasion, he was not averse to submitting disputes to arbitration, nor was he unreasonable in his handling of visiting captains and alleged charter infringements.<sup>144</sup>

Under the circumstances of early British rule at the Cape, Pringle had many attributes of an ideal Company representative: in running the Agency's own day-to-day affairs, he displayed frequently a shrewd sense of business acumen; he never hesitated to point out that his job was not to instigate policy, but merely to carry out instructions which, more often than not, were vague and ambiguous; but, while he remained fearful of creating precedents through bestowing particular indulgences, it was an attitude mitigated by tactful handling of local officials and merchants, a dry sense of humour, and an elastic interpretation of the limits of his own powers.

143. Cape Town Gazette, 26 June 1813.

144. Perhaps the most notable example of this was his lenient treatment of Capt. Nicholls during the Union dispute -- see above, Ch. III, (iii)(a).

What redounds most to Pringle's credit is that, in spite of his official position (frequently an embarrassing and unpopular one), he genuinely was concerned about promoting the Colony's material welfare, being especially anxious to encourage trading activities where there was no danger of overlapping with the Company's own preserves; and, even if his efforts in this direction (such as the wine consignments to Leadenhall Street and the despatch of Spanish ewes to St. Helena) did not produce spectacular results, any sort of improvement was something of an achievement since there was room for so much. Nor were his interests confined to commerce, and Cradock gave recognition to the Agent's knowledge of local conditions when he appointed him to the Agricultural Advisory Board;<sup>145</sup> moreover, that Governor freely acknowledged the energies expended by Pringle on trying to enhance

"the prosperity of this Colony, to which the Colonists can make no further return than in what you now fully enjoy, their best affections and respect."<sup>146</sup>

Somerset, too, was to speak of "the many exertions" which the Agent had "constantly made for the interests of the Settlement".<sup>147</sup> However, his friend, colleague, and successor, Joseph Luson, was to provide the most appropriate epitaph, when, on reporting Pringle's death to the Directors, he added:

"It is quite unnecessary for me to say anything regarding the public or private conduct of a man so highly and deservedly esteemed in both respects..."<sup>148</sup>

Thus, although the figure of John Pringle was not quite in the forefront of the Cape scene during the official occupations, it was one which hovered vigorously in the middle-distance, its influence being reflected in many facets of the Colony's emergent economic life, and it is deserving of more than mere honourable mention in any study of that period. If this survey has managed to indicate the nature of Pringle's niche in history, at least one useful purpose will have been served.

145. Government Advertisement, 16 Oct. 1812, Recs.C.C., IX, p. 2.

146. Cradock to Pringle, 10 March 1813, CGH.P.R., XII.

147. Somerset to Pringle, 21 Sept. 1814, CGH.P.R., XIII.

148. Luson to Cobb, 24 June 1815, CGH.P.R., VIII.

(vii) Summary and Conclusions

When the Directors of the English East India Company resolved to establish an Agency at the Cape of Good Hope, they had been motivated entirely by self-interest: (1) by having a representative stationed at Table Bay, proper arrangements could be made for sending regular supplies to the Company's own island-base of St. Helena, which was not self-supporting, but, because of the direction of prevailing winds and currents, was a highly important landfall, especially for homeward-bound fleets; (2) it would be extremely convenient, too, to keep a man on the spot who could assume responsibility for the revictualling, refitting, and other problems connected with the movement of Company shipping around the southern shores of Africa; (3) moreover, a control point at Cape Town would help to bolster up the monopoly of the Eastern Seas by ensuring that the Colony under British rule did not become a clandestine outlet for Asiatic produce.

In return for such concessions, John Company promised to furnish the settlement with regular supplies of Eastern articles at reasonable prices. It was an obligation undertaken with little enthusiasm: the local market was too small to yield voluminous profits, it was a cumbersome business to arrange for special shipments or to re-route the regular fleets, while, if the position was not watched carefully, Lendenhall Street's monopoly could be exposed to all sorts of subterfuges; consequently, the desultory and very inadequate arrangements made to meet the colonists' needs must be viewed in the light of these circumstances. In such a situation, the Agent, torn between loyalty to his employers and the frequently just complaints of local officials and merchants, and genuinely anxious to cater for the Colony's wants, found himself in an invidious position.

The Cape market for Eastern goods fell into four main categories: teas, spices, piece-goods, and miscellaneous articles (of which timber and sugar were the most important items). It was the absolute monopoly of the China tea trade which seemed to vex the settlers most, and until 1812-13 there

can be no doubt that the Colony did suffer from an acute shortage of that beverage as a direct result of the Company's stranglehold. But thereafter, until the abrogation of the charter in 1833, it would seem that, as regards actual supplies available, tea drinkers at the Cape were certainly no worse off than their counterparts in the British Isles.<sup>149</sup> Nonetheless, Cape imbibers appear to have paid more per pound than most drinkers elsewhere,<sup>150</sup> and in the early 'twenties it was being ~~claimed~~ that the Company's

"paltry retail sales, by vendue, are not guided by demand and supply; ...the agent fixes the minimum, and beyond that price the buyer must advance, be it what it may; and the value of tea...is guided by the moderation of the agent. ...nor is it overcharging the picture to assert, that the trade most destructive to the interest of this place, is that of the East India Company from the dominions of China, as now carried on."<sup>151</sup>

It can hardly be denied, therefore, that John Company did more than its fair share in creating a nation of coffee drinkers.

With the exception of pepper — regular and adequate supplies of which were available from 1812 onwards — the colonists were not heavy consumers of spice products. The Malay inhabitants, most of whom were still enslaved, were hardly in a position to influence local demand very markedly, while the winters were too mild to create any severe shortages of fresh meat — a problem tackled in severer climes during those pre-refrigeration days by spicing as a preservative. Thus, in this

149. Using the tael invoice value of teas despatched from Canton as a common basis for comparison, roundabout 1825, when the population of Britain was in the neighbourhood of sixteen million, something like 2/6d. worth of tea was available per head (teas arriving in London at that time averaged £2 million p.a.); the Cape, with a white population of roughly 50,000 in 1825, had an annual intake of tea invoiced at approximately £8,000, which made available more than 3/2d. worth of tea per head — Morse, Chronicles, IV, passim, contains the tea export figures; estimates for the British population are given by T.S. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution: 1760-1830 (London, 1948), pp. 2-3, and S.B. Clough, The Economic Development of Western Civilization (New York, 1959), pp. 241-242; the population figure for the Cape is a generous estimate.

150. See the views of Abraham Borradalle, Chairman of the Cape of Good Hope Trade Society, in Recs.C.C., XXI, pp. 138-139, and the comments by the Commissioners of Enquiry, ibid., XXVII, pp. 448-449, 468, XXXV, pp. 237-238.

