

tain stands about a league and a half to the south-south-east of the city of Tunis, and is mostly barren and desert, except a few spots which produce barley; but it has proper places where the people place a vast number of beehives.

This country is for the most part healthy and fertile, only in the south there are many sandy and barren deserts, and there the heat is excessive; hence, though the winds which blow from the sea are very refreshing, those which proceed from these deserts are quite suffocating, especially as they mostly blow in July and August, and will continue five, six, or more days in the same corner; so that the inhabitants are obliged to water the flooring of their houses to cool them. This wind is likewise apt to blow after the winter solstice, and then, if there be any snow on the ground, which is seldom the case, it quickly thaws and disappears. The sea-winds from the north and the west-north-west, bring dry weather in summer, and rain in winter; but both the easterly and southerly winds are for the most part dry, though in most seasons they are attended with thick clouds.

Their first rains commonly fall in September, and sometimes not till October; soon after which the Arabians break the ground, sow their corn, and about three weeks after plant their beans, lentils, and chick-pease. If they have any rain in April, as they usually have, they reckon their crop secure. Their harvest commonly begins in May, or in the beginning of June. Their ploughed lands are generally so light, that a pair of oxen may easily plough an acre in a day; and the quantity of seed, whether of wheat or barley, is about two bushels and a half to an acre, which one year with another yield about tenfold, and in some districts much more. The Tunisiens are much more addicted to agriculture than their neighbours the Algerines, and are for making the most of every inch of ground.

The story they tell of Mahomet, bey of Tunis, shews the high opinion they have of agriculture. This prince having been dethroned by his subjects, applied to Ibrahim Hujah, dey of Algiers, who engaged to restore him to his throne, on condition of his discovering to him the grand secret of the philosopher's-stone, which he had the reputation of being master of; and, on his promising to fulfil this condition, he restored to him the government of Tunis. Mahomet then sent to the dey, with great pomp and ceremony, a multitude of plough-shares and mattocks; intimating to the Algerine prince, that the wealth of his country was to arise from a diligent attendance on the cultivation of the earth; and that the only philosopher's stone he could acquaint him with, was the art of converting a good crop into gold.

Eight leagues to the westward of Carvan are the ruins of Truzza, where are several vaulted chambers perpetually filled with sulphureous steams, much frequented by the Arabs for the use of sweating.

This kingdom and the rest of Barbary are very subject to earthquakes, which is easily accounted for from the great number of hot springs and sulphureous caverns, which are a proof of there being an almost inexhaustible store of nitre, sulphur, and other inflammable bodies in the earth, sufficient to cause those frequent and violent concussions. These earthquakes commonly happen after some great rains, at the end of the summer or in autumn, and will extend themselves a great way into the sea, where they have been felt when the depth of water has exceeded two hundred fathoms.

Among the natural curiosities of Tunis are several salt lakes, and a mountain of salt named Jibbel Haddessa, which is hard and solid like a stone, of a reddish or purple colour, and bitter to the taste; but being washed down the precipices by the rain and dews, becomes soft and white as snow, and loses all its bitterness. There are other mountains whose salt is of a bluish colour, and, without undergoing such accidental purifications, are very palatable.

S E C T. XXIII.

Of the principal Towns of the Kingdom of Tunis; particularly Bizerta, Tunis, Nabel the Colonia Neapolis of Ptolemy,

Susa, Cairwan, or Carvan, Media, or Mchedia, Urbi, or Tulerbo, Bayjah, or Beja, Ferranah, &c.

WE shall now describe the principal cities and towns of this part of Barbary. At the bottom of a large gulph is Bizerta, which is pleasantly situated on a canal, between an extensive lake and the sea, in thirty-seven degrees twenty minutes north latitude, two hundred and forty miles to the west of the city of Algiers, and thirty-seven miles to the north-west of Tunis. This town, which is about a mile round, is defended by several castles and batteries, the principal of which are towards the sea, from which the lake is continually receiving a brisk stream, or discharging one into it; the waters flowing into the lake when the wind is northerly, and returning back into the sea when it blows from the south. The channel between the lake and the sea was the ancient port of Hippos, which is still capable of receiving small vessels, but was once the safest and most beautiful haven on this coast; and there are still some traces of a large pier, which extended a considerable way into the sea, to break the force of the north-east winds.

The gulph of Bizerta, the Sinus Hipponensis of the ancients, is a beautiful sandy inlet, near four leagues in diameter. As the ground is low, the eye penetrates thro' delightful groves of olive trees far into the country, and the prospect is bounded by a high rocky shore. Were proper encouragement to be given to trade and industry, Bizerta might be rendered a town of great wealth, it abounding with all kind of corn, pulse, fish, fruit, oil, cotton, and many other productions.

On the side of a spacious navigable basin, formed by the Mejerdah, lies Porto Farino, which was once a considerable city, but is now greatly decayed. It is chiefly remarkable for its beautiful cotton, where the Tunisiens keep their navy.

Tunis, the Tunis of the ancients, and the capital of the kingdom, is situated in latitude thirty-six degrees twenty-six minutes, and in ten degrees fifteen minutes east longitude from London, on the western bank of the channel of Goletta, in the form of an oblong square, about a mile in length; but the whole town, with the suburbs included, does not exceed three miles in compass, though some authors have, without any foundation, given it a much larger circuit. It is not so populous as Algiers, nor are the houses so handsome and spacious. The lakes and marshes with which it is surrounded might probably render its situation less healthy, was not the moisture of the air corrected by the great quantity of mastic, myrtle, rosemary, and other aromatic plants, with which their ovens and bagnios are daily heated, and that frequently communicate a fragrance to the air. The want of sweet water is one of the greatest disadvantages under which the inhabitants labour; for the brackishness of their well-water, and the scarcity of their cisterns, oblige them to fetch a great part of what they drink from some places about a mile distant; but, except this inconvenience, no place enjoys a greater plenty of all the necessaries of life: for, besides ships continually bringing new supplies of provisions, their gardens abound with variety of fruit-trees, as palms, citrons, dates, lemons, and olives; which last grow in such abundance about a league distant round the city, that they supply not only the inhabitants but strangers with oil, and even with charcoal, that being the only wood they have to make it with.

They have their wheat chiefly from Urbs, Bugia, and other neighbouring places; and this they grind with a hand-mill; and having sifted it through a fine sieve, make of it fine cakes, and a flat kind of vermicelli; but this is only in use among the wealthy, the poor being forced to feed upon barley-meal, which they make into a kind of dumplings, and eat in oil or butter mixed with vinegar or lemon juice; but those who are very poor only stir it in water, and eat it raw, without any other preparation. However, they have plenty of honey, and fruits of all sorts pretty cheap.

Their principal streets are large and crossed by narrow lanes at proper distances, and the houses are chiefly built with stone; but are meaner than those of Algiers, they being but one story high, and flat at the top. There are
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