

24. 10 JANUARY 1782

Notes the current selling prices of cotton, fustic and pimento at Bristol. He will send Tharp's supplies on the *Good Hope*, John Munt master, and the provisions from Cork on the *Sally*. These ships will sail with convoy. Mentions that Charles Gordon, the owner of Georgia estate, has paid off Miles' mortgage. Reports the death of Hugh Barnett; George and Richard Brissett and Miles are executors of his will and trustees of his property. The heir, the younger Hugh Barnett, and Robert McGhie, elder brother of James and Jonathan McGhie, the owners of Retreat and Hampstead estates, are bound to Jamaica with the fleet. Robert McGhie hopes to buy the above-mentioned estates from his brother and to ship their produce to Bristol. Miles is concerned in the *Jamaica* which is going to Rio Bueno estate to load sugar and rum from the property of Bryan Edwards. If the *Good Hope* and the *Sally* cannot be filled at Martha Brae and Montego Bay, the master is instructed to proceed to Lucea 'where there will be only the *Eagle* to load, which cannot be sufficient unless the crops should turn out as wretched as the last year.' Reports that some sugar received from Tharp has a bad smell and taste, as if tintured with tar, and hopes that Tharp will look into this. Complains about Tharp drawing a bill on him for £446 4s. 2d. on account of Chambers' estates. Miles is also unhappy at receiving ordinary sugar and light weighing casks from Tharp. The *Eagle* is newly sheathed and has a new master, John Mathews. Tharp owes Miles £481 3s. 0d. on his account with the Deans Valley estate.

25. 30 JANUARY 1782

Miles has shipped sundries to Tharp on the *Good Hope*, John Munt master, amounting to £1,239 0s. 11d. The *Sally* is proceeding to Cork to take in provision orders. Miles provides further discussion about settling Chambers' affairs. He hopes that Tharp can sell the Dolphin Lead Pen land for a good price, in order to reduce Miles' obligations in Jamaica. Miles says that he has not yet recovered from Chambers' mismanagement of his Jamaican affairs. He notes the loss of the *Mary*. Abraham Frizwell has been appointed master of the *Sally*. The *Eagle* and the *Sally* will proceed to Martha Brae, but Miles hopes that some produce will be loaded on them at Lucea and Green Island.

26. 18 FEBRUARY 1782

Mentions supplies that will soon be sent to Tharp. Notes that the *Lord North* has lost one of its prize vessels. Refers to the *Lord*

Germaine with 450 Gold Coast slaves on board. Expects it will prove difficult for sugar ships to make return voyages to England this year because of marauding French and Spanish vessels in the Caribbean. Considers that if ships cannot get a convoy through the Windward passage they should

push through the Gulph, by stretching over from Cape Antonio directly to the Florida shore, and keep that on board with a good look out to clear themselves of the martiers, or p convoy strong enough to carry them clear of our ennemies men of war at the Havannah.

27. 16 APRIL 1782

The *Lord Germaine* has arrived in Jamaica and Tharp intends to sell the 450 negroes on board. Tharp will draw on Miles for the proceeds 'in bills of £500 each in three equal payments at 18, 24 & 30 months.' Refers briefly to business dealings with Mr. Knowles and David Finlayson.⁶² Comments on bill transactions involving John Wedderburn and Andrew Martin.⁶³ Mentions the loss of the *Mary* and notes that Owen Watkins who 'held a quarter of her lost every shilling.' Writes about visiting Tharp's children in London. Miles has arranged insurance at £20 per hogshead on 150 hogsheads of Tharp's sugar shipped on the *Lord North*. 'I offered to be Mr. Adlam's security for a ship going for 500 slaves at 12, 18 & 24 months and was refused, unless I would allow interest after twelve months which I refused. Another house, I believe *Hibberts*,⁶⁴ give it.' Miles hopes that the *Lord North* will be ready to sail with the convoy appointed for 15 April. He has written to friends in Liverpool to inquire about a bill Tharp drew on Watt & Rawson⁶⁵ in favour of John Fowler for £173 4s. 10d. Considers that the current selling prices of sugar and rum will fall. Cotton 'will fall to a very low price it being imported from all parts of Europe as well as the West Indies.'

28. 2 MAY 1782

Miles has insured £3,000 on 150 hogsheads of Tharp's sugar shipped on the *Lord North*, John Smith master, from Jamaica to Bristol. The cost of insurance was £488 2s. 0d. Miles reports the

⁶² The manager of one of Knowles' estates in Jamaica: see letter 41.

⁶³ One of Tharp's overseers.

⁶⁴ Hibbert, Purrier & Horton, merchants, 9 Mincing Lane, London. Kent's *London Directory* (1782), p.85.

⁶⁵ Merchants, 25 Mincing Lane, London. *ibid.*, p. 175.

loss of his ship the *Eagle* to a privateer; on board were stores for Jamaica worth more than £600. He will find it difficult to send another ship to load sugar at Jamaica. He has paid the bill drawn in favour of John Fowler, a bill mentioned in his last letter to Tharp.

29. 15 JUNE 1782

Tharp and Mr. Campbell have drawn bills on Miles in favour of John Coghlan as payment for the *Lord Germaine*'s cargo of slaves. Miles wants sugar and rum from Chambers' estates to be sold rather than an additional burden to be placed on him. He hopes that, with the help of Thomas James, Miles' debt will be reduced just to the mortgage. He mentions the loss of his ships the *Eagle* and the *Mary*.

If I send out a ship to run it – as for instance the *Lord North* – that don't answer, because it does not meet with the approbation of the planters to risque their property in running ships. If it goes with convoy, then it is not in my power to hasten the arrivals of the ships, under such convoy, and in that case [they] are always to late.

Refers favourably to Lord Rodney and his forces beating the French fleet away from Jamaica.⁶⁶ Praises Captain Chubb who has now decided 'to follow the sail making business.' Reports poor markets for sugar and rum at Bristol; most of the rum imported last year is still on hand.

