

Madeira is fertile in wine, corn, oil, sugar, and fruits; the trees are perpetually covered with blossoms; and the soil being well watered by five or six rivers, produces almost every delicious vegetable which can add to the luxury or gratification of life.

The sugar made in this island is remarkably beautiful, and naturally smells of violets. Indeed, this is said to be the first place in the west where the manufacturing of sugar was attempted, which was afterwards carried to the Brazils; and as the plantations thrived exceedingly at this last place, the canes at Madeira were mostly pulled up, and vineyards planted in their stead, which furnish those excellent wines that seem intended by Providence as a refreshment for the inhabitants of the torrid zone. Of these wines there are several sorts, and not less than 20,000 hogshheads are annually exported to different countries, particularly to the West Indies; Madeira wine not only enduring a hot climate better than any other, but being even improved by exposure to the sun, after the bung is taken out of the barrel.

The only considerable town in the island is Funchiale, which is situated at the bottom of a large bay, being fortified towards the sea with a castle and a strong battery of cannon. This is the only place where there is a possibility of landing; and even here the access is dangerous, on account of the number of large stones which cover the beach, and the violent surf that continually dashes upon them.

The town is well built, and extremely populous; being filled with the descendants of English and French Roman Catholics, as well as with native Portuguese. It is likewise a bishop's see, and the seat of the governor.

Porto Santo, the other Madeira island, lies at a small distance to the north-east of the former, in 32 degrees 30 minutes north latitude; and, though extremely fertile, is only about ten miles in circumference.

It was discovered in 1412, by two Portuguese gentlemen, on a voyage of discoveries on the coast of Africa; who, being surprized by a violent storm, were driven upon this island, to which they gave the name of Porto Santo, or the Holy Port. This island is much frequented by Indiamen, as the harbours are exceedingly good.

We must not forget to observe, that the Madeira islands are blessed with a total exemption from venomous animals; and, it is said, if any noxious reptiles are introduced, they immediately die.

Some modern geographers have ridiculously mentioned an inconsiderable barren rock as a third Madeira island.

C H A P. XVIII.

AZORES.

THE Azores, which are the only African islands at present remaining to be described, were first discovered by a merchant of Bruges, in Flanders; who, in a voyage to Lisbon, was driven hither by stress of weather, and gave them the name of the Flemish Islands.