



THE ADVENTURES OF



OTTOBAH CUGOANO



BY MARCIA HUTCHINSON & PETE TIDY





THE TRIANGULAR TRADE



The Adventures of Ottobah Cugoana
 © Marcia Hutchinson & Pete Tidy 2007

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 Painting 'The Black Boy', by William Windus 1844
 Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool

Slave whip from the Gold Coast
 Bolling Hall Bradford
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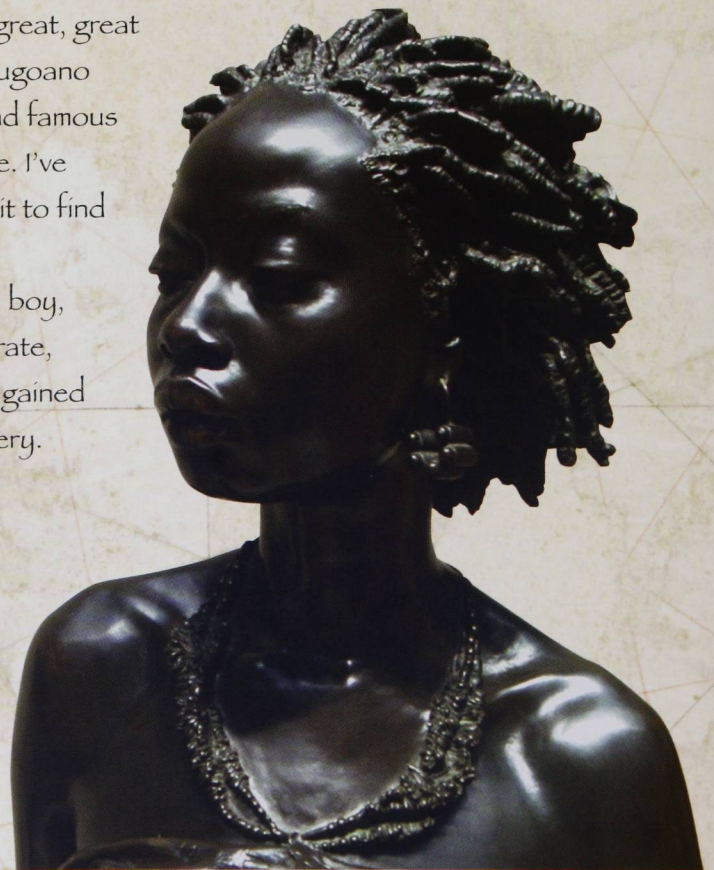
PROLOGUE

It is the evening of 18th March 1841, in Agimague in Fante (now called Ghana) on the west coast of Africa. By the fireside a young girl eagerly awaits the arrival of a very special visitor.



ello, my name is Kifu and it's my birthday today. I'm thirteen and I'm so excited because I'm going to meet my great, great uncle, Ottobah Cugoano who's really old and famous and has just returned home to Fante. I've heard so much about him; I can't wait to find out about his adventures.

I know that he was captured as a boy, taken to the Americas, became a pirate, was enslaved, travelled to England, gained his freedom and helped to end slavery. He's going to tell me his life story.



Kifu

CHAPTER I GROWING UP IN FANTE

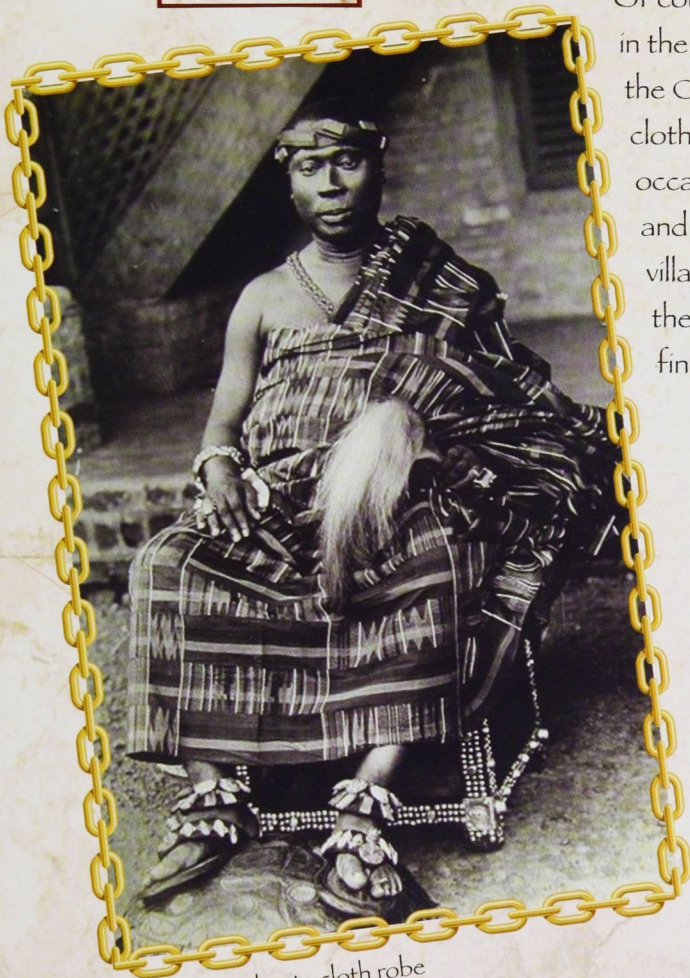
What was it like when you were a little boy?



As the son of a Chief I had a very privileged life. As soon as I was ten years old I was allowed to go hunting.

Were you rich?

Of course, we were the richest family in the village because my father was the Chief. He had the best kente cloth robes that he wore on special occasions, like when my brothers and sisters got married. The other villagers had to give us a share of their crops and animals. We had a fine house, land and servants.



Chief wearing kente cloth robe



Kente cloth



CHAPTER II CAPTURED

How were you captured?



I will never, ever forget that day. The year was 1770 and it was the week before my thirteenth birthday. My cousin Siseyo and I had decided to hunt waterbuck. They came down to the water early in the morning to drink and we caught sight of a mother and her baby. We were crouching down, trying to be as quiet as stalking leopards. I was just about to throw my spear when I was grabbed from behind.



Adult and baby waterbuck

I swung around, it was some strange men, they weren't from our village. They held knives to our throats and told us to come with them. I asked where we were going, but received a box on the ears for my trouble.

What else did they do to you?

They made us walk for three days and kept us in huts overnight. Each day more boys, women and men captives arrived. We tried to talk to them, but they spoke different languages to us. By now we were becoming very afraid and Siseyo and I decided to try to escape. At midnight we got up and tiptoed towards the door but there was someone outside on guard and he had a gun. I'd never seen one before – it had a shiny barrel and a carved wooden handle. He pointed it at me, "This could kill you," he snarled. "Sit down!"



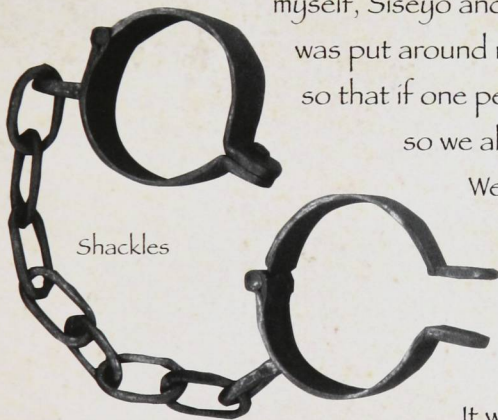
"I will not sit down," I shouted. "I am Ottobah, the son of the Chief of Agimaque. You will lead me to my father immediately..." Next thing I remember everything went black, he had hit me with the gun, hard on the side of my head. I think I must have passed out because when I awoke I had been tied up just like a slain waterbuck; my ankles and wrists were fastened together and I was told, "Make another sound and you will die."



