

SIR CHARLES MACCARTHY (1768-1824), SOLDIER AND ADMINISTRATOR¹

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THE failure of the Bulama settlement in 1792 (the survivors of which took refuge for a while in Freetown), of the Sierra Leone Company in 1807, and even of the French West India Company, seemed to confirm a growing belief in Whitehall and Westminster that successful management was unattainable overseas without ministerial surveillance, or what was called "regular government".² The weakness of benevolent institutions such as the Sierra Leone Company, or of private colonization projects like Bulama, was their total irresponsibility. Unfortunately, with her contemporary, New South Wales, Sierra Leone was too distant and impoverished, besides being unhealthy, for even her highest offices to be sought after by the distinguished. As Sir George Stephen pointed out, no governor accepted office in the tropics except under duress of poverty;³ however, in the course of the long war, there were plenty of half-pay officers accustomed to discipline and plans were accordingly made to have the several West African settlements run by naval or military men, aided perhaps by a black corps raised from the Sierra Leone Nova Scotians and Maroons. Even so, Sir Charles MacCarthy Lyrach of Maunche, known as Charles MacCarthy, was the first Crown governor of Sierra Leone totally unassociated with the Clapham Sect and the African Institution.

The Institution, like the defunct Sierra Leone Company, had been founded by the Low Church party in the Church of England known as the Evangelicals. Unwilling, as the leading Abolitionists, to surrender authority in Freetown, and the only group amongst the upper classes with knowledge of the coast,

¹ The author is indebted to the Canada Council for a Research Grant enabling him to complete this paper.

² National Library of Scotland, MS. 1075 (Melville), fols. 136 ff., anon. memo, n.d., c. 1808.

³ *Anti-Slavery Recollections* (London, 1854), p. 43.

they enthusiastically took to advising government about the new colony.¹ William Wilberforce, around whom they gathered, actually chose Thomas Perronet Thompson, the first colonial governor, his appointment by Lord Castlereagh following automatically. Thompson's father was a governor of the Institution, an old friend and a fellow Abolitionist, but his ardent son was too intellectual and too scrupulous to make a good colonial administrator. Like Governor John Clarkson more than a decade earlier, who also remonstrated with the saintly oligarchs at the inept way they ran Sierra Leone, he was peremptorily dismissed.² He can scarcely rate as a public officer, receiving only two letters from the Secretary of State (both at the Institution's prompting): one appointing, the other dismissing him.

His successor, Captain Edward Columbine, R.N., was actually a governor of the African Institution. Arriving in February 1810—according to Thompson, with a pack of rascally placemen—frequently absent as one of the commissioners appointed by the House of Commons to inspect the British West African possessions (an appointment found by Wilberforce, who had nominated the two others: William Dawes and Thomas Ludlam, both former Sierra Leone Company governors), Columbine was in any case often ill and left in May 1811.³

¹ The Crown took over from the Sierra Leone Company on 1 Jan. 1808. The Institution, founded in 1807, was run by Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, Zachary Macaulay (secretary and a former governor of Sierra Leone in Sierra Leone Company days).

² Thompson was elected a Fellow of Queens, Cambridge, when a midshipman in 1804. His lifelong affinity with Arabic and Muslims, which he first evinced in Sierra Leone, could not, of course, be reconciled with the Evangelical crusade launched by the Church Missionary Society against Islam.

³ Ludlam, the last Company governor, stayed to hand over to Thompson in August 1808. Like MacCarthy, Thompson had French antecedents and even spoke with a French accent (as MacCarthy may have done). His first service, also undertaken on Wilberforce's advice, was as midshipman in a ship commanded by Vice-Admiral Gambier, Newfoundland. Lord Gambier was a noted humanitarian after whom the Church Missionary Society (hereafter C.M.S.) named a station in the Northern Rivers. Thompson, like Clarkson, soon concluded that the 'Saints' "were all heart and no head", that there were two Sierra Leones: one existing solely in the minds of Wilberforce, Macaulay, Thornton and the other (real) one of Nova Scotians and matchet-carrying Maroons. The worry made

The amiable, self-indulgent Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Maxwell, who followed, mindful that the Institution had been founded by his patrons partly as a watch-dog against slave-trading, devoted himself to eradicating that commerce from nearby but non-British territory. Consequently an American, George Cook from the Rio Pongo, successfully sued for £20,000, which Government reluctantly paid. This governor was also the centre of a bitter suit brought by Robert Thorpe, his eccentric chief-justice, an Irish barrister and former judge from Upper Canada, removed for violence and indiscretion. Thorpe belaboured the Sierra Leone Company, the Institution, and the colony government, becoming in the process the slavers' protagonist. Maxwell's other official preoccupations were in resolving questions outstanding since Company days: the matter of land-allotments and quit-rents (the latter revived by Thorpe), and the subjugation, by the formation of two companies of liberated Africans within the Royal African Corps,¹ of what were held to be the too-democratic Nova Scotians and the over-independent Maroons. His private interests were farming and trading; he, Kenneth and George Macaulay (government servants and second cousins of Zachary) between them held more than half all cultivated lands,² his own being acquired cheaply by appropriating the empty or forfeited settlers' allotments. His governorship was the nadir of the Institution; even its friends became sceptical, John Clarkson being roused by the reimposition of quit-rents, a dastardly breach of promises he had made to the settlers. Too many failures of administration, he felt, ever since his departure in 1792, had been blamed, first,

him ill, with symptoms similar to Clarkson's. See esp. L. G. Johnson, *General T. P. Thompson, 1783-1869*, London, 1957, ch. iii and iv and pp. 57, 77, 91, 98, 118; also the author's "John Clarkson and the S. Leone Company", *Internat. Journal of African Historical Studies*, v, ii (1972), 203-20.

¹ The Corps, recruiting from the hulks where convicts awaited transportation, or from criminals convicted in other regiments, was further augmented by from 2 to 10 companies of whites. Their qualities can be imagined. Until the mid-1820s Liberated Africans were known as Captured Negroes.

² Maxwell appointed Kenneth as Collector of Customs and as Superintendent of Captured Negroes. Maroons were free blacks from Jamaica, deported for rebellion; Nova Scotians were black Loyalists originally settled in Nova Scotia after the American Revolutionary War.

on the Nova Scotians, and then on the Maroons. There were rumours of settler exploitations; Zachary Macaulay, the secretary, had, after all, made a fortune in the Sierra Leone trade already, and was believed to be trying to have Castlereagh stop Maxwell from levying the colony's first customs duties intended to save Britain at least some of the expenses of administration. He made a large profit, too, from the £450,000 which passed through his hands as Prize Agent.¹

It was unfortunate that no Crown governor had ever survived long enough to evolve his own policy; dismissal, sickness, even death had precluded this. MacCarthy's three successors succumbed in three years. Hitherto, the Institution had at least provided a kind of continuity. MacCarthy, however, immunized by service in the West Indies and Senegal, toughened by regular exercise and shower baths, sleeping with open windows, "dispelling all gloomy impressions as far as I can by keeping body and mind exercised, mixing with society, etc.",² imaginatively and vigorously administered not only Sierra Leone, but latterly the Gambia and the Gold Coast settlements from 1814 to 1824, longer than any other governor throughout the whole colonial period.

He terminated the amateur, partisan, and even petty, administration of the African Institution, though not without a struggle; the Claphamites, working latterly through the Church Missionary Society,³ were not routed until the 1820s. Applying his wide experience as a soldier in Europe, the Caribbean, New Brunswick and St. Louis (Senegal), eschewing the "Saints"

¹ According to the *Glasgow Courier* of 4 Nov. 1824 he was made to disgorge £5,000—interest made in merely 2 years on some £50,000 held for that period—when the Treasury threatened prosecution. For Maxwell, see Public Record Office (henceforth P.R.O.) Colonial Office (henceforth C.O.) 267/35, 11 Nov. 1812, H. Chisholm to Geo. Harrison.

² C.M.S., London, MS. C/A1/E8, no. 51, 21 Aug. 1819, MacCarthy to Josiah Pratt. With his passion for exercise, he resembles another popular Irish Governor, Sir James Pope Hennessy. MacCarthy had only one period of home leave, from July 1820 to Nov. 1821.

³ Founded in 1799, so named only in 1813. Wilberforce (as president), Macaulay, Thornton (treasurer) and other Claphamites were founder-members, and, as the Institution fell into disrepute, used it as a new power base from at least 1813.

and the C.M.S., working enthusiastically within the strict colonial and imperial framework of his adopted county, he set himself unselfishly, in the best traditions of the colonial service he did so much to formulate, to improve the lot of those he governed, subordinating in the process his own professional ambitions.¹

The scandalous disposal of public lands, of which he had seen something in Canada, was ended; the Crown's first acquisition of adjacent territory was negotiated; strict accounts were kept of the increasing British imports; and a constructive and harmonious relationship was established with the King's ministers and civil service—especially with the treasury towards which the "Colonial Office" had so frequently looked only with hostility. The constitutions of the various West African territories were overhauled, their administrations systematized. The mundane, even primitive, maritime and commercial concepts of Empire to which Britain had returned after 1783 acquired a new dignity and purpose, more in keeping with the original vision of Granville Sharp's Province of Freedom than its successors, the Company and the Institution. "I can say boldly", wrote MacCarthy to the C.M.S. secretary in 1819, "that the most powerful, nay the only inducement to my long stay in Africa . . . has . . . been the hope of laying the foundation of civilisation for an oppressed race on the only stable basis—Christian religion and Loyalty".² The policy of drift was halted in the Liberated African Department, and, while the population tripled, the colony was set upon a course held for most of the century and even beyond as the cultural and administrative centre of British West Africa. In short, with MacCarthy, Crown government arrived.

Such loyalty may seem at first surprising. The Governor's greatgrandfather, Michael MacCarthy, had followed James II to France, where he and subsequent generations served the French

¹ Cf. MacCarthy to General Sir Martin Hunter, Anton's Hill Muniments, Coldstream, letter of 7 Jan. 1818: "... frustrated in my military career I have employed to the best of my ability the power entrusted to me in assisting the unfortunate and oppressed Africans." I am indebted to Mrs. Bates, Anton's Hill, for permission to use her family papers.

² C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E8, no. 58, 21 Sept. 1819.

Crown. Charles, born at Cork on 25 February 1768,¹ was the second son of Jean Gabriel Guérout, Procureur du Roi of the town of Nogent-le-Rotrou, Department of Eure et Loire, and of Charlotte Guérout, *née* MacCarthy. His uncle, Captain Thaddeus MacCarthy, who adopted him, induced him to take his mother's name. Thaddeus, a colonel in Louis XVI's Life Guards, later became a captain in the British 9th Foot. Charles was appointed sub-lieutenant in Berwick's regiment of Irish Infantry—the Irish Brigade in France having been formed in 1689, since when none had had a higher reputation.² By 1791 he was a captain with the emigré army at Coblenz under the Prince de Condé. In 1793 and 1794 he served as a volunteer under the Dutch in the regiment of Damas against France, being wounded in the leg. When the Dutch surrendered he served the emigrés under the Duc de Castries. In October 1794, after the French royalists' collapse, the Irish Brigade being reorganized into British pay, MacCarthy became an ensign in the regiment of James Henry, Count Conway, afterwards called the 6th Regiment of the Irish Brigade, and proceeded to the West Indies. Little is known of his service there, but the vital part played by black troops in that campaign may have contributed to an overconfidence in his Fante auxiliaries and local militia later in the Gold Coast; it happened that on the former occasion they were extremely well led on both sides, the

¹ Various dates are given for his birth. I have ratified this from the Pedigree of MacCartie Lyragh, Office of Arms, Dublin Castle. Michael was buried in Caen, Sept. 1744, as was his son Michael in Sept. 1763. Sir Charles's elder brother John Henry (1764-93), a Captain in the Irish Brigade, was buried in Flanders. Their sister, Frances, born 1766, married Charles Francis Fountain Merry. Their son Charles, a captain in the 52nd was killed at Badajos. Sir Charles's other sister married the Comte de Mervé, (see p. 66 n. 3 below). It was an elder uncle, John, a captain in the Irish Brigade (died 1788) who asked Thaddeus, his heir, to bequeath all the property to their nephew. Thaddeus was captured by the Republic and in 1812 was a prisoner in Chartres. Jean Gabriel Guérout (1737-1821) was born at Aigle and died at Nogent le Rotrou, whither he had moved after becoming a lawyer in 1760. In 1781 he was Deputy (Province of Perche) for Nogent and in 1787 Deputy to the Third Estate. In 1785 he was mayor of Nogent.

