

cate conical hills, and the horizon is bounded by an irregular chain of more lofty mountains. The scene, as beheld through the hazy atmosphere of this climate, is one of great interest; if, indeed, a person, fresh from sea, and who has just walked, for the first time, in a grove of cocoanut trees, can be a judge of anything but his own happiness. The island would generally be considered as very uninteresting; but to any one accustomed only to an English landscape, the novel aspect of an utterly sterile land possesses a grandeur which more vegetation might spoil. A single green leaf can scarcely be discovered over wide tracts of the lava plains; yet flocks of goats, together with a few cows, contrive to exist. It rains very seldom, but during a short portion of the year heavy torrents fall, and immediately afterward a light vegetation springs out of every crevice. This soon withers; and upon such naturally formed hay the animals live. It had not now rained for an entire year. When the island was discovered, the immediate neighborhood of Porto Praya was clothed with trees,<sup>1</sup> the reckless destruction of which has caused here, as at St. Helena, and at some of the Canary Islands, almost entire sterility. The broad, flat-bottomed valleys, many of which serve during a few days only in the season as watercourses, are clothed with thickets of leafless bushes. Few living creatures inhabit these valleys. The commonest bird is a kingfisher (*Dacelo Iagoensis*), which tamely sits on the branches of the castor-oil plant, and thence darts on grasshoppers and lizards. It is brightly colored, but not so beautiful as the European species: in its flight, manners, and place of habitation, which is generally in the driest valley, there is also a wide difference.

One day two of the officers and myself rode to Ribeira Grande, a village a few miles eastward of Porto Praya. Until we reached the valley of St. Martin, the country presented its usual dull brown appearance; but here, a very small rill

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<sup>1</sup> I state this on the authority of Dr. E. Dieffenbach, in his German translation of the first edition of this Journal.