

Can a dead man sail the seas? Simon  
Jonson did—and he was very dead.

by Eugene Burdick

# Log the Man Dead



In the harbor of Plymouth, in England, the ship-building firm of Hawkins and Company was working day and night on the ship. During the day, men, naked to the waist, chipped at huge, raw logs, converting them into ribs and spars. At night, torches and cressets were lit and, in the fitful light, hot creosote and tallow were poured into the seams. In the sail shops, yards of bright-red cloth were converted into sails. The great, gaunt ribs of the ship grew higher than the shops and were finally planked over and sanded into a slick surface. The masts were inserted into their locks and the long task of fitting the sails begun.

Crimping crews<sup>1</sup> began to drive crewmen aboard the ship. Among these crewmen was a tall, slim boy named Simon Jonson, from Devonshire.<sup>2</sup> This was the first time he had ever seen salt water. As he fled aboard he looked up at the masts, their tips vanishing into the mist. The ship seemed enormous.

Finally a carpenter chiseled the letters T—I—G—E—R into the overhanging stern of the vessel. The next day the ship slid down the ways,<sup>3</sup> heaved gently in the quiet waters, and then rested, ready for the sea.

Four months later the ship was six hundred miles off Africa and becalmed in a great, dead circle of water. Occasionally a ground swell would bulge the gray, hot surface and the ship would creak. Under the steady blast of unre-

lieved brightness, the sea began to smell like iodine, quenched iron, and dead fish.

But the *Tiger* was taut with excitement. For a man was on trial for his life, and the man was Simon Jonson. He stood on the quarterdeck in front of a table over which the officers of a court-martial eyed him. Behind him the entire crew was drawn up in three straight lines.

The men stood stiffly, and sweat streaked their clothes black, poured down their faces, ran in trickles into their shoes. Simon Jonson, facing the sun, was almost blinded, so that the figures of the officers behind the table seemed to be tiny black figures, all identical and all very far away. Occasionally a salty drop of sweat ran into his eye, but he patiently blinked it away. He was thinking of an event that had occurred three weeks before. In exact and precise outlines, the memory came back to him. As the voice of the prosecutor droned on, endlessly and far away, Simon thought back to that rotten, irresistible memory.

It had started with a simple argument between Martin, the boatswain's mate,<sup>4</sup> and Blake, the sailmaker. They had stood arguing by the hatch leading into the fo'c'sle,<sup>5</sup> and Simon had been listening. Suddenly, in one of those blinding seconds of action, the argument had grown heated, and Blake had swung his sail needle at Martin. Quite by accident, the curved, ugly needle caught in Mar-

<sup>1</sup>*Crimping crews*, those who trap men against their will into sea service.

<sup>2</sup>*Devonshire* (dev'an shir), county in southwestern England in which Plymouth is a city.

<sup>3</sup>*ways*, timbers on which a ship is built and launched.

<sup>4</sup>*boatswain's mate* (bō' sn), officer in charge of anchors, ropes, rigging, etc.

<sup>5</sup>*fo'c'sle* (fōk 'sl), forecabin—the sailors' quarters in the forward part of the ship.

tin's shoulder muscle and jutted out, turning the shirt red as the blood seeped out. In a moment, Mr. Galbraith, the second mate, was on the scene, and had arrested Blake for attacking another man.

"He didn't mean anything, Mr. Galbraith," Martin said through his clenched teeth. As if to minimize his injury, he reached up and jerked the needle out of his shoulder. The blood ran in a gush down his arm. "We was just fooling around."

"We'll let the captain decide that," Mr. Galbraith said coldly. "There are regulations to govern such matters."

Two days later the captain had called the crew together and read the verdict against Blake. The captain was a tall, thin, aristocratic man who wore immaculate white linen at his throat. He looked somehow like a preacher as his Adam's apple worked in his long neck. When he finished, two men seized Blake and dragged him to a block situated in the middle of the quarterdeck. Blake screamed a long, quivering shriek and then stared with bulging eyes up at the sky.

One of the men forced the sail needle into Blake's open hand and then forced the hand down onto the block. At the same time, another man stepped forward with a sharp hatchet. Simon had been standing numbly, hardly knowing what was happening. But as he saw the hatchet, he guessed what was to come. With a quick, sliding jerk, he was out of the right ranks of the crew, had stepped across the deck, and, tearing the hatchet from the man's hand, threw it over the

side. Then, wheeling about, he swung accurately and powerfully at one of the men holding Blake's hand. The man fell and the other man let go. Blake stood frozen, staring up at the sky, paralyzed with fear, unable to move.