151. W.W. Bird, op. cit., p. 127; cf. Isselman, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

respect, the settlement can scarcely be said to have suffered overmuch from the Company's trading monopoly.<sup>152</sup>

The erratic supply of piece-goods through the Agency did at first give cause for concern, since, besides a demand for more expensive materials on the part of the urban white settlers, there was a steady need for cheaper cotton textiles to clothe the Colony's slaves. Yet, even before the Charter Act had become effective, the position was steadily ameliorated by the swelling stream of British-made calicoes which started flowing towards the Cape.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, as already suggested,<sup>154</sup> the limitation of such imports from the East was not without some advantage to the Cape, for, once the restrictions had been removed and local merchants could satiate the market for exotic stuffs, the resultant annual debt to Indian shippers of more than one million rixdollars by no means helped to improve the Colony's foreign exchange condition.<sup>155</sup>

As regards the miscellaneous articles required from Eastern sources, the Company had on occasion actively hindered private traffic in such goods, while it did very little on its own account to overcome shortages. However, since new trading contacts tended to emerge out of the highly dynamic global war situation then prevailing, this problem eventually solved itself:

"The Hon. Lt. Governor in Council, Batavia, [ Pringle informed the Directors ] is anxious to encourage the sale of Java beams and planks at this Place,<sup>156</sup> and there are now good stocks of Rice from the island of Madagascar and De la Goa Bay; also available are abundant stores of Sugar and Coffee from the Isles of France..."<sup>157</sup>

He could have added that the Stoke-on-Trent potteries had rendered the Company's chinaware imports superfluous.<sup>158</sup>

152. Throughout the second half of 1813 the Agency attempted (apparently without much success) to get rid of accumulated stocks of preserved ginger — see numerous advertisements in the Cape Town Gazette (Aug.-Dec.); in 1825 total imports of spices and drugs from all sources (including pepper) amounted to £460 — Recs.C.C., XXIV, pp. 242-245.

153. By 1813 these textiles (sometimes styled "imitation India Piece Goods") were regularly on sale — e.g., advertisements of Ross & Twycross (30 Jan.), R. Ross & Co. (10 April), Ed. Smith (29 May), Boden & Watts (10 July), and M. Duncan (6 Nov.), Cape Town Gazette.

154. See above, Ch. IV, (1)(c).

155. Grant, op. cit., pp. 66-67; W. Bird, op. cit., pp. 125-126.

156. cf. Advertisement, Cape Town Gazette (suppl.), 29 Aug. 1814.

157. Pringle to Cobb, 17 Sept. 1814, CGR.F.R., IV.

158. See import values of British earthenware (1813-17) in Recs.C.C., XI, p. 294.

If, in any tentative assessment of Leadenhall Street's impact on the Cape economy during these early years of British rule, the assertion is accepted that the Company undoubtedly "handicapped the Colony in the development of its trade",<sup>159</sup> then, on the other hand, sight should not be lost of certain positive contributions, such as the facilitating of essential imports from Britain<sup>160</sup> and the building up of an export traffic to St. Helena. The settlement's commercial framework as it emerged from the Napoleonic Wars was at once strikingly different and curiously the same: there had been rapid growth in certain directions, especially in the rate of capital formation,<sup>161</sup> but, basically, it was still an era of "dreary ebb tide",<sup>162</sup> and the curtailment of the charter had not led to any remarkable transformation in trading status. Moreover, although the Company's privileged position until 1814 had meant that the local mercantile community was hedged around by numerous vexatious impediments which limited entrepreneurial energies, while the continuance of the tea monopoly remained a source of irritation thereafter, it is not unreasonable to infer from this survey that the Agency was far from being the only major obstacle to commercial expansion. The Cape colonists were severely handicapped in their efforts to make Table Bay a trading centre of the first rank: they lacked desirable export items in sufficient and unfailing quantities, they were isolated by sheer distance from the main world markets, and frequently hindered by those portions of the Navigation Acts still enforced. These were the inherent drawbacks — John Company's presence for a time merely aggravated a situation already far from promising.

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159. Immelman, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

160. Between 1808 and 1813 (according to the shipping movements listed weekly in the Cape Town Gazette), an annual average of 35 merchant vessels put in at Cape ports from European waters, the proportion of Company ships fluctuating from more than a half to never less than one-third of this yearly total.

161. Schumann, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

162. J.C.Chase, Annals of the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town, 1869), pp. 269-270.

The Transformation of the Cape Colony's  
Commercial Status after 1815

(1)

If a new community is fortunate enough to find valuable, abundant, and easily marketable natural resources, then in that particular respect it is likely to enjoy a marked economic advantage over older and more fully developed regions; but in most other ways, it is certain to find itself at a distinct disadvantage.<sup>1</sup> At the close of the Napoleonic struggle the Cape colonists did not yet possess any readily exploitable sources of wealth which could become major staples of foreign commerce, while even their furnishing of necessities for the small local urban market was hampered severely by the distance and difficulties of ox waggon transport in the absence of navigable rivers.<sup>2</sup> As had been the case in the 17th and 18th centuries, their environment was conducive to little more than subsistence production.

Superimposed on these natural drawbacks, the settlers continued to experience the effects of the controlling power's policy which, in its essentials, still endeavoured "to engross as much as possible the whole market of its own colonies".<sup>3</sup> Thus, the considerably higher duties levied on foreign imports kept the Colony almost wholly dependent on British sources for virtually all of its processed and manufactured needs,<sup>4</sup> while the preferential treatment given to British shipping in Cape ports deprived the settlement of regular visits by foreign vessels for trading (as distinct

1. Some of the reasons for this are discussed in S.H. Frankel, Capital Investment in Africa (London, 1938), pp. 44-45.
2. J.W.D. Moodie, Ten Years in South Africa (London, 1835), Vol. II, p. 62; Barrow, Travels..., II, p. 332; Lichtenstein, Travels..., V.R.S., Vol. 10, pp. 25-26.
3. Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations, Bk. IV, Ch. vii (Pt. 3), p. 595.
4. cf. Immelman, op. cit., p. 60; Bruwer, op. cit., pp. 64-65; H.R. de Kock, op. cit., pp. 301-303.

from revictualling) purposes, thereby drastically narrowing the Colony's potential arteries of commerce.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, if Cape wines were dealt with favourably on the home market, such a benefit had to be weighed against the continuance of John Company's exclusive control over the Colony's tea indents after the Charter Act had thrown open the rest of the Eastern trade to private merchants.

