

BOAT ON WHICH PRINCE HENRY SAILS.

MADEIRA A. A.

The Isles of Eternal June. Where Columbus Came a-Courting—An Earthly Paradise, Almost Unknown in the United States, Except as a Refuge for Absconding Criminals.

THE truth of the old saying—that human beings are like sheep in blindly following the lead of a bell-wether—is proved anew in the fact that our wealthy countrymen, while searching the world over in quest of novelty and perfection of climate, have quite neglected these Isles of eternal June, where beauty and healthfulness are wonderfully combined. Even the guide-books have passed them by unnoticed; and one cannot "read up" to advantage on a subject about which almost nothing has been written. In the United States the most that is known of the Madeiras has been in connection with absconding cashiers and other defrauders, who find in these islands a haven of refuge where extradition cannot touch them. So it came about, long ago, that when any Howgate, Tweed, or other illustrious runaway was badly wanted, the first place searched was the ocean-highway leading to this port. To this day it is unsafe to ask questions of one's consanguinity in Madeira, and the part of discretion is to avoid allusions to the home country. There are Americans here, of means and standing, living apparently blameless lives, who dare not so much as set foot on a vessel in the harbor, for fear of arrest, for some crime committed years ago across the broad Atlantic.

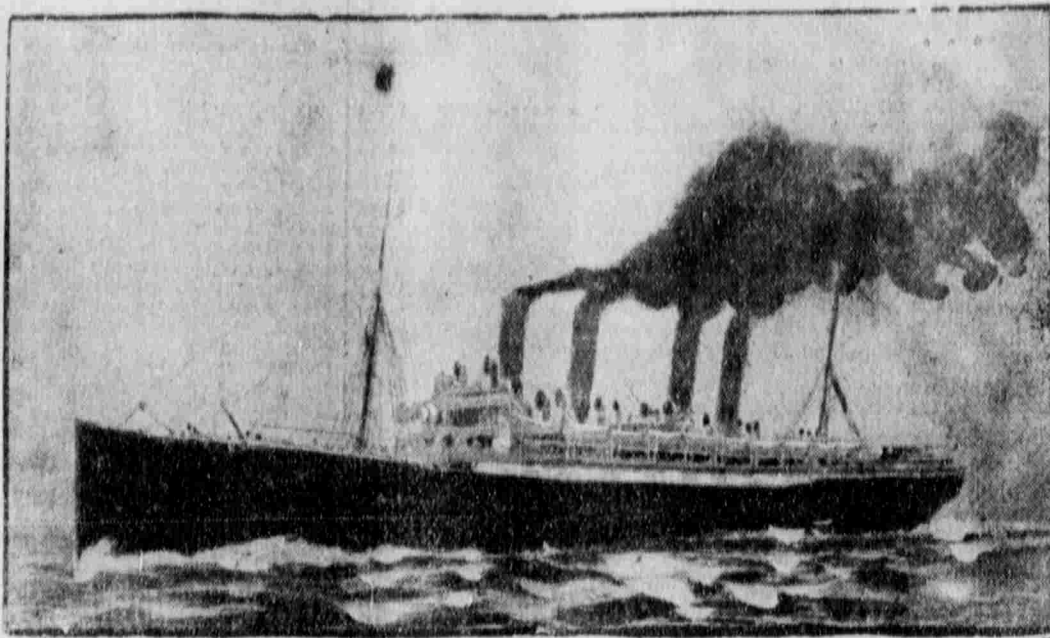
Wiser let us get our bearings well in mind. The little archipelago, of two inhabited islands and three bare rocks, lies just about midway between the Canaries and Azores—four thousand miles due east from Charleston, South Carolina, and a little more than three hundred miles from the western coast of Africa. No steamship line makes the trip direct from the United States to Madeira. The Portuguese company, Empresa Insular de Navegacao, which has offices in New York, comes nearest to it; and you may go by sailing vessel from New York or Boston in about twenty days—a trip which is particularly recommended for consumptives. It is easy enough to visit Madeira while on the Mediterranean trip, by breaking the voyage at the Azores, Gibraltar or Tangier, and transferring yourself to any local coasting line, of which there are dozens.

