

Chapter 64

She then inquired of him what things it was necessary we should carry over with us, and he, like a very honest as well as knowing man, told her thus: 'Madam, your cousins in the first place must procure somebody to buy them as servants, in conformity to the conditions of their transportation, and then, in the name of that person, they may go about what they will; they may either purchase some plantations already begun, or they may purchase land of the Government of the country, and begin where they please, and both will be done reasonably.' She bespoke his favour in the first article, which he promised to her to take upon himself, and indeed faithfully performed it, and as to the rest, he promised to recommend us to such as should give us the best advice, and not to impose upon us, which was as much as could be desired.

She then asked him if it would not be necessary to furnish us with a stock of tools and materials for the business of planting, and he said, 'Yes, by all means.' And then she begged his assistance in it. She told him she would furnish us with everything that was convenient whatever it cost her. He accordingly gave her a long particular of things necessary for a planter, which, by his account, came to about fourscore or a hundred pounds. And, in short, she went about as dexterously to buy them, as if she had been an old Virginia merchant; only that she bought, by my direction, above twice as much of everything as he had given her a list of.

These she put on board in her own name, took his bills of loading for them, and endorsed those bills of loading to my husband, insuring the cargo afterwards in her own name, by our order; so that we were provided for all events, and for all disasters.

I should have told you that my husband gave her all his whole stock of #108, which, as I have said, he had about him in gold, to lay out thus, and I gave her a good sum besides; so that I did not break into the stock which I had left in her hands at all, but after we had sorted out our whole cargo, we had yet near #200 in money, which was more than enough for our purpose.

In this condition, very cheerful, and indeed joyful at being so happily accommodated as we were, we set sail from Bugby's

Hole to Gravesend, where the ship lay about ten more days, and where the captain came on board for good and all. Here the captain offered us a civility, which indeed we had no reason to expect, namely, to let us go on shore and refresh ourselves, upon giving our words in a solemn manner that we would not go from him, and that we would return peaceably on board again. This was such an evidence of his confidence in us, that it overcame my husband, who, in a mere principle of gratitude, told him, as he could not be in any capacity to make a suitable return for such a favour, so he could not think of accepting of it, nor could he be easy that the captain should run such a

risk. After some mutual civilities, I gave my husband a purse, in which was eighty guineas, and he put in into the captain's hand. 'There, captain,' says he, 'there's part of a pledge for our fidelity; if we deal dishonestly with you on any account, 'tis your own.' And on this we went on shore.

Indeed, the captain had assurance enough of our resolutions to go, for that having made such provision to settle there, it did not seem rational that we would choose to remain here at the expense and peril of life, for such it must have been if we had been taken again. In a word, we went all on shore with the captain, and supped together in Gravesend, where we were very merry, stayed all night, lay at the house where we supped, and came all very honestly on board again with him in the morning. Here we bought ten dozen bottles of good beer, some wine, some fowls, and such things as we thought might be acceptable on board.

My governess was with us all this while, and went with us round into the Downs, as did also the captain's wife, with whom she went back. I was never so sorrowful at parting with my own mother as I was at parting with her, and I never saw her more. We had a fair easterly wind sprung up the third day after we came to the Downs, and we sailed from thence the 10th of April. Nor did we touch any more at any place, till, being driven on the coast of Ireland by a very hard gale of wind, the ship came to an anchor in a little bay, near the mouth of a river, whose name I remember not, but they said

the river came down from Limerick, and that it was the largest river in Ireland.

Here, being detained by bad weather for some time, the captain, who continued the same kind, good-humoured man as at first, took us two on shore with him again. He did it now in kindness to my husband indeed, who bore the sea very ill, and was very sick, especially when it blew so hard. Here we bought in again a store of fresh provisions, especially beef, pork, mutton, and fowls, and the captain stayed to pickle up five or six barrels of beef to lengthen out the ship's store. We were here not above five days, when the weather turning mild, and a fair wind, we set sail again, and in two-and-forty days came safe to the coast of Virginia.