Although the immediate post-war years were ones of relative prosperity,<sup>6</sup> the sudden contraction of the St. Helena market with the death of Napoleon led to a severe shrinkage in the value of the settlement's exports,<sup>7</sup> to a marked falling off in tonnage putting in at Cape ports,<sup>8</sup> and, consequently, to "a considerable convulsion" among the ranks of local traders.<sup>9</sup> Nature, too, took a hand in furthering economic depression, with a general failure of the wheat crop over two successive harvests (1821-22), followed by widespread flood damage in 1823;<sup>10</sup> and the replacement of the depreciated rixdollar by sterling currency at a rate of ls. 5d.,<sup>11</sup> though perhaps unavoidable, undoubtedly intensified this commercial slump.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, if the colonists were experiencing the consequences of conditions over which they themselves had exerted a very negligible influence, other circumstances were already at work which, ultimately, were to divert these trends into more positive channels.

5. The Commissioners of Inquiry frequently harped on this question in their report to Bathurst, 6 Sept. 1826, Recs.C.C., XXVII, pp. 397-502.
6. P. Warden Grant, op. cit., p. 59.
7. Exports to St. Helena decreased from £30,844 in 1820 to £15,440 in 1822 — A.W.G. Bock, Foreign Trade of South Africa since 1807 (unpublished thesis, University of Stellenbosch), Statistical Appendix, No. 4. By 1824, the figure had fallen to less than £8,000 — Recs.C.C., XXVII, p. 496.
8. Merchant tonnage calling at Simon's Town (from which harbour a considerable portion of the St. Helena supplies were shipped) dropped immediately from 21,000 (1820) to 13,000 (1821) — Recs.C.C., LXXV, p. 234.
9. W.S. Bird, op. cit., p. 3.
10. Recs.C.C., XIV, p. 500; XVI, pp. 264-290; Theal, Hist. S.Af. since 1795, Vol. 1, pp. 359-360, 372, 390; Goldswain's Chronicle..., V.R.S., Vol. 27, p. 55; Arndt, op. cit., p. 32; Schumann, op. cit., p. 69.
11. Cape Town Gazette, 11 and 18 June, 1825 (see above, p. 169a).
12. Recs.C.C., XXIII, pp. 39-43, 106-113, 118-126; LXVI, p. 359.

One of the factors helping to transform the situation was increased immigration: the small trickle of Britons who had been migrating of their own accord to the Colony ever since the Second Occupation<sup>13</sup> was joined in 1820 by a considerable stream of 4,000-odd settlers flowing towards the eastern Cape under a government-sponsored scheme.<sup>14</sup> Among the economic repercussions of this influx was the great fillip given to commercial wool farming,<sup>15</sup> the tremendous extension of the "Inland Kaffir Trade",<sup>16</sup> the development of more regular coastal shipping services,<sup>17</sup> the emergence of Port Elizabeth as a new and more advanced starting point than Cape Town for further expansion into the interior,<sup>18</sup> and, eventually, the establishment of closer and stronger commercial ties with British merchants and shippers.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, the severe commercial depression engulfing the western Cape in the early 'Twenties had provided a strong incentive for local co-operation, and, after several false starts, the Commercial Exchange had begun to function as an embryo chamber of commerce, providing a pivot around which Cape Town's merchants could conduct their trading affairs.<sup>20</sup> By 1825 this body was collaborating with the Cape of Good Hope Trade Society, a group of London shippers with particular interests in the wine business.<sup>21</sup> Jointly and severally, the two organizations bombarded government departments and influential members of Parliament with letters, memorials, and petitions.<sup>22</sup> In short, the colonists and their associates

13. See above, Ch. II, (ii)(a).

14. For a summary of the scheme's objectives, see H.E. Robertson's paper in The Economics of International Migration (ed. Brinley Thomas, London, 1958), p. 175.

15. Thomas Pringle, Narrative of a Residence in Southern Africa (London, 1834), Ch. xi; J.C. Chase, The Cape of Good Hope and the Eastern Province (London, 1843), p. 174.

16. C.H.B.E., Vol. VIII, p. 242.

17. W.W. Bird, op. cit., p. 121; Recs.C.C., LXXV, p. 250.

18. Commissioners' Report (Parl. Papers, 1829), p. 279; Recs.C.C., XVI, p. 208; G.S. Cory, The Rise of South Africa (London, 1915), Vol. II, pp. 208-209; Neumark, op. cit., p. 140.

19. Theal, Hist. S.Af. since 1795, Vol. II, p. 164.

20. Immelman, op. cit., Chs. iii-iv.

21. P.J. Venter, "The Cape of Good Hope Trade Society and the Wine Crisis", Wine and Spirit (Feb. 1937), p. 2984.

22. Immelman, Ch. v.

overseas had now made some progress towards mastering the art of successful pressure-group lobbying, and it became increasingly difficult for Whitehall to ignore completely the collective wishes of those concerned with the Cape trade.

One notable achievement resulting from this development was the final overthrow of John Company's tea monopoly in the Cape market: late in 1826 the (London) Society sent five packages of China tea to the Colony, which, upon arrival, were immediately seized by the Customs at the instigation of William Hawkins, the Company's Agent. During the ensuing dispute, the Commercial Exchange expounded vigorously the case for unrestricted tea imports, while its London counterpart gained some sympathy from the Board of Trade; the upshot was that, thenceforth, tea re-exported from Britain was allowed entry for local consumption "on payment of the usual duties".<sup>23</sup> For the first time, Leadenhall Street was confronted with legitimate private competition in its only remaining preserve.

However, in general, it is difficult to gauge precisely the extent to which these mercantile pressure groups were instrumental in securing an improved commercial status for the Colony. Probably, a much more important influence was the overall trend towards free trade in Britain itself, which, as a conscious crusade, had got under way by 1820.<sup>24</sup> When William Huskisson became President of the Board of Trade in 1823,<sup>25</sup> the movement gathered momentum, for, although he had patriotic reservations about economic liberalism,<sup>26</sup> prohibitions and prohibitory duties, in his opinion, were "a premium to mediocrity";<sup>27</sup> and, if tariff policy was in urgent

23. Hawkins' correspondence with the Directors on this affair is contained in CGH.F.R., IX; the many letters on the subject which passed between the Agency, the Customs, and Government House are in CGH.F.R., XVII and XXIV; the Cape Chamber of Commerce records (U.C. 2 and 119, Cape Archives) recount the incident from the viewpoints of the Commercial Exchange and the Cape of Good Hope Trade Society.

24. C.H.B.R., Vol. II, p. 389.

25. For a brief survey of his tenure there, see Anna Langelbach, "William Huskisson as President of the Board of Trade", American Historical Review, XLIII (July 1938), pp. 759-774.

26. Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 116; J.B. Condliffe, The Commerce of Nations (London, 1951), p. 212.