In a moment Simon was subdued by a brace of seamen and was standing in front of the captain. He had not been excited when he left the ranks and he was not excited now, only impatient to explain to the captain the true story of the needle-stabbing episode.

"It was not a fight, sir," Simon started to say in a deliberate voice. "They were really only joking. It was not——"

The captain's already thin face had drawn sharp with anger. Two spots of color burned in his cheeks.

"It states in the Rules for the Regulation of the Navy that any man who draws the blood of another shall have the hand that inflicted the damage chopped off," the captain said in a crisp, rigidly controlled voice.

"But any rule that doesn't recognize that this was just a joke between friends is a bad rule," Simon said. He could not conceive that the captain would not see the justice of this.

"The Regulations also state that anyone that interferes with the administration of justice aboard a naval ship shall be confined to the bowsprit," the captain said. His narrow red tongue came out, flicked at the corners of his mouth, left his lips moist. "You shall stand court-martial for that offense."

And then, as the crew held Simon back, although he was calm and cool, the two men again held Blake's hand on the

block. With a swish a new hatchet cut the air. A dark spray of blood shot over the deck, the severed hand opened with a jerk, and the gleaming, bright needle rolled out on the deck. Blake shrieked once, then groaned and fainted. Simon watched the proceedings coldly, his eyes moving from the hand to the captain's face.

"And Seaman Jonson was, to your best knowledge, not suffering from sunstroke, brain fever, or other disease when he interfered with the administration of justice on last June fifteenth?" Lieutenant Galbraith, the prosecuting officer, was asking the ship's surgeon.

The surgeon, a squat fat man, with a red face, shook his head. "He was of sound mind and body." He turned his bloodshot drunkard's eyes toward Simon and then glanced quickly away.

Simon still could not believe that he would not be able to explain his actions. To his methodical, Devonshire mind it seemed a simple case of righting a wrong. He waited patiently for the moment when he would be asked to explain what had happened.

In a few more moments Lieutenant Galbraith finished his interrogation. He turned to the captain saying, "Sir, I have finished the presentation of the case for His Majesty's Navy."

"In your opinion, Mr. Galbraith, does this offense fall under those crimes which call for automatic confinement to the bowsprit until dead?" the captain asked casually, although he was watching Simon while he spoke.

"Well, sir, it might be interpreted in

another manner if extenuating circumstances were found." Lieutenant Galbraith hedged, unwilling to face the reality of such a sentence.

"What would such extenuating circumstances be?" the captain asked in an icy voice. Without waiting for an answer, he stood up and announced, "Gentlemen, the court-martial shall retire to my cabin to reach a verdict."

So suddenly that he could scarcely comprehend what had happened, the officers had left the quarterdeck, and Simon realized that he would never have a chance to plead his case; that the decision would be reached on the basis of the evidence that the court-martial had now taken. For the first time he thought seriously of "bowspriting." It was one of the most dreaded words in the Navy and Simon had heard endless stories of former "bowspriting" sentences in the crew's quarters.

This was the most hideous of punishments. A sailor sentenced to be "spitted" was led to the bow of the ship where the powerful jutting beak of the ship, reaching far out over the cutwater, constituted the bowsprit. At the foot of the bowsprit he was given a ration of beer, a half a loaf of bread, and a sharp sail knife. Then two boatwain's mates tied his body to the bowsprit, leaving his arms free. There, after finishing the bread and beer, he had three alternatives.

First, he could kill himself with the knife and have a speedy death. Or he could cut himself loose and fall into the ocean, where he would either drown or fall victim to the shark or the sharp slashing teeth of the barracuda. Or, final-

ly, he could starve to death on the bowsprit. The thing he could not do is come back off the bowsprit onto the ship. Five yards behind the victim the ship was going about its normal life, but he could only eye that life as his own existence was slowly squeezed out.

If the man stayed on the bowsprit and died, his body was not removed, and for months there would be the thick, rotten odor of death about the bowsprit as the elements and the sharp, pecking beaks of sea birds reduced the body. Finally there would be nothing left but a jiggling, clean-picked skeleton, held to the spar by the few remaining lines. And no man would, or could, touch the lines on the skeleton. They must wait until the line rotted off and the skeleton slipped loose and fell into the sea.