² Three regiments had been formed: Dillon's, Berwick's, and Walsh's. See W. E. Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1913), iii. 524 ff.

Republicans having made a special point of using black troops, thereby revolutionizing West Indian warfare.¹ The British black troops, mainly French-speaking, were led by Irish Brigade officers, who, for reasons discussed later, were particularly efficient.

Returning from Honduras, via New York, to Britain in 1798, he was badly wounded in the right elbow when fighting a French privateer; his commanding officer reported his conduct "on this, as on all other occasions, particularly zealous".² Considerably taller than average (he towered above his staff in West Africa), with yellow hair and light blue eyes, conspicuousness was an extra danger.

The Brigade being disbanded at the end of 1798, MacCarthy was appointed to a company in the 11th West India Regiment,³ transferring to the 52nd (Oxfordshire) Foot on the 15 March 1800.⁴ Senior British officers from the very first had been struck by the high professional skill and morale of all emigré troops. Sir John Moore, perhaps the best soldier Britain has ever had,⁵ taking over their command at Cowes, Isle of Wight, was ecstatic: "I could not have been so happy with any British Regiments".⁶ By contrast the British army generally lacked spirit among the lower ranks, whilst the higher ("blockheads

¹ Register House, Edinburgh, MS. GD 193/7/5 (Maitland Papers), anon. memo; probably Thomas Maitland to Henry Dundas, Lord Melville. In MacCarthy's sphere of operations they were led by a charismatic black colonel, Marin Pedre (British Library (henceforth B.L.) Add. MS. 57327, Moore's Journal).

² D. D. Daly, "Brigadier-General Sir Charles MacCarthy, Kt., 1764[sic]-1824", in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, x (1931), 143-49; *The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1825* (London, 1825), p. 436; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London, 1824), ii. 277; J. Hayes, *Bibliographical Dictionary of Irishmen in France*, Dublin 1949. It should be noted that the D.N.B. entry has been largely superseded by modern research.

³ The formal prohibition against the enlistment of Irish Catholics was withdrawn only in 1799 (*The Irish Sword*, i (1949), 35). I have no evidence that in getting these commissions any political influence was exercised (see E. M. Johnston, *Great Britain and Ireland, 1760-1800*, Edinburgh 1963).

⁴ For this and subsequent appointments see the Army Lists.

⁵ Cf. a contemporary, present at his death: "the most perfect soldier and gentleman I ever knew" (Colonel Sir S. Graham of Balgowan to Capt. Robert Garden, Reg. Ho. MS. GD 46/17/10 (Seaforth Papers), 22 Jan. 1809).

⁶ B.L. Add. MS. 57325, p. 79, 22 Dec. 1795, Moore's Journal.

at the heads of Regiments "1) neglected even elementary duties. In St. Lucia it had once taken all Moore and his staff could do to *persuade* troops to charge a party of half-cowed brigands; the general, utterly despondent, convinced that Britain could not match the "spirit and enterprize" of the Republic, felt she should make peace.²

In circumstances like these determined men draw together, and MacCarthy began to make influential friends. Sir David Dundas (1735-1820) first heard of him when they were both in Flanders in 1794. He was a student of continental military systems and had published in 1788 *The Principles of Military Movements, chiefly applicable to Infantry*, but his reputation rested on his *Rules and Regulations for the Formation, Field Exercises and Movements of H.M. Forces*, which appeared in 1792 and was used by Moore and Wellington. In view of MacCarthy's defeat by the Asante in 1824, when his junior officers let him down badly, it is significant that Sir David Bunbury criticized Dundas's works because, though providing a much needed uniform system, after the Prussian example, they were badly written "and led the large class of stupid officers into strange blunders".³ Moreover, no role was assigned to Light Infantry,⁴ despite the bitter lesson taught Burgoyne in America and the unconventional fighting encountered in the West Indies,⁵ India and the Peninsula, to say nothing of the increasing need for

¹ B.L. Add. MS. 57321(4), Moore to Sir R. Brownrigg, 4 Sept. 1796. Of the principle of promotions by purchase a modern soldier has written: "Of all systems of promotion, even that of promotion by birth, this is the most inimical to efficiency" (Brigadier S. Bidwell, *Swords for Hire* (London, 1791), p. 168).

² B.L. Add. MS. 57326, 8 July 1796, Moore's Journal. See also especially Add. MS. 57327 *passim*, and Reg. Ho. MS. GD 51/1/652, Tarleton to Dundas, 1 Aug. 1795 and enc.

³ D.N.B.

⁴ Reg. Ho. MS. GD 45/4 f. 36, anon. memo. Moore, however, was training his 52nd as Light Infantry in 1803 (see B.L. Add. MS. 57547, pp. 162-5, 171-3). For a parallel and almost contemporary development of the light dragoons see M. Jankuvitch, *They Rode Into Europe* (London, 1971), p. 7.

⁵ Where, it was wryly noted in army circles, the Jamaican Maroons "were got the better of by Treaty and not by open force" (Reg. Ho. MS. GD 193/7/5 (Maitland Papers), anon. memo., n.d., c. 1796). See also the author's "Alexander Lindsay . . . Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica", *Bull. John Rylands Univ. Lib. of Manchester*, lvii (1974-75), 327-65.

bush and hill warfare as the empire grew. Down to modern times the Horse Guards required field days which rehearsed movements committing huge numbers of troops in classic European confrontations. General William Harcourt, writing to David Dundas when the latter was studying the Prussian system, observed loftily that he doubted whether every British officer was capable of appreciating Prussian order and discipline "and upon the whole whether loose files and American scramble would not have been preferred".¹ Governor Maxwell, incorporating five black companies into the Royal African Corps in 1812, remarked that "the fatigue of skirmishing in a woody, and almost inaccessible country, would be with difficulty borne by the European soldier".² Thus the usual view was that bush-warfare was for "rebels" (like the Americans) or for "natives", but not for Englishmen.

MacCarthy made particularly useful friends during his West India service. Henry Torrens (1779-1828), also from an Irish family, was with him in St Lucia. He later became adjutant-general. Finally, there was Moore himself and the energetic Brigadier-General Sir Martin Hunter, with whom Moore served for a time as second-in-command, discovering Hunter shared his low opinion of British training and morale.³ With these two especially he made life-long friendships.⁴ In the summer of 1797 fever sent Moore home; in November, Sir Ralph Abercrombie, his general officer commanding in the West Indies, being appointed commander-in-chief, Ireland, he asked for Moore. The following year Moore, now a major-general, was made colonel of the 9th West India Regiment. In November

¹ Dundas of Beechwood Papers, Comrie, Perthshire (Nat. Reg. of Archives Survey no. 0354), letter of 10 Nov. 1785. I am grateful to Sir Robert Whyte-Melville Dundas of Beechwood, Bt., Comrie House, for permission to quote this.

² P.R.O. C.O. 267/34, letter of 1 Dec. 1812, Maxwell to Lord Liverpool.

³ B.L. Add. MS. 57326, p. 9; Reg. Ho. MS. GD. 225 (Leith-Hay of Leith Hall Papers), box 33, bundle 22, letter of Capt. Robt. Garden, St. Vincent, to Col. Hay, 29 Mar. 1796: "some disagreeable things have been said by General Hunter who commands here at present against the Regiments".

⁴ Hunter was "an active bustling man" (Nat. Lib. of Scotland, Edinburgh, MS. 3835, fol. 151, letter of R. Abercrombie to H. Dundas, 23 June 1796).

1799 he was appointed colonel commandant of a second battalion added to the 52nd Foot—a Light Infantry regiment—which was afterwards associated so closely with him. After the attack on Ferrol, at which he was present, he was appointed to a brigade encamped at Shorncliffe, part of a division commanded by General Sir David Dundas engaged in the new training exercises.¹

The Irish Brigade not being a British regiment of the Line, when it was disbanded its officers did not qualify for half-pay. MacCarthy, though better off than some, was short of money. Although there is no evidence, it is likely that Moore got him a company in the 11th West India Regiment in mid-October 1799, whence he transferred almost at once to the 52nd and so found himself under Moore and Dundas at Shorncliffe, where officers of spirit—"not to be found exclusively amongst those who have most money or most political interest"²—were building the revitalized army so successful in the Peninsula.

After long and varied periods of active service on the continent and in the tropics, barrack life in Kent seemed dull. With no money and of scant seniority, promotion was unthinkable, but in North America prospects would certainly be better, particularly when General Hunter, now governor of New Brunswick, was ordered by the War Office in August 1803 to raise a regiment of one thousand men to be recruited in Scotland or anywhere in North America.³ MacCarthy promptly applied, being gazetted major in April 1804. This promotion was especially important because, unusually, officers taken from Line regiments obtained substantive rank when promoted into the Fencibles and would be entitled to half-pay accordingly if the

¹ Where Moore did train the 52nd as Light Infantry, even though Dundas's manual had omitted to assign any role to such troops (see B.L. Add. MS. 57547, pp. 162-5, 171-3).

² B.L. Add. MS. 57327, Moore's Journal, Moore to Sir Ralph Abercombie.

³ Though Ensign J. H. Roche was reported recruiting in Ireland in 1804. Cf. Henry Dundas to Duke of Portland, 4 Aug 1794: "... the democratic principles of the inhabitants of Lower Canada seem very alarming. An additional military force ought certainly to be sent there ... Catholics from Ireland seem the best resource." (Nottingham University Library, MS. PwF 3481. I am indebted to the Duke of Portland and to the University of Nottingham for kind permission to consult the Portland Papers).

regiment were reduced.¹ Furthermore, the buying and selling of commissions was prohibited, another exceptional regulation advantageous to an impoverished emigré.² His commission was by no means due solely to private influence, however; about twenty-five per cent of the names on the pay-roll are French.

The regiment hoped to be ordered to the West Indies, but was sent to protect Halifax while Sir George Prevost led the expedition.³ Promotion was to be slow after all. MacCarthy, the only major, busied himself recruiting and with all the hard work which creating a new regiment entails. General Hunter found him "an excellent and valuable officer", and for two years he was in command while Lieutenant-Colonel Johnston was on leave in Britain. His ambition was to make the regiment good enough to become a Line regiment and thus have its sphere of operations widened.⁴ The War Office refused the first application in 1809, but a second was successful in September 1810, when the regiment was renamed the 104th Foot.