Captives being taken to the coast

Oh that's terrible! What happened next?

Don't cry Kifu, I survived. We were tied together in a long row, myself, Siseyo and the other children and women. A collar was put around my neck and attached to the next person, so that if one person fell the next person fell with them, so we all tried to stay upright.



Shackles

We walked for a week. We crossed rivers, we climbed mountains and we waded through swamps; we walked until our feet bled. At last we came to the Market at Assin Manso on the coast.

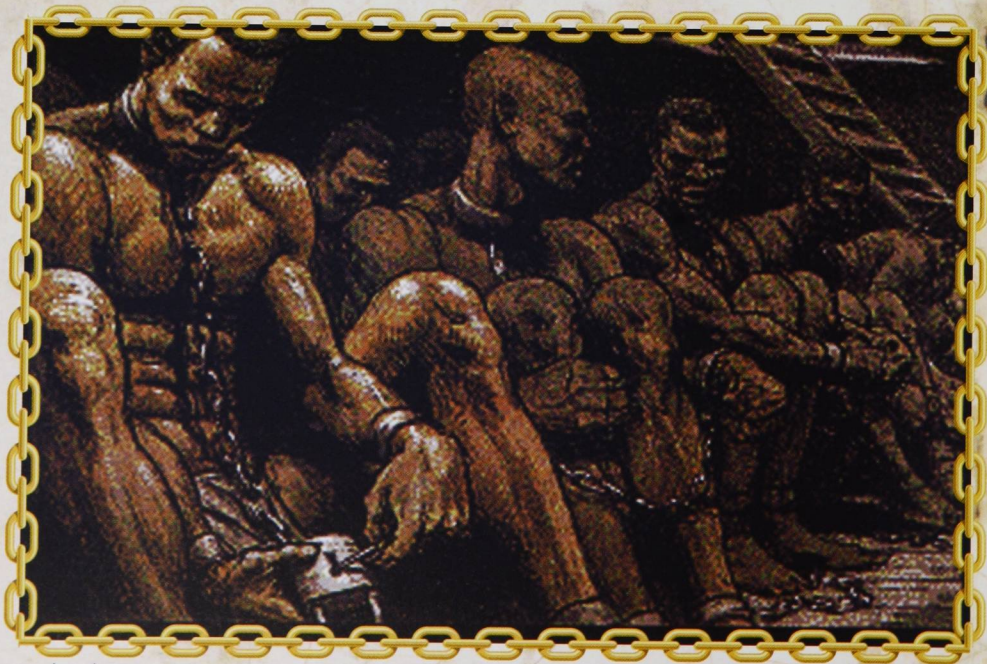
It was a place where people were bought and sold, a Slave Market. There we were sorted into groups; we were placed with the other boys. From there we walked again for days, this time along the coast until we came to a place called Elmina. From a distance it looked like a great palace.

Slave fort at Elmina, Ghana



Was the palace bigger than your father's house?

Oh! It wasn't a palace at all, they called it a 'fort'. It was made of stone and from a distance it looked beautiful, but when we got closer we realised we were going into the dungeons underneath. We were kept chained up like criminals for two moons.



In the dungeons

CHAPTER III THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

What happened after two moons?



hey said we were going to the Molly Snow. I wondered who she was. She was actually a ship, bigger than a house; she had many sails and there were many white men aboard.

You mean the brow-sow?

Yes, you call them that, they looked like ghosts. I wondered if they were demons who had died and come back to life.

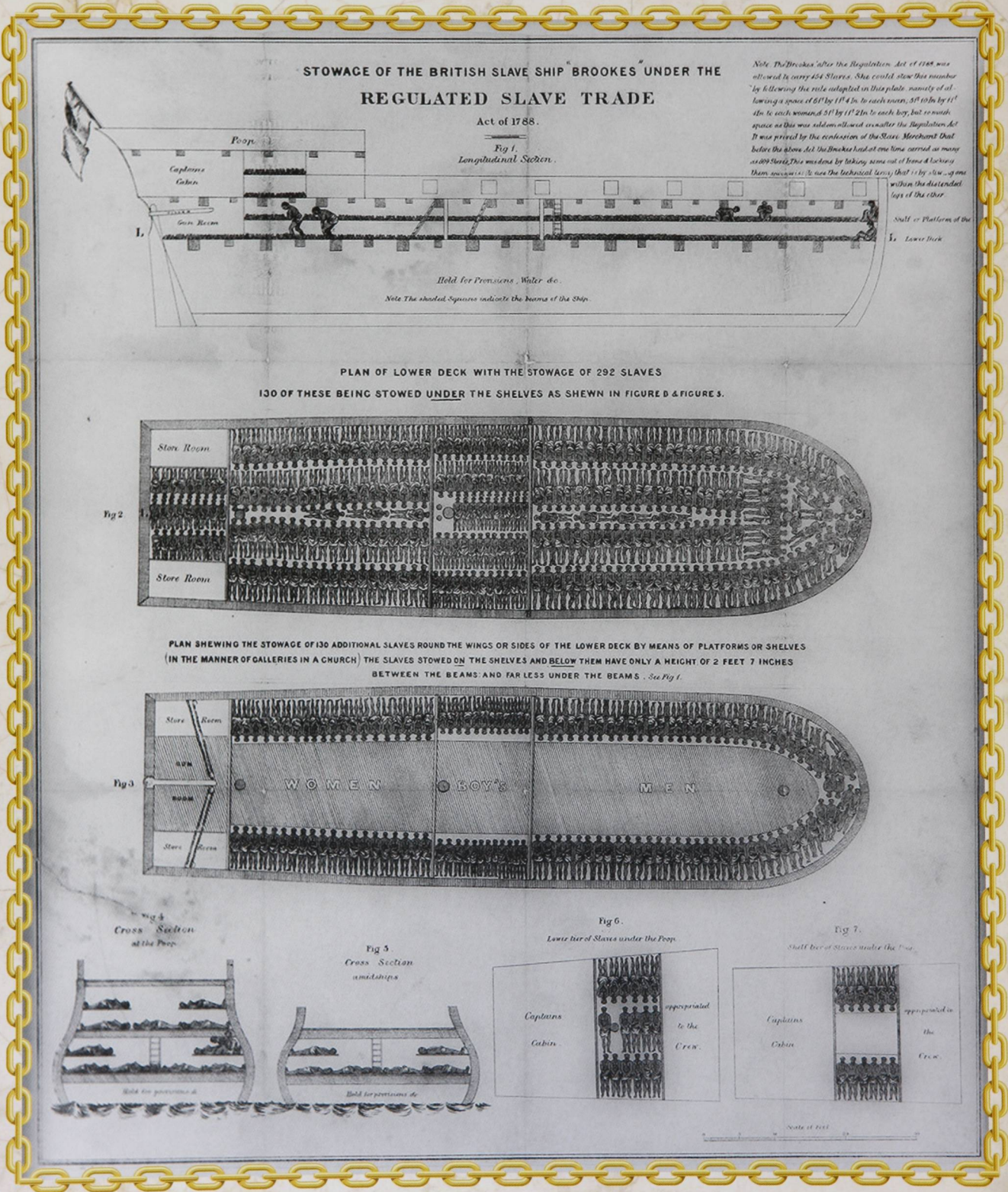
I heard that the brow-sow eat people. Is it true?