30. 16 JULY 1782

Miles has insured £1,500 on Tharp's sugar and rum shipped on the *Jean*, John Heyward master, from Jamaica to Bristol. The cost of insurance is £323 4s. 0d. Miles hopes that this ship will arrive safely with the fleet, but he notes that 'the combined fleets of France and Spain are now cruizing off the chops of the channel.' Lord Howe is in the English channel with 22 sail of the line to protect the fleets soon expected from the Caribbean.⁶⁷ Miles writes that the loss of the *Eagle* was 'entirely owing to the Capt. of the *Rodney* deserting her in the moment of danger.' He includes some brief details about

⁶⁶ Admiral Sir George Rodney helped to save Jamaica from the threat of France and Spain in a naval victory at the Battle of the Saints in April 1782. Langford, *Modern British Foreign Policy: The Eighteenth Century*, p.178.

⁶⁷ A heavy gale helped to disperse the French and Spanish fleets as the Jamaica convoy approached the mouth of the English Channel. Mackesy, *The War for America*, pp.478–479.

Chambers' estates. He considers that 'sugar, rum, cotton and indeed all West India produce has a bad appearance, and has fallen greatly in price, must fall more, or it will not be consumed. The high prices has greatly lessen'd the consumpt.' He states that bills of exchange will be protested 'in greater numbers than perhaps was ever experienced.'

31. 13 AUGUST 1782

Notes that the *Jane*, Captain Heyward master, has arrived at Kinsale in Ireland. The master stated that he lost a convoy in fog, but Miles thinks the real reason was to enter Ireland for smuggling purposes. Miles writes that there are currently many privateers in the English channel. He mentions that the *Charles* and *Major* from Martha Brae and Montego Bay are stranded near Liverpool. He refers to the large sums owed him by Chambers' estates. He has received from Tharp 150 hogsheads and 24 casks and barrels of sugar and 10 puncheons of rum. from the *Lord North* plus 40 hogsheads of sugar from the *Trelawny*. Good sugar crops are expected from Jamaica, but Miles reports a fall in the prices for sugar and rum at Bristol. Miles will forward memorandums, a still and lead pipe for Potosi estate. He has credited Tharp for several bills of exchange. He hopes that Thomas James will continue to act for Chambers' estates and that Mr. Adlam will not take over this position for he is 'no judge of the planting business.' Miles has received 5 hogsheads of sugar from the *Jane*. He has insured £100 on this consignment at 5 guineas per cent. The cost of insurance is £6 4s. 0d.

32. 22 OCTOBER 1782

Miles has written to Tharp & Campbell about bills of exchange that concern them. The *Good Hope* and the *Sally* have arrived at Bristol. Miles has received 230 hogsheads of Tharp's sugar from the *Good Hope* and 30 puncheons of rum and 79 hogsheads and casks of sugar from the *Sally*. He has not yet sold any of this produce. He notes that sugar prices

are from 48 to 60/. Most of what sells is at about 53/ pc. Rum [is] worse; [it] will not net £10 per pun., in my opinion not £9. There are many ships has arrived, and four more expected soon to arrive from Tortola & Saint Thomas, where they load with sugar, cotton, coffee &ca. brought there by French, Dutch and Danish subjects that find their way here as English. And [it is] so lucrative that fortunes has been made tho' they give 10/6 pc freight. This with a decline of consumpt from its being at so high

a price the last year is the reason the price is so reduced without even a hope of mending.

Miles will honour Tharp's bills but will protest many bills sent by other people. The McGhies have drawn on Miles for £2,000; they have consigned 65 hogsheads of sugar to Miles but this will not cover the cost of the bills. Miles refers to three hurricanes in recent years causing severe damage to trade and property in the Caribbean. Miles again mentions his misfortune over Chambers' estates. He thinks that he might soon have to pay an extra £4,000 for the upkeep of the estates. He has sent the *Lord North* with part of her load in order to keep some goods to fill the *Good Hope* and the *Sally* which are bound to Martha Brae.

Mr. Tharp, never was a man more dispirited than I am from the repeated misfortunes of losing my ships – the *Mary*, the *Miles*, the *Eagle*, the *Hope* with all my Golden Valley sugar & the *Jamaica*. Such a year surely was never experienced by any man.

Miles hopes that Tharp can sell the Dolphin Lead Pen land for about £10,000. He hopes that the *Lord North* can be dispatched from Jamaica through the Windward passage. 'I have suffered so severely that I am determined to cover my interest by insurance, so as never to lose more than four to five hundred upon any ship again.' Miles states that Tharp will have to receive wine from London ships for no Bristol ships 'ever touch at Madeira.' He points out the high losses of London and Bristol sugar ships in 1782. Miles' son has received a letter from Tharp's son. Mr. James has arrived at Bristol. The bills for the cargo of slaves on the *Lord Germaine* are protested and will be returned to Tharp. Miles explains that he owns three ships in the Jamaica trade but needs four in all: two for Lucea, one for Morant and one for Old Harbour. He refers to sundries shipped on the *Lord North*, John Smith master, for Jamaica, amounting to £1812 14s. 10d.

33. 30 NOVEMBER 1782

Advises Tharp to sell produce from Chambers' estates on the spot. The proceeds should be paid to those owed money on these properties and the rest should be remitted to Miles. Miles is unwilling to buy any ships for 'they now yield here twice their worth owing to so many having been captured & lost.' Miles does not want to give a power of attorney to Mr. James for Chambers' estates; he wants Tharp to remain in charge. Miles refers to business transacted between Tharp and John Parkinson over the Old Hope plantation. He mentions that repairs have been made to the *Good Hope* and the *Sally*. These ships will provide the rest of

Tharp's supplies. Miles has been unable to engage another slaving vessel addressed to Tharp on similar terms to those of the *Lord Germaine*. He refers to a quarrel with Mr. Adlam over a house Miles owns in Kingston. They have also quarrelled because Adlam ordered goods from Miles to arrive at Kingston in September and October, but Miles declined 'because people will not send their ships at that season on acct. of hurricanes.' Miles has sold only 31 hogsheads of Tharp's sugar so far: 'the fears entertained by the buyers, that a Peace will take place soon, has stopd. all sale.'