The following year Hunter, writing to Torrens, who from 1809 to 1812 was military secretary to the commander-in-chief, the Duke of York, about orders to raise a second battalion, proposed the establishment of an additional lieutenant-colonel: "In justice to Major McCarthy who has been near seven years in the regiment, constantly employed, who has commanded it for two years, and to whose proper management and knowledge of the language, I consider myself in a great measure indebted for the zeal shewn by the Canadians, I should propose him to be

¹ Officers not from Line regiments had no such privilege.

² So attractive were the prospects of promotion, no less than 114 officers held commissions in the Regiment 1803-17, in a total strength of about 40 (see W. A. Squires, *The 104th Regiment of Foot* (Fredericton, 1962), esp. ch. 2 and 3). Canadian Militia (i.e. Fencibles) supported British regulars but were not required to serve outside N. America. By 1809 there were 4 full-time units: the Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Canadian, with a total strength of some 2,236. See Lt.-Col. G. F. C. Stanley, *The Canadian Military During the Colonial Period*, n.d. mimeograph; and Stanley, "The New Brunswick Fencibles", *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, xvi (1938-9), 39-53.

³ Sir Martin Hunter administered Nova Scotia in Prevost's absence, Oct. 1808 (Anton's Hill MS., letter of Lady J. Wentworth, Sunninghill, Berks., to Mrs. Hunter, Dec. 1812).

⁴ P.R.O. War Office (henceforth W.O.) 3/157, p. 73.

appointed Lieutenant-Colonel, and from the favourable disposition of Sir David Dundas in behalf of that Officer, I have no doubt of his ready concurrence in any plan that would promote him."¹

Unluckily, either through an oversight or because of some service *brouillerie*, the memorials asking for the regiment to be numbered in the Line had not been sent, as regulations required, through Sir James Craig (1748-1812), Governor- and Captain-General of Canada, in Quebec.² A distinguished soldier and army reformer who was in constant correspondence with his old friend Dundas, and therefore likely to be accommodated at the Horse Guards, Craig, though basically kind-hearted, could be fiery, peremptory and pompous. Offended, he declined absolutely to forward Hunter's proposal to the commander-in-chief, on the grounds that as Hunter had managed so far without him, he could continue to do so.³

Bored and frustrated even before this set-back, MacCarthy had plunged, as usual, into a life of entertainment as an antidote. At the end of 1809 his eldest natural son, Charles, was born to Mary Hilligrove, who later married one Segre of New Brunswick and emigrated to America. Just after he left, in 1812, she bore him another son, John, at Fredericton.⁴

By now he was despondent; his letter accompanying the second request for the regiment to be numbered spoke of being "doomed to labour under a Fencible name", of having to "moulder their lives in the same station until discharged".⁵ He had developed a deep affection for Sir Martin and his family, which was reciprocated, but Hunter's term of office was running out.⁶ Knowing he could never be so happy under another governor, he began looking for a transfer. There was another

¹ P.R.O. W.O. 1/647, p. 259, Hunter, Fredericton, 4 Feb. 1811. Dundas was commander-in-chief from March 1809 to May 1811, until the Duke of York's scandal with Mrs. Ann Clarke blew over.

² For Craig see D.N.B.

³ P.R.O. W.O. 1/647, 22 Apr. 1811, Hunter to Torrens.

⁴ P.R.O. Erskine 480, MacCarthy's will, 27 Oct. 1821. Cf. also, Univ. of New Brunswick MS., Saunders Papers, letter of MacCarthy to Judge Saunders, 14 June 1810, postscript: "pray present my best respects to the ladies."

⁵ Quoted in W. A. Squires, *op. cit.*

⁶ He was succeeded as Governor in mid-1812 by Major-General Smyth.

reason; when the Fencibles at length became the 104th Foot, the customary buying and selling of commissions operated and the major was thus in a position to sell what he had acquired free.

He was appointed lieutenant-colonel in the Royal African Corps and lieutenant-governor of Senegal. Before sailing, the city of St. John made him a freeman as a mark of "high respect".¹ In the end he was sorry to go, for the Royal African Corps was not of the Line, and in London he asked his friends to find him something else. Sir John Wentworth, once governor of Nova Scotia,² took him to meet the Duke of Kent at Windsor, who invited him to dine.³ Lady Wentworth promised to mention his name whenever she saw the Duke.⁴ Torrens wrote: "he *knew* His Royal Highness had the most favourable opinion" of his services, but all the same, he had better do as he was told; he could "depend on being brought back at an early opportunity". MacCarthy was not reassured. After all his work making the Fencibles into a Line regiment, he said he never believed he would have been appointed to an unnumbered corps.⁵ Even the larger salary could not console him; he would rather, he

¹ New Brunswick Museum, *The City Gazette*, St. John, 9 Nov. 1811. As far as I know this is the only extant copy.

² Like MacCarthy, an émigré, having left America at the time of the Revolutionary War.

³ The Duke had commanded a Brigade at St. Lucia and had subsequently been commander-in-chief, N. America, 1799-1800.

⁴ Anton's Hill MS., letters of Lady Wentworth to Mrs. Hunter, London, 25 Nov. 1812, and Dec. 1812.

⁵ Anton's Hill MS., letter of MacCarthy to Hunter, 10 June 1812. Governor Maxwell's recommendation to augment the Corps (drawn from the malefactors of all British regiments as an alternative to deportation) with a black corps was accepted in part, an 11th Company of 100 being approved in Nov. 1811, giving an official strength of 1236. The additional Lt.-Col. had been approved by the Prince Regent by June 1811. By "H.R.H.", Torrens presumably meant the Duke of York, to whom he was still military secretary. See P.R.O. W.O. 1/648, p. 349; W.O. 4/308, p. 254; W.O. 4/432, p. 130; W.O. 4/307, p. 404; W.O. 4/212, p. 155. MacCarthy, once chosen to administer this former French territory, was unlikely to have been allowed to withdraw; shortly after handing the secretaryship to Portland, Dundas wrote: "I am well aware from experience of the difficulty of finding proper persons for discharging the duties, both civil and military, of our foreign possessions" (Nottingham Univ. Lib. MS. PwF 3483, 7 Sept. 1794).

complained, be a lieutenant-colonel in his old regiment than a governor in Africa.

A Catholic and a devout believer (as he assured posterity in his will), he was no bigot,¹ and he now signed the declarations against popery and transubstantiation required of office-holders under the Crown. Almost whimsically he began to turn into an "Establishment" figure, buying an oil-painting of his new Sovereign, which he left with Cox, his tailor, at 8, Cork Street, and registering his pedigree with the Irish College of Heralds, meticulously recording male relatives who had fought and died in the service of French and English monarchs, but omitting two French aunts and a sister, Charlotte, married to the Comte de Mervé, one of Napoleon's colonels—all currently living in France.

Then, by way of Guernsey, where he picked up a Royal African Corps detachment,² he sailed for Senegal, to administer a population of some eleven thousand and command a garrison of four hundred.³ Never inclined to shirk duty, with Torrens's only half-hearted assurances behind him, he must have been resigned to several years of African service.

The two important settlements in Senegal were St. Louis and Gorée where the African citizens—*métis*, blacks, and Moors—were very largely assimilated into French culture and commerce. Many were descendants of *Signares*: African wives or mistresses of Europeans whose children were customarily sent to France for education. The new lieutenant-governor quickly took up with one, Antoinette Carpot, grand-daughter of the tempestuous

¹ He once said that all he asked of a clergyman was that he should be soundly educated.

² P.R.O. C.O. 267/34, letter of Torrens to Peel, 14 Apr. 1812. He arrived on 2 Sept. 1812 (C.O. 267/36, letter of MacCarthy to Bathurst, 20 Jan. 1813).

³ P.R.O. C.O. 267/34, Instructions, 3 Apr. 1812. The appointment of a Lieutenant-Colonel in addition to Maxwell was necessary because the Royal African Corps' strength had grown so that it considerably exceeded its official establishment (C.O. 267/32, letter of Torrens to Lt.-Col. Bunbury, 18 May 1811), MacCarthy received £1. 10s. a day with the "usual deduction for income tax". In May 1814 he asked for the additional 20s. a day given to regimental officers succeeding without a regular staff appointment to the command of troops abroad, enclosing the War Offices printed regulations, 10 Jan. 1812, which he must have taken with him (C.O. 267/38, letter of MacCarthy to Bathurst, 9 May 1814).

Governor Colonel O'Hara,¹ an Irish Protestant about whose tyrannies, after ten years of misrule, the colony complained.² In November 1813 she bore him a son, christened Charles like his eldest in North America. Educated in England (at the Alfred House Academy, Camberwell), he was later adopted by his aunt, the Comtesse de Mervé, and inherited the title.³

St. Louis specialized in trading for the gum used in printing calico which, until the early 1840s, was a major influence in African-Anglo-French relations in Senegal and the Gambia. It was virtually a monopoly of the Moors living on the right bank, and MacCarthy's principal duty was re-establishing that commerce by preventing as far as possible the wars between the

¹ Appointed as Governor of Senegambia in 1766.

² See ed. J. Hargreaves, *France and West Africa* (London, 1969), p. 76. Senegambia, Britain's first colony in Africa, received its constitution in 1765, having an executive and a legislative council under a governor, a military establishment, and an array of law courts and administrative branches. There was no representative element; trade was free to all British. The first autocratic colonial government created for a non-settlement colony, it was a forerunner of the Quebec Act system, indeed of Crown colony government. It ended when the territory was returned to France in 1783 (see D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires* (London, 1966), pp. 81, 131).

³ In Sept. 1776 the Comte MacCarthy was recognized by law as of the French nobility (Gaufrey-Penelle, *Armorial Chartrain*, ii. 410), when he was described as Seigneur de la Bourdinière, citizen of Nogent-le-Rotrou (Dépt. Eure et Loire). Sir Charles's son was adopted on 14 Sept. 1835; his mother dying in Jan. 1818, since July 1826 he had been living with his uncle and aunt at 108, rue St. Hilaire, Nogent-le-Rotrou (Service d'Archives, Chartres, MS., Nogent-le-Rotrou, *Naissances, Décès, Adoptions etc.*, vol. xliii (1835), adoption no. 317). Presumably the Countess, as the eldest surviving child, inherited this house when her father Jean G. Guérault, died in 1821. At the time of her marriage (19 Dec. 1785) she was a Lady in Waiting to Madame Elizabeth, the King's sister. Number 108 (now 100, rue St. Hilaire) is a girls' school today. Charles, junior, was married in Oct. 1835 (*ibid.* marriage no. 32) to Marguerite MacCarthy, daughter of Daniel MacCarthy, teacher at the Polytechnique, Paris and of his wife, née Catherine O'Connor. She was born, like Sir Charles, at Cork, on 29 July 1813. M. Sabras, Ferme de la Viandrie, Mayor of nearby Berd'huis, where La Bourdinière stands, spoke of a tradition that the chateau (at present empty) was built by an Englishman who went to Africa. This is not quite correct (it was rebuilt c. 1880), but suggests Sir Charles helped to revitalize the family estate, or perhaps the £12,000 or so he left to his heir, the Count. It is not known why the family left it in the mid-1820s. They sold it in 1855 and no. 108 in 1856 (information kindly supplied by Mme. Michel Hoguet, 108, rue St. Hilaire, 28400 Nogent-le-Rotrou. See also the Parish Register of the Church of Nogent).