"They won't spit you, Simon," one of the crew members murmured to him. "You did nothing wrong."

"Quiet there," the sergeant snarled. The crew fell silent and then, after a pause, began to whisper among themselves. From the sound of their whispers Simon knew they thought he would get the bowsprit. He began to feel as if he were involved in a hot, steaming nightmare which had gripped him in some strange way, but which would release him before it was too late. The sun suddenly seemed to increase in size and warmth. His head felt empty and burned out. He knew he was afraid.

In ten minutes the officers fled back out of the cabin. The surgeon licked a smear of Demerara rum off his lips, the captain touched his hands to the linen at his neck, Lieutenant Galbraith looked

deliberately past Simon. They assembled quickly around the table and Lieutenant Galbraith stood up. He cleared his throat and spoke.

"We find Apprentice Seaman Jonson guilty of obstructing the administration of justice, and under the Regulations of the Navy we order him confined to the bowsprit, never to return. God rest his soul. Ship's Clerk, strike his name from the record. Boatswain, carry out the sentence. All hands splice the main brace."

Simon heard the crew stiffen in anger behind him, even before he realized what the sentence was. Then Simon felt his cheeks burn hot; behind his eyes he felt blackness loom up; the table and officers angled before his eyes and then vanished. He had fainted.

The captain turned and walked into his cabin. The officers walked slowly toward the limp, unconscious body of the boy. They picked him up and carried him to the bowsprit and bound him to the long spar. It was a hot, sultry day and Simon did not regain consciousness for some time. An officer was stationed at the foot of the bowsprit to make sure that Jonson did not return to the ship. As far as the British Navy was concerned, Simon Jonson was already dead. The ship's clerk drew a line through his name on the roster and put these words after it: "Died at sea."

Simon had been on the bowsprit only a half-hour when the whole aspect of the sea suddenly altered. The bottle-green color changed, a flat, black bank of clouds came bustling down out of the middle distance, and, with a sudden jerk, the sails filled, the frigate heeled over

and began to scud across the ocean. The Canaries<sup>6</sup> dropped away, and the ship lurched swiftly toward the equatorial seas. The shock of the cool wind brought young Simon back to consciousness, and as soon as he looked around he could see what had happened. He glanced down the bowsprit to where the officer stood. Then he glanced at the worsening sea. He tucked the bread, the bottle of beer, and the knife into his shirt, tightened the ropes around his chest and waist, and locked his arms around the bowsprit.

Simon was tough, intelligent, and determined to live. When he looked over his shoulder at the men, who gathered at the foot of the bowsprit to shout encouragement to him, his eyes bulged slightly with fear, but his jaw was strong and tight. As the seas got higher the bowsprit would occasionally dip deep into the green water, lurch back, and Simon would come to the surface dripping water, his fingers biting into the smooth, tough wood of the bowsprit.

The storm lasted six days. During that time Simon drank and ate nothing. His only refreshment was the shock of the seas passing over his body as the bowsprit lunged into the tropical waters. When it rained, he turned his head toward the sky, stuck his tongue out, and caught a pitiful few drops of water. With his hands, he scooped the thin, slick layer of rain water off the surface of the spar and obtained a few more drops. Meanwhile the *Tiger* pitched and wallowed down the length of Africa, passed

Dakar,<sup>7</sup> and finally began to head south-east to swing in under the great belly of Africa and to run along the Gold Coast.<sup>8</sup> On the seventh day the winds died and the sun came up hot and clear. The sails began to flap again, the ship rolled listlessly. They were within a hundred miles of the equator. The bowl of the sea and sky became brassy with heat, the ocean steamed. The sun burned the salt water off Simon's skin, leaving streaks of pure-white salt behind. In the storm his cap and shoes had washed away, and now the exposed skin on his feet, hands, and face turned pink, then red, and as blisters formed, a painful white.

By the tenth day the boy's tongue began to protrude from his mouth, and he chewed on a small piece of the bread, trying to work up some saliva. On the eleventh day Martin advised him to take some of the beer, and for the first time the boy uncorked the bottle and took a mouthful of the rich bitter stuff. Martin was the boatswain of the *Tiger*, and although he had spent twenty years at sea, he was bitterly opposed to the navy method of discipline. A tough, wizened, sun-blackened man, he had much admired Simon's calm performance before the court-martial. The beer revived Simon at once, and he waved a hand at the crew members who stood at the foot of the bowsprit. The crew roared support back to him.