34. 10 JANUARY 1783

Hopes that the *Lord North* will be able to take a prize vessel as he is short of ships. He has sent an extra master and chief mate on the *Lord North* to command any suitable ship that might be taken or purchased. The *Jane* has reached Bristol, but the rum and sugar on board have arrived at a poor market. 21 barrels and tierces of Tharp's sugar from the *Lord North* sold at 55/ per hundredweight and 31 hogsheads of sugar from the *Jane* sold at 54/. Miles writes that

the quantities continually coming from Tortola & Saint Thomas's keeps the market full and the prices falling, so much so, that better sugar has of late been selling at 46 to 48/. You will naturally ask me why I keep to do worse; I answer because I cannot sell, unless to be under others which would fall the market very low indeed, and then not succeed. Duty and freight being so high, operates dreadfully on the holder of it.

Miles comments on plantation affairs, including Hinton East and Chambers' estates. He has made extra insurance on recent voyages of the *Good Hope* and the *Sally* because of 'the disaster to the fleet.' He states that he is obliged to protest many bills; otherwise he would be ruined. Robert McGhie junior is in Bristol; he intends to sell some land in Jamaica. Miles mentions that John Coghlan of London is planning to send two slaving vessels to Tharp. He thinks Tharp is unwise to deal with such vessels while the seas are still unsafe in wartime. He writes that 'the price of West India produce now operates fatally, which together with the destruction to the Jamaica fleet will be most severely felt in your island.' At 30 May 1782 Tharp owed Miles £8,496 3s. 1d. on his account current. Miles expects the planters to have insurance made on their cargoes 'with returns for convoy, in that case they are insured in all events.' He cites examples of recent losses to proprietors who did not insure their sugar in this way. He has been visited by various people with Jamaican connections. He has

shipped sundries to Tharp on the *Good Hope*, John Munt master, for Martha Brae, amounting to £1,421 11s. 1d. Some of these goods are insured. He mentions that the *Lord North* and the *Good Hope* will be loaded by Tharp, while the *Sally* will be loaded at Lucea. The *Hope*, Captain Sims, and the *Jamaica*, Captain Shute, have both been taken, the former with all the Golden Valley sugar crop on board. Miles will find it difficult to engage another ship to take in the produce from that estate. He hopes that the *Lord North* 'will be dispatched to run it, if there is the least prospect of her getting clear going to Windward or to Leeward. The *Sally* and *Good Hope* must come with convoy, and I hope before the fatal time the first of August.'⁶⁸

35. 6 MAY 1783

Miles has protested bills of exchange sent by various people. He explains that

had sugars kept up in price I might have been enabled to pay them; as it is, I am obliged to protest. The fall on sugar by the peace taking place, together with a very great fall off in the consumption of it, makes a difference to me only, of full £20,000.0.0. Last year sugar netted from £22 to £32 stg. p hhd, now £5 to £10 p hhd, the average about £7. I have sales from London of sugar that nets £7 12. 0 stg. p hhd, and from Liverpool that nets under £6.

Miles has been paid £35 4s. IId. by Watts, Walker & Rawson of Liverpool for the account of Rowland Savage of Trelawny, Jamaica. He notes that there are

'many thousand hhds sold here from 36 to 39/ pc that can do very little more, some not so much. I just mention this to shew you how miserable off you and others will be, having all yours on hand, but what you have been advised is sold. I have 1400 hhds on hand at a time I ought not to have one. Had I pushed off mine with the rest of the sellers, I am certain it would have lowered this market full 2/- pc more.'

Miles does not know why the *Lord North* has been detained so long in Kingston. He writes that 'now peace has taken place things will go on better and with more certainty' and that 'the loss of my ships forced me to do things against my judgment.' Miles hopes that the *Good Hope* will arrive in good time with the remainder of

⁶⁸ This was the start of the hurricane season in the Caribbean. Freight and insurance rates increased at this time of the year.

Tharp's stores. The stores for Chambers' estates were shipped on the *Sally*. Miles explains that he insured goods on the *Lord North* against Tharp's orders because both men had experienced a run of bad luck and because 'my advances are so great added to a heavy load of produce on hand, that if the *Lord North* or *Good Hope* miscarried and no insurance made on the supplies I could not have replaced them.' Miles explains that he made extra insurance on the *Sally* and the *Good Hope* because of the loss of a recent fleet. He provides brief comments on the friendship between his own son and Tharp's son. Mr. Coghlan has sent another slaving vessel to the Gold coast to pick up slaves to be sold by Tharp. Miles will leave the times of payment for this cargo to Tharp but will accept and pay the bills of exchange. Miles mentions another London vessel that will deliver slaves to Tharp. The owners of these ships are pleased with the sales of their previous cargoes directed to Tharp. Miles advises Tharp not to over-extend his business transactions; he approves of Tharp's actions over the Hinton East property. Miles considers that

the dreadful loss on sugar rum &c: compared with former years will make a vast alteration, even you will feel it essentially. I shall sink more in the advance I shall be in of freight & duty on sugar and rum on hand than the whole of my commission will come to, so fatal has this peace proved, tho' if it had not taken place, Jamaica would have fallen into the hands of an host of enemies.

Miles has quarrelled with Mr. Adlam of Jamaica. Miles thinks that his wharf and stores in Kingston are now ruined. He notes that his son, William, 'wishes to go to Jamaica, but he's too young and wants experience.'

36. 17 JUNE 1783

Now there is a peace all obstacles will be removed, and you will find, if I have your orders early, you will have your supplies out early, and with certainty; that it was not in my power to do during so ruinous a war, and being so unfortunate to lose the ships I had concerns in.