When we drew near to the shore, the captain called me to him, and told me that he found by my discourse I had some relations in the place, and that I had been there before, and so he supposed I understood the custom in their disposing the convict prisoners when they arrived. I told him I did not, and that as to what relations I had in the place, he might be sure I would make myself known to none of them while I was in the circumstances of a prisoner, and that as to the rest, we left ourselves entirely to him to assist us, as he was pleased to promise us he would do. He told me I must get somebody in the place to come and buy us as servants, and who must answer for us to the governor of the country, if he demanded us. I told him we should do as she should direct; so he brought a planter to treat with

him, as it were, for the purchase of these two servants, my husband and me, and there we were formally sold to him, and went ashore with him. The captain went with us, and carried us to a certain house, whether it was to be called a tavern or not I know not, but we had a bowl of punch there made of rum, etc., and were very merry. After some time the planter gave us a certificate of discharge, and an acknowledgment of having served him faithfully, and we were free from him the next morning, to go whither we would.

For this piece of service the captain demanded of us six thousand weight of tobacco, which he said he was accountable for to his freighter, and which we immediately bought for him, and made him a present of twenty guineas besides, with which he was abundantly satisfied.

It is not proper to enter here into the particulars of what part of the colony of Virginia we settled in, for divers reasons; it may suffice to mention that we went into the great river Potomac, the ship being bound thither; and there we intended to have settled first, though afterwards we altered our minds.

The first thing I did of moment after having gotten all our goods on shore, and placed them in a storehouse, or warehouse, which, with a lodging, we hired at the small place or village where we landed--I say, the first thing was to inquire after my mother, and after my brother (that fatal person whom I married as a husband, as I have related at large). A little inquiry furnished

me with information that Mrs.----, that is, my mother, was dead; that my brother (or husband) was alive, which I confess I was not very glad to hear; but which was worse, I found he was removed from the plantation where he lived formerly, and where I lived with him, and lived with one of his sons in a plantation just by the place where we landed, and where we had hired a warehouse.

I was a little surprised at first, but as I ventured to satisfy myself that he could not know me, I was not only perfectly easy, but had a great mind to see him, if it was possible to so do without his seeing me. In order to that I found out by inquiry the plantation where he lived, and with a woman of that place whom I got to help me, like what we call a chairwoman, I rambled about towards the place as if I had only a mind to see the country and look about me. At last I came so near that I saw the dwellinghouse. I asked the woman whose plantation that was; she said it belonged to such a man, and looking out a little to our right hands, 'there,' says she, is the gentleman that owns the plantation, and his father with him.' 'What are their Christian names?' said I. 'I know not,' says she, 'what the old gentleman's name is, but the son's name is Humphrey; and I believe,' says she, 'the father's is so too.' You may guess, if you can, what a confused mixture of joy and fight possessed my thoughts upon this occasion, for I immediately knew that this was nobody else but my own son, by that father she showed me, who was my own brother. I had no mask, but I ruffled my hood so about my face, that I depended upon it that after above twenty years' absence, and withal

not expecting anything of me in that part of the world, he would not be able to know anything of me. But I need not have used all that caution, for the old gentleman was grown dim-sighted by some distemper which had fallen upon his eyes, and could but just see well enough to walk about, and not run against a tree or into a ditch. The woman that was with me had told me that by a mere accident, knowing nothing of what importance it was to me. As they drew near to us, I said, 'Does he know you, Mrs. Owen?' (so they called the woman). 'Yes,' said she, 'if he hears me speak, he will know me; but he can't see well enough to know me or anybody else'; and so she told me the story of his sight, as I have related. This made me secure, and so I threw open my hoods again, and let them pass by me. It was a wretched thing for a mother thus to see her own son, a handsome, comely young gentleman in flourishing circumstances, and durst not make herself known to him, and durst not take any notice of him. Let any mother of children that reads this consider it, and but think with what anguish of mind I restrained myself; what yearnings of soul I had in me to embrace him, and weep over him; and how I thought all my entrails turned within me, that my very bowels moved, and I knew not what to do, as I now know not how to express those agonies! When he went from me I stood gazing and trembling, and looking after him as long as I could see him; then sitting down to rest me, but turned from her, and lying on my face, wept, and kissed the ground that he had set his foot on.