

At night, there was a general illumination of the churches, and the constant ringing of the bells added much to the excitement of many on board, and told us we had reached foreign shores.

The first appearance of Madeira did not come up to the idea we had formed of its beauties from the glowing description of travellers. It exhibited nothing to the distant view but a bare and broken rock, of huge dimensions, which, though grand and imposing, is peculiarly dark and gloomy, and it was not until we had made our way close under the land, that we could discover the green patches which are every where scattered over its dark red soil, even to the tops of the highest peaks.

The mountain verdure was afterwards discovered to be owing to groves of heath and broom, which grow to an extraordinary height, aspiring to the stature of forest trees. In addition to these groves, the terraced acclivities, covered with a luxuriant tropical vegetation, change on a closer approach its distant barren aspect into one of extreme beauty and fertility.

The most striking peculiarity in the mountain scenery, is the jagged outline of the ridge, the rudely shaped towers and sharp pyramids of rock, which appear elevated on the tops and sides of the highest peaks as well as on the lower elevations, and the deep precipitous gorges, which cut through the highest mountains almost to their very base.

The shores of the island are mostly lofty cliffs, occasionally facing the water with a perpendicular front one or two thousand feet in height. The cliffs are interrupted by a few small bays, where a richly cultivated valley approaches the water between abrupt precipices, or surrounded by an amphitheatre of rugged hills. These narrow bays are the sites of the villages of Madeira.

As we sailed along from its western end, we occasionally saw, in these quiet and peaceful situations, small white-walled villages, each with its little church at the outlet of the gorges. We were particularly struck with that of the Camera de Lobos, a few miles to the westward of Santa Cruz hill. This is the largest, and is the most interesting of any, from its having been the first point settled by Europeans. The high precipices were new to us Americans: so different from what we are accustomed to in the United States. The scene was still more striking, and our attention was more forcibly arrested, when passing under cliffs of some sixteen hundred feet above us. We were so near them that the sound of the surf was distinctly heard. The whole effect of the view was much heightened by a glowing sunset in one of the finest climates in the world.

Off the eastern cape of the island, many isolated rocks were seen