The *Sally* has been sent out with supplies for Chambers' estates. Provisions are not included: the prices were high and Miles felt that they would be bought more cheaply in Jamaica. Miles mentions the difficulties experienced by insurance underwriters during wartime.

I would not have guaranteed the underwriters in London last

year for £5 p ct. and if the war had continued on this year I would not have guaranteed them for £10 p ct. Here there has been 5 or 6 bankrupt underwriters during the war. In London I should think if a nought were added to the number here, would be nearest their number.

Miles hopes in future to secure insurance at 40/ out and £4 per hundredweight home. He has sent out Campbell & Whittaker's order. He has insured £2,100 on 150 hogsheads of Tharp's sugar on the *Lord North*, John Smith master, for Bristol. The cost of insurance is £95 4s. 0d. He makes a brief reference to Chambers' estates. Miles mentions that his son, William, might be sent out to Jamaica. At present Tharp's son is staying with him in Bristol. Tharp has two other sons being educated in England. Notes the appearance of bills drawn jointly with Mr. Adlam for £5,000 to buy the *Chambers*. Miles expected Adlam to buy four prize vessels for him 'for under the sum this unwieldy vessell will cost.' He is upset at 'so contrary an execution' of his orders and expects to lose much money as a consequence. Tharp thinks a good sugar crop will be made this year.

37. 1 MAY 1785

Provides routine business details about money claimed by Mr. Reynolds from Chambers' estates.

38. 8 OCTOBER 1785

Miles wishes Tharp had dispatched the *Jarrett* from Jamaica to any part of America for a return cargo rather than send the ship to England in ballast. Miles must return the ship to Jamaica in ballast 'for all my orders will not load out more than two (or three at the most) out of five that I have.' He notes that it is better for a ship to stay in the Caribbean throughout the winter rather than to send it without freight. He thinks he will lose

more by it than I suffered by the *Simon Taylor* that was driven on shore in the hurricane; that was £1,600 and odd currency but came home as full as an egg.

Miles refers to supplies he is getting ready for the Potosi estate, Jamaica, the property of Samuel Horlock. He has been visited by George Brissett junior. Tharp concurs with Simon Taylor's opinion that Miles should take possession of Knowles' properties in Jamaica. Miles only wants to do this if the properties appear to be doing badly; otherwise he will leave them to the direction of Mr. Grizell and Mr. Joseph Brissett. Miles will write to George

Charles about the affairs of Tharp, Campbell & Charles and Tharp & Campbell. Miles does not intend to insure the supplies for the Potosi estate.

39. *NOVEMBER 1785*

Miles has heard from Tharp about another hurricane striking Jamaica. He adds:

That of 80 with respect to Chambers' property's I have not recovered to this hour. To take up & pay annuitants off in London & Reynold's claim too is what I am not abled to do . . . These hurricanes will ruin planter and merchant together. In 80 sugar sold at a great price in England, now at a poor one, and altho' the hurricane is fully known there is but little advance. Indeed the import has been a great one; that prevents it.

Miles gives brief details about Tharp's problems in trying to manage Chambers' estates. He will honour a bill of Thomas Buchanan & Co. of New York on Tharp's account. He has received a letter from Mr. Taylor that includes comments about personnel and management on Chambers' estates. Miles thinks that bad consequences will stem from Taylor's description of 'overseers being suffered to raise stock, corn &ca. and what they don't use sell.' He hopes the sale of Tharp's produce will enable Mr. Wilkinson to pay £1,500 to £2,000 for the account of Tharp & Campbell. He states that he will not act as security in another slaving voyage.

I have been security for two Guinea men to Adlam, to put him in tollerable good humour, and I have been security for two to MacLean Bagnold & Taylor to oblige and shew my gratitude to my friend Mr. Simon Taylor, which with all other acceptances is within now at this moment writing £50,000 stg. and this with the number of bills that has been remitted to me that are noted & will be protested, makes it notwithstanding a very serious business.

Miles refers to sales of 35 hogsheads of Tharp's sugar from the *Commerce* (net proceeds £635 19s. 1d.) and 20 hogsheads from the *Rodney* (net proceeds £375 18s. 2d.). A large amount of logwood has been imported at Bristol; its price is falling daily.

40. *15 NOVEMBER 1785*

Refers to sundries shipped on the *Good Hope*, John Smith master, for Martha Brae, amounting to £1,524 2s. 1d. Miles has a three-sixteenths share in a ship being built; he has paid £2,200 in

advance for his share. He hopes that Tharp will also take shares in the vessel. Miles will send the *Sally*, the *Good Hope* and the new ship *Martha Brae* to Martha Brae. He notes that 'dispatch, with taking in a cargo at the smallest possible expence is what is absolutely necessary for to constitute profit.' Miles has taken a mortgage from George Robinson Hamilton, who has assigned all his property to him 'in trust to pay him £600 p annum.' Miles has contacted John Mowat⁶⁹ and Mr. Paul⁷⁰; they are attorneys for Hamilton. All the produce from Hamilton's properties should be consigned to Miles in future. Miles has taken pains to settle with the annuitants over Chambers' property, but they require the consent of Mr. Reynolds. Miles is worried by Mrs. Chambers' request that he should pay £300 per annum for the maintenance of herself and her family. He mentions the death of his eldest daughter. He has received news of another hurricane in the Caribbean 'yet the imports of sugar has been so great that the price has now mended, at most about 1 to 2/ in some sorts of sugar.' The sales of 200 hogsheads of sugar from the *Good Hope* produced net proceeds of £3,480 5s. 8d. Miles will send the *Jarrett* to Cork for provisions which will be delivered at Martha Brae, Montego Bay and Lucea. The *Jarrett* and the *Simon Taylor* will load their return cargoes at Lucea. Miles is surprised at George Brissett 'not liquidating and sending me a mortgage of the estate.' He has only lent money to Brissett because Tharp persuaded him to do so; he would have preferred to invest money in the funds. 'I wish the planters would clammer to have the duties lowered on sugar; and they must lower the duty on rum or it will not sell.' Miles refers to a poor cask of sugar sent to him as a sample by Tharp. He would like to send some beans, peas, oats and groats to Tharp, but the high prices of these commodities preclude buying at present. At 30 May 1785 Richard Brodhurst owed Miles £5,067 4s. 0d. Brodhurst had agreed to buy Miles' wharf and store in Port Royall Street, Kingston for £1,200.