We thought so at first because there was a big pot of boiling water on the ship. I didn't see why they wanted to take so many people on board unless they were planning to feast on us.

We were herded onto the ship, still in our chains, and sent into the hold. There was barely enough room to lie down and I was lucky that I could lie as some people were propped sitting, chained one against the other. The smell, the moaning and the crying as people were chained to the ship was unbearable; I never want to see such a sight as long as I live.



Diagram of a slave ship





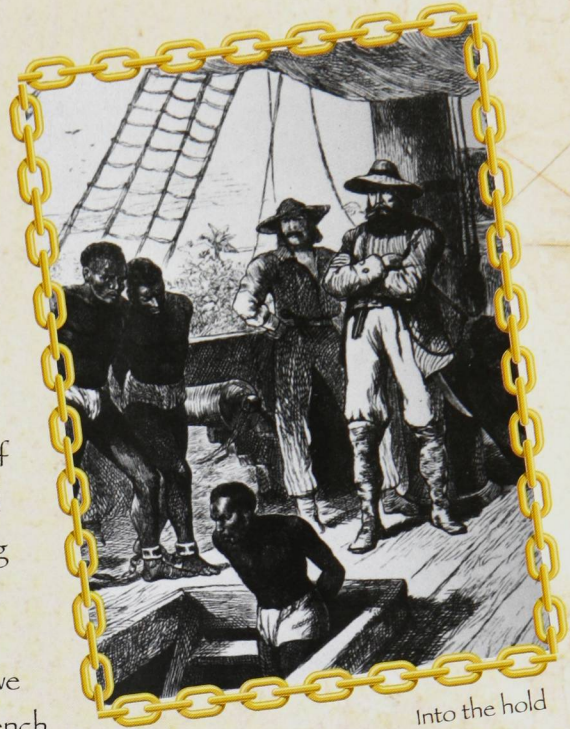
What did you eat on the ship?

They fed us like animals from a trough. We had to dip our heads into the mess to eat. They were afraid that if they unfastened us we would escape. I saw two men who had been unchained throw themselves overboard to their deaths rather than stay on the ship. While we ate the sailors pointed their guns at us. The food was a kind of porridge, like our cassava, but it tasted bad and often there were tiny, wriggling worms in it.

The Molly Snow headed out west, across the Atlantic Ocean. For weeks we rocked in the belly of the boat. The stench was overpowering and there was nowhere to relieve ourselves, so we were caked in our own mess. One morning I awoke and Siseyo was still. I could not turn because I was chained to his neck, so I poked him and said, "Turn Siseyo, turn." He didn't move and his back felt cold...

He was dead, wasn't he?

I began to scream and one of the sailors, Collingwood, they called him, came down and hit me, shouting, "Shut your wailing!" He called upstairs, "We've got another dead one." They loosened his chain and dragged him by his arms and legs and I heard the splash as they threw him into the sea. I knew that the great white bellied fish who always followed the Molly Snow would feast today.



Great white shark



CHAPTER IV PIRATES



Forced to exercise on deck

Tell me about the pirates?



A few days later I heard a commotion up on deck. I didn't know what was going on, I thought the sailors were whipping the captives again. Earlier on in the voyage they took groups of us up onto the deck and told us to dance.

I didn't know why at the time, but I since realised it was to keep us exercised so that more of us didn't die. Collingwood whipped us and made us jump about like fools for the crew's amusement.



Slave whip



On this day another ship appeared on the horizon, smaller but faster than ours. It was flying a very strange black flag. Upon it was a picture of a human skull and beneath were two crossed swords. The captain appeared to be very afraid. “Damned pirates,” he shouted. “All hands on deck; load your pistols!” Immediately the crew forgot about us, gathered their weapons and looked to the pirate ship, which was fast approaching. “Hard to starboard!” the Captain yelled to Collingwood, the First Mate. “Run out the cannons.”

Did the pirates capture the Molly Snow?

Before I knew it, the pirates had thrown grappling irons across and hauled our ship to join theirs. They jumped, screaming upon us and furious fighting ensued. I heard one sailor say, “Oh my God, it’s Cutlass Cameron!” He looked even more frightening than the rest. He had a huge red beard with brightly coloured ribbons tied in it and he threw his cutlass about with careless abandon; with one stroke I saw him kill two men, he ran them straight through! We covered in a corner, hoping against hope they would not kill us. The fighting was over almost as quickly as it began. The Captain was tied up and made to walk the plank. To tell you the truth, I was not sorry to see him jump. Within seconds the waters were red. The great fish fed well again.

Cutlass Cameron



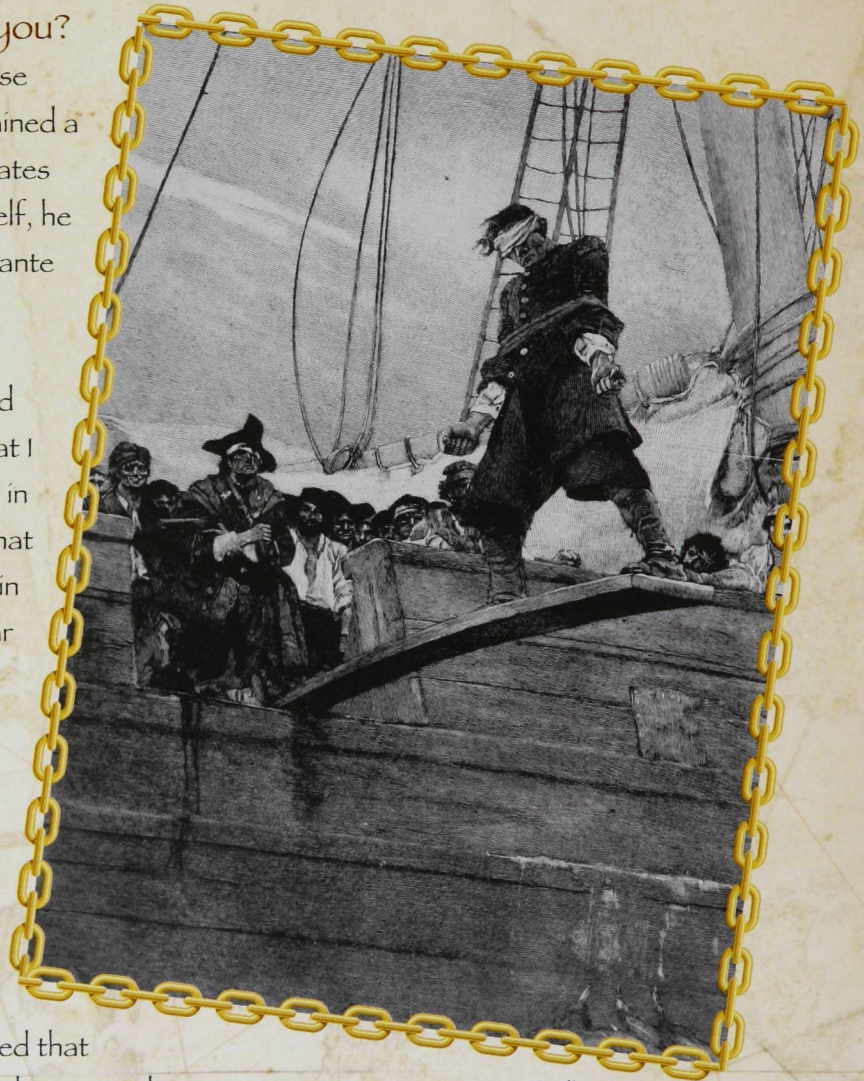
What happened to you?