27. John Wright (ed.), The Speeches of the Rt. Hon. William Huskisson (London, 1831), Vol. II, p. 344.

need of revision, the colonies, too, with regard to their trades, would have to be treated with "all proper kindness and liberality".<sup>28</sup> Consequently, by the time Stephenson's Rocket had fatally injured Huskisson as he walked across the tracks to greet the Duke of Wellington at the opening of the Manchester-Liverpool railway (15th September, 1825),<sup>29</sup> the Old Colonial System already had suffered several radical legislative onslaughts.

Hence, as far as the Cape was concerned, the fence of commercial restrictionism was not so much broken down at one point as it was eroded away in a number of places by various factors operating simultaneously.

(111)

Of the many intricate measures which made up the Old Colonial System, none had been regarded as more important than those excluding foreign vessels from trafficking with British colonies.<sup>30</sup> As far as the Cape was concerned, the first dent in these protective arrangements was made in terms of an Order in Council of July, 1820,<sup>31</sup> whereby the principle of reciprocity replaced the traditional policy of national monopoly as the criterion for determining which ships should trade with the settlement. The United Kingdom's industrial and commercial leadership at this period had resulted in a growing awareness that British shipping and exports might be served more effectively through tolerant co-operation with foreign merchant marines rather than by the absolute exclusion of such vessels.

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28. Speeches, II, 304-327 -- the phrase occurs in the course of Huskisson's famous address to the Commons on 24 March 1825; see also, Annual Register, LVII (1825), pp. 99-106.

29. C.R. Fay suggests that when this accident occurred, Huskisson was a spent political force who "could never have held with success the highest office" -- Huskisson and His Age (London, 1951), pp. 31-32.

30. G.B. Hertz, The Old Colonial System (Manchester, 1905), p. 55.

As early as 1796 some concessions had been made in favour of American ships, and these had been extended in 1815 -- possibly because of the fear that reprisals by the United States could prove more harmful than American participation in the British carrying trade -- Harper, op. cit., pp. 395-396.

31. See above, Ch. V, n.124.

Accordingly, Huskisson's Reciprocity Acts of 1823-25<sup>32</sup> virtually shattered the backbone of the Navigation Laws by creating the necessary machinery for the negotiation of shipping treaties on a *quid pro quo* basis;<sup>33</sup> and by 1830, such arrangements had been concluded with most of the leading maritime nations (Holland being the only notable exception).<sup>34</sup> In the meantime, measures promulgated in the Colony (1826-27) took cognizance of this trend by widening the carrying scope in Cape waters of vessels belonging to countries which had extended reciprocal treatment.<sup>35</sup>

Further inroads into the preferential system were made when duties on Continental wines were lowered (1825) and those on Cape wines raised (1831),<sup>36</sup> although the differential did not disappear altogether until the middle of the century.<sup>37</sup> An Order in Council issued in February, 1832,<sup>38</sup> consolidated and simplified all existing commercial edicts applying at the Cape: (a) goods "from British possessions anywhere"<sup>39</sup> were to be admitted at a uniform duty of 3 per cent *ad valorem*; (b) imports from foreign countries were to be levied at a rate of 10 per cent of their value;<sup>40</sup> (c) foreign vessels could convey

32. 4 Geo. IV, c. 77; 5 Geo. IV, c. 1; 6 Geo. IV, c. 73.

33. Cf. G.M. Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century and After (new edn., London, 1944), p. 203; Lingelbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-268.

34. C.R. Fay, Great Britain from Adam Smith to the Present Day (4th edn., London, 1945), p. 51.

35. Commissioners' Report (Parl. Papers, 1829), pp. 251-252.

36. G.R.S.E., Vol. VIII, p. 762.

37. See J.R. McCulloch's scathing comments on the effects of protecting Cape wines in the British market — A Dictionary, Practical, Theoretical, and Historical of Commerce and Commercial Navigation (London, edition of 1855), p. 259.

38. Text in British and Foreign State Papers, Vol. LXXII, pp. 1265-1267.

39. One exception continued to be made: articles from British territories in India were to be assessed at the much higher level of 10 per cent; this was not intended to be a concession to the Company, as has been argued (cf. Bruwer, *op. cit.*, p. 54; M.H. de Kock, *op. cit.*, p. 303); in the main, it was an attempt to conserve foreign currency, since Cape exports eastwards remained negligible.

40. These differential import duties were retained at the Cape (with a few minor modifications) until the Colony secured representative government; then — in full accordance with the prevailing ideas and policy of Whitehall itself — the principle was discarded by the Cape Parliament in its Customs Tariff Act of 1855. Some account of the settlement's customs history and institutions during the first half of the 19th century is to be found in the Collector of Customs Report for 1899 (Annexure), Votes and Proceedings of the Cape Parliament, Vol. 4, Appendix I (G.26/1900).

all articles of their own countries to the Colony, and (d) carry Cape produce anywhere on the same terms as British ships. Thus, not only had goods from the Empire (India excluded) been placed on an equal footing with those from the United Kingdom itself, but all discrimination against foreign shipping in the export trade had been removed; and, if foreigners were not yet permitted to land British cargoes in the settlement, that was of little practical significance, entailing no great hardship as far as the colonists themselves were concerned.

Only the marcescent blooms of colonial mercantilism now remained to impair Cape commercial life, and these were not out of harmony with the natural flow of trade, since low freights and the quantity and cheapness of her manufactures gave Britain the lion's share of the local market throughout the middle decades of the 19th century.<sup>41</sup> Hence, neither the abrogation of the East India Company's charter in 1834 (at a time when the colonists' prime concern was slave emancipation) nor the final repeal of the Navigation Acts in 1849 (when the settlers were busy agitating against the landing of convicts) had very profound repercussions on the Colony's trading status, and, in fact, these measures appear to have aroused little interest at the Cape.

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41. In 1855, for example, when all preferences and shipping restrictions had been removed altogether, 764 British and only 130 foreign vessels entered Cape ports, the former carrying more than 90 per cent in value of all imported goods — Theal, Hist. S.Af. since 1795, Vol. III, pp. 142-143; Theal, Progress of South Africa in the Century (London, 1902), p. 52.

APPENDIX I

PRINCIPAL EDICTS CONCERNING THE TRADE OF THE CAPE COLONY  
DURING THE FIRST AND SECOND BRITISH OCCUPATIONS.

