| NAMES. | AGES. | FROM. | FOR. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sarah Caroline Johns, | 19 years | Baltimore, Md. | Monrovia. |
| Mary Johns, | 18 do. | do. | do. |
| Martha Johns, | 15 do. | do. | do. |
| William Johns, | 4 do. | do. | do. |
| Philip Johns, | 2 do. | do. | do. |

---

## THE AFRICAN SQUADRON—ASHBURTON TREATY.

### Address of Commander A. H. Foote.

At the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Colonization Society, held in Washington City on the 18th of January, 1855, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted, viz:

Whereas, The African Squadron has protected the legal commerce of the United States on the coast of that Continent—has had an essential agency towards removing the guilt of of the slave trade from the world, and has afforded countenance to the Republic of Liberia:—Therefore

*Resolved*, That no article of the Webster Ashburton Treaty, ought to be abrogated; nor the African Squadron be withdrawn or reduced, unless it be in the number of guns specified in the Treaty. But on the contrary, that said squadron, ought to be rendered more efficient, by the employment of several small steamers, as being better adapted for the suppression of the slave traffic and the protection of our legal commerce, than the mere sailing vessels now composing the squadron.

On motion of the Hon. Dudley S. Gregory, of New Jersey, seconded by President Maclean, of Princeton College, it was

*Resolved*, That the address of Commander Foote, U. S. N. on the subject of the African Squadron under the Ashburton Treaty, be published in the African Repository, Colonization Journals and other papers.

Mr. President:—Agreeably to the request of the Board of Directors, I will now express my views in reference to the recent action of the U. S. Senate on the subject of the African Squadron and the African Slave trade.

I have before me a copy of the Instructions for the Senior officer of H. B. Majesty's cruisers, on the west coast of Africa, in relation to the treaty of Washington. "By the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain and Ireland, &c."—which says:

"The Commanding officers of her majesty's ships on the African Station, will bear in mind that it is no part of their duty to capture, or visit, or in any way to interfere with vessels of the United States, *whether these vessels shall have slaves on board or not.*"

These Instructions show that, as the African slave trade has been pronounced by the United States piracy *only in a municipal sense*—not piracy by the law of Nations, *bona fide* American vessels, irrespective of their character, are considered by the British Government as well as our own, to be in no sense amenable to foreign cruisers. But how is American nationality to be ascertained: for the slaver, even if not American, can easily hoist the American Flag; and therefore, unless the vessel is boarded, our colors may be made to cover the most atrocious acts of piracy. The 8th Article of the Washington Treaty, which the committee of the Senate on foreign affairs, in their late report propose to abrogate, provides for the co-operation by joint cruising, of British and American men-of-war. When this stipulation is carried out, the American cruiser boards all vessels under American colors, which prevents the escape of the slaver even under any nationality, for if she



is not American the British cruiser captures her. If on the other hand the Treaty be abrogated, no co-operation by joint cruising between the two squadrons will take place, and British cruisers then will board vessels under the American Flag, to the detriment of our legal commerce, on suspicion of their having assumed false nationality. This practice cannot be conceded as a right. It conflicts with our doctrine of the inviolability of American vessels; and in case the vessel should prove to be by her register or sea-letter American, as her colors indicate, the foreign boarding officer may be regarded in the light of a trespasser; although, if the vessel be, as suspected, a foreigner, she becomes a prize to the British cruiser, for the United States gives no immunity to its Flag, when fraudulently used by a vessel of another nation.

The American Flag has become deeply involved in the slave traffic. Of this as you are aware, from the reports of our officers on the African and Brazil stations and from our diplomatic agents in Rio de Janeiro, there is abundant evidence in the Navy and State Departments. To correct this abuse, and with the design more effectually to suppress the slave trade, Senator Clayton, at the last session, introduced a bill denying consular *sea-letters* to American vessels when sold abroad, *provided* such vessels were bound to the coast of Africa. This wise and beneficent measure was adopted, the bill passing the Senate unanimously. It is greatly to be deplored that the same bill was not immediately taken up and passed by the House of Representatives.

It may be well here to remark in reference to *sea-letters*, that on the sale of an American vessel in a foreign port to an American citizen, the *register* of the vessel, which is her proof of her nationality, cannot be transferred with the vessel itself; but a *sea-letter*, which is merely a transcript of the register and bill of sale with the consular seal appended, is given by the Consul as a substitute for said *register* for the purpose of nationalizing the vessel.

The greatest abuse of our Flag has arisen from the facility with which these consular *sea-letters* have been obtained. More than two-thirds of the slavers on the African coast claiming American nationality, as may be found in documentary evidence, have been provided with this *sea-letter*. Or in other words, American vessels when sold abroad, have had their nationality perpetuated by this consular *sea-letter* for the express purpose of being employed in the African slave trade. And surely, when the evil arising from the issuing of this document becomes as well understood in the House, as it has been in the Senate, it may be supposed, that the bill, denying said *sea-letters* to African bound vessels, will also be passed unanimously by that body.

On the other hand, to those at all familiar with the cunning devices of the slaver, it will be manifest that in order to extirpate the slave trade, even with the powerful aid of the Clayton bill suppressing *sea-letters*, the *letter* and the *spirit* of the Washington Treaty must be carried out, and the African Squadron rendered more efficient by substituting two or three small *steamers* for the large sailing vessels. No regulation or law about *sea-letters*, on the sale and transfer of vessels, could repair the mischief that must inevitably follow the abrogation of that Treaty. For many an American merchant who has not scrupled to sell his vessel in Brazil or in the Spanish West Indies, knowing it to be designed for the slave trade, would not hesitate to evade the Clayton bill, were the Treaty abrogated, by sending his vessel fully equipped for the traffic, direct from the United States with her *register* (as in the recent case of the slavers Gray Eagle and Julia Moulton from New York) where she would engage in slaving under a *charter party*. Such instances are even now

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)

1855