We did not know who these pirates were. They unchained a few of us. One of the pirates was a black man like myself, he came from the coast of Fante and he could speak a language close to mine. By a mixture of words and gestures he explained that I could join them or remain in chains and I thought, "What can I do?" I decided to join the pirates. I had to swear an oath of allegiance.

What is an oath of allegiance?

It is a promise. If you break the promise you can be executed. I was now one of the pirates.

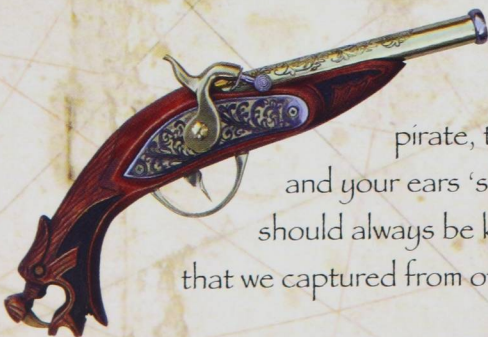
Cutlass Cameron explained that there were strict rules on the pirate ship. If we followed them we could become rich, but if we disobeyed we would be killed.



Walking the plank

What were the pirates' rules?

Well, you should never steal from another pirate, the punishment for that was to have your nose and your ears 'slit'. No gambling was allowed. Our pistols should always be kept clean and ready for action. All 'booty' that we captured from other ships was shared out fairly.



Crow's nest



I learned very quickly. They taught me how to tie the ropes, when to use a slip knot and when to use a reef knot. I learnt how to fight with a dagger and a cutlass and how to look after my pistol. Many of the pirates spoke English and I soon learnt enough to understand what they were saying. Since I was a small 13 year old I had to climb up to the crow's nest.

Did the crow not chase you from its nest?

It was not a real bird's nest, it's a tiny little platform at the top of the tallest mast and my job was to climb up there as fast as I could and look for land or ships approaching. Sometimes in a storm it rocked to and fro and I feared I would never get down, but then I thought of it as a tall cocoa tree, like I used to climb at home, and I felt safe.

What did you do as a pirate?

I soon realised that the pirates were not much better than the slavers. They survived by attacking other ships and stealing their cargo.

Where did you go next?

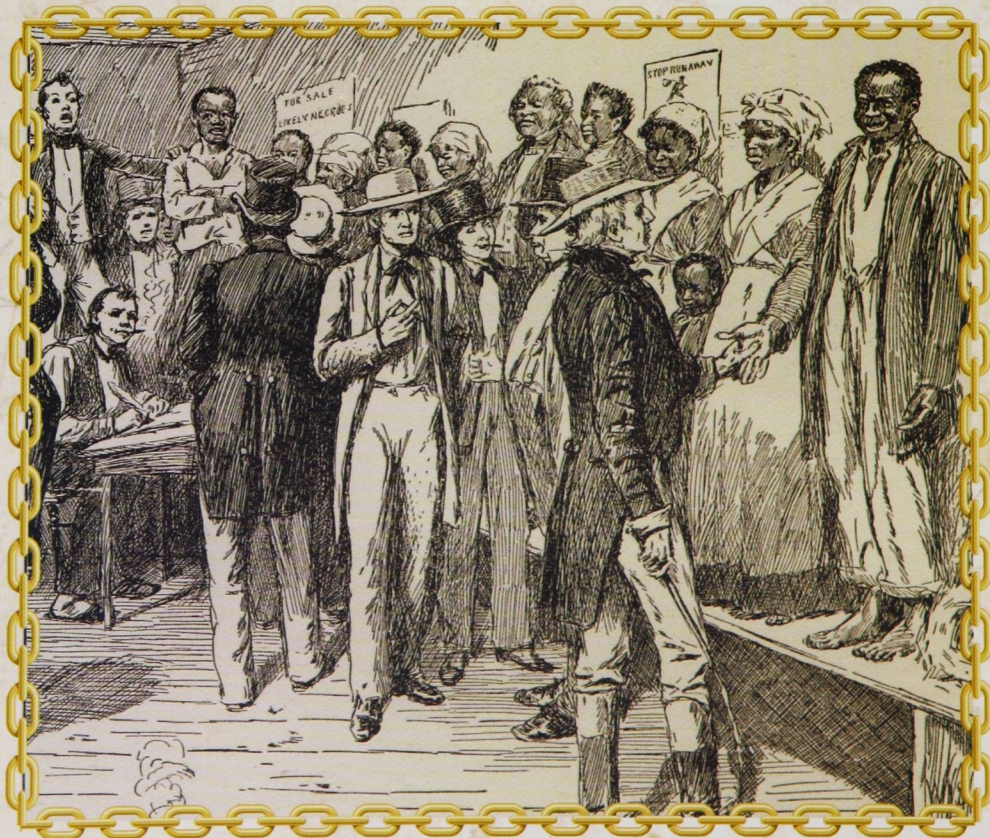
We went to the Bahamas Islands to take on water, food and other supplies. Most of these islands are small and make good pirate hideaways.

How did you become enslaved again?

We were captured by a British Navy frigate. It was faster than us and had many more guns. They attacked us under cover of night. The battle was fierce. Cutlass Cameron was shot. He was easy to spot with all those ribbons in his beard. Before he died he made us promise that he would never be captured. The crew wrapped his body in chains and threw it into the sea.

Why did he fear capture so?

Because the British would have put his head on a spike in the harbour in Port Royal in Jamaica as a warning to other pirates and left it there to rot to the bone.



Slave auction

CHAPTER V RECAPTURED



I realised I could either be hanged as a pirate or captured as a slave. Without even thinking, I stripped off my clothes and grabbed one of the iron collars from the hold of the ship, wrapped it around my neck and held my head down. Before long one of the sailors came upon me, grabbed me by the hair and lifted me up and shouted, "Who are you?" I made no answer, as if I didn't understand. "Who are you?" he asked again.