Moors and their enemies the Wolof and Tucolor on the opposite side of the Senegal. For two years trade had been almost non-existent, depressed by riverain hostilities and the continental war in Europe which reduced prices drastically. Merchants, already over-stocked in London, were not buying, yet many debtors in the colony had no other commodity to offer. In MacCarthy's opinion the Moors traded into Galam, where the gum trade was most extensive, primarily to acquire slaves.¹ Abolition was therefore contributing to the current stagnation. It was only the corn trade into Damel, where there was a dreadful scarcity, which averted almost universal bankruptcy in 1813, and the lieutenant-governor sensibly suggested economies: blue baft, a cloth used in making presents to chiefs, should be bought by H.M. Government in London where it could be acquired for half the price charged by local merchants; muskets and rum, too, could be obtained more cheaply at home. Showing the flag, sailing indefatigably up and down the Senegal making treaties and delivering presents to chiefs, MacCarthy quickly created an unusual *rapport* with the Moors, whose military prowess he admired.

He felt Providence must have designed the river specially as a barrier between Muslim Moors² and the animist black peoples, and, though he could easily have prevented the former harrassing the latter, if he did so the gum trade would have stopped.³ The Moors in Galam, their lucrative trade in slaves ended by the British occupation, began sending goods to Segou, Timbuctu and Hausa country. MacCarthy thought it would be worthwhile renovating the French factory at St. Joseph.

¹ P.R.O. C.O. 267/38, letter of MacCarthy to Bathurst, 21 Feb. 1814.

² C.O. 267/36, letter of 9 Apr. 1813, MacCarthy to Maxwell; MacCarthy noted with approval that the Moors fired their muskets lying prone; their adversaries, though superior and courageous, exposed themselves, trusting in their magic amulets.

³ These wars exhibited religious and racial tensions, but political struggles further off in Futa, where Almami Bubakr, King of Toro and Futa, was disputed by one "Aldondow" who, having the right to crown the Almami, had chosen to exercise it on another claimant, divided the Moors themselves until Abubakr was captured. The black Tucolor and Wolof had become dangerously vulnerable, too, through their habit of calling on one or other Moorish faction in their disputes. See C.O. 267/38, Maxwell to MacCarthy, 8 Sept. 1813.

London viewed Gorée as the key to the whole coast. It was essentially a slaving centre, the Tuculor and Wolof its middlemen. Never subject to the same regulations as St. Louis, it paid no customs, which put it at a tremendous advantage. Britain having abolished the slave-trade and France, though committed, being as yet irresolute, MacCarthy feared that the latter, with the Americans, now uninhibited by British Navigation Acts, would soon dominate local coastal trade as far south as the Gambia.¹ He knew ships sailed under Spanish colours and traded in the Gambia, and he complained that the navy was always to leeward, to the south. He asked if they could "look in" there on their way. Meanwhile he despatched Ensign Chisholm and a detachment of the Royal African Corps, advising Lord Bathurst that, if Britain intended keeping Senegal, garrisons should be placed not only in the old fort in Galam but also in the Gambia.²

Meanwhile, though not yet in possession, France regained Senegal by the Peace of Paris, and was rumoured to be preparing to re-occupy Albreda, down-river from James Island in the Gambia. Lord Bathurst, at first demurring, took MacCarthy's advice and despatched an expedition in 1816 to rebuild the fort on St. James. However, preferring Bayol and obtaining a treaty of cession, they founded the settlement of Bathurst instead. At first entirely military,³ in 1818 MacCarthy created a civil government with a committee of local merchants and two courts.

MacCarthy in St. Louis had to send major decisions to Sierra Leone for ratification. Letters sent in March were still unanswered in July. The lieutenant-governor was the sole

¹ In Sierra Leone from 1787 foreign ships were excluded, though this was not so in other coastal factories. A colonial Act of 1812 levied 4 per cent on foreign goods at Freetown, and this was extended to Bathurst, Gambia, 1822, and to the Gold Coast 1821-8. Since they were independent, Americans were not concerned with Britain's Abolition Act of 1807, and American slavers abounded. See C.O. 267/40, MacCarthy to Bathurst, 16 Mar. 1815; 267/34, Minute, Maxwell to Liverpool, 1 May 1812.

² C.O. 267/38, letters of MacCarthy to Bathurst, 19 Mar. and 10 Apr. 1813, 17 May 1814; 268/14, 12 July 1815, Bathurst to MacCarthy.

³ St. James was officially the responsibility of the Company of Merchants, until 1821 when it came under the Crown. See C.O. 267/36, 7 July 1813.

magistrate and obtaining justice was a slow process. Exhibiting his usual stout common sense MacCarthy "arbitrated", reserving decisions to himself when the arbitrators could not agree or when their decisions, made according to French law, seemed contrary to English practice. Fortunately he had no bad crimes to settle, but in the circumstances he hoped his warrant permitting him to hold courts martial would suffice. He asked for advice, and, waiting two years for an answer, raised the matter again.¹ West Coast constitutions were still embryonic and Freetown's hands often tied. When issuing instructions to the administrator of the Gambia, or when appointing magistrates there, the Governor could proceed only upon an *ad hoc* basis, not according to law but by using discretionary power. In Senegal MacCarthy was grossly overworked; one hundred and fifty Europeans died between February 1812 and August 1813. All his officers died between August and October 1812.²

By now he was in Freetown, having assumed the government in an acting capacity upon Maxwell's departure for England in July 1814. His first move was to ask (as had Maxwell, but without success) for a copy of the Acts of Parliament from 39 Geo. III onwards, and of the Orders in Council on commercial regulations, for use in the law courts.³ This was prudent in view of Maxwell's unfortunate blunders. Unlike several colonial administrators of the time, he was meticulous with paper-work, a *trait* perhaps strengthened by his French background. He was scarcely settled, however, before being ordered back to Senegal in December to arrange its evacuation and restoration to France. Negotiations were delayed, not being concluded until 1817; even then vexatious disputes over trading spheres obliged the Foreign Office, when MacCarthy was on leave at the end of 1820, to despatch him to Paris—the first of the rare occasions in which a Sierra Leone administrator was so employed—for which he was prodromously knighted.

¹ C.O. 267/40, 13 May 1815, MacCarthy to Bathurst. The Mayor's powers, too, were limited, appeals appearing before MacCarthy who had no Court to assist him.

² C.O. 267/36, 8 July 1813, MacCarthy to Hugh Stuart, Downing St.

³ C.O. 267/38, 19 Aug. 1814, MacCarthy to Bathurst.

Anglo-French diplomacy centred on the treaties of 1786 and 1814. Article 12 of the former had arranged for commissioners to define British and French settlements, stating "that in places not specified the ships of the two Countries shall continue to frequent the coasts according to the practice there observed".¹ Unfortunately the commission never met and, as MacCarthy pointed out before leaving for Europe, Senegal's dependencies remained undefined. Colonel Schmalz, governor of Senegal, now reoccupied, as MacCarthy had anticipated, Albreda as well as other posts on the river, equipping them with artillery. Representing Albreda as in the river mouth, whereas it was forty miles inland, having British settlements on both sides,² to say nothing of a pilot's station placed with usual foresight by MacCarthy on Bird's Island, near the mouth, Schmalz justified himself by citing, not the treaties, but a royal *aide-mémoire* issued to Baron de Boufflers³ in 1785. On that principle Britain might have asserted rights on the Senegal itself, though the inevitable altercation made such an event unlikely. Britain thus felt France should respect her request to evacuate the Gambia, particularly since, as MacCarthy correctly maintained, the earlier treaty had guaranteed all that river to Britain.⁴ He had to admit, however, that the terms of the Treaty of Paris allowed France to resume occupation of Albreda.⁵

In Paris his cardinal point was the suppression of the slave trade; this seems to have led a generation of British historians to build his reoccupation of the Gambia into a crusade for Abolition.⁶ Although there is no doubt of his humanitarianism, or of his concern that Havannah slavers were sailing under French colours, that slaves from Gorée were exported first to Cacheu, the Cape Verd Islands, or the Casamance so as not to

¹ National Library of Scotland, MS. 6202, pp. 701, 703, copies of letters of Charles Stuart de Rothesay, Paris, to Castlereagh, 21 Dec. 1820.

² St. James Island and Bathurst.

³ 1737-1815, governor of Senegal 1785-6.

⁴ France relinquished Albreda only in 1857, when Britain concurrently surrendered claims to Portendic, important in the gum trade.

⁵ C.O. 267/48, MacCarthy to Bathurst, 3 June 1818.

⁶ E.g. J. M. Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (London, 1940), p. 304; H. A. Gailey, *A History of the Gambia* (London, 1964), p. 61.

compromise France, nonetheless this posture was diplomatic and somewhat artificial. Abolition was the popular slogan in Britain, nearly one million signatures having been received in its favour (out of a population of some thirteen millions) and, publicly, at least, no elected government could ignore it.¹ Although France, Spain and Portugal perceived it as a British plot to stop their own colonies from regenerating labour forces depleted during the long blockade, giving economic preference to British plantations which had been replenished to some extent during the war, other powers at the Congress of Vienna mostly having no overseas possessions regarded the matter as remote. Consequently it was a neat way of splitting the opposition abroad, of making friends at home, and of concealing less creditable national ambitions. MacCarthy's true feelings were military and imperial, French competition and loss of trade being uppermost in his mind. He urged retaining Senegal not so much to repress the slave trade as to keep the factories, such as that in Galam, which could be used to develop trade with the interior and open a market for British goods—the express intention of the Colonial Office when creating an administration there in 1810.² His reoccupation of James Island and the creation of several entirely new settlements in the Gambia were corollaries.³ He had successfully encouraged a number of British and Senegalese merchants to settle in Bathurst, where, they claimed, since 1814 they had already invested £117,000.⁴ These needed protection. Indeed the only picture that comes down to us is of MacCarthy the imperialist. In 1861, Governor D'Arcy of the Gambia, suppressing a Marabout revolt, wrote

¹ See F. J. Klingberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement* (Oxford, 1926), pp. 148-53, and J. Reich, "The Slave Trade at the Congress of Vienna—a Study in English Public Opinion", in *Journal of Negro History*, liii (1968), 128-43; M. Putney, "The Slave Trade in French Diplomacy from 1814 to 1815", in *ibid.* lx (1975), 411-27.

² See Maxwell's Instructions as lieutenant-governor of Senegal, quoted in A. A. Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara and the Western Sudan* (Oxford, 1964), p. 36.

³ That Anne Carpot was a slave owner and left her slaves (along with all other property) to their son Charles did not bother him.

⁴ Nat. Lib. Scotland, MS. 6202, p. 631, Castlereagh to Stuart, 17 Nov. 1820 and enc.; MacCarthy to Bathurst, 23 Nov. 1820.

home confident of approval : “ by the display of such a force as has never been seen on the Coast since the days of Governor MacCarthy British supremacy is secured on the Coast for many years to come.”¹

The acting governor’s absence from Sierra Leone was soon regretted. By the spring of 1815 two substitutes had died of yellow fever and a third was ill. “ We have ”, said a missionary, “ been almost like a body without a head since he left us ”.² It is clear that his administration was both forceful and innovative from the start. In Canada public affairs were publicly aired ; in Senegal black and white participated constructively and harmoniously in commerce and government ; he was therefore distressed by the racial distinctions preserved so jealously in Freetown.³ Company government had never been on the freest principles,⁴ and Nova Scotian and Maroon settlers, accustomed to the freer North American ways, had already rebelled. Crown government hitherto had changed nothing, H.M. Government relying for advice upon the African Institution, but Zachary Macaulay, their secretary, in the 1790s when governor, had done more than anyone to bring on the insurrection of 1800. In John Clarkson’s view, without MacCarthy “ the colonists might have gone on for a century on the old plan and the hateful distinction between black and white, and the jealousy of the former still continued ”.⁵

The acting governor (he was not appointed governor until 1816) returned from Senegal in July 1815 determined to make both administrative and social changes. Few men, said Joseph Dupuis of him later when he was administering the Gold Coast, knew better how to regulate power : “ fewer possessed more ability or inclination to temper it with indulgence towards the

¹ Quoted in C. Newbury, *British Policy Towards West Africa* (Oxford, 1905), p. 234.