"Just a mouthful, Simon. That's all you can have today," Martin called to

<sup>7</sup>*Dakar* (dä kär'), seaport capital of Senegal; the westernmost point in Africa.

<sup>8</sup>*Gold Coast*, former British colony in West Africa, now Ghana.

<sup>6</sup>*Canaries*, group of islands in the Atlantic Ocean off the northwest coast of Africa.

him. "Cork up the bottle and put it back in your shirt."

The boy obeyed reluctantly, his bleary, bloodshot eyes fastened on the bottle of beer. Martin now spent his nights sleeping at the foot of the bowsprit, awakening throughout the night to give the boy encouragement and, occasionally, to pray with him.

On the thirteenth day two things happened. The lines holding Simon had become loose because of the weight he had lost. It took him six hours to untie the knots and tighten up the lines around his shrunken body. The second thing that happened was that he began to moan—an occasional desolate, low scream of pain that hung over the ship like a curse before the tropical winds swept it away.

By now the ship had swung under the great overhanging belly of Africa and was heading toward the tiny island of São Thomé,<sup>9</sup> which was almost exactly on the equator. Each day the sun came up hot and clear and beat down on the boy on the unprotected bowsprit. During the hottest part of the day the helmsman tried to steer so that the sails made a shadow over Simon, but the captain insisted relentlessly that they hold to the true compass course.

By now the boy's tongue was black and swollen. The exposed skin of his feet and neck had formed into hard brown scabs of burnt flesh. He lay like a sack of rags, only his hands, clinging like claws to the bowsprit, seemed alive. He gave a cry of despair two or three times a day. Once a day he took a single mouthful of

<sup>9</sup>São Thomé (soun tō mā'), island about 175 miles off the west African coast.

beer from the bottle. He could no longer chew the bread. Several times when the members of the crew were swabbing down decks they would throw a bucket of cool seawater over his dry body. This would revive him and he would wave a thin hand in thanks. The crew members cheered wildly whenever this happened. The officer on watch would beat the offending crew member, but it went on despite this.

On the seventeenth day, São Thomé was sighted, and the ship steadied on a direct course for the island. The boy had not stirred for a day now and the crew feared he was dead. As the ship threaded its way through the channel, the crew stood watching him. The ship was finally warped alongside the dock.

"Boy, you've made it, you're safe," Martin said in a low voice. "Come on, boy, wake up. Cut yourself loose. We've made a port."

Nothing happened, and a groan went up from the crew. Martin's voice went higher, a note of despair in it, as he repeated the words.

Then the bundle of rags stirred, the boy's head, now balancing on an incredibly thin neck, came up. Through the puffed and lacerated eyelids there was a gleam of light. Thick, swollen fingers laced with blood reached into his shirt, took out the knife. With weak, grotesque motions he sawed at the ropes, cutting through a thread at a time. He finished one rope and then collapsed, unconscious. In a half hour he revived and doggedly cut through the last rope. Then he turned and looked dully at the crew without speaking.

"You can't come back down the bowsprit," Martin shouted. "It's against the King's Regulations. Drop into the water."

The words slowly worked through to Simon's mind. He let go of the knife, half-turned on the bowsprit and fell into the still water alongside the dock with a loud splash.

The boatswain, Martin, and two other sailors dived over the side. They collared Simon and swam over to the pier with him. Two other sailors had sprinted off down the dock. They came back with oranges, sugar lumps, and a beaker of water. They squeezed the juice of several oranges into his mouth, past the swollen, blackened tongue; then gradually and slowly they gave him water. By that afternoon the tough fiber of the boy's body was already knitting and he was asking for meat. He was going to live. But the seventeen days on the bowsprit had changed Simon Jonson. He was no longer a boy. He had become a hard and bitter man. Although he recovered quickly from the ravages of exposure, lines remained about his mouth and eyes. Whenever the *Tiger* was mentioned, his face became a flat, implacable mask in which his eyes glittered with a bold hatred.

