merce. There is not often an extent of ten miles of beach without its canoe landing and small or large trade towns established, specially for the purpose of exchange of commodities with merchant vessels. In many places the trade is very inconsiderable, not being sufficient to induce the master of a trading vessel to clew up and anchor; in others of an equally unpromising appearance, the whole cargo of a vessel may in the time of an ordinary voyage be exchanged for African produce. In the large rivers many vessels of from two to four hundred tons are continually to be seen engaged in traffic.

The principal articles of export in former years were gums, wax, malagratta pepper, hides, ivory and gold. All these articles are now of secondary importance to dye-woods and palm oil. The latter article when used barely for the manufacture of soap and in woollen factories, has found a ready and permanent market both in Europe and America. But of late, experiments have been made by which the stearine is separated from the ealine, both of which products being in great demand, it may reasonably be supposed that any amount of the article will always find a ready market at a fair profit. The production of this article is greatly on the increase, and no probable limits can be fixed as to the extent to which it can be furnished. In small towns where I could ten years since only purchase a few gallons in calabashes for the use of my crews, it is now obtained in puncheons for exportation. In fact the whole palm oil trade of the windward coast has been formed within the last twelve years, and now thousands of puncheons are shipped annually.

The camwood is one of the most important dye-woods in the world, and we believe is mostly if not altogether obtained from Africa, and it can there be obtained to almost any extent, being, in the interior, one of the most common forest trees. The demand for it is steady and uniform both in this country and in England.

The principal articles used in trade with Africa are tobacco, rum, gunpowder, muskets, cotton goods in all varieties, silks, many articles of hardware; many also of crockery and glass ware. Beads in all their varieties, and various trinkets of small importance, and for which the demand is decreasing. The article most in demand, and that which must necessarily constitute a portion of every cargo destined for the native trade, is tobacco, and of that kind which can only be obtained in the United States. The article next in demand, and of which the amount used far exceeds that of tobacco, is the coarse, heavy cotton goods, made in imitation of many varieties of the Indian cottons. These, it is believed, can be produced at as low a price in this country as in Europe, were there sufficient encouragement offered to induce our manufacturers to engage in imitating the particular patterns required. Gunpowder and rum can also be produced here cheaper than in England. These five articles actually constitute two-thirds of the value of a cargo used in the palm oil and camwood trade. The main importance of this trade to the United States I should attribute to its affording a steady and increasing market for the above articles, two of which are important staples of the country. There is also a great demand for the various articles of American provisions at all the various settlements on the coast, (excepting the English, from which our salted provisions and fish are excluded,) and which will rapidly increase as the settlements multiply and enlarge.

No. 7. By whom and under what advantages and disadvantages is it now carried on?

I should judge that at least three-fourths of the native trade of the whole continent of Africa, excepting the Mediterranean, of which I know nothing, to be in the hands of the English. Of the remaining fourth, perhaps the

Americans have one-half, and the balance is divided between the French, Portuguese, and Dutch. The English maintain the ascendency for many reasons: in the first place, they were at one time the most extensive and successful prosecutors of the slave trade, and obtained jurisdiction over many important points of the coast at that time. Then, the goods used in the slave trade by all natives even to the present day, are mainly the production of England and her India colonies, tobacco only excepted. Consequently, upon the abolition of the slave trade, a vast extent of the coast was under English influence, and a demand existed for the products of her manufactories.

Again: England is the great central mart for all articles of commerce for the whole world, and there, more than any where else, a market may be found for all African produce. The amount of capital, too, in England seeking investment is a powerful instrument in opening new sources of commerce. But added to all these, and perhaps as powerful in its influence as all other causes combined in securing a majority of this trade to the English, is the manner in which the trade is carried on, and the general and ample protection afforded by the English Government to the African commerce. The whole trade of the African coast consists in a system of barter of commodities. Every large tooth of ivory, quintal of camwood, or cask of oils, must command in most instances a moiety of every article used in that commerce. The want of one important article of trade, as for instance a musket, tobacco, or even a cutlass or flints, will prevent the trader from making a purchase, even although he may offer four times the value of the article in question in other merchandise. From this cause, when the commerce is well established and a demand created for all articles desired in that trade, the merchant will enjoy great advantages in the complete assortment of his cargo over his less fortunate competitors.

Then there is established throughout the coast a system of credit which is exceedingly prejudicial to the vessels of all nations whose commerce is not specially protected. The native tribes on the beach are merely the factors for the people of the interior, and have no capital to trade upon; consequently the foreign trader is obliged to land his goods to be sent into the interior and exchanged for his return cargo. His whole cargo, therefore, is at the mercy of these people, and when there is no protecting power at hand they are solely governed by what they may deem their interest as to the amount which they will refund. If the merchant is an old trader, and it is supposed he will continue the business, they are anxious to secure a continuance of his custom and probably may pay him up well. But on the other hand, should it be a transient vessel, and one which it may not be supposed will visit the coast again; but a poor return will be received for the cargo landed. Now, the British Government maintains a large squadron on the coast, whose duty it is, in addition to the suppression of the slave trade, to form treaties of commerce more or less perfect with the African chiefs and head trade men, to see the conditions thereof well fulfilled, to demand satisfaction for all trespasses by the natives on the persons or property of the British subjects, and to relieve their merchant vessels in cases of wreck, pestilence, or any other disaster. This, it will readily be perceived, gives the British commercial vessels very great advantages over those of all other nations, and renders their commerce on this barbarous coast (where to the vessels of all other nations the risk is so great as to swallow up the large profits of the trade) almost as safe as in any part of the world, where it is protected by the regular custom-house laws of civilized nations.

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XII. Newspapers
A. Maryland Colonization Journal

2. June 1841 (n.s. I, 1)--May 1861 (n.s. X, 24)

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