² Church Missionary Society (henceforth C.M.S.), London, MS. C/A1/E4, no. 104, Leopold Butscher to Josiah Pratt, secretary, C.M.S., London, 4 May 1815.

³ See, for example John Clarkson’s letter to him (n.d. (c. 1820), Huntington Lib., Pasadena, MS. CN65).

⁴ See the author’s *Sierra Leone, A Concise History* (New York, 1975), p. 126. The phrase is Henry Thornton’s.

⁵ Huntington Lib., MS. CN65, Clarkson to MacCarthy, n.d.

feelings and interest of those who were dependent upon him".¹ Prominent blacks were invited to dinner, others were offered senior administrative posts, and an agricultural committee, half black half white, was appointed. Soon he was writing with satisfaction to Clarkson: "I have put in execution here my plan of raising men of color to situations of importance. The present Mayor, Mr. Carew, is a Mulatto. The Sheriff a Black Man (J. Thorpe), others are in situations of trust."² He did not add that he was taking a coloured mistress, Hannah Hayes, born at Cape Mesurado but raised in Freetown. She was, he later excused himself to his family, "almost white". She bore him a son, John, in August 1822, and a posthumous child early in 1824.

Maxwell having successfully blocked the return of Dr. Robert Thorpe, MacCarthy had no chief justice, and no one qualified to preside in the vice-admiralty court; no causes pending there, he reported in June 1815, had been heard since January.³ Latterly seizures had been rare. Perhaps this was as well, because the Captured Negro Department,⁴ as it was known until 1822, had become lax. On the whole, MacCarthy said, the coast was in a worse state at the end of 1818 than it had been two years earlier. The Courts of Mixed Commission envisaged in the Madrid treaty of September 1817 had not materialized, the Governor having as yet no instructions. A slave ship captured eight months previously had arrived in Freetown, by way of Jamaica and Havannah, for trial, but everywhere the navy disclaimed authority. Abolitionists at home, victims of their own enthusiasm, misled by the unusual conditions imposed by continental and maritime warfare,

¹ *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (London, 1824), p. lxxv.

² Huntington Library, MS. CN124, 23 Dec. 1818. Thomas Carew may have known him in Senegal; he had made a fortune in Gorée. John Thorpe, of Maroon descent, was educated at Clapham and became King's Proctor in the Vice-Admiralty Court under Governor Thompson.

³ The Act of 1807 (47 Geo. III, sess. 1, c. 36) forbidding British subjects to trade in slaves, empowered naval and customs officers to bring captures before a Vice-Admiralty Court. An order in Council of 16 Mar. 1808 established one in Freetown. Slaves liberated by the court came under the jurisdiction of the Captured Negro Department.

⁴ It then became the Liberated African Department, at first unofficially.

assuming the slave trade was moribund, had advised H.M. Government accordingly. It would take time to rectify this dreadful miscalculation ; meanwhile MacCarthy, exercising his usual good sense, ordered Recaptives to be landed and placed in the little villages in the hills surrounding Freetown.¹

He had found the first Recaptives living in a few wooden huts, not even raising enough rice or cassava to support themselves. Having no surveyor until 1816 he had been unable to allot them land but used instead Tasso Island, the former slaving depot near Bunce Island, to grow rice, cotton and tobacco. He discovered that some made a living by occasional labour on public works and by carrying wood and lime to market. Few were practising Christians. Maxwell's (and Thorpe's) Militia Act, which, as it turned out, was contrary to British law,² had driven several hundred settlers out of the colony, allowing Maxwell to appropriate their lands. From now until the middle of 1820, when he went on leave, MacCarthy concentrated on creating an efficient Liberated African Department. In 1815 only three colony villages were recognized officially ; by 1820, with C.M.S. help, ten more had been established and the area divided into parishes, with magistrates, schools, food and clothing provided. Over sixteen thousand Recaptives entered the colony during his administration and he tried to turn them into an intelligent, loyal, Anglican yeomanry. Commerce reviving after the war, he hoped they would soon " return thanks to the Almighty for the advantages they enjoy over and above most colonies, nay most of the middle and lower class of society in Europe ".³ This was not achieved without almost incredible effort. Taking over government in July 1814 he found that Maxwell had already spent all sums voted for that year. He received the estimates for 1815 from H.M. Government only on 29 November (1815), by which time he had naturally spent his vote on priority items ; in particular he repaired the barracks

¹ Huntington Lib. MS. CN124, MacCarthy to Thomas Clarkson, 23 Dec. 1818. Other civilian posts were unfilled (see C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E6 no. 92, copy MacCarthy to Bathurst 31 May 1816).

² C.O. 267/41, letter of Thos. Clarkson to Bathurst, 22 June 1815. See also 267/42, 31 May 1816, Despatch no. 74.

³ Huntington Lib. MS. CN124, MacCarthy to T. Clarkson, 23 Dec. 1818.

and gaol, and built wharves and fortifications.¹ After his death he was blamed for his "mania for building large and almost useless houses and Churches",² and so it is instructive to note that the first money he could lay his hands on was spent on neither of these. Moreover, aware of the poor quality of available craftsmen, he soon asked for two companies of European troops with trade qualifications, but this was refused.³ His zeal affected even the treasury. In 1813 the civil budget was £23,788; in 1823 it had risen to £94,951. Nonetheless time pressed and there was never enough. In the ten months after MacCarthy's return from Senegal 2,000 Recaptives were landed, government being committed to their support for a year.

Although the C.M.S. in 1814 was hastily planning a church, the provision of a colonial chaplain, a school for a thousand, a printing press, and Arabic teachers to "prepare the most able youths to become opponents of the Mahometans and to resist the encroachment and inroads of the Natives", the Governor felt they had let him down; not merely because missionaries wandered off to begin new tasks in their parishes before completing the old, not even because their organization had virtually collapsed under pressure (their secretary piously writing from London, "On all parties I would urge a conscientious economy, but, having done this, I leave the whole with God").⁴ Nor was it that some took to drink, nor that another's wife was ambitious to have her husband appointed colonial chaplain instead of Leopold Butscher and created bitterly divided factions in their ranks.⁵ The fundamental and very wide cleavage between MacCarthy and the C.M.S. was education. Apart

¹ C.O. 267/42, 20 July 1816. Desp. no. 82.

² The words are those of Col. Dixon Denham, who reorganized the Department under Governor Campbell. It should be noted that several of the 214 Churches built in Britain with the million pounds provided under the 1818 Church Building Act fell down within a few years.

³ C.O. 267/49, 26 June 1819, MacCarthy to Bathurst.

⁴ C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E4, no. 43, J. Pratt to L. Butscher, 21 Nov. 1814.

⁵ The Rev. Melchior Renner, who arrived in 1804, was said to have become an alcoholic; so was Johnathan Klein on the Iles de Los with his ambitious wife. See C.M.S. MS. A/1/E5 no. 59, Kenneth to Zachary Macaulay, 21 Dec. 1815.

from some forty scholars being taught at Leicester, scarcely a Recaptive in the colony was receiving instruction,¹ yet the C.M.S. persisted (obstinately in the Governor's view) in staffing missions among the Susu to the north, in running schools on the Bullom shore across the river, in the Rio Pongo and the Iles de Los, when in Freetown alone two thousand children lacked attention.

For some years, however, like his predecessor, the Governor failed to distinguish between the objectives of the C.M.S. and those of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Having met the latter in Canada, which sponsored missions in the colonies, that is, to the converted, he expected the C.M.S. to operate in the same way. But the C.M.S. was devoted to "saving" the "heathen", holding that it was government's duty to provide education and religious instruction for dependent and destitute populations in the colonies, and particularly for that so unfortunate as Sierra Leone's.² By 1817 relations were strained; though the Governor got on particularly well with Leopold Butscher, the colonial chaplain, the Rev. William Garnon and most others felt that MacCarthy was too concerned with bricks and mortar, that Butscher, industriously building and personally labouring on his model farm, was his henchman.³ Soon complaints reached Josiah Pratt, the C.M.S. secretary in London, that the Governor was "two faced"—"while your Servants do his dirty work i.e. build houses and plant vineyards—all is well, but if they talk about their peoples' souls and how they may best improve their minds, it is then nothing but poh, poh . . . be assured his fame is building on our foundation". Pratt replied that the Governor's high opinion of his chaplain

¹ *Ibid.* no. 65, same to same, 29 Dec. 1815. There were some 150 day scholars, but these were mostly old Settler's children, not Recaptives; some 60 Recaptive night scholars and 100 girls at the Captured Negro School were taught English and hygiene.

² C.M.S. MS. A/1/E6, no. 86, copy, Pratt to MacCarthy, 10 Nov. 1817; see also C/A1/E7 no. 21, MacCarthy to Pratt, 19 June 1818; *ibid.* no. 28, same to same, n.d. (early 1819).

³ C.M.S. MS. A/1/E6, no. 58, Garnon to Pratt, 27 June 1817. Garnon was formerly a soldier. He told Pratt: "I have also mentioned to Mr. Butscher . . . that I am sure your main object is to erect a Spiritual Church here and not merely a stone edifice."

was to be expected since "his attentions to worldly objects have the praise of worldly men".¹

However, the inexorable accumulation of numbers demanded immediate, down-to-earth solutions. Salvation was all very well at the right time, but rations came first. At a children's rally in the rains of 1818 MacCarthy commented angrily, and in public, on the scruffy turn-out of the C.M.S. children. Government children had shoes and woollen clothing for the rains with cotton or linen for the dry season; they received a weekly ration of meat besides rice and palm-oil. Riding assiduously round the villages, he had noted the C.M.S. did not provide so well. He spoke "warmly" to the Rev. J. B. Cates, warning him that if the C.M.S. could not do better he would take the children away. Reporting to London Cates said there had been a time when Government and C.M.S. boys and girls were on a par. The C.M.S. allowed £5 a year for their support, but Government now had "very liberal supplies"; it was doubtful whether £9 a year would cover it. The Governor reminded him that the C.M.S. had more than £5, because sponsors in Britain, in return for naming a child, had provided funds for four or five hundred, yet they kept only two hundred. Moreover, the Church of England refused baptism too often, driving converts to the Methodists whose ministers were more willing to risk the climate than those of the Established Church, which had to employ a large proportion of foreigners. The Methodists, however, taught that not even a Governor could regulate their congregations unless he were one of them.² Admittedly MacCarthy's Recaptives were somewhat deficient in learning, but a good moral conduct and what he termed a "Christian appearance" was all that could be expected.³ He

¹ Ibid. no. 77, 8 Oct. 1817, Garnon to Pratt; C/A1/E54A no. 64, Pratt to Garnon, 9 Apr. 1817.

² C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E6 no. 92, 31 May 1816, MacCarthy to Bathurst; A/1/E5, no. 32, 15 Aug. 1815, MacCarthy to Pratt; *ibid.* no. 46, 25 Sept. 1815, K. to Z. Macaulay; *ibid.* no. 71, 7 Feb. 1816, MacCarthy to Pratt.

