

FROM THE AFRICAN SQUADRON.

**The U. S. Navy Coast-Guarders in Africa—
Cruising Down the Coast—"Salt Horse"
and "Hard Tack"—Turkeys and Tomatoes—
Letters from Home—Hospitality—
—India Ink Artists on Shipboard—Tattoo
Statistics—What is Eaton on a Man-of-
War, &c., &c.**

*Correspondence of the New-York Times—(by brig Julia
Ford, Boston.)*

U. S. NAVAL DEPOT, PORTO PRAYA, }
Wednesday, Jan. 26, 1859. }

The African Coast-Guard Squadron, sustained at an annual cost of nearly one million of dollars, forced out of the pockets of the American people by the Ashburton Treaty of 1842, have their rendezvous at this Island of St. Jago, one of the group of the Cape de Verdes. Three of the cruisers are now here—the flagship, the ever-moving *Dale*, and the *Marion*. The *Vincennes* is expected next month. What is called a "cruise down the coast" involves a long and tedious voyage of six or seven thousand miles there and back, interspersed with calms, baffling winds, hurricanes, and diminished rations. Destitute as Porto Praya is of society—the population being all negro, with some few nice exceptions, of white Portuguese—when a ship has reached the southern limit of her cruise a Loando, or Little Fish Bay, in 15° south of the line, all hearts on board are turned hopefully towards this island as the paradise of the African station. Here, 15° north of the Equator, we breathe a fresher atmosphere (though warm in January) and recuperate on turkeys and tomatoes, eggs and vegetables, rich bananas, and the most gorgeous and delicious oranges that was ever grown elsewhere. These things of the table and the appetite may appear contemptible to you who are living on shore and have them within daily reach; but we poor exiled wretches whose blood grow acrid on the "salt horse" and "hard tack" of ship life, look forward to a mouthful of fresh food with a relish that the law of compensation only permits. From the grosser to the finer—from the stomach to the heart: It is here, at Porto Praya, the exiles receive those cherished gems yecept letters and newspapers from home! that come *via* England once a month, but are frequently four months or half-a-year old before they reach the hand and heart for which they were intended.

The great point of intelligence—the exchange of opinion, and news and Navy gossip, the social rendezvous of the American officers, the centre of the coast guards—is the residence of Mr. Consul MORSE, who keeps "open house" all the year round, at which the Squadron are not only welcome, but show their appreciation by a constant enjoyment of Morse's hospitality. The "table talk" at Morse's, if served up stenographically, would be rare, rich and racy. As Consul and Naval Storekeeper in this fever-laden atmosphere, MORSE is invaluable to the United States Government. He is the only live American that has ever won *acclimation* here by literally living down annual fevers, famine and small-pox. On the whole island there is not a Yankee living, save the unconquerable MORSE. Long may he wave!

We have late advices from the African Squadron. The flag-ship *Cumberland* was to have sailed on the 25th for Goree, east from Cape de Verdes, and thence to Porto Grande. The *Marion*, Capt. BREAR—the boldest and most skilful commander in the Squadron—sails on the 27th for the Congo River direct. The *Dale*, ceaseless in her cruising, sailed on the 26th for Sierra Leone and Monrovia; expected to return to Porto Praya in early March. Lieutenants DALLAS and CAMPBELL have been detached from the *Dale* and ordered to the *Marion* on duty. Midshipman McDONALD transferred from *Marion* to *Dale*. Lieutenant WINDS, executive of the *Dale*, is to be transferred to the *Vincennes* next month. Health of the Squadron good.

Among the unconsidered trifles that float about the fore-castle of a man-of-war, one cannot help observing the *tattooed* arms, limbs and bodies of the sailors. I saw a man stretched upon the deck, with his breast all bare, and a big fellow, with no compunction, but with great energy, scarifying the flesh with five needles tied together, with the points dipped in India ink, and each wound in the skin absorbing enough of the fluid to retain a mark for life. The figure was composed of the Goddess of Liberty, the stars and stripes, a ship, &c. Some have a taste for the melancholy, and mark the arm with a *memento mori*—a tombstone and weeping-willow; others for the villainous, and adopt the gallows, with a culprit pendant. Some have double-hearts and love-arrows, and some inclose in a wreath of roses the initials of a deserted, yet hoped-for, sweetheart. Then there is the patriotic taste, with the Escutcheon of the Union, and a ship-of-war ready for a fight. It is estimated that, at least, four thousand persons in the United States Navy, annually, are tattooed, with figures costing from seventy-five cents to fifteen dollars, and showing an annual expenditure in the aggregate of *twenty thousand dollars!* A single "artist" has been known to pocket over a thousand dollars in a cruise of a frigate in these senseless India-ink prickings.

To give you an idea of the profusion of the Navy ration as issued to the enlisted men of Uncle Sam's service, we will look into the invoice of provisions just put on board a third-class sloop-of-war as a four months supply. In this brief period a crew of one hundred and thirty men are expected to consume eleven thousand pounds of biscuit, unctuated with six hundred pounds of butter, made piquant by over five hundred pounds of cheese, moistened by a half thousand pounds of tea and coffee, sweetened with twenty hundred pounds of sugar; to masticate eight thousand pounds of salt beef, and two thousand pounds of rice; to swallow six thousand pounds of fat salt pork, souped with three hundred and fifty gallons of beans, with an appetizer of a thousand pounds of pickles and two hundred gallons of vinegar; to luxuriate in a desert of one thousand pounds of dried apples and forty-four hundred pounds of flour, cooked up into a sea dish of very dyspeptic tendencies called "duff," rendered palatable by two hundred gallons of molasses. Then, for his *post prandial* smoke and quid the sailor revels in eleven hundred pounds of tobacco, put up by Mayo, of Richmond, of excellent quality—not "cigger-head" by any means. In his bath he uses WINCHESTER'S perfumed white salt water soap; and, as condiments, he has pepper and mustard to any degree of heat he may desire. Last and worst, and which should be abolished by the next Congress, is the grog, or vile whisky, to the amount of four hundred gallons, that he drinks according to law.

As to the manners and curious habits of the Africans we meet on the coast, let your readers inform themselves in Purser BRIDGE'S *Journal of an African Cruiser*, 1845. It has been our *vade mecum* in the two years cruise just completed, and I pledge you that it is an absolute daguerreotype of the mental, moral, physical, political and social condition of this western edge of a Continent so impenetrable to the white man that it must remain, as it has heretofore, an unsolved enigma to the world.