

GEOGRAPHY.

An account of the possessions which the French republic has acquired, by the treaty of Campo Formio, on the coast of Albania, and in the Ionian Seas.

The late Venetian settlements, from the entry of the Greek Archipelago to the Aegean sea, now ceded to France, consist of some ports and roads on the coast of Albania, or the ancient Epirus, and several islands from Corfu to Creigo.

COAST OF ALBANIA.

The principal ports and roads now possessed by the French, in Albania, are Butrinto, Commonizza, Parga, Preveza, and Vonizza.—We shall notice them in this order.

BUTRINTO.

This is the ancient Buthrotum, and is said to have been built by Helen and Andromache, on the plan of Troy. Racine lays the scene of his tragedy of Andromache here. The town and port have fallen into decay. It was formerly the diocese of the Suffragan of Yanina, & was also the residence of the Pacha. A few fisher and sea-faring people are the only inhabitants of the town. The harbour cannot admit vessels of burthen.—Virgil makes Aeneas visit this town in his way from Italy to Troy.—See Aen. lib. 3. v. 295.

COMMONIZZA.

This is a town three leagues to the south of Butrinto. The harbour is safe, but can only receive small vessels. The town is thinly inhabited, and its trade is of very little importance.

PARGA.

Is situated four leagues to the south of Commonizza. It has a fine and commodious harbor, capable of containing a number of large vessels.

Properly speaking, this town is merely a fortress built on a promontory of the coast. It contains about 500 families, partly Greeks and partly Albanians, who live according to the manner of their respective nations.

The inhabitants of Parga are very brave, strong, and active. They have besides the reputation of integrity. They are given to navigation, & live upon the produce of their commerce with the neighbouring islands.

The small territory which belongs to this town, produces good tobacco, and in a sufficient quantity to be exported. It also produces corn, but only what serves the inhabitants.

PREVEZA.

Is said to be built on the ruins of Nicopolis, which Augustus founded after the battle of Actium, in memory of his victory over Anthony.

This town stands at the mouth of the large Gulph of Larta, the entry to which is unfortunate by strait and shallow. Frigates cannot enter it. The harbor is excellent; and a considerable number of vessels come to it, and take in cargoes of oil and corn, &c. which are brought from the interior of the country.

There is no fortress here; the Turks would never permit the Venetians to erect one.

The territory of Preveza extends only half a league from the town, but it is exceedingly fertile. The town is surrounded with walls, its population amounts to about 10 or 12,000. The Venetians keep only 100 troops here; but the bravery of the people make up for the weakness of the garrison.—When united with the inhabitants of some of the Greek villages in the neighbourhood, they are able to repel the attacks of the Albanians, as desperate a kind of people as any in the world.

Fishing is the principal employment of the Prevezians, and they sell the produce of their labor in the neighboring islands. The Gulph abounds in all kinds of fish. The Louro, a river of considerable size, falls into it at Preveza, and facilitate the descent of great quantities of timber for ship building, that comes from the forests of the Pacha of Yanina.

VONNIZZA.

Is also situated on the Gulph of Larta and inhabited by Greeks, who were for-

merly subject to Venice. It has a Castle, which was the residence of a Proveditor, whose jurisdiction extended to all the Venetian settlements in Albania.

The territory of Vonizza is very small; it terminates at Xeromero, a part of Albania, inhabited by Greeks. It produces only what is barely sufficient for the maintenance of the inhabitants, who still depend much upon fishing. There are 250 houses in Vonizza, the population may therefore be estimated at about 1000 persons.

ISLANDS.

The islands at Corfu, Paros, Antiparos, Saint Maura, Cephalonia, Little Cephalonia, Zante and Creigo.

CORFOU.

This island was known to the ancients successively under the names of Drepane, Scheria, Phœcia and Corcyra. The shipwreck of Ulysses, and the gardens of Alcimus, have rendered it famous in the poetry of antiquity. The ancient inhabitants, called Phœaces, were so luxurious and dissolute a people, that a glutton was stigmatized by the epithet of Phœax. A colony from Colchis was settled in this island 1349 years before the Christian era. The celebrated Peloponnesian war, which lasted 27 years, commenced in a quarrel between the Corinthians and the people of this island, under the name of the Corcyrean war.