The main islands—which the discoverer named Madeira (the Portuguese word for a certain beautiful tree), on account of its mighty forests of that valuable timber—is approximately thirty-five miles long by twelve wide. Like its neighbors, the Azores, and Canaries, it was thrown up from the Atlantic by volcanic forces, at a comparatively recent period—perhaps when Atlantis sank out of sight, and the ancients reckoned it among the other "Isles of the Blest," wherein was Paradise. Late as Milton wrote, you remember that in "Paradise Lost" he made the sun set in Madeira—the westernmost limit of the world.

The island is of magnificent outline, covered with lofty mountains which fall abruptly into the sea at either end, presenting to shoreward a series of sheer precipices, detached rocks of fantastic shapes and rich volcanic colors. A serrated ridge, six thousand feet high—no deeply grooved and turreted that it looks like a stupendous fortress with bastions and pinnacles—extends from end to end of the island. From this backbone, so to say, other enormous ridges, set at almost regular intervals, run down to the shore on all sides, with deep valleys between them, every foot of which is richly cultivated, from the water's edge to the central peaks. The seaward line of every valley is indented, forming a small, semi-circular bay between the headlands; and around the shore of each bay a white-walled village is nestled, amid groves and gardens. Both in the valleys and on the mountain slopes the land seems to rise in natural, narrow terraces; and all the terraces are covered with the most luxuriant vegetation, the golden yellow of sugar cane, the dark green of coffee and orange groves and the abounding vineyards from which the famous wine is made—every shelf of rock and the narrow windowsills flanked out of the solid rock; and again it leaps from crag to crag on walls of masonry above the raging surf. Looking at this wonderful road from shipboard, you picture yourself that, once ashore, no time at all will be wasted before you traverse every ton of it.

Rounding Point San Lorenzo, the easternmost end of the island, the green terraces, deep valleys and sloping terraces suddenly disappear and the mountains appear to be the planned level on top to the edge of the sea, where they fall in sheer precipices thousands of feet high. No words can describe their grandeur of form and beauty of coloring—fleece clouds veiling their summits and white spray dashing far up the laval rocks which wear the color of old red sandstone, seamed with black and streaked with bright vermillion.

A few miles to the southward are the three rocky islets, known collectively as "Las Desertas," rising to the height of 3,000 feet, but so narrow that they look like a winding wall. They are prominent features in a glorious view, but extremely dangerous to mariners, being almost inaccessible by reason of lofty precipices on every side, against which surf dashes with resistless fury. Violent squalls often spring unannounced from the cliffs and many a vessel has been dashed to pieces at their base. Off the end of Chao, the northernmost islet, is a gigantic needle, 200 feet high, which so nearly resembles a ship under full sail that it has been christened "Sail Rock." Deserte Grande, the largest of the group of three, is six miles long by less than a mile wide; while Bugio, the southernmost, is even taller and narrower—nothing more than a saw-tooth ridge of rocks. Yet the Desertas are not without value, being overrun with cats, goats and rabbits, and their inaccessible cliffs the haunts of guano-making sea birds, while the archipelago, sometimes called orchilla, (a val-



uable dye-stuff much used in the cloth manufactures of England, covers the rocks from base to summit. Fishermen come over from Funchal to gather the dried fish, and the spot is a most venturesome, scale the lofty precipices to catch "shearwaters," the fluffy little birds whose plumage is so extensively used in Madeira feather-work. It is asserted that smuggling is carried on from Funchal to the Desertas, under the very noses of the customs officials sent out to Madeira from Portugal.

Porto Santo, the other inhabited island of the group, stands alone, forty miles from Point San Lorenzo, and looks in the distance like a vast, half submerged cathedral, with turrets and pinnacles rising above the water. It is a little larger than either of the Desertas—a collection of tall, disjointed crags and broken cliffs, bathed in the spray of the breakers, upon which the sunbeams play in brilliant rainbows. It is historically interesting as having been the temporary home of Columbus when he was maturing his plans for finding a shorter passage to India. It now forms a parish of the Madeira colony and has a stationary population of 16,000 or more. The lieutenant-governor resides in its only village, La Villa. The island is unproductive, with almost no water, and no wood at all, but is valuable on account of a marble quarry—a geological phenomenon which is, of course, attributed to the lost Atlantis, the alleged source of all mysteries in these islands.