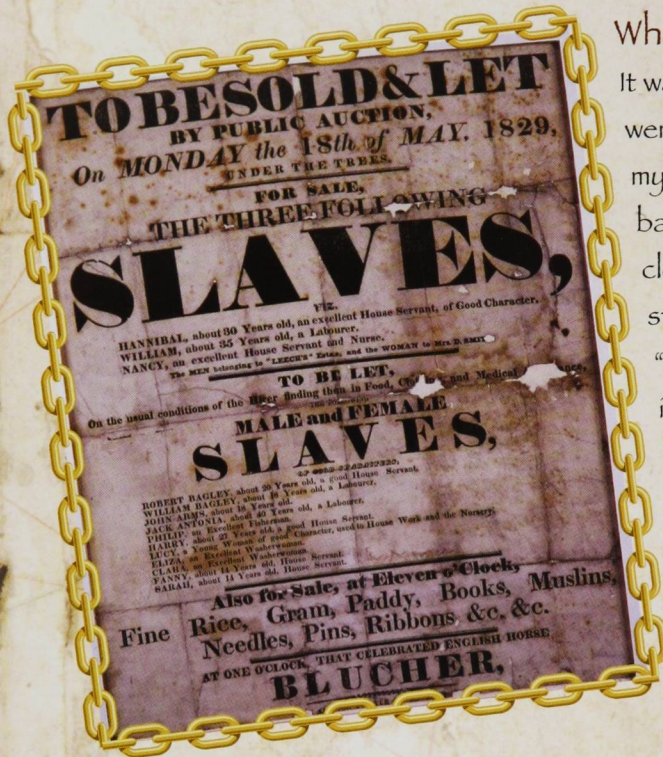
I replied in my own language, "I am Ottobah Cugoano, the son of the chief of Agimaque and I demand to be sent home."

"Captain," said the man, "This is one of the slaves." I hung my head and was chained in the hold along with the others.



So did they sell you?

We were taken to an island called Grenada in the Caribbean. As the ship approached it seemed such a beautiful place, reminding me of home, but as we got closer I realised this was not Africa. We had not been taken back to Fante and we would not be freed. They cleaned me up, oiled my skin and powdered over all my bruises and cuts to make me look as healthy as possible. Then they sold me in the Market Square.



Who bought you?

It was hard to listen as the tears were running down my face and my arms were chained behind my back. I was wearing only a loin cloth. The auctioneer held a stick beneath my chin and said, "Raise your head." A man inspected me as if I was an animal, lifted my lips, looked at my teeth, raised my eyelids, stared into my eyeballs and prodded me in the belly. I heard "£1," then "£2," then "£5," then "£10". I realised this must be a Slave Auction.

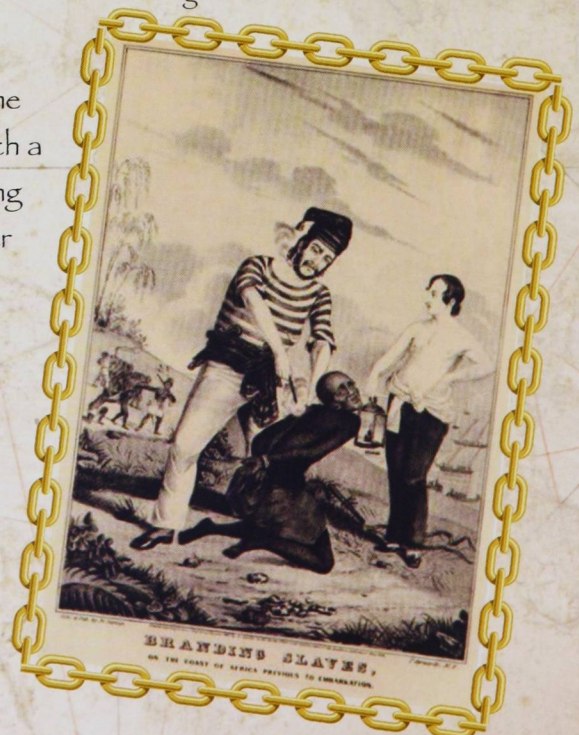
The last bid I heard before the hammer came down was "£20." I was sold to Mister Alexander Campbell, a planter. I was branded with his initials.

What's branding?

Branding is burning the letters of the name of your 'owner' into your flesh. It was such a cruel practice and was even done to young children. If you were sold, your new owner would brand you again. Here look at my shoulder – you see the letters 'AC'?

The pain must have been great! I passed out. When I awoke I was on a cart being taken to the plantation.

Branding



CHAPTER VI PLANTATION LIFE

What did Mr Campbell plant?



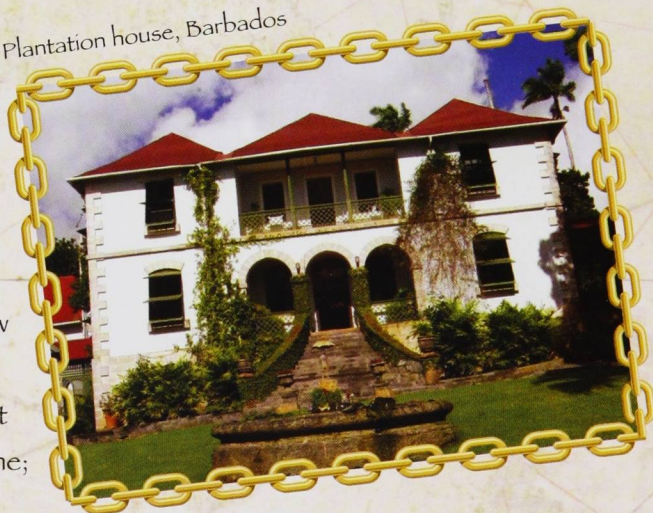
He planted nothing. We did all the work. We planted sugar cane and tobacco. He spent his time in the Great House counting his money, with two slaves to fan him day and night. When he realised I spoke good English he decided not to send me back into the fields. He took me with him to another island, Barbados, which was a few days sailing from Grenada. There we visited St. Elizabeth, one of the grandest plantations in all the Caribbean, owned by his brother. I was Mr. Campbell's valet.

What's a valet?

My job was to look after all his needs. I did things like keep his clothes tidy and ironed and helped him dress every day. When I was on my errands I passed through the fields and saw the work on the sugar plantation.

The gangs of workers got up at dawn and tended to the sugar cane; even small children had to weed in between the plants. This went on six, sometimes seven days a week until the sugar cane ripened, which took over a year. At harvest time they worked eighteen hours a day.

Plantation house, Barbados



Harvesting sugar cane

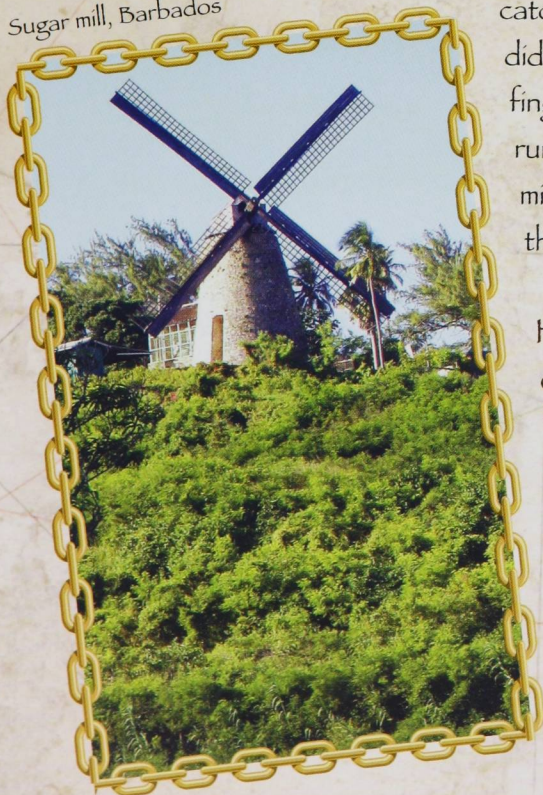


Why did they work so many hours?