Corfu is the key of the Adriatic.—It has a strong fortress, which has several times withstood the vast force of the Ottoman empire.—The island is ten leagues long, and four broad.—It has no rivers, but abound in torrents and springs. The population is near 40,000. There are only two towns on the island, Corfu and Cassiope, the Cassiopea of the ancients; there are, however, a number of villages.

Corfu was the residence of the Proveditor of the Venetian islands. The town is surrounded by good fortifications, which have been constructed at a considerable expence by the Venetians, since their peace with the Turks in 1717.

The channel, which divides the island from the main land affords every where good anchoring ground. It requires a strong north wind to fail thro' the northern passage, because the river of Butrinto occasions an opposite current in that quarter.

The harbor of Corfu lies towards the middle of the channel. It is spacious and safe, and capable of admitting ships of the largest size. There is a small island in the road, which serves for a Lazaretto: it is under the cannon of the town; and the vessels which perform quarantine lie in a well sheltered creek between the island and the road.

Next to Candia, Corfu is the most productive, in oil, of any of the Greek islands. Before the French conquest, no oil was allowed to be sold to foreigners, the proprietors being obliged to send it all to Venice.

The wine made here is good but the other liquors are of an ordinary quality. Cotton and silk are raised in sufficient quantities for clothing the inhabitants. As to corn, it only produces as much as serves the people three months of the year. Their wants are supplied from Larta, the Albania of the Levant.

The French have restored to the island its celebrated appellation of Broyra, & mean to revive the classic names of all the Venetian possessions which have fallen into their hands.

PAROS AND ANTIPAROS.

Are two little islands, situated between Corfu and Parga; the first is about two leagues long, and half a league broad; the last is not so large. They are inhabited, tho' far from being fertile. There is a small fort near the town of Paros, which commands the harbour.—There are besides, two other excellent harbours, in which ships of the line may anchor. Several villages are scattered over the island, and the whole number of the houses may amount to about 600.

Oil is the principal production of these

little islands, and it is of an excellent quality. It used to be, as well as the oil of all the other islands, sent to Venice by the order of the government.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that this Paros is not the island of the same name so celebrated among the ancients for its beautiful marble; that Paros is one of the Cyclades.

SAINT MAURA.

This island was called by the ancients, Leucas, or Leucadia, on account of the whiteness of its rocks. It contains the famous promontory known by the different names of Leucate, Leucas, or Leucates, from which despairing lovers used to throw themselves into the sea. The enchanting poetress Sappho had recourse to this leap, to free herself from the violent passion she entertained for her ungrateful lover Phaon.

St. Maura is about six leagues distant from the gulph of Preveza. It is said to have been formerly joined to the continent by a narrow or Isthmus which the inhabitants cut through after the Peloponnesian war. The island is about 12 leagues in circumference, and contains between 5 and 6000 inhabitants. There are six or eight villages besides the largest one, which is considered as the chief town.

Wine is the principal production of St. Maura, which is exchanged for the corn of Albania. The inhabitants have some small vessels in their possession, with which they conduct a sort of carrying trade for the islands and neighbouring continent. Salt is one of the principal articles of their commerce.

St. Maura has a good harbour, in which large vessels may ride with the greatest safety. It has also a well fortified garrison, which is of very difficult access.

CEPHALONIA.

Called by the ancients, Cephelena, and Cephalonia, is the largest of the islands which formerly belonged to Venice.—It is 60 leagues in circumference.

Argostoli is the name of the capital, and there are a great number of villages on the island, the least of which contains fifty houses. The whole population is from 30 to 40,000. There are several harbours and roads, besides those of Argostoli and Litocourt. The largest vessels may enter the harbour of Argostoli.

The country is fertile, tho' mountainous, and produces corn, wine, and oil of excellent qualities. The Muscadine wine made here has great reputation.—The inhabitants chiefly cultivate a species of vine, the grapes of which they convert into a fine kind of currants, called by the French 'Raisins de Corinthe.' The English traders purchase annually from twelve to fifteen cargoes of this fruit.

The island also produces a plant called Agricock, bearing a sort of bean, which is excellent food for horses, mules and other domestic animals. Several cargoes of this bean are shipped for Leghorn and other ports in Italy.

The Cephalonians are fond of a seafaring life. They have about 150 trading vessels and a great number of boats. Their navigation extends to the Black Sea, in consequence of wearing Russian colours, which they have been in the practice of hoisting. Their ships will now sail under the flag of the French republic, which, doubtless, will not be less respected. These people make bold and skilful sailors, and the Russian vessels in the Mediterranean used to be almost entirely manned by the natives of this and the neighbouring islands.