18 June 1795	Declaration by Maj. Genl. Craik	"...the Inhabitants shall be permitted to Trade with the English East India Company's Settlements in the same manner as the Subjects of the most favoured Nation".
26 Dec. 1796	Order in Council	The Company's control of the Colony's trade with the East corroborated; British goods in British vessels admitted duty free; 10 per cent levy on cargoes landed by foreign ships.
2 March 1798	Directive from E. India House	Presidencies instructed to comply with all reasonable indents received from the Colony.
3 Feb. 1800	Proclamation by Governor Young	Condemned Eastern prize goods to be auctioned for re-export only (except under special circumstances).
5 June 1800	Directive from Calcutta	The Company to be solely responsible for shipping Indian articles to the Cape.
11 Feb. 1801	Order in Council	The Order of 1796 clarified and slightly amended.
11 March 1802	Proclamation by Acting Governor Dundas	Colonists reminded that the Company's special licence was needed for all trading in Eastern goods.
21 April 1806	Cape of Good Hope Trade Regulation Act	The control of the Colony's commerce entrusted to the King-in-Council.
11 June 1806	Order in Council	The Company's monopoly of the Colony's trade to the East reaffirmed.
13 May 1807	Order in Council	British goods in British ships admitted duty free; a duty of 5 per cent on foreign goods landed from British ships and 15 per cent if carried in foreign vessels.
17 Oct. 1809	Tariff of Import and Export Duties published (based on an Order in Council of 12 Apr. 1809)	Eastern produce imported (1) in British ships, 5 per cent on prime cost, (2) in neutrals ("supposing a permission to be granted"), 15 per cent; Eastern prize goods (if sold for local consumption under special circumstances), 10 per cent on the sale price; a duty of 5 per cent on all Eastern re-exports.

3 Nov. 1810	Directive from S.India House	Direct trade sanctioned between the Cape and New South Wales in the produce of either settlement, and between the Cape and Ceylon in Ceylonese ships under 300 tons and not exceeding three shipments per annum.
1 Oct. 1811	Order in Council	Commerce to and from the Cape confined to British and British Colonial vessels.
9 Oct. 1811	Proclamation by Governor Cradock	Import duties on Eastern goods raised from 5 per cent on the invoice value to 10 per cent on the sale price.
18 Oct. 1811	Proclamation by Governor Cradock	All export duties on local products abolished.
2 March 1812	Directive from S.India House (published 29 May 1812)	Trade sanctioned between the Colony and the Mascarene Islands in Cape, British, and Island produce under certain limitations.
8 Jan. 1813	Proclamation by Governor Cradock	An import duty of 3 per cent on the value of British goods to be levied as from 8 July 1813 for revenue purposes.
2 July 1813	Cape of Good Hope Importation of Wine Act	British import duties on Cape wines reduced to one-third of those levied on Portuguese and Spanish wines.
14 Aug. 1813	East India Company Charter Act	The charter was renewed for twenty years, but with the Company's monopoly confined to China and the Indian trade thrown open to British subjects under certain conditions.
17 Dec. 1813	Circuitous Trade Act	Defined the "free trade" area resulting from the Charter Act, the Colony falling within that area.
24 June 1814	Proclamation by Governor Somerset	Facilities provided for the re-export of Eastern goods.
24 Sept. 1814	Order in Council	The Colony placed under the general incidence of the Navigation Laws.
1 Dec. 1814	East Indian Duties Act	Cape merchants given further encouragement to re-export Eastern articles.
18 Dec. 1815	Directive from Jamestown	All trade between the Colony and St. Helena confined to Company vessels.
12 July 1820	Order in Council	Relaxation of restrictions on foreign ships trading with the Cape.
19 Sept. 1823	Order in Council	Eastern goods re-exported from the Cape placed on an equal footing with exports to Britain from the East direct.

APPENDIX II

GLOSSARY OF THE MAIN KINDS OF EASTERN PINGEE-GOODS IN  
INDIA AT THE CAPS.

When the English East India Company first established trade relations with the Orient, India was unrivalled as a cotton textile manufacturing country, although its craftsmen had little technical knowledge and used no elaborate machinery;<sup>1</sup> this leadership was to be maintained until the Industrial Revolution so reduced production costs in Britain that the foreign markets for Indian fabrics were gradually lost.<sup>2</sup> Two principal classes of cotton goods were produced — calicoes<sup>3</sup> and muslins<sup>4</sup> — while other types of cloth (fashioned from silk, linen, and wool) were also of much importance in Indian foreign trade.<sup>5</sup>

1. It was this aspect of the Indian cloth industry which most astonished European observers:  
 "It cannot but seem strange that in a department of industry where the raw material has been so grossly neglected, where the machinery is so crude, and where there is so little division of labour, the results should be fabrics of the most exquisite delicacy and beauty unrivalled by the products of any other nation..."  
 — H. Baines, History of the Cotton Manufacture (London, 1835), p. 56.
2. As late as 1877, the following passage is to be found in the article on "Cotton Manufacture" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (9th edn., Vol. VI, p. 487):  
 "The implements used by the Indians in the different processes of the cotton manufacture, from the cleaning of the wool to its conversion into the finest muslin, may be purchased for the value of a few shillings, and are of so rude and simple a construction as to be evidently the invention of a very early period. With the exception of the loom, none of them deserves the name of a machine, or displays the slightest mechanical ingenuity. They spin the yarn upon the distaff; and yet, with all the advantages which we in this country derive from machinery, we have only recently been able to equal, either in fineness or quality, the yarn which is produced by means of this primitive instrument. The well-managed use of the finger and thumb of the Indian spinner, patiently and carefully applied in the formation of the thread, and the moisture at the same time communicated to it, are found to have the effect of incorporating the fibres of the cotton more perfectly than can be accomplished by our most improved machines."  
 A detailed survey of the spinning, weaving, bleaching, and dressing processes may be found in Jesse Taylor's A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Cotton Manufactures of India (published anonymously, London, 1851).
3. Cloths of medium quality for ordinary wear; the word is derived from Calicut, the port from which the Portuguese first sent Malabar textiles to Europe, although that town was never a major centre of calico manufacture.
4. Very fine, high grade fabrics; the word comes from Mosul, the town on the Tigris, where muslins were first made.
5. Bal Krishna, op. cit., ch. iv.

Production was diffused throughout the country, but the distribution was not uniform, and certain localities had acquired a reputation for special classes of goods.<sup>6</sup> To such spots the Company sent specialist weavers and dyers with the task of instructing local craftsmen in the needs and patterns of the British and Continental markets.<sup>7</sup> Although primitive implements and traditional techniques could not always be successfully adapted to meet such demands,<sup>8</sup> the upshot was the unusual spectacle of names traditional in the European textile trade being attached to various Indian cloth exports which bore only a remote resemblance to their Western originals.

Thus, by the close of the 18th century, the difficulties of correct nomenclature when placing orders for such articles were considerable, as Pringle himself was fully aware:

"It has occurred to me that countless mistakes and disappointments may happen from not rightly understanding the Names of the Articles indented for, as it is well known how much these differ in the various parts of India, & even in the same place amongst different Nations."<sup>9</sup>

To eliminate such confusion, the Agent developed the practice of sending to Bengal labelled samples of each type of piece-good required, and keeping duplicates of these for subsequent checking; eventually, in drawing up indents, nothing more was needed than the relevant sample number.