If the cane wasn't cut quickly it would spoil. The cane was carried on the backs of the workers to the manufactories which were powered by windmills. There it was crushed to extract the juice. It was hot, it was sweaty, it was dark and the crushing machines were vicious. If you weren't fast they could

catch your fingers and if that happened they didn't even stop the machine, they just cut your fingers off with a machete and left the machines running. I saw many men, women and children with missing fingers and hands. Many survived less than ten years; they were worked to death.

Sugar mill, Barbados



How did they make you do all this nasty work?

We would have escaped if we could, but we were terrified. The first thing they did when new captives were brought to a plantation was to whip them savagely in front of everyone else to remind everybody what would happen if you didn't do as you were told. If you ate the sugar cane they pulled out your teeth.



Whipped



What?

Yes – pulled out your teeth! For running away or learning to read they might chop off a toe or a foot! Many were tortured in front of everyone on the plantation or even killed by hanging. Their bodies would be left swinging from the scaffold as a warning, to keep everyone else in line.

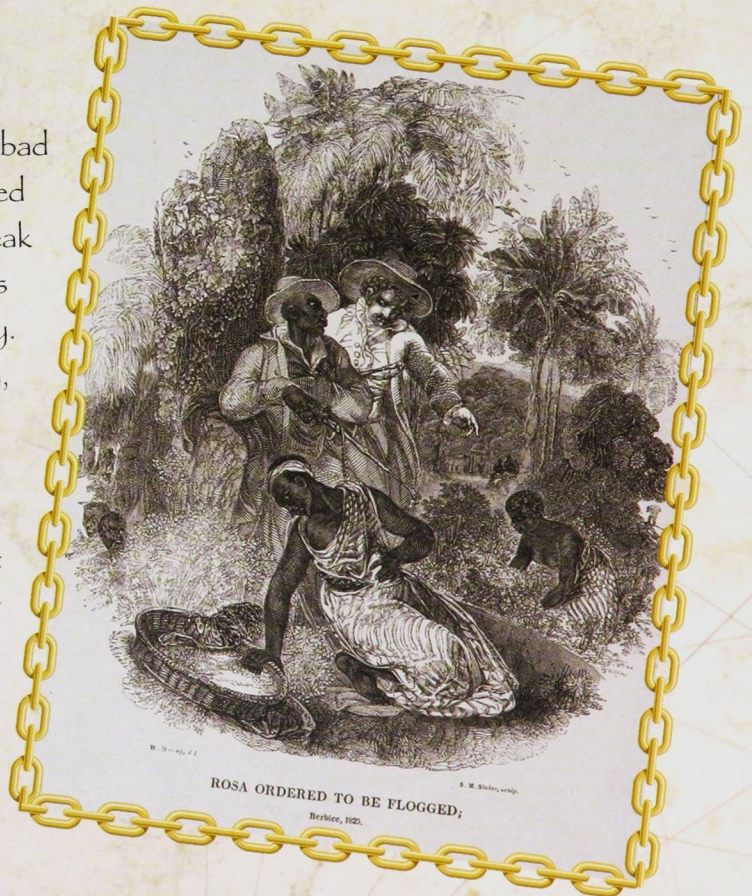
Weren't there any laws against this?

Not really. Each planter could do whatever he liked with his 'property'. The

planters were terrified that we would stop working and revolt, so they punished us at every opportunity. They were especially cruel when they were seasoning the captives.

They put salt on you?

No! Seasoning doesn't sound so bad but it's actually the word they used to describe how they tried to break your spirit. For the first two years they treated you especially badly. You might get whipped every day, even if you had done nothing wrong. They wanted to show you that they were in charge and make you so scared of them that you would work for no wages for the rest of your life.



CHAPTER VII A FREE MAN

No more of such horrors! Tell me something better, tell me about England.



Right then, Mister Campbell decided to return to England in the Year of Our Lord 1772 and he took me with him. I was fifteen. We landed at the port of Bristol, in the southwest. From there it took us three days by coach and horses to travel across the country to his house in London.



Black page boy

Coming to London



What was your job in London?

The same as in the Caribbean; I was his valet. By now I spoke very good English. I often had to deliver his letters and open the door to guests. His friends were greatly impressed that he had a black servant.

Were you the only black servant around?

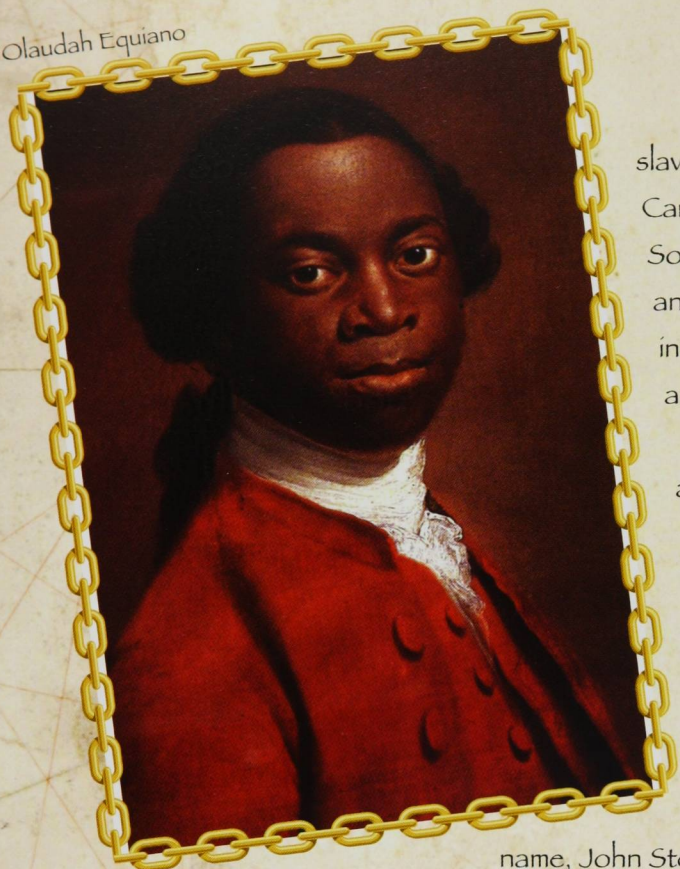
Oh no, there were many black servants in London. It seemed that every rich person wanted a black servant as a symbol to show that they were wealthy and suggest that they had estates in the Caribbean. The very wealth of the country was built on slavery. The cotton they wore, the indigo which dyed the cotton, the tobacco they smoked, the sugar they put into their tea and the cocoa from which they made their beloved chocolate were all produced by slavery.

I heard that it was in London that you became free.

Yes, that was after the abolitionist Granville Sharpe took James Somerset's case to the highest court in the land. In 1772 Judge Mansfield ruled that no



Olaudah Equiano



slave could be taken back to the Caribbean against their will. James Somerset became free. This meant that any enslaved person who was already in England didn't have to go back to a slave-owning country.

I arrived later the same year and amongst the black servants I knew, the talk was all of the Somerset case and how our masters could not force us back into slavery in the Caribbean. Some said you needed to be baptised a Christian to be freed, so on 20th August 1773

I was baptised with my English

name, John Stewart, at St. James Church in

Piccadilly, London. I was sixteen years old. That winter Mr Campbell ordered me to pack his trunk as we were to return to Grenada; this I knew was my only chance. "No," I said, "I shall not return with you. I know of the Somerset case and I am free."

How did he react?

He looked at me with shock and horror and struck me across the face. "Get out of my sight you ungrateful wretch!" he cried. Without even a chance to stop and collect my belongings he threw me out onto the streets of London.