41. 17 NOVEMBER 1785

Tharp has drawn on Miles for the *Gascoyne*'s cargo of slaves in 37 bills amounting to £16,064 17s. 1d. The bills have been honoured. Miles has received two bills of lading for 30 hogsheads of sugar from the *Ocean* of Glasgow. He has forwarded these bills to Walter Monteath, the purser of the ship. Miles wants Tharp to

⁶⁹ Of St. James's parish, Jamaica.

⁷⁰ Overseer on Success estate, Jamaica.

assist him with the affairs of George Robinson Hamilton. He mentions that Mr. Atherton of Green Park owes him around £1,400. He adds: 'I shall not lay myself out to lend money. My whole aim is & must be to lessen & get some of it in England, for what with ships, & being obliged to advance, instead of collecting, will make it absolutely necessary.' Miles states that unless Mr. Knowles gives up the management of his Jamaican estates he will 'file a bill and bring it to a sale before he's quite ruind.' He complains that Mr. Finlayson promised in 1782 to remit 70 hogheads of sugar per year from Knowles' estates to lessen Miles' burden, but has failed to do this. Tharp has sent two pipes of Madeira wine to Miles. Despite short crops in Jamaica there have been large imports of sugar at English ports. A report of a hurricane in Jamaica and the Windward Islands has not affected the sugar market more than 2/ per hundredweight. Miles has received several sugar shipments from Mr. Jarrett. There are various references to plantation affairs. Miles is unable to act further over Chambers' estates because the annuitants in London will only listen and agree to Mr. Reynolds on this matter. Miles is unhappy at the management of Chambers' properties by Thomas James senior. He adds that

The eyes of people in England are now pretty well opend, to see they have no chance in Jamaica living here with the property and people there. Longs⁷¹ house refused lending an old correspondent a single £1,000.0.0 but for a short time, tho' the person lives in England, and to be called upon when they thought proper.

Miles wishes that Tharp would involve George Brissett junior with Chambers' estates. He mentions that there are 'no iron hoops to be had in quantity till November . . . Beans, Pease, Oats & Groats so scarce and dear that it could not be procured but with difficulty. Another year, I mean a good harvest, then its all in plenty.' Miles is ready to send the *Jarrett* to Cork but herrings will not be available there until the end of January. He has put Tharp's coppers on board the *Good Hope*. He has offered the living annuitants their money on Chambers' estates but they would not accept this 'unless Reynolds was first paid his demand.' Miles refers to net proceeds for 50 hogsheads of sugar from the *Chambers* (amounting to £777 0s. 8d). and for 45 hogsheads from the *Lord North* (amounting to £655 19s. 3d.). These proceeds are 'to be applied to the payments of *the annuitants expressly*.' Miles

⁷¹ Probably the merchants identified in letter 12, note 50.

notes that 'the business of raising premiums on bills from the long established custom of the fixed exchange of 40 p cent, has ruined the credit of the island so effectually, that you will not find much more will be lent.'

42. 14 JANUARY 1786

Gives details of a formal demand for money on his brother, John Miles. The claim has been made by John Howell⁷² for a mortgage on Old Hope estate. Miles has purchased his brother's concerns in Jamaica but Hibberts, Purrier & Co.⁷³ of London, acting for Howell, have threatened to file a bill in Chancery against him. Tharp is involved because he is acting as Miles' attorney in Jamaica. Tharp wants Miles to pay the annuitants for Chambers' Prosper estate. But Miles is unable to do this while 'the annuitants will not do anything until they are assured that Mr. Reynolds has been paid his whole demand.' Miles will honour the bills sent by Tharp for land he has bought in Jamaica. He makes further remarks about Chambers' properties. He notes that prices for newly imported slaves in Jamaica are high and that therefore 'the owners of Guinea ships submit to have their cargoes sold in the Windward Islands of St. Kitts, Grenada, Dominica and Saint Vincent at £30 to £31 & £32 stg. p head.' Miles states that he only has to pay the balance due on Hinton East to settle his mortgage on Chambers' estates. He forwards various letters to Tharp. He writes that the properties of John Dawes owe him £5,400 and those of James Dawes owe him nearly £3,500.

43. 18 FEBRUARY 1786

Miles has sent Tharp one cask of copper, amounting to £22 1s. 9d., on the *Hanover Planter*, John Neilson master. Miles cannot ship stills for Tharp until the autumn, 'the *Hanover Planter* being the last vessell at this port for the North side of Jamaica.'

44. 28 FEBRUARY 1786

Tharp wants to purchase from Mr. Wedderburn a gang of negroes plus the time to come on the lease of Potosi estate. To carry this out he has drawn bills that have been accepted by Miles. Miles refers to his mortgage on Mr. Hamilton's estate and to supplies to be sent to Tharp. He also mentions his mortgage on Success estate and its negroes, and hopes that John Mowat is performing his

⁷² 'Formerly a Provost Marshall at Jamaica'.

⁷³ The merchants identified in letter 27, note 64.

work there properly. He begs Tharp not to increase the debt on Chambers' property.

