HISTORY
OF THE
PORTUGUESE IN BENGAL

CHAPTER I

THE PORTUGUESE EPIC PERIOD

Cessa tudo o que a Musa antiqua canta,
Que outro valor mais alto se alevanta.*
Camões, Lusiadas Cant. I St. iii.

Four centuries have sped since the Portuguese first drank of the waters of the Ganges. It was 1517. King Manoel, the fortunate (o venturoso), whose reign was immortalized by the discovery of the sea-route to India, was on the throne of Portugal. Queen Elizabeth was not yet born and over eighty years were yet to elapse before she was destined to sign the memorable charter which originated the East India Company. Baber had not come down from the heights of Kabul to found the Mughal Empire. The Portuguese had, however, already established the foundation of an Eastern Empire and were already pushing their power to Bengal.

* Cease, ye heavenly Muses, songs of ancient lore,
A greater star now rises on Creation’s shore.

Trans. J. C.
D. João de Silveira was the first Portuguese commander* of an expedition to come to Bengal. In 1517 he landed on the coast of Arakan whence he steered towards Chittagong staying in the Bay for a considerable portion of the year 1518. He had come to Bengal not as an itinerant foreigner like the Venetian Nicolo Conti or the Bolognese Ludovico Di Varthema. Like the ancient Megasthenes, who was perhaps the first European to behold the Ganges, Silveira came to Bengal as the envoy of a European nation—of that small nation, shot into the western corner of Europe, geographically occupying an area of barely 34,000 square miles but historically great in civic feats and martial triumphs. He belonged to that race that had scurried the Moors out of Portugal and had hotly pursued them into Africa, conquering such possessions as Ceuta, Fez, Morroco, Macau, Mozambique, Congo, and Guinea; that had even penetrated into their stronghold in Asia establishing their supremacy in such rich Eastern centres as Goa, Malacca, Ormuz, Cochin and Ceylon. The Portuguese visited Bengal when their long-cherished dreams about the creation of an Empire in the East were about to be realized. The dawn of the sixteenth century had ushered in a period of conquest as the close of the fifteenth century had witnessed the culmination of discovery. As early as 1494 Spain and Portugal, known together as Iberia to Herodotus and the Greeks, and called Hispania by the Romans, had already divided between themselves the eastern and western hemispheres.

A glance on this great movement that revolutionized an age and marked a new era in discovery and geographical expansion, revealing to man "more than half the globe"!

* Silveira commanded the first expedition to Bengal but he was not the first Portuguese to come to Bengal, as stated by modern writers. João Coelho was in Chittagong before Silveira, and many Portuguese, specially from Malacca, had come to Bengal in Moorish ships as roving traders. Besides, the Portuguese who had settled in Pipil (Orissa) in 1514 had visited Hijili (Western Bengal) about the same time.
On a July morning in the year 1415 the waters of the Tagus witnessed the departure of an esquadron of 59 galleons, 63 transports and 120 various kinds of vessels carrying 20,000 soldiers and 30,000 sailors against the Moorish stronghold of Ceuta*. On the 21st of the next month Ceuta passed into the hands of the Portuguese after a glorious and well-contested fight with the Moorish Chiefs. Overwhelmed with joy the King of Portugal knighted on the battlefield his three sons, one of whom was the renowned Prince Henry the Navigator, and the other Dom Pedro, the first foreigner to be elected Knight of the Garter. It was the first conquest, the first firm foothold on the coast of Africa. The effect of the conquest was magical. The whole nation rose as one man in a burst of enthusiasm. The spirit of discovery and conquest was kindled and Portugal dreamt of greatness at the cost of the vast, unknown lands where a legend placed a Prester John† and of a boundless sea that extended from her shores to—where?

The national sentiment would have, however, been strangled and all aspirations suffocated unless a master-hand had guided the energies of the Portuguese people. With the times arose the man. This genius was the Prince, known to immortality as Infante Henrique. Strong, daring, and determined, his one ardent desire was to rescue from the oblivious empire of the sea, lands that were unknown or else indifferently regarded by the rest of the civilized world. But the task was not easy. The current opinion was that Africa was not circumnavigable. Hipparchus had

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* Ceuta, situated on the African side of the Straits of Gibraltar, was strongly fortified and defended by the bravest portion of the Muhammadan population.