What did you do?

I had been planning for this day and my friend Olaudah Equiano had said if I ever needed a roof over my head he could find me a position. He told me if I was in trouble I should come to him and now I quickly made my way to his lodgings. He was also a writer and had, like me, been captured as a child in Africa.

CHAPTER VIII TELLING MY STORY



Etching by Richard Cosway



he next day he took me to meet Richard and Maria Cosway, at number 88 Pall Mall, London. Both were famous artists and they agreed I could be their servant and they would use me as model.

Is that how you made a living?

Oh yes. I sat and I had my portrait painted by Richard. I met many of the great artists of the day, including Joshua Reynolds and William Blake. Blake listened carefully when I told him of my experiences.

So you're famous then?

Well, in a manner of speaking. While I was living with the Cosways I wrote my life story. I called the book, 'Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evils of Slavery'.

What is a book?

You know the adinkra writing we use here in Fante? Well in England, instead of printing on cloth like we do, they print on paper and attach the sheets of paper together to form a book. This book is copied many times by big machines and the people in England paid money to buy my book. It took me many months to write as I had learned to read and write in secret and so at first I was not proficient in it.



Adinkra symbols

Why did you learn to read in secret?

Because on the plantation it was against the law for slaves to learn to read; we could be punished severely if we were caught.

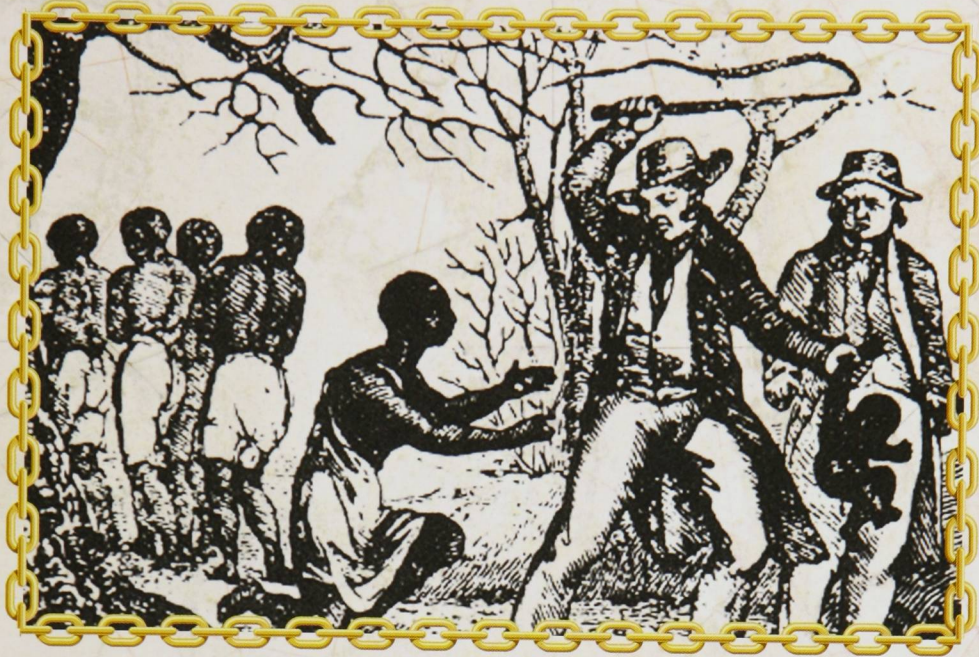
Why was reading a crime?

The planters wanted us to be ignorant. They were worried that if we learnt to read and found out what was going on in the world we were more likely to communicate with each other, organise and rise up and overthrow them.

Who read your book?

I travelled for over two years with Olaudah Equiano all over England; I visited London, Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham and many other towns and cities. Everywhere we went the crowds flocked to hear us speak. Some people were just curious because they had never seen a black man before.

A baby is taken from his mother to be raised by others until he is old enough to work



Many were against slavery and wanted to hear a first-hand account of the injustice meted out to my race. Some were spies of the planters who were trying to find out what we were planning. They were the ones who would ask if it were not true that blacks were merely savages who ought to be grateful they were fed and clothed, who had such small inferior brains and were not fit for anything but being beasts of burden.

How dare they say that?

Don't worry, it was they who sounded foolish. The crowd had heard me read from my book and were mightily

impressed. It was clear to all who was the

more intelligent. I also told them about fine art and craftsmanship from West Africa, and showed them examples of art we created long before white people first came to our shores. I spoke about the great civilisations of Mali and Benin.

Asante gold brooch



Ivory Mask, Benin



The Slave Ship by J.M.W. Turner



So why did they think like that?

Well, you see, they believed that they were good Christians and so they had to make up reasons to justify their evil treatment of our race. They couldn't admit that it was only about making money. For example, do you remember Luke Collingwood, the First Mate on the Molly Snow? He eventually became Captain of the slave ship 'Zong'. On 29th November 1781 he threw 133 people overboard to their deaths because they were sick.



Thrown overboard

Surely they hanged him for such murders?

Not at all, the matter only came to light because he tried to claim insurance money for the value of those he murdered. The courts in England did not treat it as murder because they did not see us as human. It took the campaigning of my dear friend Olaudah Equiano to bring the matter to light. Even then it was not considered a crime.

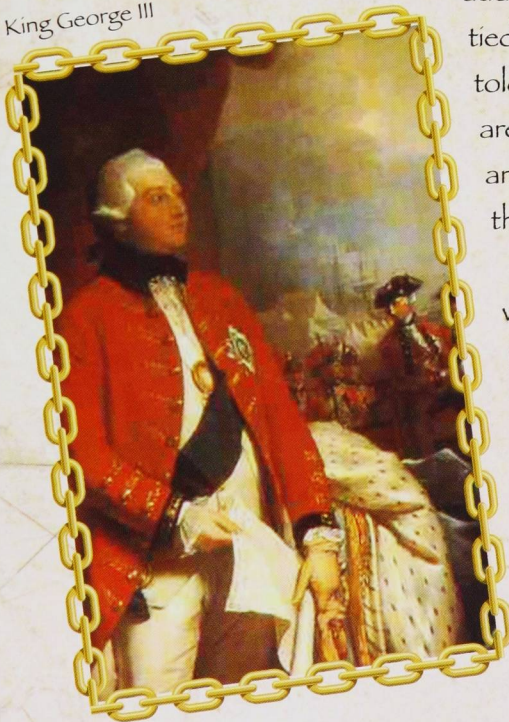
CHAPTER IX MEETING THE KING

Is it true that you met the King of England?



Yes, I met His Majesty King George the Third in the year of Our Lord 1788. I met his son the Prince Regent many times as Richard Cosway made a number of miniature portraits of him. I wrote to the King petitioning him to end slavery and sent him a copy of my book. Eventually I received a reply saying the King would like to enquire of a former slave about the exact conditions under which we were kept. I was taken to the Palace for an

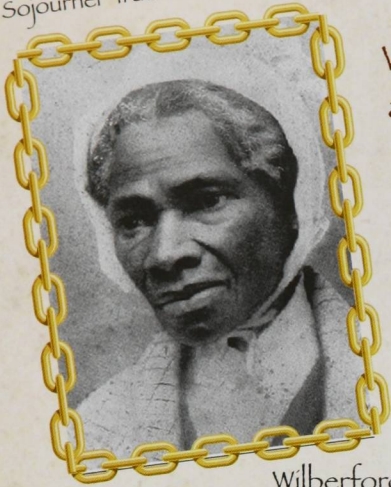
King George III



audience with the King. I was so tongue-tied I was almost unable to speak. But I told myself, "Remember Ottobah, you are the son of the Chief of Agimaque and you have every right to speak to the King of England."

