

**A TRIP TO THE
AZORES OR
WESTERN ISLANDS**

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A Trip to the Azores or Western Islands by Borges de F. Henriques

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BORGES DE F. HENRIQUES

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1871
A. J. Lee
1871

TRIP TO THE AZORES

OR

WESTERN ISLANDS.

BY

M. BORGES DE F. HENRIQUES.



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A TRIP TO THE AZORES.

CHAPTER I.

Departure for the Azores. — The Ocean. — Discovery of the Islands. — Speculations in regard to their probable Origin. — Formation of a Volcanic Island.

LAST summer I resolved to visit my native home — a home long unseen, but not forgotten. Eighteen years had elapsed since I strained my sorrowful eyes to watch the last glimpse of its blue-tinted mountains, gradually receding into obscurity.

Thought crowded thought, suggesting the probable changes that might have taken place during that time, and working me to a high state of excitement, in which pleasure and pain strove each for mastery. This state of feeling continued during the trip; in reality, it did not fairly subside until some days after I had reached my destination.

Having completed my arrangements, such as chartering a schooner and procuring passengers, and cargo, the vessel was unmoored from the wharf, and, with all its sails expanded to their utmost before a light breeze, glided down the harbor.

When we lost sight of the land, and found ourselves upon the broad bosom of the Atlantic, our vessel (a ninety-ton schooner) seemed to me like a cockle-shell, contrasted with those in which I had sailed before, during a period of six years of my hitherto eventful existence.

Were you ever, kind reader, tossed upon the surging billows of the restless ocean, the blue canopy of heaven seeming to form a part of the fathomless waters beneath you? Did you not contemplate with awe, and a feeling of your own nothingness, that no less wonderful than mighty work of the Creator, — that boundless deep in whose bosom are hidden, not only all the known animalcula and monsters, but those unknown mysteries, which will remain unrevealed to man until the great day when the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll? It is the element, the prairie, the field, the only home of the true-hearted, generous, and gallant sailor. What a source of happiness and misery, of sprightliness and dejection, of joy and sorrow, of hope and despair, of ambition and disappointment!

The sailor—Ocean's true child—is never really happy but whilst rocking upon the heaving bosom of the mighty deep; his joy is boundless when he looks up to the light and airy symmetry of the spars and well-filled sails of his ship, and his heart throbs with pride as he contemplates her, proudly cutting her way through the waves; she bears him on farther and farther, from dear and near friends, towards some distant port, which, to his imagination, seems like the far-off peasant's cottage, whose flickering light cheers the poor benighted traveller on his weary way. His hopes are buoyant as he contemplates the beautifully blue sky, well studded with bright planets and myriads of twinkling stars, and the few objects around him rendered visible by the mellow light of the moon, and his mind wanders to some future, and perhaps indefinable prospect; his ambition taking heart at the possible realization of some long-cherished hope.

But I am wandering from my subject. Twelve days elapsed,—days of inquietude and mental anxiety,—and then my heart throbbed with joy at the sight of my childhood's home!

It was not until the next day, however, that I landed, and embraced those of my dearest and nearest friends whom the chill hand of death had not yet touched, but whom the long years of my sep-

eration from them had so changed, that my first pleasurable emotions were speedily overshadowed by a sadness that with difficulty I could overcome.

I will, for the nonce, suspend my personal narrative, to give a description of the Azores, as an archipelago; and then resume, beginning with the day when we arrived at the islands.

During the fifteenth century, that interesting period in the world's history when the then civilized nations were being successively electrified by the discoveries of those mighty spirits who wandered over the ocean, hither and thither, in quest of unknown lands to endow their sovereigns with, and, as it were, to place richer and rarer pearls upon their diadems, as well as to cover themselves with that imperishable glory that still encircles their names,—during that epoch it was that Gonçalo Velho Cabral, in one of his voyages of discovery, in 1431, fell in with the Formigas, or Ants, a collection of eight bare rocks, the highest sixty feet, and one of them, at a distance, bearing a marked resemblance to a vessel under sail. Upon these rocks the Atlantic spends its unbridled fury without avail, for they have withstood it centuries, and will still withstand it, the great Ruler alone knows how much longer.

It is a fact, although surprising to us now, that a

year elapsed before Cabral discovered the contiguous island of St. Mary, only fifteen miles to the north-east of Formigas. Some writers state that eight years after Cabral's discovery of St. Mary, that is, in 1439, Vanderberg, a Flemish merchant, of Bruges, driven to that vicinity by a storm, during a voyage from Flanders to Lisbon, discovered some of the other islands. But, be that as it may, Cabral has the undoubted right to the credit of discovering most of the islands bearing the name of *Azores*.

The large numbers of *açores*, a species of hawk, found upon these islands when discovered, gave their name to this archipelago, which is now commonly known as the Western Islands; and the English, to supply the soft sound of the ç, have substituted the z, and made it Azores instead of Açores.

These islands are nine in number: St. Michael and St. Mary to the southward; Fayal, Pico, St. George, Graciosa, and Terceira, in the centre; and Flores and Corvo to the northward,—three clusters, forming one group, extending nearly two hundred and eighty-eight miles from the north-west to the south-east.

The discovery of the various archipelagos in the Atlantic Ocean, about the middle of the fifteenth century, gave rise to a number of hypotheses advanced by philosophers and geologists of that age.

From these we may gather the following three theories: First, that there was reason to suppose the Azores, Canaries, and Cape Verde Islands were the highest summits of a range, or ranges, of submarine mountains, encircling the globe from north to south; Second, that these islands were the fragments of the fabulous Atlantis, described by Plato; and, Third, that as vestiges of submarine volcanic eruptions were met with in nearly all of them, there was reason to believe they owed their origin to volcanic agents.

I unhesitatingly follow the first theory; though Plato's description of the Atlantis, after being divested of its pagan fictions, has but little of the incredible in it; and it is not only probable, but possible too, that such a continent did exist, and was destroyed by those agencies he mentions, leaving the archipelagos already mentioned as mementos of their overwhelming powers; for in many of the islands, but particularly in Flores, there are vestiges clearly indicating that formerly, as well as lately, parts of the island have sunk, or rather fallen away and disappeared in the sea. In the summer of 1847, for instance, a tract of land a mile long, several fathoms wide, and some seven hundred feet high, fell into the sea, and formed a sort of islet near the shore, leaving a passage for fishing-boats between it and the main land. The effect of such a heavy