This island is covered with forests, which afford excellent wood for ship building. One of these forests was exclusively the property of the Venetian government, and supplied the arsenals of Venice with masts and planks. The inhabitants were obliged to cut down the trees, and carry them to the harbor, without receiving any pay for their labor. Wishing to terminate this oppression, they set fire to the forests, a part of which was consumed. The damage however, was not great, and may be easily repaired.

LITTLE CEPHALONIA.

Is called Theaki by the modern Greeks, & is about twelve or fifteen leagues in circumference. It is near to Ithaca, now known by the name of Iotaco. It is probable that these two islands formed the kingdom of Ulysses. Penelope is supposed to have retired to this island when she endeavoured to avoid the importunities of her lovers.

Little Cephalonia contains about 12,000 inhabitants. The harbor of Theaki is ve-

ry commodious and safe, and the seamen are much esteemed for their address and courage. Some cargoes of currants are annually shipped from this port; and there is a fine kind of cheese made in the island, which is much sought for by foreign traders.

ZANTE.

Is three leagues south of Cephalonia, and not far from the Western coast of the Morea, or ancient Peloponnesus. It is about twenty leagues in circumference, and was called Zacynthus by the ancients—the name of a companion of Hercules, said to have been buried in the island.

This is a most beautiful island, and it possesses a most fertile soil. There are 50 villages besides the town Zante, and the whole population exceeds 40,000.

Its productions are oil, which formerly, in the other island, could only be sent to Venice; warrants, of which the English buy 30 or 40 ship loads each year; wine of a very fine flavor, and corn, but not enough of this article for the consumption of the inhabitants.

There is a very singular and valuable natural curiosity in this island. It is a fountain of black pitch, which is advantageously employed in caulking ships and covering their bottoms.

The country people go to the Morea in autumn, where they assist in getting in the harvest. They bring back with them a considerable quantity of corn, preferring payment for their labor in that article to money.

The cotton spun by the women of Zante is greatly valued by the Turks, though the raw materials is bro't from the Morea.

The island is subject to earthquakes every spring. The inhabitants live in harmony together; though they consist of Roman Catholic, Greeks, Mahometans, and Jews, they never have any religious disputes.

There are three harbours; one at the town of Zante; one at Kexi; and another called Skinari, opposite to Cephalonia. In the two first, vessels may lie in perfect safety both winter and summer; but the road of Skinari is not so safe: It may serve however, as an occasional resting place, and there are several villages on that part of the coast.

CERIGO.

The ancient Cythera, celebrated in the Greek and Roman theology as the place near which Venus rose out of the sea, and famous for the licentiousness of the inhabitants, and the lascivious rites performed in the temple of their favorite goddess. This island is as large as Zante. Its chief town is called Capsali, near which there is a fort and a pretty good harbour in summer. Aulenconas is the next town to Capsali in point of size, and has also a convenient summer harbor: But St. Nicholas is the only port in the island in which vessels can lie safely in the winter season.

Cerigo contains about sixty villages, besides Capsali and Aulenconas. The number of the inhabitants is about 15,000. The country is mountainous, and the soil is poor, but whatever it produces is excellent in its kind.

The principal trade of the inhabitants consists of muscadine wine and provisions which they sell to the ships that frequently put into the island, on account of its situation at the entry of the Archipelago or Aegean Sea.

Cerigo was the Botany Bay of the Venetian government. Here the patriot whose political opinions displeased the aristocracy, was doomed to suffer the same punishment as the basest of society.—Those who were thought not sufficiently criminal to merit death or the gallies were transported to this island.

We shall now terminate these particular details by some general considerations respecting these new possessions of the French Republic.

The population of the islands and settlements on the coast of Albania may be calculated at 200,000. The revenue which Venice draws from the possessions exceeded 2,000,000l. of French money. This sum was raised by a land tax, by duties on oil and currants, by farming a tax on tobacco, and by an impost upon anchorage.

The Morea furnishes the island with whatever grain is wanted for the subsistence of the inhabitants. Its exportation is permitted by firmans issued by the Grand Seigneur.

Tho' the Roman Catholic was the religion of Venice, the government allowed its Greek subjects the free exercise of