After what seemed like an age of waiting I was taken in to see His Majesty. I told him of my experiences and that I too was a human being and should not be treated like a farm animal. All Africans ought to be free. He simply thanked me for my opinions and I was lead out. I later heard that the King was still in favour of slavery.

Sojourner Truth



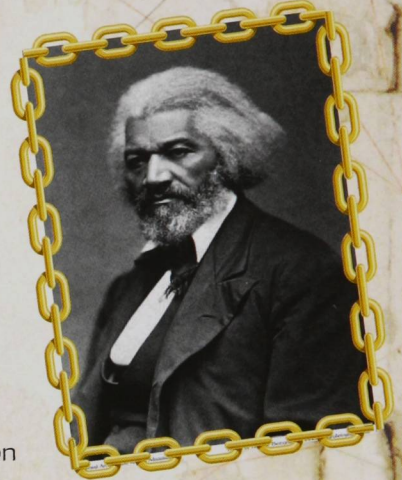
Were any of the brow-sow against slavery?

Along with black abolitionists like Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho and famous Americans like Frederick Douglas and Sojourner Truth, many whites were against slavery. William

Wilberforce was the best known. He was the Member of Parliament for Hull. Wilberforce thought the best way to end slavery was to do it gradually. First we should abolish only the trading in slaves, then move on to restricting working hours and so on. No, I said, the only way we can ever abolish slavery is by doing it straight away,

doing it now, and if necessary fighting for our freedom. It was all very well for Wilberforce to talk about gradual abolition, but how many thousands would have to die while this 'gradual' abolition would take place. I wanted freedom now, not in twenty, fifty or a hundred years time.

Frederick Douglas



Ignatius Sancho



William Wilberforce



William Knibb



CHAPTER X BACK TO THE CARIBBEAN

Did you ever return to the Caribbean?



did. Through Ignatius Sancho, I met a preacher called William Knibb. He was a Baptist Minister in Jamaica. As I had been baptised he thought I could help him by talking to the workers about Christianity. In 1829 I boarded one of the first steam ships, The Angelina, for Jamaica. It was so very different to the first time I crossed the Atlantic, chained in the hold of the Molly Snow.

So what did you do in Jamaica?

You must realise that it was very dangerous for me to be in Jamaica. I knew that at any moment somebody could capture me, brand me and enslave me once again. Mr. Knibb was hated by the plantation owners as they knew he wanted to get rid of slavery.

What was Jamaica like?

It was bigger and rougher than Grenada with huge mountains, the Blue Mountains – it was a beautiful place. However as soon as we set foot on the island I felt something was amiss. The atmosphere was tense, I could sense that trouble was brewing. There were many more soldiers than in Grenada and the planters were much more vicious to the enslaved people.

Run Away

14. ff. St. Ann's, July 20, 1779.

RUN AWAY
 from the Subscriber,
 About five weeks ago,
 A NEGRO BOY, named
JACK,
 Of the Congo Country,
 About 15 or 16 years of age, and has no Brand Mark.
 —He speaks tolerable good English, and it is supposed
 that he has taken the Clarendon road, being well ac-
 quainted in that parish.

TWO POUNDS FIFTEEN SHILLINGS Reward
 will be given for taking him up, and lodging him in
 any of the Gaols of this Island, giving information
 thereof.

ANDREW BYRNE.

Why was this so?

Well, for one thing there were the Maroons, led by Nanny.

They had escaped slavery and had lived in the mountains for over two hundred years.

The British had tried to conquer them but never succeeded. They often raided the plantations for supplies and runaways would join up with them.

In the end the British had to sign

a peace treaty with them. There were many slave revolts in Jamaica, so the British were even more brutal here. Runaways could expect to have a leg or foot chopped off if they were caught – or even be killed.



Am I Not A Man
And A Brother



'Hung alive by the ribs' by William Blake



CHAPTER XI

SAM SHARPE

AND THE CHRISTMAS REBELLION

So did you meet any of the enslaved Africans in Jamaica?



travelled with William Knibb and I met an extraordinary fellow named Sam Sharpe, a true hero.

What did he do?

While we were there, Sam Sharpe organised the Christmas Rebellion in the west of Jamaica. It took Sam over a year to plan it. He managed to persuade the workers to go on strike. On Boxing Day 1831, when the cane was ready to harvest they refused to work unless they were paid. Sam Sharpe had told everyone, "Don't fight, we must not be violent unless they attack us."



Sam Sharpe

Did they attack?

The planters were outraged, they refused to pay and demanded that the cane be cut straight away or it would spoil and the whole year's crop would be lost. Rather than work, the enslaved people burnt down the cane fields on over 200 plantations in west Jamaica. The rebellion lasted nine terrible days; by the end 200 blacks lay dead, their bodies rotting in the fields. 350 ring-leaders, including Sam Sharpe, were quickly tried and sentenced to hang. His last words were; "I would rather die on yonder gallows than live for a minute more in slavery." With tears in my eyes I watched them hang him in the main square in Montego Bay on 28th of May 1832. His owner was paid sixteen pounds and ten shillings compensation by the British Government.





CHAPTER XII ABOLITION



Only two years later slavery in the whole of the British Empire was ended. Even before they hanged Sam Sharpe the British Parliament set up an inquiry into the Christmas Rebellion. Sam didn't live to see the day, but he did not give his life in vain. Many think it was Wilberforce and religious groups that forced the hand of the British government. But I know they were afraid of us.



General Toussaint l'Ouverture

The mighty British Empire,
afraid of you?

Well there were nearly a million enslaved Africans in Jamaica and only 15,000 white people. The British government feared a slaughter. Nearby on the island of Haiti blacks had taken advantage of the French Revolution, overthrown the French and set up their own country. The black General Toussaint l'Ouverture had even fought off the British, the French and the Spanish. If we could do it in Haiti we could do it in Jamaica! At least if the British freed the enslaved people the plantation owners would keep their heads; in Haiti many of them were killed and their lands given to the people.



Great Britain abolished trading in slaves in 1807;
slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1834



Why have you come back to Fante?

Well, first of all, I returned to England after the Christmas Rebellion. I had worked hard in England to help abolish slavery and I was overjoyed to live to see the 1st of August 1834; the day that slavery was abolished in the British Empire. I wanted to see my homeland before I died.

What happened to the enslaved when they were freed?

Most of them stayed where they were and carried on working on the plantations for low wages. The Government gave the planters £20 million compensation for their 'lost property' but the enslaved Africans didn't get a penny. Some have 'returned' to Africa. Olaudah and I set up a group called the 'Sons of Africa' and we helped the British to create a new country called Sierra Leone, to which people could return. The capital city is called Freetown.

But many black people in other countries are still not free. France, Portugal and America still hold slaves and transport them from here in Fante. The Fort at Elmina is as busy as ever, trading in human misery. I am an old man now and I have done my best. Some day, I believe, slavery will come to an end everywhere in the world.



The movement continued to campaign against slavery in other countries

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