45. 6 SEPTEMBER 1786

Miles has insured £1,000 on Tharp's sugar on the *Martha Brae*, John Munt master, for Bristol. The cost of insurance is £45 14s. 0d. Miles refers to business affairs in Jamaica involving the McGhies and Thomas Adlam. He notes that Tharp's nephew George Brissett is now at Bristol. Mr. Knowles has died. Miles has received a copy of his will from John Grizell and a statement of his accounts from Mr. Finlayson. He has dispatched a gardener to Chambers' estates; he is now hoping to send a sawyer. He refers to the carrying capacity of some of his ships. He also notes that coal and lime are expensive to ship from Bristol. Miles has paid a bill drawn by Tharp for £1,243 16s. 6d. He mentions the problems he has had with Hibbert, Purrier & Co. He refers to money advanced for the account of the Campbell family. He comments on his ships in the Jamaica trade and the estates from which he expects sugar to be shipped. He writes about Mr. Atherton of Green Park. Miles wishes 'for your sake the whole of your crop was coming in the *Jarrett*. The first best sale made in Bristol was . . . 30 hhds p *Orange Valley* at 50/ pc. Now the worst almost sells for that money, and yet sugar 8/ pc better will not yield more than 54/ pc.' Miles gives a long list of some of the debts he is owed in Jamaica. James Wedderburn owes £1, 453 16s. 11d. with interest from 30 May 1785 till paid. Rowland Savage owes £673 9s. 0d. with interest for Dromelly estate from 30 June 1784 till paid. Hugh Barnett's estate owes £753 3s. 8d. with interest from 30 August 1782 till paid. William & Samuel Stevenson owe £123 17s. 4d. with interest from 30 March 1784 till paid. Robert Minto owes £420 3s. 9d. with interest from 30 April 1786 till paid. Mary Cunningham of St. James' parish owes £161 9s. 0d. with interest from 30 May 1785. Mr. Guthrie of Hawkerton, Trelawny owes £418 8s. 11d. with interest from 10 May 1785 till paid. Miles also refers to an older unpaid debt of £884 15s. 5d. with interest from 31 July 1780. He provides details of exports to be shipped to Tharp. He refers to Brissett's and Chambers' properties in Jamaica. Miles criticises Thomas James for poor management of Chambers' estates. He has agreed to pay £500 to support Mrs. Chambers and her family from 20 July 1786 to 20 July 1787. He states that he has sold sugar from the *Simon Taylor* and the *Sally* too soon. 'I sold 105 hhds of your sugar p *Good Hope* at 54/, 4 hhds at 52/ and 41 at 56/. Those p *Orange Valley* and *Sally* at 46 to 47/6 pc.' Miles says that he will insure property for Tharp on these ships at £4 per cent. He has

received from Tharp a bill of lading for 20 hogsheads of sugar shipped on the *Kent* to London and consigned to Davidson & Graham.⁷⁴ He would like Tharp's assistance in securing a debt of £143 18s. 10d. from Samuel Horlock junior. He briefly refers to G.R. Hamilton and the Rio Bueno estate. He criticises George Brissett junior for selling some of his Jamaican property for an annuity. Brissett was about to take over the management of Chambers' estates but has decided instead to settle in England. Miles has debited Tharp for one-eighth of the *Martha Brae* for her first cost and first outset; this amounts to £730 12s. 11d. He has not insured Tharp's share in the ship from Jamaica to Bristol because Tharp wishes 'to risque it.' Miles is irritated that the *Jarrett* was sent to Bristol with a light load. He considers this to be 'xing the sea to no purpose' and he will have to send the ship back in ballast for no freights are available for Jamaica. He adds that 'it is monstrouse hard upon me. From the money I have out in Jamaica I ought to have 5,000 hhds consigned instead of 2,000.' Miles is worried about the accounts from Chambers' estates. He thinks that this is the result of bad management by Thomas James. He will be hard pressed to pay Mr. Reynolds of London. He comments that the rum alone from Chambers' properties

ought not only to pay for English & Irish supplies but for every other contingency whatever. Instead of that, for these six years last past, what has it done: got further in my debt 22,000£ stg. and done little more than pay Mrs. Chambers & family's support. To compare management at Hanover to the same at St. Kitts, Nevis, Antigua &ca., where the rum that sells but for 18d & 20d curr:Y p gallon, not only pays all contingencies, which is all sent from England (having no negro ground to spare at those places) but oftentimes something left to buy one two three or more negroes as it may happen to add to the propertys. See the contrast, to the utter destruction of Jamaica properties.

Miles requests that Mr. Minto should debit him for the loss of goods from the *Good Hope*. He refers to Knowles' estates and their creditors. Miles again returns to the vexed matter of Chambers' properties. He is worried that reports of a short sugar crop in Jamaica will lead to ships returning to Bristol with light loads.

46. 8 DECEMBER 1786

Miles has heard unfavourable news about the prospects for next

⁷⁴ Merchants, 14 Fenchurch Buildings, London. Kent's *London Directory* (1786), p.48.

year's crops. He has only received £950 of the £2,000 owed him by Mr. Wilkinson. He has paid Tharp's bills to James Wedderburn and he has also remitted a bill to John Ashurst for 375 negroes bought by Tharp. Altogether, with interest, Tharp owed Miles £14,999 19s. 10d. on 1 January 1787. Miles refers to money he is still owed on Potosi estate. He has forwarded Tharp's letter to John Coghlan in London. He looks forward to the foreclosure and sale of the late Chambers' properties. A postscript dated 18 December 1786 refers to sales of 108 hogsheads of sugar from the *Good Hope*; the net proceeds amount to £2,496 13s. 6d.