† Prester John, a semi-mythical Asiatic potentate of the Middle Ages, was supposed to be both king and priest of a Christian country between Persia and Armenia. Modern scholars identify him with Gur Khan founder of the Black Cathay Empire in the XII. century.
stated that Africa was a big continent extending to the South Pole and that there was no sea but was shut up by land. Ptolemy had adopted his opinions and the Greek geographers had mapped out about the equator of the earth an uninhabitable land which they fancied as being surrounded by a torrid zone of fiery heat, where life would be scorched by the blazing sun. The Prince, however, was convinced of the error of these views by the power of inspiration which is the gift of genius. In the twilight age of geographical knowledge he fought, with the firmness of his conviction, the geographers and the existing beliefs. He vowed to show that Africa was circumnavigable and that in all probability there existed a maritime route to India.* He found heroes equal to the task. It is difficult to say whether the people made the man or the man the people. A race Celtic in origin but mixed with Roman, Carthaginian, Gothic and lastly Semitic blood had developed into heroes and sages. When Prince Henry proposed the conquest of Ceuta the whole nation rose to the call. Even the dying queen† was foretelling days of grandeur on her death-bed, and when consoled that she would yet see Portugal emerge glorious was murmuring with lips that were soon to close for ever:—

"No......................yes, from above. My death will not, however, detain you a moment. In a week, for the feast of San Thiago......................" She had breathed her last.

It is interesting to note that in the expedition to Ceuta

* It is not certain whether Prince Henry was fully convinced of the existence of a sea-route to India, but he had hopes of reaching India by rounding the southern point of Africa.

† Queen Philippa, wife of Dom João I, and mother of Prince Henry was an English Princess being the daughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. She was so high-souled that on her death-bed she gave a sword to each of her five sons in order to wield it in defence of the country, widows, orphans and especially against infidels.
England sent some help to Portugal and encouraged a wealthy Englishman to take with him four ships laden with provisions. There had been amicable relations between England and Portugal since King João, the father of Prince Henry had signed with Richard II of England the Treaty of Windsor in 1386 and had tightened the bond of alliance by his marriage with Phillipa of Lancaster. Prince Henry the Navigator was, therefore, the nephew of Henry IV of England and great-grandson of Edward III.

The whole of Europe was so astounded at the conquest of Ceuta that Prince Henry was invited by the Pope of Rome, by the Kings of England and Castille and by the Emperor of Germany to take command of their forces on land and sea. His dreams were however different. He had bridged over the Atlantic and had united Portugal and Africa. He would not rest satisfied until the whole continent of Africa was explored and, if possible, the maritime route to India discovered. He erected an observatory and established a naval school on the promontory of Sagres in Algarve where he collected the best geographers and mathematicians. It was in this school that Columbus learnt the first principles of navigation. Absorbed in his sea-problems he discussed here the probability of the existence of new worlds and investigated the secrets of the sea and the winds. Here he built those small barques of one mast, or two in the case of long voyages, with which the first Portuguese argonauts braved the fury of the sea. It was here that for the first time the possibility of sailing round the continent of Africa and ultimately reaching India was established.

It was the time when sailing a few degrees beyond the Straits of Gibraltar was considered to be a wonderful feat. The last limit of Spanish exploration was Cape Non, (No) and as its name indicates it was thought to be impossible to double its rocky point where the winds and waves beat furiously. Prince Henry, however,
knew no impossibilities. Year after year he sent expeditions
till at last Cape Non was passed. Zarco at the head of an ex-
pedition landed about 1418 in the Island of Madeira. This
discovery was the first result of Prince Henry’s explorations.
Another expedition driven eastward by the winds discovered
Porto Santo. In 1433 Gonçalvo Velho discovered the Azores;
In 1434 Gil Eannes at last doubled Cape Bojador and
dispelled the age-long superstitious belief, that none would
return who rounded it.