Martin explained that it had never been contemplated that a man would return alive from the trip to the bowsprit. In the eyes of the Navy and of England, Simon was dead, and his family would be notified that he had died at sea. He was without passport, nationality, money, family, or profession. Simon nodded grimly as Martin talked, his eyes occa-

sionally wandering down the dock to the black, empty outline of the bowsprit on which he had lived so many days.

"I'll live somehow," Simon said flatly. "Can you teach me how to build a boat before the *Tiger* sails? If you can, I'll have a trade that I can work at. Then I won't starve to death on this miserable island."

"I'll try, my boy," Martin said. "But it is a difficult craft. It takes time."

Eighteen hours a day, for the time the *Tiger* remained in port, Martin taught Simon the craft. Simon's gaunt hands were weak at first, but they were sure and deft. He learned quickly. In all that time, however, Simon did not once talk of England, and he would not permit Martin to mention the Royal Navy or the humiliation of his bowspriting. Martin was disturbed by the steel-hard bitterness he found in Simon. Once he began to talk of Christian forgiveness, but Simon only stared at him with glazed and cynical eyes. Martin's voice trailed off inconclusively, disconcerted by the hardness in Simon's face which appeared to intensify.

Finally the *Tiger* sailed. Everyone on the island was on the docks to watch it leave—except Simon Jonson. He was on the far side of the island cutting a rosewood tree into spars for a sloop he had already started to build. He had his trade and was hard at work.

During the next year Simon built furniture, homes, canoes—anything to keep alive. In his spare time he worked on his sloop. It took two years to finish it.

The day it was finished he took on a crew of four men from the Gold Coast

and began to roam the under part of Africa. He bought hard woods, spices, gold, pearls, and an occasional diamond. These goods he then resold to European merchants. He gained a reputation for being a fair and honest dealer and he worked at a grinding pace. He confided in no one, made no friends, was never known to smile. Within five years he was one of the richest men to be found along the Gold Coast.

Four times a year he wrote long letters to Martin. In these letters his furious, raging hatred of the British Navy was put into words. Martin, now retired to his cottage in Oxford,<sup>10</sup> wrote Simon to soften his attitude, to let bygones be bygones. Each reply was the same: a re-statement of Simon's quiet, deadly hatred for the men who had tortured him and whom he would never forget.

Finally, seven years after the bowspriting of Simon, Martin wrote a letter in which he offered to send his youngest daughter, Nancy, to São Thomé in the hopes that she and Simon would be married. The girl was eighteen, tall, clean-limbed, and cheerful. Martin wrote that she was the only thing that could save Simon from the cancerous hate that was eating inside him.

For six months there was no response to his letter.

Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, Simon Jonson was given his revenge. He was in a dirty, hot anchorage north of Cape Lopez,<sup>11</sup> negotiating for the

purchase of six huge pearls that had been passed from one native hand to another halfway around the globe. He had almost completed the sale when a canoe with three natives in it came flying across the anchorage. They reported that they had seen an English man-of-war drifting hopelessly with the current, far out at sea. And, they reported, there was a man tied to the bowsprit.

Simon completed his sale, gathered his crew, and set sail in the direction the natives indicated. After two days of sailing, he located the ship. As soon as he saw it, he knew what had happened. It was the victim of what was called a line hurricane.

Line hurricanes are short-lived storms of a terrible intensity. The horizon is suddenly obscured by a black, solid line of clouds that is laced with lightning flashes around the surface of the sea, the sea in front of the storm becomes flat, the whole universe seems to stop and to wait dully for a few seconds. The hurricane strikes like a coiled snake. In a matter of seconds the wind rises to enormous velocities and pulls the tops of the waves after it, so that there is a flat, flying sheet of water a few feet off the surface. Beneath this, great combers of green and white water crash insanely against one another. For several minutes the whole ocean turns dark, and the hissing of water and wind is so great that normal voices are utterly lost. Then it is suddenly over. The sea falls flat, the sun reappears, a few wounded fish lie gasping and dying on the surface. But if a sailing vessel is caught in such a storm with sail on, either its sails will be ripped

<sup>10</sup>*Oxford*, city in southern England.

<sup>11</sup>*Cape Lopez*, point of land extending into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of southwestern Africa.

to shreds or its masts snapped. A poorly handled ship will simply vanish, and a well-handled one will be badly damaged at the very best.