47. 2 FEBRUARY 1787

Refers to a drought and a hurricane in Jamaica and to poor accounts from Hanover estate. Mentions that he is unable to fill the *Jarrett* with herrings because they are currently scarce and expensive at Cork. Makes detailed reference to a disagreement between the McGhies and Mr. Innes of London. This involves making Miles party to a bill in Chancery. Miles states that he has been paid money owed him by James McGhie for the Hampstead and Retreat estates. He agrees that Tharp is right to maintain a ship trading to North America to pick up provisions and lumber. So far Miles has been unable to procure a sawyer or blacksmith to send to Tharp. Miles criticises John Brissett for selling his commission. He mentions that Tharp's eldest son and George Brissett visited him a few days ago. He refers to Hibbert's involvement with Howell's business and to the Campbell family. He thinks that Mr. Atherton and his wife, who are childless, could live well in England for £1,000 per year. He notes that Mr. Minto owed him £420 3s. 9d. on 30 April 1786. There are miscellaneous business references to John Mowat, Mr. Samuels, James Hay, Mr. Grizell, Mr. Quarrell, John Dawes and various properties in Jamaica. John Dawes' Rockspring estate owed him £550 7s. 3d. plus interest from 30 April 1786 while James Dawes' estate The Grange owed him £3,667 9s. 4d. with interest from the same date. Miles briefly refers to repairs made to the *Good Hope*; to Mr. Horlock's affairs on Potosi estate; to the bad management of Thomas James senior on Chamber's estates; and to provisions sent on the *Jarrett*. Miles has received 120 hogsheads of sugar from Tharp sent on the *Martha Brae*. He hopes that 'it will sell soon. Our market [is] flat but I think all will go off before new arrives. The high price has lessened consumpt.'

48. 8 JUNE 1787

Refers to a commercial treaty with France confirmed by act of

parliament in May 1787,⁷⁵ to the consolidation of duties on sugar,⁷⁶ rum and ginger, and to an act to create free ports in Jamaica.⁷⁷ Mentions people who owe him money. The McGhies have virtually paid all the money they owe. 'Sugar has fallen very much in price indeed and will be lower. The prices quoted this day from London are sugars 37 to 50/ pc, good middling 43/ pc.' Miles has received a bill of lading for 40 tons of logwood from the account of Benjamin Blake.⁷⁸ Tharp wants to add Pantre Pant estate to his properties. Miles states that he has experienced a bad year: only a short sugar crop will be shipped from Jamaica and Hanover estate has been hit by a hurricane. Miles gives instructions about produce to be shipped to Bristol on the *Jarrett* (molasses, rum, pimento) and comments on sugar prices in London and Bristol.⁷⁹

49. 30 JUNE 1787

The *Good Hope* has arrived at Bristol and is discharging her cargo. Sugar is now selling at Bristol from 40 to 52 shillings per hundredweight. Miles has insured £360 on 30 hogsheads of sugar from the Potosi estate on the *Simon Taylor*, Valentine Baker master, for Bristol. The cost of insurance was £16 13s. 0d. Miles notes that, by April 1787, he was owed £3,099 9s. 6d. from Canaan estate. He also refers to money owed him from the estate of the deceased Francis Blower Gibbes. He considers that after sending out supplies for Chambers' properties 'to have arrearages to pay of near £4,000 for contingencies and near £1,000 stg to annuitants . . . is hardly to be borne.' Mr. Atherton's sugar received from the *Good Hope* is poor in quality.

50. 2 OCTOBER 1787

Mentions that the *Martha Brae* struck rocks on her way out of Martha Brae harbour; but no serious damage has been done. Reminds Tharp of the need to provide timely information about insurance. Miles has consulted with Messrs. Gordons about providing anchors and chains to assist ships sailing out of Martha Brae harbour. He states that Bristol sugar bakers are currently

⁷⁵ The Eden Treaty with France, first signed in September 1786. Langford, *Modern British Foreign Policy: The Eighteenth Century*, p.194.

⁷⁶ The duty on muscovado sugar for home consumption was raised to 12s. 4d. per cwt. in 1787. Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763–1833*, p.190.

⁷⁷ A bill to reopen free ports in the British Caribbean was passed in 1787 as 27 Geo.III c.27.

⁷⁸ The brother of William Blake (see note 45).

⁷⁹ Part of the letter is damaged.

'dreadfully off.' He writes that he has suffered by his ships coming home short-freighted 'and not one of them has half the money owing to them, that I have in Jamaica.' He mentions the problems experienced with Chambers' properties, but thinks that Tharp is the right person to take over and run them successfully. There are miscellaneous references to bills drawn on Miles and to supplies to be sent out to Tharp. Miles credits Tharp with £979 13s. 2d. for money the latter has spent acting as attorney to Chambers' estates. Miles is owed money from the properties of the deceased James Dawes. He is also owed money by George Charles, to whom he has consigned goods.

51. 10 DECEMBER 1787

Tharp's son has travelled to Jamaica to assist his father with plantation affairs. Miles writes that the problems he has encountered with Chambers' estates were 'the foundation of my long illness some years ago.' He mentions costly repairs to his ships the *Sally* and the *Good Hope* within one year. He refers to the Campbell family and to the death of John Coghlan in London. Miles wants the *Simon Taylor* and the *Jarrett* to load at Montego Bay and the *Sally*, the *Martha Brae* and the *Good Hope* to load at Martha Brae and its neighbourhood. Miles refers to manufacturers experiencing problems in the sugar baking trade.

52. 7 FEBRUARY 1788⁸⁰

Refers to sundries shipped to Jamaica. Miles and Tharp have both been suffering from gout and gravel. Tharp owes Miles for some negroes he has bought and for contingencies. Miles hopes that the current crop of produce will help to reduce Mr. Atherton's debt. He writes about Chambers' properties in Jamaica. He has asked Robert Cooper Lee of London to find out how many of the annuitants on Prosper estate are still alive, in order to pay them off. Miles notes that

I have had no complaint about your sugar this year. Messrs. Hibberts house were right: its grain is rather too fine. A white cast and strong body are the signs of perfection; what is deemed straw colour or yellow is not so good. I cannot but think your sugar has neated you more here than anywhere, notwithstanding the prices you quote at Liverpool and London.

Tharp expects a good sugar crop this year. Miles will send out ships to collect cargoes at Martha Brae and Morant.

⁸⁰ Parts of the letter are damaged.

