

years committed many cruelties, and the natives frequently retaliate by making excursions among them, or murdering all they meet with at a distance from the forts, and in the interior part of the island.

(4.) The Maldives. The Maldivia islands, so called from Male, the chief of them, which is the residence of their king, lie about four hundred miles south west of Ceylon and Cape Comorin. They extend from 4 deg. S. to 8 deg. N. latitude; and are about 600 miles in length, and upwards of 100 in the broadest part. They are said to be 1000 in number, but many of them are only large hillocks of sand, and from the barrenness of the soil, are uninhabited. The whole country is divided into 13 provinces, called Attolons, each of which contains many small islands, and is of a circular form, about 100 miles in circumference. These provinces all lie in a line, and are separated from each other by channels, four of which are navigable for large ships; but are very dangerous, on account of the amazing rocks that break the force of the sea, and raise prodigious surges. At the bottom of these channels is found a substance like white coral, which, when boiled in cocoa-water, greatly resembles sugar. The currents generally run east and west alternately six months, but the time of the change is uncertain; and sometimes they change from N. to S. The climate is exceeding sultry, this country lying near the equinoxial line on both sides: the nights, however, are tolerably cool, and produce heavy dews that are refreshing to the trees and vegetables. Their winter commences in April, and continues till October, during which they have perpetual rains, with strong easterly winds, but never any frost. The summer begins in October, and continues six months, during which time the winds are easterly, and the heat is so excessive as scarce to be borne, there not being any rain throughout that season.

In general these islands are very fertile, and produce great quantities of millet, and another grain much like it, of both which they have two harvests every year.