

**SIX MONTHS' SERVICE IN THE
AFRICAN BLOCKADE, FROM
APRIL TO OCTOBER, 1848, IN
COMMAND OF H. M. S. BONETTA**

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Six Months' Service in the African Blockade, from April to October, 1848, in Command of H. M. S. Bonetta by F. E. Forbes

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F. E. FORBES

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H.M.S. BONETTA.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH H.M.S. Bonetta has been only six months on the coast of Africa, it must not be imagined that this Work has been composed merely from the experience of so short a service.

In order to give it a freshness, recent scenes and captures are indeed detailed, but the opinions contained in this volume, have been formed from a long series of service, viz.—of nine years in the West Indies; a voyage of four months in a slave ship (one of many captured) from Cuba to Bermuda; and another across the Atlantic to Sierra Leone, in 1838.

The Slave Trade is a vast speculation. The vast gains attending this traffic are scarcely conceivable, and, from the great number of vessels fitted for the purpose, most certain. The profitable result is pretty well calculated by the merchant;

and although it is a lottery to the people employed, he is safe enough. He fits out four, and expects to lose three vessels; if he should lose only two, he would consider himself lucky.

Captures are, therefore, really of small consequence to the Slave-merchant, and certainly of little use towards the suppression or extinction of the Trade. During twenty-six years, 103,000 slaves have been emancipated; while in the same period 1,795,000 slaves were actually landed! or rather more than over 69,000 slaves annually! (See Parliamentary Reports), and last year (notwithstanding the enormous proportion of empty vessels taken), 60,000 slaves were landed!!

On the other hand, the shipment is generally by agency, the merchant on the coast receiving bills to an enormous amount, payable only in the event of the vessel arriving in port. He is content to bear the loss should she be taken, because one cargo in six will pay him well. As a proof how much must be gained by this system, slaves were sold on the coast of Africa in 1847, for a mere song,—an old musket was considered too much,—while in the Brazils they realized 50*l.* a-piece.

So long as there is a demand there will be slavers. No native Government will declare the Trade piracy, though it be carried on as such, and even suppose they did, the Trade would only be checked, and perhaps stopped for a time, but then the price of labour in the Brazils would increase so much in consequence of the demand, that the moment the blockade was raised, hundreds would risk even a pirate's doom.

Burn and destroy wherever the merchant places his factory, and ruin must follow; but relax vigilance and his successor will re-commence.

There is only one real cure for the Slave Trade, and that is the introduction of a cheap and useful system of Trade under Government superintendance, assisted by a reduction of prices at first, but no presents. Returns for a length of time would be necessarily small, but large quantities of palm and ground-nut oil, camwood and ivory, might soon be brought into the market.

A naturally indolent people are not to be made industrious in a day or a year; but once open a market, and the whole state of society may be altered. The liberated African at Sierra Leone is a good example.