³ C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E7A, no. 72, 8 June 1819, MacCarthy to Pratt; C/A1/E8, no. 51, 21 Aug. 1819, MacCarthy to Pratt; C/A1/E7 no. 54, 27 Oct. 1818, Pratt to MacCarthy; *ibid.* no. 36, 11 Aug. 1818, Cates to Pratt. The C.M.S. had baptized less than 80 in 3 years.

detected signs of treason even amongst the C.M.S.: Gustav Nylander and Wilhelm Johnson (seventeen out of twenty-four missionaries in the first fifteen years were German) had left a meeting whilst the National Anthem was being sung; "Christianity without loyalty is a mere *Name*", he declared angrily.¹ Leopold Butscher, his steadfast supporter in providing practical Christianity, died in June 1817; soon his seventy pupils in the Christian Institution at Leicester, whom he had trained as craftsmen and farmers, got out of hand, rioting in November 1818. MacCarthy wanted to use the opportunity to start a college of higher education, modelled on Windsor College, Nova Scotia, with which he was acquainted, to train for the professions. Government would buy the buildings and enrol colony children as well as Recaptives and chiefs' children. Classics and Arabic could be taught. If the C.M.S. would do that, then he would take the two hundred or so children they currently taught off their hands. In fact, new buildings were erected at Regent in 1820, but the syllabus turned out less ambitious and the institution merely a seminary.²

The active members of the C.M.S. committee on whom had fallen the mantle of the African Institution were accustomed to managing governors. MacCarthy's intransigent requests for teachers, not preachers, for technicians, not translators of the Scriptures, seemed gross ingratitude. Oligarchs in decline, they retreated into rodomontade threats of evoking ministerial wrath: "He has hitherto", said their secretary, "stood fair with us. . . . I hope we shall not now be compelled to speak otherwise of him. He owes to our exertions with Government, that countenance to his plans . . . which Government have given; and it requires but common discernment to see, and common candour to acknowledge, that all we are doing in the Colony, and all we have offered to Government to take our share in, are matters of pure benevolence, and such as Government itself might be justly called on to undertake. . . . I will only say that he is

¹ C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E7, no. 28, n.d. (early 1819), MacCarthy to Pratt.

² C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E8, no. 58, 21 Sept. 1819, MacCarthy to Pratt; C/A1/E7, no. 60, 31 Nov. 1818, Johnson to Pratt; *ibid.* no. 75, 18 Nov. 1818, Bickersteth to MacCarthy; *ibid.* no. 43, 28 Aug. 1818, MacCarthy to Pratt.

ten times more known to his advantage through the medium of our various publications than in any other way. . . . Now must a Society like ours be run down because it does not, as yet, see fit to adopt all the plans of the Governor?"¹

They miscalculated. MacCarthy being by now respected in Whitehall, his reports on the increasing post-war slave trade, undazzled by the myopic optimism of his critics, were both perceptive and accurate. His suspicion of Dissent echoed Parliament's fears expressed in the 1818 Church Building Act,² and his concern to improve the Liberated African Department mirrored government schemes between 1815 and 1818 for getting colonial legislatures to register and legally demand the improvement of the conditions of their slave populations. No suspicion of self-interest, such as the editor of *John Bull* so easily fastened upon Macaulay, could touch the anti-slavery policies of one who had given up a promising military career, whose very salary was less than his commissary judge's and chief justice's.³ His opposition to the C.M.S. missions to the Susu corroborated the East India Company's dictum that it was dangerous to impart Christianity wholesale to "natives".⁴ Even his Clapham opponents, in their new endeavours to have slavery itself terminated in British territories, could not get round the fact that MacCarthy presided over the government of a country which was the singular virtuous exception and example to the rest. In short, Sierra Leone, hitherto of doubtful value, seemed destined to be not only the cradle of British trade, "civilization" and humanitarianism in Africa, but a crucible of Crown colony government. Hence the treasury's largesse, once merely the chimera of the Sierra Leone company directors,

¹ C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E5A, no. 64, 9 Apr. 1817, Pratt to Garnon. In fact, according to their principles, they had done quite well for him, before the end of 1817 procuring a chaplain and his wife, six missionary-schoolmasters (four married whose wives also taught). Their assistance was sought all over the world now, and possibly MacCarthy did not know that.

² Which provided a sum to counter the increasing growth of Dissenting Chapels.

³ E.g. see F. J. Klingberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England* (London, 1926), pp. 184, 220 n. 93, 246; also C.O. 267/49, 26 Nov. 1819, MacCarthy to Bathurst.

⁴ Chairman Robert Dundas in 1808, to Lord Minto, quoted in A. P. Thornton, *Doctrines of Imperialism* (New York, 1965), p. 165.

became a reality. In 1814 MacCarthy had wanted to divide the colony into parishes, suggesting a scheme to the African Institution in 1815 and the year following to the C.M.S. With money more plentiful this became possible and in 1817 seven country parishes and that of St. George in Freetown were created. The country schools were run by C.M.S. teachers on Bell's Card system. The village superintendents who were also magistrates were likewise mostly C.M.S. personnel. In this way the Society's principle of preaching to the "heathen" was not entirely violated, and a general working agreement with the Methodists gave Freetown and suburbs to the latter, using Lancaster's educational system.¹ The C.M.S. missionaries never liked their secular roles and shortly after MacCarthy's death responsibility for the clergy's stipends was transferred entirely to the C.M.S. instead of being shared, and Government became responsible for buildings and for education outside the town; superintendents were replaced by government managers.²

The Governor's active and practical mind probed everywhere: distributing coffee plants, encouraging his surgeon to introduce vaccination, inaugurating *The Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser* (in 1817), fitting out Major Peddie's intended expedition to Segou and up the Rio Nunez (the last government attempt to establish commerce with the Niger via

¹ C.O. 264/46, Minute, 17 Jan. 1818, on Sierra Leone; C.M.S. MS. C/A1/E6, no. 9, MacCarthy to Z. Macaulay, 1815; *ibid.* no. 92, 31 May 1816, copy, MacCarthy to Bathurst. MacCarthy's suggestion was made to Edward Bickersteth, C.M.S. African Secretary, who came out to make an inspection in 1816 (see A/1/E5, no. 130, 5 June 1816, MacCarthy to Pratt). Formerly a Norwich solicitor, he was ordained specially. Andrew Bell (1753-1832) developed at Madras a system of mutual instruction which taught blocks of information *verbatim* in a series of set answers and questions to monitors who in turn taught others. Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838) independently founded a somewhat similar scheme. Bell became associated with the "National Schools" (National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Church of England), encouraged by Zachary Macaulay; Lancaster's "British Schools" (British and Foreign School Society) was associated with Disestablishment.

² C.M.S. MS. C/A1/L1, no. 311, 29 Oct. 1824, Secretaries, C.M.S., to Sierra Leone Mission. A convict settlement for criminals from colony villages was placed on the Banana Islands, acquired by treaty in 1820, where, understandably, the superintendant was always a government officer (see Gloucester, Shire Hall Archives, MS. D. 1606 (Hume Papers), letter of Fred. Campbell to Ben. Sword, 20 Mar. 1821).

Senegambia and the Guinea Coast), sending Alexander Laing in 1822 to Kambia and Falaba, renting accommodation for the Court of Mixed Commission, arranging to disband the Royal African Corps—sending the white troops to England, the black to settle in the Gambia and the Iles de Los (which he had just annexed)—welcoming the West India regiments and treating with the Temne for land to settle them on,¹ receiving the American Colonisation Society's deputation and seeing them settled in Sherbro—though he did not like republicans and felt they encouraged the contraband trade with the Iles de Los (his main reason for occupying those islands).²

More significant was the long memorandum he despatched in 1816 on the need to alter the constitution, virtually unchanged since the Sierra Leone Company had eventually received their Charter in 1800, although certain additions had been made in 1811.³ That Charter had been suited to its purpose: governing one town and a small population not above two thousand. Now, with twenty towns and villages, a population exceeding twelve thousand, and, above all, Liberated African settlers in the Gambia and Iles de Los needing protection, the present constitution was, in the Governor's own words, "of no use whatever" to the dependencies, having no provision for administering justice outside the peninsula. Instructions issued to magistrates in the Iles de Los and the Gambia were, as he explained: "granted upon the *necessity* of the case, and not upon positive law, and therefore subject to cavils at some future period."⁴ He needed a commission such as West Indian Governors had, but omitting the clauses concerning a House of Assembly. He complained at having no Supreme Court to include the King's Bench, Common Pleas and Exchequer, suggesting the chief

¹ I.e. Hastings and Waterloo. Land to the west of Freetown was acquired in 1816 to house the increasing Kru population so valuable to local shipping.

² *The Glasgow Courier*, 10 Oct. 1822; C.O. 267/49, 22 June 1819, letter, MacCarthy to Bathurst; *ibid.* 19, 22 Apr., 26 June, 19 July 1819, same to same; C.O. 267/48, 25 Apr. 1818, Privy Council to H. Goulburn. The Americans, moving south, settled what became Liberia.

³ By the insertion of a few clauses customary in the commissions of governors of the West Indies.

⁴ C.O. 267/42, n.d. (c. 1816).

justice and two members of council might form one. Freetown's Court of Recorder was "most ill defined and inconvenient" needing no less than four of its five judges¹ for a quorum. If only the Charter were revoked the Recorder's Court could be abolished and instead a Court of Equity created as a branch of the Supreme Court, or, like the West Indies, its jurisdiction could be given up to the Governor in his capacity as chancellor. In 1819 he asked permission to enlarge his council, which was granted; in future it comprised the governor, the colonial secretary, the chief justice, the officer next in military command to the governor, and the surveyor.² In 1821 when the Act 1st and 2nd Geo. IV c. 28 abolished the African Company, transferring their possessions to the Crown, the opportunity was seized to rewrite the Sierra Leone constitution, incorporating many of the governor-in-chief's suggestions—in particular making him chancellor and giving the Freetown Recorder jurisdiction over cases in all dependencies, the mayor and aldermen losing their judicial powers and two members of council sitting instead, with the chief justice, as assistant judges. This constitution remained virtually unaltered until 1863.³

From now on the Gambia was replaced as the principal external interest by the Gold Coast, which, in its demands, soon became paramount, requiring the Governor's repeated personal attention and finally taking his life in a war costing Britain £250,000.

The Governor's defeat and death at the hands of the Asante should not persuade us, as it did most of his contemporaries, that his general policy was wrong. His solemn undertaking to

¹ The C.J., Mayor, and 3 Aldermen.

² C.O. 267/49, 22 Nov. 1819, MacCarthy to Bathurst.