The Agency records indicate that the following were the main kinds of Eastern piece-goods absorbed by the Cape market<sup>10</sup> (with Pringle's spelling inconsistencies being shown):

6. W.H. Mereland, India at the Death of Akbar: an Economic Study (London, 1920), pp. 181-182.
7. S.A. Khan, The East India Trade in the XVIIIth Century in its Political and Economic Aspects (Oxford, 1923), p. 154.
8. G. Unwin, "Indian Factories in the Eighteenth Century" in Studies in Economic History (London, 1927), p. 356.
9. Pringle to Macartney, 19 May 1793, B.O.9, pp. 64-65.
10. The standard major English dictionaries (such as the Oxford and Webster's New International) have been singularly unhelpful in the compilation of this glossary, and most of the explanations have been derived from: G.P. Baker, Calico Printing and Printing in the East Indies (London, 1921); Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases (new edn., ed. W. Crooke, London, 1903); The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of the People of India (ed. J. Forbes Watson, London, 1867); and P.J. Moens, Quantities and Measurements of India Goods (London, 1884).

Baftans/Baftas/Bafta/Sufta - cheap, coarse, cotton fabrics, originally made for export to East Africa, but purchased in considerable quantities by the "lower layers" of English society in the late 18th century; production was centred on Benares and Surat.

Callicatties/Callipatties - muslin-like materials of high quality, blackened by vegetable dyes, and manufactured in long, narrow strips (mainly for the Indonesian markets) at Lahore and Sultan.

Cambricks/Cambrics/Cambricks - the name originally applied to the very fine white linen cloths made at Cambrai (Easerijk) in north-eastern France, but also came to describe the imitation fabrics of hard-spun muslin yarn produced in many towns of 18th and early-19th century India.

Carradarries/Carridarries - plain, unbleached Bengal calicoes, extensively exported to Britain, and there finished and dyed with suitable local patterns.

Cassacs/Cossacs/Khasacs - (from "kasa" = elegant) muslins of very fine, close texture and considerable beauty, manufactured mainly at Dacca.

Cassimeres/Cassimire/Kassimeres - originally designated the medium-weight, fine-willed materials woven from the wool of the Cashmere goat, but woven cotton fabrics made in imitation of the original received the same appellation.

Chelloes/Chilloes - (probably from the Spanish "chilla" = showy, loud) brightly coloured cotton cloths produced in the neighbourhood of Calcutta mainly for export to the negro slave communities in the West Indies and Latin America.

Chintses - (from "chhint" = variegated) calicoes printed or stained with extremely bright patterns (usually of floral devices) and widely used in upholstery; the chief manufacturing centres were Masulipatan, Patna, Surat, and Bombay.

Cushtacs - (from Kushtia, an important market-town in the Nadiya district) calicoes of medium-fine quality used for dressmaking.

Dimites/Dimities - stout calico fabrics woven with raised stripes or fancy patterns, and usually employed undyed for furniture coverings or bedroom hangings, but coloured when used as dress materials.

Dooooties/Dooooties/Dooooties - cheap but durable cotton stuffs woven with doubled threads; produced and worn all over India.

Dungarees/Dungrie - coarse calicoes manufactured at Bombay for a variety of uses (e.g., rough suitings, sailcloths, and tents).

Garrhas/Garrahs - plain cotton materials, bleached for dress-goods, but also used unbleached for packing articles and for shrouds; mainly manufactured in northern and eastern Bengal.

Ghillacs/Gillacs - silk fabrics from the province of Ghilan in northern Persia; but most of those brought to the Cape were imitations manufactured in Bengal.

Gingams/Ginghams/Ginghams - mixed stuffs of linen and cotton, woven from dyed yarn, with striped or checked patterns; of Malayan origin, these cloths were produced mainly at Dacca and Golconda (near Hyderabad).

Barkans/Humans - cloths of thick, stout texture, used for towelling and to make wrappers for out-of-doors wear in cold weather; Dacca was the principal centre of production.

Jenns - as their name suggests, these cloths were manufactured originally in Genoa; the Indian imitations were twilled, undressed fabrics with cotton warps, and were used for undergarments and overalls.

Langees/Loangees/Loanghees/Langis - richly coloured fabrics made from a mixture of cotton and silk in the Company's own manufactories near Calcutta, and used for scarves and plaids.

Longcloths - mainly white or grey cotton shirtings which were extensively exported to Britain from Madras, and so called because they were made of a length unusual in India, cloth for native wear being ordinarily made in pieces sufficient only to clothe one person.

Malsals/Mullmalls/Malsuls - thin, soft muslins without any stiffening; these "exquisite" fabrics from Bengal were keen competitors of French silks on the English market, and Jane Austen has some of her heroines paying as much as nine shillings and upwards a yard.

Mainsooks - thin cotton fabrics, with a glazed finish on one side, classed between cambric and muslin, and used for making dresses (being particularly suitable for out-of-doors wear in hot weather) and infants' garments; the main centre of production was Dacca.

Nankeens - cloths of firm texture and great durability, made from a species of brownish-yellow cotton cultivated in the neighbourhood of Nankin, and often strengthened by an admixture of linen and silk; besides the genuine product from China, the Cape market also consumed imitation fabrics of a buff colour produced in Bengal.

Nicanees/Nicones - piece-goods of poor quality and light weight exported to tropical markets from Bombay and Surat.

Palampores/Palempores - chints-like materials, glazed or unglazed, frequently decorated with beautiful painted or printed patterns, and mainly used as bed-covers; Masulipatan and Madras were the chief producing centres.

Paunch - not, strictly speaking, piece-goods, but thick, strong matting made of interlaced spun yarn, and employed in various spots on sailing ships to prevent chafing.

Rossals/Rosalls/Rusals - cotton or silken fabrics much used at the Cape (as in England) for towels, handkerchiefs, and napkins; manufactured in the Bombay region and in the neighbourhood of Madras.

Salampores/Salempores/Sallampoores/Sallampores - chints-like cotton cloths - akin to Garras (q.v.) in texture, but usually dyed blue for export to the slave populations of the West Indies; Wellore (north of Madras) was the main centre of production.

Sannas/Sannoes/Sannows - unbleached calicoes, exported to the American markets from the Malabar Coast.

Shalloons - light, worsted fabrics (patterned on the original made at Châlons-sur-Marne), and used chiefly to provide linings for coats.

Taffetas/Taffetas - light, thin silken fabrics, with a wavy, glossy appearance; only the cheaper types (i.e., with linen and cotton added) were much in demand at the Cape.