As Simon approached the ship, he saw it was a large man-of-war. It carried thirty-three guns and the name *India* was on its stern. All the masts had been broken, the decks were a tangle of broken spars and lines, there were gaping holes in the gun decks where the guns had come adrift and smashed their way overboard, the rails were splintered and torn, bits of sail, mattresses, shattered casks, wet powder were scattered over everything.

And the natives had been right—from the bowsprit dangled the body of a man.

As Simon bore down on the *India*, the desultory activity of the men aboard the ship stopped. Men staggered to the rails, looked with bleary eyes at Simon's sloop. A hatch opened and the captain walked out on deck. Simon hove-to<sup>12</sup> a hundred feet from the damaged ship.

"What happened to you?" he shouted to the captain.

"Hit by a line hurricane," the captain said in a rasping voice. "No time to bat-ten down or secure. Our guns came adrift and smashed half the crew before they went overboard. Compass ruined. All our water kegs smashed into pieces."

The captain ran a dry tongue over even drier lips. Simon realized that all of the men along the rail were half dead with thirst.

"You are a hundred and fifteen miles southwest of Calabar.<sup>13</sup> I advise you to

make for it at once," Simon said. He motioned for his crew to set sail, and he began to veer away from the *India*.

"Wait, man," the captain cried. "Do you have water? My God, we are dying of thirst. We can never make land in this condition. If you have water, in the name of mercy give it to us."

"Yes, I have five large casks of fresh water," Simon said.

"Look, you talk English; you must be an Englishman," the captain croaked. "I order you to come alongside and give us water and supplies. I further order you ———"

"I am no English subject," Simon said coldly. "I am a citizen of the seas. I am under no obligation to obey your orders."

He ran back alongside the ship, but carefully stayed out of gunshot. The captain, reeling slightly under the impact of the tropical sun, stared down at him unbelievably.

"Then I request you to aid us in the name of common humanity," the captain said.

"Ah, common humanity, that is another thing," Simon said, but his voice was colder and more deadly than before. "Then, in the name of common humanity, I order you to take that man down from the bowsprit."

"That is impossible," the captain said. "That man was sentenced to the bowsprit several days ago under the authority of His Majesty's Regulations for the Government of the Royal Navy. It is impossible for me or anyone else to order him cut loose."

The men on the rail, the captain, and

<sup>12</sup>hove-to, stopped.

<sup>13</sup>Calabar (kal ə bār'), city in Nigeria.



Simon all looked down the ship toward the bowsprit. The poor wretch tied there raised his head, his eyes glittering with hope. The captain turned and looked down at Simon.

There was a long silence while all the vast and massive authority of the British Navy matched wills with a single individual in a small sloop.

"It is impossible for me to aid you as long as that man is tied to the bowsprit," Simon said deliberately and slowly. He gestured to his crew and the sails of his sloop went up. As the canvas ballooned slowly, the sloop picked up way and began to move away from the *India*.

"No man was ever allowed to come down off the bowsprit to the ship," the captain screamed.

Simon did not reply. He merely glanced once at the captain, then at the man on the bowsprit. Then he turned his back to the ship.

The captain's tongue came out, his hot, dry breath whistled out through the dry passages of his nose. Then he threw back his head and shouted after Simon, suddenly afraid that he could not be heard.

"Cut the man loose from the bowsprit. I pardon him unconditionally."

The crew began a ragged cheer. Men stumbled down the deck toward the

bowsprit, clambered over the debris to set their shipmate free. The man on the bowsprit waved his hands feebly, unable to realize fully what had happened.

Simon heard the command and put his tiller hard over. The sloop bore down on the shattered hulk of the *India*. As lines came from the ship and were tied to huge water casks in the sloop, Simon did something he had not done in seven years. He put his head back and smiled up at the crew. As the men stove in the end of the first cask and stuck their dry heads into the fresh water, he continued to smile at them.

Two weeks later when he returned to São Thomé, after aiding the *India* to make port, he sat down to answer the last letter of his friend Martin.

"My dear and only friend Martin," he began. "Since you wrote, something happened which has much changed my former attitude. You will now find that I am more kindly disposed toward His Majesty's Navy in particular and the English people in general. I would now be most grateful if you would send your youngest daughter Nancy to São Thomé as you proposed in your last letter. She will not have an easy life here, but she can be assured that I shall give her all the love and care and devotion of which I am capable. . . ."