³ Maxwell's 1811 Instructions gave him a council comprising: the governor, C.J., colonial secretary, and one nominated prominent local citizen (i.e. one unofficial member). The first (1815) was K. Macaulay. The 1821 council, besides the governor, comprised the C.J., the colonial secretary, senior military officer under the governor, the surveyor, and one unofficial. The 1863 constitution created the executive council. The legislative council was the executive council (the governor and 4 government officers who were nominated) plus 2 unofficial members, supposed to be nominated. See Colonial Office List 1864, p. 77. I am indebted to Mr. V. Reimer, my graduate student, for this summary.

secure independence from Asante aggression of all states from Tano to the Volta set the pattern of Gold Coast politics for generations,¹ and it was not really incompatible with his sincere and publicly stated wish for peace; Major J. Chisholm's official opinion that MacCarthy came to the Gold Coast determined to provoke a rupture with the Asantehene is quite untrue. As late as April 1823 Sir Charles twice reminded Lord Bathurst of his desire to spread peace and civilization on the coast,² although he had to admit he was disappointed in not being able to establish the kind of harmony obtained in Freetown. Far from being on a war footing, the immediate cause of the final rupture, the arrest and subsequent execution of a black British sergeant at Dunkwa, only ten miles from Cape Coast Castle, in February 1823, caught him unaware.³ Even the *Glasgow Courier*, pro-West Indian and scarcely friendly towards philanthropy in West Africa,⁴ printed an article by Captain Alexander Laing, attributing the war "more to accident than design, more to the offended dignity, pride and avarice of a powerful and despotic King, than to the indiscretions of Mr. Smith, the disputes of Mr. Dupuis, or the biassed opinions of the late Sir Charles MacCarthy".⁵

Sir Charles, on taking over the government from the Company of Merchants (forming his administration during a brief visit in April 1822), had adopted a very different view from that of his predecessors, who, knowing the Asante could not be successfully defied by their Fante allies and the coastal towns alone,

¹ See especially G. E. Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast* (London, 1962), pp. 41 ff.

² C.O. 267/58, despatches, 308, 309.

³ MacCarthy was on the point of leaving Freetown for the Gambia when, on 3 Nov. 1822, he heard of the sergeant's capture. Hurrying to Cape Coast, he left again in May 1823, returning on the 23 Nov.

⁴ James McQueen, joint proprietor and editor, had been manager of an estate in Grenada; in 1825 the Jamaican Assembly voted him £3,000 for his advocacy of the W. Indian interest.

⁵ *Glasgow Courier*, 9 Sept. 1824. Hope Smith was the Company of Merchants' Governor; Joseph Dupuis an Ambassador to Kumasi, the Asante capital, where the paramount ruler, the Asantehene, resided. Chisholm was governor, Gold Coast. Laing (1793-1826) had served in the W. Indies; given a Company in the Royal African Corps, 1822, the year he visited Falaba, he was murdered outside Timbuktu.

since they relied on the interior for food as well as trade, had never attempted, ever since Anglo-Asante relations began in 1807, to extend the field of resistance by taking the initiative.¹ In that sense, therefore, MacCarthy, sending Chisholm to avenge the sergeant's death, was making an important innovation. Nonetheless the merchants were largely responsible for his predicament, the Asante having good grounds for grievance. Despite direct appeals to the British and Dutch, the coastal Fante could not be persuaded to allow the Asante direct access to the forts, since they wished to retain all their advantages as middle men. They diluted the gold going south² and the gunpowder despatched north, plundered Asante traders repeatedly, blocked Europeans from visiting Asante and gave help to rebellious states. Since the conquest of Denkyira in 1700 when the Asante had begun to expand, incorporating their neighbours, and the resultant capture of the rental agreements³ for the fort at Elmina, the Asante had had an alliance with Elmina state where the fort was in Dutch hands. Thus Elmina divided the Fante alliance, separating the states of Fetu and Kommenda from Fante proper and providing the Asante with access to the sea where the Dutch sold the guns prohibited at the English settlements. The Asante invasion of the coast in 1811, her rupture with Britain in the 1820s, even the invasion of 1869-73, were all aimed at maintaining a hold on Elmina. At Christianborg, to the east, a fort much superior to the adjacent British one at Accra, the Danes encouraged the Accra peoples to ally with Asante, since the Danes, like the Dutch, preferred to come to terms with their powerful neighbour. Thus, at the end of 1809 and early in 1810, when the Asante withdrew due to bad water from Anomabu, the British Fante, allied with the Cape Coast merchants and the Wassaw, attacked Elmina and

¹ Anglo-Asante relations began in 1807 with the incorporation into the Asante empire of the Fante states. The period 1807-24 divides at 1817; the first half witnessed the development, the second the breakdown of these relations. By 1821 there were only 4 forts (Dixcove, Cape Coast, Anomabu and Accra) in British hands, though Dutch and Danes held Elmina and Christiansborg (see E. Collins, "The Panic Element in 19th Century British Relations with Ashanti", *Trans. Hist. Soc. of Ghana*, v, 2 (1962), pp. 79-144).

² With brass filings.

³ Or Notes as they were called.

Accra for assisting the enemy. Akyem and Akwapem, lying on one of the main Asante routes to the sea, joined the revolt. The Asantehene,¹ in a series of campaigns lasting until 1816, reduced the coastal states to complete submission and blockaded Cape Coast. Withdrawing that year from Fante territory he appointed resident commissioners, or ambassadors, to Elmina, Cape Coast and Abora Dunkwa.

The merchants decided to despatch a mission to Kumasi and accordingly Thomas Bowdich arrived there in 1817, intending to initiate discussions on opening regular communications, establishing peace, exploring the hinterland and countering Dutch influence. Negotiations soon reached a stalemate in discussions about sovereignty and the question of the Notes for Cape Coast Castle and Anomabu Fort, because the governor, Hope Smith, had heavily discounted the promissary Note when paying the annual rent, and the merchants absolutely refused to acknowledge Asante sovereignty over their neighbours and themselves, Hope Smith unscrupulously altering article 4 of his copy of the treaty signed by Bowdich so as to imply Asante acknowledgement of British sovereignty. To maintain this illusion, when Asante ambassadors were sent, no less than three times between March and September 1819, they were ignored. Consequently the Asantehene's nephew was despatched to demand 1600 ounces of gold as a recompense for breaking the treaty.²

Unaware of these difficulties H.M. Government had meanwhile decided to send a full consul, Joseph Dupuis, in accordance with clause 5 of Bowdich's treaty. The Asantehene was delighted, sending Owusa Adom, his treasurer, with presents to Hope Smith. But the latter again repudiated the treaty, refusing to pay tribute of any kind. Unable to believe white men could be so stupid, and determined if possible to maintain good

¹ King of Asante.

² See especially Clause 4. In 1806, when the Asante were on the coast, Governor Torrane paid the Asante rent for Cape Coast and Anomabu, thus acknowledging they had been conquered from his neighbours. Hope Smith, his successor, did not however send the original Notes to Kumasi, fabricating new ones for greatly reduced amounts and continuing to pay sums to local chiefs. Bowdich now settled this satisfactorily, restoring the full payment.

relations with Europeans, the Asantehene delayed ten months before blockading Cape Coast in February 1821.

No real statesman would have repeatedly humiliated ambassadors from such a powerful neighbour or kept such an important embassy waiting, and it should have been realized that Dupuis had made a good impression in Kumasi on which one ought to have built. But Hope Smith and his colleagues, disliking Dupuis, snubbed the Asante and thus brought on the MacCarthy war.¹ Jealous of outside interference and resisting the British assumption of government, they failed to inform the Asante of the impending change of régime and absolutely refused either to serve under Sir Charles or to offer their knowledge of the country to him.

Accordingly, on departing the new Governor left behind him, as he thought, a peaceful country. But in his absence the storm burst with the capture of the black sergeant and he returned hurriedly in November 1822. The merchants were inclined to welcome the sergeant's later execution as a fortunate excuse to destroy an enemy² and make the country safe for white traders, now that the fighting was to be done by H.M. Government.

A Crown governor could hardly compromise over a matter of sovereignty; besides, it was against MacCarthy's principles: "I deemed it my duty in order to support in this part of Africa the undisputed character for honour and courage our country has for so many years maintained in Europe and elsewhere not to delay any longer . . .".³ He had, he said, a difficult choice: either to make peace with a "ruffian" or to show, by going to war, that Britain would not allow chiefs who behaved like that to go unpunished.⁴ Accordingly, in February 1823 he ordered all the troops he could spare to Dunkwa under Major Chisholm.

¹ See ed. W. E. F. Ward, J. Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (London, 1824. Cass reprint 1966), p. 54.

² As a sergeant he was a subject of King George, as an Anomabu, of the Asantehene, who punished him for a disrespectful Oath "By Kormantin and Saturday"—a reference to Osei Tutu's defeat c. 1731 (see G. E. Metcalfe, *Gt. Britain and Ghana, 1807-57* (London, 1964), p. 80, n. 1.

³ Quoted from G. E. Metcalfe, *op. cit.* memorial no. 60.

⁴ C.O. 267/58, Despatch no. 308.

The result, he reported, had the "happiest effects" because the Asante leaders made off, leaving the lesser Asante and their Fante allies to bear the brunt. Since this expedition was in a way a dress rehearsal for the 1824 fiasco, it should be noted that, though Dunkwa was only a few miles off, Chisholm managed to lose his way and was routed.¹

When he left the Gold Coast again in May, Sir Charles was still sanguine about a peaceful solution. His instructions were quite precise on this: "To make as many allies as possible, . . . but to risk as little as possible till his return."² This, given his subordinates, was prudent, but even his allies Akyem and Akwapem were unreliable, having been badly bullied by Major Chisholm and Captain Blenkarne; only a token force was despatched from Akwapem in the campaign in which he lost his life. In addition the relative ease with which Dupuis had won over the war party in Kumasi (opponents of the second Anglo-Asante treaty) to the concepts of peace and commerce suggested that a political solution was still possible.³ However, there was plenty of evidence that the merchants and most of his subordinates were more bellicose. He did not trust them, and his instructions were framed accordingly.

This is rather different from the picture repeatedly presented; the most recent authority⁴ going so far as to call MacCarthy the undoubted architect of renewed resistance to the government in Kumasi. The same author also suggests the Governor had bribed the chief of Danish Osu to murder or imprison three hundred Asante traders, allegedly with the Machiavellian intention of drawing Accra to the "MacCarthyite cause" for fear of Asante retribution.⁵ This is fantastic; he had never been known to give or receive bribes, being outstandingly honest even by modern standards; frank, courteous and gallant were

¹ C.O. 267/58, Despatch no. 317.

² A. G. Laing in the *Glasgow Courier*, 9 Sept. 1824.

³ For a discussion see I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 481-2 and ch. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 170.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 172. Osei Kwadwo (Asantehene 1764-77) divided Accra into 3 wards—Danish, Dutch, English—under resident commissioners, c. 1770, the Asante having subdued it first in 1742. Danish Osu was a ward.

the adjectives used by a later Gold Coast administrator who knew him well,¹ and a Ghanaian, C. Reindorf, writing at the end of the century, particularly states that the large presents to chiefs came from African merchants who told them that siding with the Asante was "like keeping a snake in the pocket".² The accusation of murder by proxy is too ludicrous to deserve further discussion.

A more credible hypothesis would be that the incompetent lieutenant-governor, Chisholm, either exceeded his instructions, or, with respect to military enterprise, ignored them. When commanding in Senegal he had been accused of taking by force a woman slave from her owner and of accepting bribes from chiefs.³ Major-General Charles Turner, "indefatigable and persevering",⁴ succeeding MacCarthy, blamed his predecessor for "trusting . . . those around him. The consequence has been that idleness, disorder and corruption to the greatest degree prevailed throughout the departments and no account whatever has been transmitted from the Gold Coast ever since its annexation in 1822. . . . The discipline of the troops was at the lowest state I ever saw it anywhere, and the negligence of the Officers beyond example."⁵

Returning to Cape Coast in November 1823, Sir Charles was too astounded by the state of his troops to contemplate aggressive diplomacy. "It has been supposed", he reported, "that my arrival . . . will lead to some overtures of peace . . . I most sincerely hope for an honourable peace". Even so, he spent

¹ B. Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa* (London, 1853), p. 148. He always eschewed the usual gubernatorial practice of discounting Colonial Notes—an accepted perquisite. Dollars were valued in Sierra Leone at 5s., in Britain at 4s. 6d. He even suggested sending £10,000 in gold so as to avoid the need for Notes (see C.O. 267/42, 23 Apr. 1816, Despatch no. 71).