53. 15 DECEMBER 1788

Miles has sent to Tharp 'the deeds of assignment on Prosper estate from annuitants to me', the only exception being one deed he has sent to Simon Taylor. A deed of assignment from Jacob Wilkinson to Miles has been forwarded by Mr. Lee to Singer, Ellis & Singer of Spanish Town. Miles notes that the bonds of Thomas Reid junior⁸¹ should lessen the debt owed on Grange estate. He hopes that remaining demands on this estate can be paid from the proceeds of the forthcoming crop. There are further remarks on Grange estate. Miles is owed £6,372 18s. 6d. on Rockspring estate at 30 May 1788. Turning to Chambers' properties, Miles has settled with the annuitants of Prosper estate by paying the original purchase money with arrears of rent due to 20 September 1788. Miles has taken out deeds of assignment from the annuitants for this estate and has sent a fresh power of attorney to Tharp, Simon Taylor and John Taylor. He hopes that Tharp can help him to sell all of Chambers' properties as soon as possible. He makes further remarks on the involvement of the annuitants with Prosper estate. Miles has forwarded his accounts with Knowles' properties to Simon Taylor. He wonders how Edward Knowles 'applied the many thousands I have paid him,' but hopes that Poor Hope estate near Lucea can be sold to pay all the creditors. Miles refers to sales of 15 casks of sugar from the *Neptune*; these being sold in London by Thomas Trenham for £280 11s. 3d. Miles gives details of supplies to be sent to Tharp. He replies to various letters from Tharp which mainly give information about bills of exchange. He will send out supplies to Potosi and St. James's estates. He thanks Tharp for helping him to recover a debt owed by Stephen Lawrence. Tharp has sold Blower estate to Dr. Gibbes, who owes money to Miles. Tharp's son, John, is staying with Miles. Miles states that

our import of sugar has been a large one which occasions a flat market, and many on hand, rum also at miserable prices. Great quantities of French sugars are smuggled to our islands and imported from thence to Great Britain. It increases the revenue, which is all government looks out to get, besides adding to the carrying trade.

Miles has received some bills of exchange and a bill of lading for five hogsheads of sugar; the proceeds are to be placed to the accounts of Tharp & Campbell and Tharp, Campbell & Charles. Miles notes that an anchor and hawser carried on the *Good Hope*

⁸¹ Reid was the manager of Grange estate.

were useful in helping the *Neptune* which had got on shore on her passage from Jamaica to Bristol. There are some more references to bills of exchange. Miles wants the mortgage on Rockspring estate to help pay off his debts in Jamaica. He is alarmed at Tharp's account of Knowles' properties. He does not want Mr. Adlam to act for him in Jamaica any longer; he has appointed John Taylor in his place. Miles refers to sales of 40 hogsheads of sugar from the *Martha Brae* (net proceeds £818 0s. 10d.) and to 7 casks of copper from the *Good Hope* (net proceeds £100 8s. 6d). He includes an invoice and bill of lading for sundries on the *Good Hope* amounting to £546 19s. 6d.

54. 26 FEBRUARY 1789

Miles has paid off the annuitants on Prosper estate and has taken individual assignments from them. He considers that Tharp should be refunded any outstanding money on the account of this estate. He writes about Tharp's sons, John and Tom. Miles hoped to send the *Good Hope* to Jamaica, but the vessel got on shore at Kingroad which detained her for nearly a month. Miles thanks Tharp for help in securing payment from Dr. Gibbes on Blower estate. He comments on the quality of Tharp's sugar:

I dont think refining your sugars will answer. Give the sugar you make a stronger body than it has had for some time, and you will soon reap benefit from it. I sent you out a cask of lime the chippings of the marble blocks which Sir James Laroache⁸² has used for some years past on an estate in Antigua. That has been the finest sugar that has been imported to this market for several years. Its as white as white salt and the grain almost as large & firm, which he attributes to the lime.

Miles comments further on the need to temper sugar with lime. He is pleased that Tharp has recovered from gout and recommends various liquors to aid Tharp's constitution. Miles writes about Cocoon estate. He has received a bill of exchange which he will credit to Tharp, Campbell & Charles. He notes that the *Martha Braef* arrived safely at Jamaica. He comments on the idleness of Tharp's son, John, while the latter is in England. The sale of Chambers' properties has been carried out by a lawyer in Spanish Town for £78,200. Miles states that his purse has been drained by the long-drawn-out business dealings with Chambers' estates. Miles will leave many of the practical arrangements for his newly

⁸² Member of the Bristol Common Council, 1764–1804; M.P. for Bodmin, 1768–1780; created baronet, 1776; Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers, 1782; died 1804. Beavan, *Bristol Lists: Municipal & Miscellaneous*, p.300.

acquired Jamaican estates to Tharp and Mr. Taylor. Miles refers to bonds intended to lessen his debt on Grange estate. He agrees with Tharp that 'negroes of the Country are much more advantageous than new negroes, but the purse strings has been open so long there is nothing left to pay for an addition of 200 negroes wanted for those estates late Chambers's.' He also states that he is 'firmly persuaded the annuitants on Chambers' property has not cost less than 20 p cent from the day it was granted.' Miles hopes that affairs on Deans Valley estate will turn out well and that Tharp is not seriously thinking of leaving Jamaica for England.

55. *N.D.*

There are brief references to financial matters in Jamaica. Miles states that he will credit some sales of logwood to Benjamin Blake. He includes various accounts with this letter. On 30 April 1787 the Potosi estate owed him £497 0s. 7d. and John Tharp & Alexander Campbell owed him £25,755 19s 3d. On 30 May 1787 Tharp, Campbell & Charles owed him £25,930 8s. 5d. Miles notes that the net proceeds of 120 hogsheads of sugar plus 3 hogsheads and 3 tierces of old copper from the *Martha Brae* were £2,579 6s. 3d. Tharp also owes Miles £4,165 19s. 10d. in a new account made up to 30 May 1787. Miles mentions several of Tharp's bonds.