From the African Repository.

PRESENT STATE OF THE SLAVE-TRADE.

In the New York Herald of the 11th ult., we have the statement and views of one who writes after "two years experience on board the Marion, in continual investigations into the legal and illegal proceedings on the west coast of Africa, and who, it may be supposed, is enabled to present the facts in relation to this traffic as nearly as they can be ascertained by the uninitiated. According to this writer, the King of Dahomey has abandoned the intention of reopening this trade, and it exists at few places in the Bight of Benin; yet (as near Cape St. Paul's, and a few other places) it might be arranged to run off cargoes of slaves, "a watchful guard is sustained upon its waters by stationed American and English war cruisers."

"The trade, therefore, is at present confined within the coast-line limits of Mayumba north, and Bahia Fonda south, embracing a cruise distance of 270 miles. The importance of other intermediate stations within this limit are comparatively trifling to that of Punta de Lenha, in Congo river, which is, unquestionably, the heart of the traffic; the pulsation, quick or slow, may be traced to the state of things there bearing on this traffic, and naturally, the principal slave stations cluster near this river, their localities depending much upon the felicity of inland communication with the Congo."

"Along this range of 'slave ground,' or any other part of the coast where the traffic has been, or may be carried on, it would be impossible to give correct distances between barracoons, or even within the range of probability, as they are not established with regularity.—Points, which at one time are favorable for shipment of cargoes, may be soon entirely deserted, as, for some cause, the facilities may be decreased or interfered with. Generally, three or four stations along the coast are the favorites during one season, and are changed again for others near by, which have become unused and unsuspected. Nor is it desirable that there should be many points for shipment, and near together, as it would enable our squadron to effect an easy blockade."

The growth of lawful commerce under the auspices of the American English, French, Dutch, and Danish, who have established factories along the coast, from Elmina to Benguela, has powerfully contributed to diminish the slave traffiic. Several American traders are represented on the coast who employ in the African trade eighteen vessels; and the writer concludes that the slave-trade must for some time to come be confined to the present limits.

"Those conspicuous as regular stations within the defined range, are Black Point, Louisa, Loango river, Landano (Malemba Bay) and Kabenda. This latter, though not a point for shipment now, unless a favorable opportunity should offer, is the most important place along the coast for landing the supercargo and his money to make the necessary arrangements, or to send the quickest notice of the slaver's arrival on the coast to Punta de Lenha. Snake's Head, thirty-three miles to the south of the Congo, is the only important station in that direction; there are several barracoons not far from that point, considered as belonging to the locality.

"It is supposable, from the detection of letters so intended, that the agents engaged in the trade on the coast are informed, by parties at the ports from which the vessel is expected to sail, of her probable departure for a calculated time of passage to the Congo river, thus giving the agents

ample opportunity for interior arrangements, with King Congo, and the collection of 'ebony.' Very often slavers, after arriving out, have to wait for some time while this is being accomplished, for the slave buyer, on the coast, would consider it too great a deduction from the profits of the trade to keep on hand cargoes for any length of time. The slaver is content to await this result and a favorable opportunity for weeks, one vessel having remained four months in the Congo, till the right moment. Vessels coming out generally make land to the southward of the Congo, to avoid the latter's powerful current, which makes to the northward, and are then determined in their farther movements by the 'look of things,' as well as by information received from those concerned in the trade, who are constantly sailing up and down the coast in light crafts, procuring intelligence of the movements of the guard ships, &c., which they communicate to these vessels and to the different slave stations, either personally or through the telegraphic system of fires, which are built at night on prominent points along the coast, and by native runners swift of foot, and other concocted signals. Thus warned, the slavers bide their time, either at Punta de Lenha, which they may have safely reached, or on the coast cruising along the intermediate stations untill the arrangements of their supercargo have been completed and the coast is clear, when they take, in an incredibly short time, from some pre-arranged locality, their cargoes of negroes.

"The class of vessels engaged in this traffic range from a schooner to a ship, the larger number, however, being barks, averaging about two-hundred and fifty tonnage; the majority of these hail from New York City.

" Contrary to the prevailing impression, these vessels are generally old and slow, having been bought up as cheap bargains for this trade, thus rendering a safe delivery of one cargo of negroes more than an equivalent for the loss of three or four such vessels. Speed is by no means the important desideratum for the successful prosecution of the business, as the light, baffling breezes and calms that so generally prevail on the west coast of Africa renders this quality of little avail while subject to them, whereas, when at sea, five or six knots answer the slavers purpose until reaching the Cuban waters, when 'luck and experience' are more relied on for a safe landing than the swiftness of their craft. A remarkable confirmation is the fact that the Marion ('one of the slowest old tubs in the navy') has overhauled every vessel she has pursued on the coast, the chase frequently affording ample time for testing the capacity of each vessel. I do not, however, wish it inferred from this that sailing ships, no matter how fast, are equal to the task of guard. They are useless for miles north of the Congo river; for the same powerful current of this river that baffles the cruiser's attempt for days, when going south, to reach its mouth, sweeps the slaver—probably at the time lying at Punta de Lenha, and telegraphed of the man-of-war's ineffectual attempt—far out to sea during the darkness of one night; whereas, to the southward of this river, and even under the most favorable circumstances, with a ship of war, dependent upon canvass alone, the chances are never equal. Steam power is therefore requisite.

"The cargoes of suspicious vessels consist principally of articles cleared by the United States Custom House, that are absolutely useless for any other purpose, on the west coast of Africa except to purchase and run off slaves. As instanced:—the New York Custom House and those of other ports give clearance for the coast to pine lumber, which is unused for any other purpose on the west coast than for laying slave decks on vessels, in consequence of its perishable nature under the influence of that climate.*

* Many thousand feet of pine lumber are annually shipped to Liberia, Gambia and Sierra Leone, for building purposes, and most of the missionary dwellings have pine frames and flooring.—*Ed. Col. Jour.*

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