² *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (n.d.), p. 175.

³ C.O. 267/34, letter of 1 Dec. 1812, Maxwell to Lord Liverpool, and extract. Chisholm died at Cape Coast on the 17 Oct. 1824.

⁴ The phrase is one of his magistrate's. See Gloucester, Shire Hall MS. D1606 (Hume Corr.), letter of 1 Nov. 1825, Fred. Campbell to Ben. Sword.

⁵ C.O. 267/65, 9 Apr. 1825, Turner to Bathurst, quoted in G. E. Metcalfe, *op. cit.* For the episodes discussed here, see B. Cruickshank, *op. cit.* pp. 135 ff.; A. Boahen, "Politics in Ghana 1800–1874" in ed. J. Ajayi and M. Crowder, *History of W. Africa*, ii (London, 1974), 167 ff.

several weeks visiting his camps, walking most of the way—the best method of surveying unknown terrain—presenting Colours to the Royal African Corps,¹ endeavouring to raise morale and improve their efficacy, and drilling them personally by sound of bugle in the art of bush-fighting.

Sir John Moore expected his officers to show intelligence and initiative; self-reliance was required in all ranks. Only when officers were absolutely reliable could troops be used as light infantry, that is, “in dispersed order, the Colonel content to leave each Company to its own officers”.² Sir Charles’s tragedy was that the terrain, the circumstances, the enemy, his own training and experience in war and at Shorncliffe, all required light infantry tactics. It would have been inconceivable for his black troops in St. Lucia, or the backwoodsmen of New Brunswick not to have had exact knowledge of all trails, fords and other features of the surrounding countryside, yet Chisholm, his most senior officer, got lost less than fifteen miles from home when marching on Dunkwa. At no time in MacCarthy’s last campaign were his combat troops, transport, or supply fit to play the role asked of them, officers and men being ill-disciplined and slack, his allies uncertain.

He placed his forces so as to block the three routes by which Asante armies, mostly using well-known paths, had hitherto approached the coast.³ Some 1600 Accra Militia, under Captain Blenkarne, were at Accra; most of the Fante allies were at Fante Nyankumasi—on the road from Anomabu to Kumasi. Further west still were the regulars, at Jukwa, a few miles north-west of Cape Coast—no doubt ready to intercept supplies which might be sent from Dutch Elmina to Kumasi, and in anticipation of a major thrust down the road which, by the Asantehene’s orders, had undergone significant reconstruction in 1816.

In fact the Asante took a different route, turning off by a lesser but well known path down the right bank of the Pra

¹ C.f. Governor Turner: “Six hundred men of the most desperate characters”, quoted in J. J. Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone* (London, 1903), p. 127.

² J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (London, 1915), vi. 410.

³ See Wilks, *op. cit.* p. 10 and map on p. 11.

through Wassaw, whose people were now chastised for deserting the Asante alliance. That, though the British did not know it, was the Asante objective, the Wassaws having several times rebelled and blocked the paths to Elmina and places westward. The Asante commanders encountering MacCarthy's force had no idea they were fighting a British expedition and had no authority to do so.¹

Had MacCarthy's subordinates known the country at all and had proper information been received, as it ought to have been, about the Asante advance, the Governor could have moved his troops quickly enough to bring them all into action. Blenkarne had been ordered to advance directly against Asante; Laing, with a fortuitously successful series of small skirmishes against the enemy to his credit, was despatched north from Nyankumasi to make a diversion in Assin country where troubled relations with Asante had enabled Torrane, the then British governor of Cape Coast, to gain political influence some twenty years before.² Chisholm, at Jukwa, was ordered forward to Ampensasu, on the left bank of the Pra, while Sir Charles MacCarthy, hearing the Asante had defeated Denkyira,³ advanced westward to their help with some five hundred troops, crossing the Pra on 13 January by the Deraboasi ferry (the only significant one until Ampensasu) and reaching Nsamanko in the pouring rain on the 14th, spending the night in the open. He halted for five days, ordering Chisholm to join him at once. The message took five days to reach Ampensasu, thirty miles away as the crow flies but much longer by any acceptable path. Sir Charles did not wait, setting out quixotically with his exiguous army, posting no scouts in advance, to rally the vanquished Wassaw and Denkyira, by way of the town of Bonsaso, Kwasi

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 155 ff., 175.

² *Ibid.* pp. 145, 214.

³ The Denkyirahene had been brought up in Kumasi, but about 1820, becoming involved in a series of Court cases, on the death of Osei Bonsu, Asantehene, in 1823, fearing for his life, fled and thus accepted British overtures at this time. In no way could Denkyira or Wassaw be considered within the British sphere of influence, not even under the dubiously interpreted treaties of 1817 or 1820 (the latter unratified). The new Asantehene, Osei Yaw, justifiably sent a force to arrest rebellious subject chiefs.

Nyako, King of Wassaw, having promised ten thousand men—though only six hundred arrived.

The Governor has been unfairly criticized for waiting, when he received no reply to his orders of the 17th, until the 21 January before sending a second messenger,¹ but a runner could be expected to take two days to reach Ampensasu, and, of course, two to return. Allowing for delay in enemy country, waiting until first light on the 21st before despatching another was only prudent.²

Chisholm meanwhile had settled in Ampensasu with typical sloth, remaining several days at this major river crossing, awaiting orders to advance without making preparations to get his men over the water. When he did begin to move forward on the 23rd he found he had only one canoe, and the crossing took him the whole day.

If the country had been properly reconnoitred, or even a few simple enquiries made amongst local traders, Sir Charles's staff would have been able to tell him that there were direct routes from Deraboasi (where MacCarthy crossed) to Bonsasu, and thence to Ampensasu—almost the only two paths on the west bank of the Pra, since the area was sparsely populated. This would have saved both commanders two days march, and they would have been at Bonsaso together in time to meet the Asante. As it was, to get to Nsamanko (from which, though he did not know it, the Governor had moved), as he was unable to proceed downstream (the quickest route), Chisholm would have had to march south-east more than half-way back to Jukwa before branching off on the south-westerly path to the ferry at Deraboasi.

Chisholm's scouts, discovering a large Asante camp near the Pra, had foolishly fired on it, standing up to show their red tunics. This had broken it up, the Asante, having no authority or wish to engage European forces, hurrying south along the river bank to be brought upon Sir Charles's flank and rear during the action at Bonsaso.³

¹ E.g. J. J. Crooks, *Historical Records of the Royal African Corps*, Dublin, 1925.

² Despatched at 5 a.m. on the 21st, Chisholm received the second (before the first) at 7 p.m. on the 22nd. MacCarthy's battle was fought on the 21st.

³ Cruickshank, *op. cit.* pp. 149 ff.

When MacCarthy met the Asante his Fante and Wassaw allies fled at the first attack, leaving him with only the Denkyira auxiliaries ; the fight, in thick bush, soon dissolved into a series of skirmishes in which it was difficult to control the rate of fire. Through no fault of his, he soon began to run short of powder.

Local carriers, demanding what seemed exorbitant rates, had been refused. Thus men (and women) already in awe of the Asante were virtually impressed as carriers, and they deserted whenever possible ; by the 11th all those hired at Jukwa had disappeared, Brigade-Major Ricketts commanding the rear-guard having to force men and women at bayonet point through the swamps and small rivers. Even so officers and men slept in the open the night before the battle, and provisions as well as powder were short. The reserve powder and ball-cartridges had been sent round by sea to Sekondi under Lieutenant Brandon who, having got it all successfully to Nsamanko on the 14th, now failed his commander by pressing on in advance of his carriers and arriving with only four kegs, three of which when opened turned out to contain macaroni, intended, one assumes, to supplement unobtrusively the officers' mess at some future date.

The battle began about 2 p.m. ; the Asante, trying to cross the Bonsa, a small river thirty feet wide, by felling trees, were driven back with severe losses. Contrary to orders troops were carrying, instead of forty, only twenty rounds each of ammunition, many of which had been spoiled in the swampy crossings and exposed camp-sites. As powder¹ began to fail the Governor sent for Brandon ; discovering what that officer had done he fell into a towering rage, even in the middle of the battle, and threatened to hang him!

At six, as the sun was beginning to set, the enemy crossed the river and the division Chisholm's scouts had disturbed arrived in time to outflank the allies, cutting off all hope of retreat. Mortally wounded in the breast by a musket ball, MacCarthy was carried under a tree. His corpse was later decapitated and the head taken to Kumasi.²

¹ But not cartridges.

² For various accounts see C. Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Ashante*, p. 180 ; Cruickshank, op. cit. pp. 149 ff. ; J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the*

The Asante undoubtedly deserved their victory, having outwitted their enemies about their line of advance, while their discipline and concentration of fire surpassed anything the allies could offer. MacCarthy was rash to establish an advance base without a guard in country open to the enemy, but at the time he believed in the promise of ten thousand reinforcements from adjacent Wassaw country which, lying between him and the enemy, was adequate protection. Inexplicable, except as over-confidence, as is his march northwards without scouts, it is possible that, still not fully comprehending the almost total incompetence of his subordinates, he assumed that the absence of reports about an Asante presence implied that they were not there.

With his death came the end of an era. In the next decade Sierra Leone saw fourteen governors or acting-governors and stable policies were not to be expected. In Britain, from 1828, followed ten years which witnessed six ministries and eight secretaries of state. A select committee recommended in 1830 that most of the Sierra Leone establishment should be withdrawn and Liberated Africans henceforth sent to Fernando Po or Cape Coast. For twenty years almost no further territory was acquired, though governors in Freetown virtually circumvented the prohibition by treaties of friendship, giving at least an indirect influence and gradually establishing the formula of binding chiefs by means of stipends. In 1827 the arrangement between government and C.M.S. ended, Governor Neill Campbell¹ reverting to the pre-MacCarthy system of apprenticing children; missionary supervision of schools being superseded by the appointment of civil managers, the village schools stagnated. The Committee of Merchants, in that year, received back the Gold Coast settlements.

MacCarthy's plans, like those of other visionaries,² took in the

Gold Coast Settlements (Dublin, 1923), pp. 178 ff.; J. J. Crooks, *Historical Records of the Royal African Corps* (Dublin, 1925), pp. 374 ff.; W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London, 1959), pp. 176 ff. and map on pp. 180-1; *The Times*, London, 17 June 1824.

¹ Turner died in March 1826.

² C. Fyfe, *Africanus Horton* (Oxford, 1972), p. 7, has called MacCarthy a "visionary genius".

broad view rather than the details and his schemes did not always turn out as envisaged. In the end, however, he was vindicated, Recaptives creating their own society and institutions of self-administration in the face of subsequent government neglect. As he had hoped, they identified with their rulers, and, like the Nova Scotians in the 1790s, insisted on being regulated by British law, proud, like Canadians, of their place as free citizens of the British Empire, of the fact that as early as 1863 one was elected to the Legislative Council, that in 1892 Creoles held eighteen out of some forty senior posts in the Civil Service, that the first black Knight was a Sierra Leonean, that for years after 1876 the only university college in British West Africa was in Freetown, and that the Creole society created in the colony provided the businessmen and professionals who, settling up and down the coast, supplied a unique element in West African life and development.