APPENDIX III

## LISTS OF GOVERNMENT AND COMPANY OFFICERS.

(a) Associated with the Colony:Administrative Heads -

16 Sept. 1795	Admiral Sir G.E. Biphinstone, Maj.Gnl. A. Clarke, Maj.Gnl. J.H. Craig (Joint Commanders)
15 Nov. 1795	Maj.Gnl. J.H. Craig (Commandant)
5 May 1797	George, Earl Macartney (Governor)
21 Nov. 1798	Maj.Gnl. F. Dundas (Acting Governor)
10 Dec. 1799	Sir George Yonge (Governor)
20 Apr. 1801	Maj.Gnl. F. Dundas (Acting Governor)
[Batavian Occupation, 21 Feb. 1803 - 18 Jan. 1805]	
10 Jan. 1806	Maj.Gnl. D. Baird (Acting Governor)
17 Jan. 1807	Lt.Gnl. H.G. Grey (Acting Governor)
22 May 1807	Du Pré Alexander, Earl Caledon (Governor)
4 July 1811	Lt.Gnl. H.G. Grey (Acting Governor)
6 Sept. 1811	Lt.Gnl. Sir J.F. Cradock (Governor)
6 Apr. 1814	Lt.Gnl. Lord Charles Somerset (Governor)

Naval Commanders -

Sept. 1795	Rear Admiral Sir G.E. Biphinstone
Nov. 1796	Rear Admiral Thomas Pringle
March 1798	Rear Admiral H.C. Christian
Nov. 1798	Capt. G.J. Losack (Acting)
Dec. 1799	Vice Admiral Sir R. Curtis
Sept. 1807	Rear Admiral C. Stirling
Aug. 1808	Vice Admiral A. Bertie
Jan. 1811	Rear Admiral R. Stopford
Feb. 1813	Rear Admiral C. Tyler
Oct. 1815	Rear Admiral Sir Geo. Cockburn

Colonial Secretaries -

Nov. 1795	Hercules Ross (Acting)
May 1797	Andrew Barnard
Jan. 1806	J.C. Smyth (Acting)
Feb. 1807	Christopher Bird (Acting)
May 1807	Andrew Barnard
Oct. 1807	Christopher Bird (Acting)
Nov. 1808	Henry Alexander
May 1813	Christopher Bird

Customs Department -

Collectors:	C. Brand (1795-96); J.H. Greene (1797-1802); A. Muller (1806-07); C. Maclean (1807-08); Chs. Blair (1808-20).
Comptrollers:	Acheson Maxwell (1797-1803); S. Raynsford (1807-10); W. Wilberforce Bird (1810-36).

Agents for the Cape in London -

1st Occupation:	William Huskisson (1799-1803)
2nd Occupation:	Hon. Chs. B. Agar (1807-11); Robt. Willimott (1811-12); Thomas P. Courtenay (1812-28).

(b) At Whitehall and Leadenhall Street:Secretaries of State for War and Colonies -

July 1794 Henry Dundas (afterwards Viscount Melville)  
 March 1801 Lord Hobart (afterwards Earl of Buckinghamshire)  
 May 1804 Earl Camden  
 June 1805 Viscount Castlereagh  
 Feb. 1806 William Windham  
 March 1807 Viscount Castlereagh  
 Sept. 1809 Earl of Liverpool  
 June 1812 Earl Bathurst (until April 1827)

Presidents of the Board of Control -

Sept. 1784 Henry Dundas  
 April 1801 Viscount Lewisham  
 July 1802 Viscount Castlereagh  
 Feb. 1806 Lord Minto  
 July 1806 Thomas Grenville  
 Sept. 1806 George Tierney  
 April 1807 Robert Dundas (afterwards Viscount Melville)  
 July 1809 Earl of Harrowby  
 Nov. 1809 Robert Dundas  
 April 1812 Earl of Buckinghamshire (formerly Lord Hobart)  
 June 1816 George Canning

Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen, East India Company -

(Elections were held in April every year)

1793 Wm. Devaynes, Thos. Cheap.  
 1794 Wm. Devaynes, Jn. Hunter.  
 1795 Steph. Lushington, David Scott  
 1796 David Scott, Hugh Inglis  
 1797 Hugh Inglis, Jacob Bosanquet  
 1798 Jacob Bosanquet, Steph. Lushington  
 1799 Steph. Lushington, Hugh Inglis  
 1800 Hugh Inglis, David Scott  
 1801 David Scott, Chas. Mills  
 1802 Jn. Roberts, Jacob Bosanquet  
 1803 Jacob Bosanquet, Jn. Roberts  
 1804 Wm. Elphinstone, Chas. Grant  
 1805 Chas. Grant, Geo. Smith  
 1806 Wm. Elphinstone, Edw. Perry  
 1807 Edw. Perry, Chas. Grant  
 1808 Edw. Perry, Chas. Grant  
 1809 Chas. Grant, Wm. Astell  
 1810 Wm. Astell, Jacob Bosanquet  
 1811 Jacob Bosanquet, Hugh Inglis  
 1812 Hugh Inglis, Robt. Thornton  
 1813 Robt. Thornton, Wm. Elphinstone  
 1814 Wm. Elphinstone, Jn. Inglis  
 1815 Chas. Grant, Thos. Reid.  
 1816 Thos. Reid, Jn. Bebb

Secretaries of the East India Company -

1792 William Ramsay (Asst. James Cobb)  
 1814 James Cobb (Asst. James Dart)  
 1817 James Dart (Asst. Peter Auber)

(c) Company Executives Abroad:Governors of St. Helena -

1787 Col. Robt. Brooke  
 1801 Lt. Col. F. Robson (Acting)  
 1802 Col. Robt. Patten  
 1807 Lt. Col. Wm. Lane (Acting)  
 1808 Maj. Gen. Alexander Beatson  
 1813 Col. Mark Wilks  
 1816 Lt. Col. Sir Hulse Lowe

Governors-General of Fort William in Bengal -

1774 Warren Hastings  
 1786 Lord Cornwallis  
 1793 Sir John Shore (Lord Teignmouth)  
 1798 Earl of Mornington (Marquess Wellesley)  
 1805 Lord Cornwallis (July-Oct.)  
 1805 Sir George Barlow (Acting)  
 1807 Lord Minto  
 1813 Earl of Moira (Marquess of Hastings)  
 1823 Lord Amherst

Governors of Madras -

1786 Maj. Genl. Sir Archibald Campbell  
 1789 John Hollond (Acting)  
 1790 Maj. Genl. Sir William Medows  
 1792 Sir Charles Oakley  
 1794 Lord Hobart (later Earl of Buckinghamshire)  
 1798 Lord Clive  
 1803 Lord Bentinck  
 1807 William Petrie (Acting, Sept.-Nov.)  
 1807 Sir George Barlow  
 1814 Rt. Hon. Hugh Elliot (until 1820)

Presidents, Select Committee of Supercargoes, Canton -

1794 Henry Browne  
 1796 Richard Hall  
 1802 James Drummond  
 1807 John Wm. Roberts  
 1810 Henry Browne  
 1811 John F. Elphinstone  
 1816 Sir George T. Staunton

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"Knowledge is of two kinds: we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we enquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it." —

Samuel Johnson.

(Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson, Everyman edn., Vol. I, p. 558).

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 36 List of Colonial Office Records (London, 1911);  
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## II. UNPRINTED MANUSCRIPT SOURCES.

### (1) India Office Library -

Since no large staff of trading officials and clerks was ever maintained in the Colony by the Company (in contrast, for instance, to Penang or Surat), the title "Cape of Good Hope Factory Records" is somewhat misleading. Of the original documents and correspondence of the Agency, twenty-four bulky collections have survived:

Volume I comprises loose packets and unrecorded papers from 1773 to 1809; those before the First Occupation include requests from the Dutch authorities at the Cape to forward mails via England to Amsterdam.

Volumes II to V contain miscellaneous letters, documents, and account books covering the years 1810-33.

The despatches from the Cape Agency to East India House over the periods 1794-1803 and 1808-28 are filed in Volumes VI to IX, while significant extracts from this correspondence have been assembled in Volume IAA.

Volumes X to XVII consist of letters received by the Agency from all sources (local and overseas) between 1808 and 1835, but one collection in this series (Volume XV, for the period Feb. 1818 - Jan. 1821) has not been preserved.

Finally, Volumes XVIII to XXIV are composed of all outward correspondence (Leadenhall Street excepted) from 1808 until 1836.

Although these records are fragmentary for the First Occupation (being especially deficient in despatches from the Court of Directors and its various committees), for the period after 1807 they provide a comprehensive, day-by-day account of the Agency at work.

Naturally, much of this material is of little real historical value: many letters deal with purely routine matters -- shipping and troop movements, repairs to vessels, the granting and refusal of passages, bill remittances -- and, in the absence of any general observations of any kind, make deadly dull reading. Moreover, none of the collections are indexed, pages are unnumbered, some documents appear in two or more places, while different portions of a single despatch are to be found occasionally scattered about in several volumes; and to such overlapping, must be added frequent illegibility, faded inks, and torn edges, so that the task of sifting the grains from the chaff is by no means an easy one. Nonetheless, since these records yield a good deal of information on the nature of Company policy towards the Cape to be found nowhere else, and throw much light on the development of the Colony's early trading contacts, it is indeed surprising that they have lain neglected for so long.

Many of the other Company manuscript collections in the India Office Library contain a vast amount of supplementary if widely dispersed data, but the voluminous indexes to this heterogeneous material are less lucid and comprehensive than one is led to believe from their imposing appearance. The following were consulted:

Bengal Secret and Separate Consultations, Vols. 230-231.  
Committee of Accounts, Minute Book (1815).  
Committee of Secrecy Minutes, Vols. 2-5.  
Correspondence Reports, Vols. 30-31, 34.  
Factory Records, Miscellaneous, Vol. 10.  
Hose Miscellaneous Series, Vols. 88, 154-155, 320, 338, 494, 517.  
Nadras Public Consultations, 1797-99.  
Marine Records, Miscellaneous.  
Original Correspondence, Vols. 897, 907.  
St. Helena Factory Records, Vols. 76-79.

(ii) Public Record Office -

Although many of the most important documents preserved in the Public Record Office which relate to the First and Second Occupations have been printed in Theal's Records of the Cape Colony, this compilation is unsatisfactory in many respects, and it was found necessary to clarify certain points by examining manuscripts which Theal had truncated or omitted altogether. The following documents were consulted:

Admiralty Papers:  
 Ad.1/65 Admirals' Dispatches, Cape of Good Hope (1810).  
 Ad.1/180-181 Secretary's Dept., Convoy arrangements.  
 Ad.1/5578 Court Martial of Sir Home Popham (1807).  
Board of Trade Papers:  
 B.T.1/37 In-Letters (Aug.-Dec. 1807).  
 B.T.5/17 Committee for Trade & Plantations Minutes (1805).  
Colonial Office Papers:  
 C.O.77/25,37 Original Correspondence, Secretary of State - East Indies.  
 C.O.77/57 War Office Entry-Book.  
 C.O.167/29 Original Correspondence, Mauritius.  
 C.O.205 New South Wales Blue Books.  
 C.O.247/16 Original Correspondence, St. Helena.  
Gifts and Deposits Series:  
 G.D.8/128 Pitt (Chatham) Papers.  
Privy Council Papers:  
 P.C.2/170 Register (1805) - Orders in Council.  
War Office Papers:  
 W.O.1/345 In-Letters, Cape of Good Hope (1812).  
 W.O.1/13782 In-Letters, Cape of Good Hope (Miscellaneous).

(iii) British Museum - (Additional Manuscripts Collection)

Add. Ms. 38769 William Huskisson's correspondence as Agent for the Cape Colony (1799-1803).  
 Add. Ms. 4010-2 Papers of Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville (1771-1801).

(iv) Cape Archives -First British Occupation:

- B.O.5 Letters from the Burgher Senate, 1795-1802.
- B.O.9 Letters received by Government from the Commissary General and Agent, H.E.I.C., 1797-1802.
- B.O.11 Letters received by Government from the Vice Admiralty Court, 1799-1800, 1802.
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- B.O.41 Memorials, 1802.
- B.O.61 Original Placaat Book, 1795-97.
- B.O.62 Original Placaat Book, 1798-1802.
- B.O.63 Proclamations, 1798-1803.
- B.O.64 Proclamations, 1795-1805 (duplicates, indexed).
- B.O.65 Instructions to Several Public Departments of Government, 1796-1801.
- B.O.72 Ships' Arrivals, 1795-1800.
- B.O.84 Vendue Masters, 1798-1802.
- B.O.90 Papers re examination of wheat and rice from Bombay, 1797-98.

Government House Records:

- G.H.1/1-3 Despatches from Secretary of State, 1806-16.
- G.H.13/1 Despatches from India, Batavia, and New South Wales, 1806-27.
- G.H.13/2 Despatches from St. Helena, 1806-27.
- G.H.13/3 Despatches from Mauritius, Bourbon, and Rio de Janeiro, 1806-27.
- G.H.23/1-5 Despatches to Secretary of State, 1806-20.
- G.H.28/4 Enclosures to Secretary of State, 1811-12.
- G.H.34/2 India Letter Book, 1806-13.
- G.H.34/3 Letter Book, Miscellaneous, 1807-33.

Colonial Office Series:

- C.O.5 Letters from Heads of Departments, 1807.
- C.O.32 Sundry Committees, 1811, Vol. II.
- C.O.4823 General Letter Book, Nov. 1806-Aug. 1807.
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