Funchal, the capital of the group and only city of consequence, lies on the southern coast of Madeira. Nothing can be more beautiful than the approach to it. The so-called port is only a slight curve between two headlands, with a sea-exposure that reaches, probably, to the south pole; yet ships lie here the year round, with no hazard at all in the balmy summer time, and little in winter. Nothing so impresses the traveler with Madeira's unexampled mildness of climate as the security of this open roadstead. There is a breakwater, which terminates at Loo Rock, the singularly picturesque eminence so familiar in the geography pictures of childhood, with its citadel atop, which seems to be an integral part of the crag. There is no special landing place, and all vessels must anchor at a long way out, to be loaded and discharged by means of lighters, the latter drawn up on the beach by immense capstans called "crabs." There are vessels of all sorts in the offing, floating the flags of

many lands, among the pre-dominating being Portuguese, French and German, the bilious-looking banner of Brazil, the white hawk of sailing, bare-legged roistabouts rising higher than a man's head above the gunwale at both prow and stern, for convenience in hauling them up the steeply shelving beaches. They are gaily painted—green, blue, black, orange, with streaks of white, scarlet or purple around the top. The beach is crowded with them and there is a very Rabel among the boatmen and the army of sailing, bare-legged roistabouts required to load and launch each lighter, to say nothing of the vociferous cries of the drivers of ox-teams, come down by scores to get the cargoes; white dominating all, like a minor chord in music, is the eternal thunder of the surf.

Funchal, as seen from the sea, lies on a slope so steep that you wonder how it clings, and is rent into three divisions by gorges, whose rugged sides are nearly vertical. At the head of these ravines, immediately behind the city, three mountains rise to the height of six thousand feet, but are dimly seen through rifts in their moving canopy of clouds. A gray castle, perched high up on a projecting spur, assists the eye to realize the steepness of these precipices. One end of the beach is flanked by a splendid avenue of royal palms, leading to the governor's residence; the other by a shaded park and an old red fort, with peaked pepper-box turrets, behind which rise the cliffs known as Bazen head, and the soft, violet-tinted outlines of the nearby Desertas.

After an unusual amount of fuss with anxious custom officers, we were at last permitted to go ashore in one of the queer little boats of many colors, followed close by a rickety tub of naked youngsters clamoring for silver. You are expected to throw small coins into the water and are importuned to use silver instead of copper, because the former is more readily seen on the ocean floor. The amphibious urchins watch you with the eyes of hawks, and the instant a coin leaves your hand there is a twinkle of beads in the air as their owners dart head first to the bottom, recovering the money with unerring accuracy.

Not until he has been a day of two

ashore, does the stranger realize the profound sleepiness of Funchal. He soon learns to "walk on three legs," as does the true Madeiran—that is, he assists nature with a staff on all occasions, which is no doubt often literally a "staff of life," as it saves him many severe falls. The straight-up-and-down hill streets are paved with small round pebbles, whose natural slipperiness is increased by friction, and by the grease bags of the ox sledges, until they have become smooth as glass and treacherous as ice. The nearest approach is a wheeled vehicle in the island are the ox sleds above referred to. The drays are mere slabs of wood, perhaps eighteen inches wide, strengthened by a ring on the upper edge, drawn by oxen, guided by leather straps passed through the tips of the horns. The backs resemble our old-fashioned covered sledges, except that the runners of these are of wood alone, and a crowbar rests on the floor inside for the support of the passengers' feet, when climbing or descending the steep streets. The driver carries a bag of grease, which he lays at intervals in front of the runners. One of the characteristic cries of Funchal is the yelling of the ox drivers: "La, para ml, bor! ca, na, ca, ca! O—O—ah!" Literally translated, the somewhat ambiguous address means, "Come here to me, oh oxen! Here, here, here, here to me. Whoa!"

FANNIE B. WARD.
Funchal, Madeira, Dec. 29, 1901.
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