However successful the Prince may have been there were not
wanting captious minds who questioned what was, barring an
empty glory, the material benefit of these discoveries. He was
too far in advance of his age and had to battle with ignorance
and blind prejudice. The geographers still ridiculed the belief
in the existence of a sea route to India. The enormous cost of
the expeditions was not worth incurring for the barren gain of
a cape or a coast land. But the Prince was inflexible and
the nation stood by him. He was conscious, however, that a
small country like Portugal could not fit out so many expedi-
tions without risking financial ruin. He was sure on the
other hand that there would finally grow up between Portugal
and the discovered lands a trade which would enrich her
beyond measure. He, thereupon, prevailed on the Pope to
concede to the crown of Portugal the perpetuity of all lands
beyond Cape Bojador including the Indies, on the ground that
he had to contend at an enormous expense against the infidels
of the African coast. The vast revenues of the Order of
Christ at first provided him with necessary resources for his
daring plans of conquest and discovery.

What the Prince anticipated was at last realized. In 1439
one of his expeditions entered Porto Cavalleiro and for the first
time brought gold and slaves to Portugal.

The Dawn of Trade

Here at last was the material advantage
of the discoveries clearly demonstrated. Gold quickened the
desire for more gold. The very same critics who had tried to convince the nation that the cost of the Prince’s expeditions was more than she could bear, laid down their pens and flocked to the Bay of Lagos. Not only in Portugal but all over Europe there was a feverish excitement to navigate under the Portuguese flag. Success followed success. One expedition explored the coast as far as Cape Blanco and another going beyond Cape Blanco discovered Arguin in 1445. Thus regions lying 300 leagues distant from the continent were revealed to the knowledge of man. The sea was dark no more.

In 1447, a new fleet was in preparation. To bring rich cargoes of merchandise, gold and slaves small boats were no longer serviceable. They now built caravels with two to four masts, weighing 50 to 150 tons. This was the type of ships which made the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries notable for a wonderful geographical expansion. The next year a fleet of these caravels entered the Gulf of Arguin and laid the foundations of the first military fortress. In 1455-56 Luigi Cadamosto, a Venetian gentleman who commanded the Navigator’s expeditions, not only discovered Cape Verde Islands but cruised along the Senegal, the Gambia and the Rio Grande. Prince Henry was not unfortunately destined to live long to see the fruit of his enterprises. Death came to claim him in 1460 amidst his plans still unfructified and maps still incomplete. He left, however, in the hearts of his people the love of discovery and conquest. The motto which graces his statue to-day—“Talent de bien faire”—is a striking testimony to his genius and his greatness.

Dom Affonso V, who was on the throne of Portugal at this time had the enterprising spirit of his uncle Prince Henry but did not possess his energy. Moreover in the latter part of his reign his attention was directed towards his war with Spain for the succession of Queen Joana to the crown of
Castille. He entrusted all the maps, which his uncle had not lived to complete, to a Venetian in the Convent of San Miguel of Murano. The completion of the new map took three years to accomplish. In this map, Cavo Di Diab (Cape of Good Hope) was distinctly laid down as the southern-most extremity of Africa and to the north-east of it, Sofala and Xangibar (Zanzibar) were correctly marked, 30 years before Dias doubled the Cape of Good Hope or Covilhão landed in Sofala from a Moorish ship. In 1461, a year after the Prince’s death Pedro de Cintra, who was entrusted by the king with two caravels, discovered Sierra Leone and went some miles southwards. Fernão Gomes, on the other side, who had bought the monopoly of trade with the African coast went for the first time two degrees south of the equinoctial line and woe to the geographers! he was not scorched by the fancied fire of the sun. A period of inactivity followed, synchronous with the war with Spain. The kingdom of Prester John was still obscure; there was not the faintest sign of the gorgeous and mysterious land of India. After half a century of voyages Portugal had only collected a little gold and a few slaves. The national sentiment was growing cold.

Dom Affonso’s son, João II, now ascended the throne and a new era dawned. He set to work with all the energy of Prince Henry but was unfortunate, however, in that he treated Columbus as a visionary when he submitted to him his schemes of a wonderful discovery.* He sent an expedition under Diogo Cão, who in 1484 went up to the Zairie and discovered Congo, sailing 200 leagues beyond. On his voyage back, Diogo Cão brought with him an ambassador of the King of Benin who requested the King of Portugal to send

* It must be said to the credit of Dom João II that he himself was ready enough to accept the proposals of Columbus, but he was overruled by his Council.
missionaries to his kingdom in order to establish there the Christian religion. He also spoke of a powerful king named Ogane, who wielded temporal as well as spiritual power over a large number of people dwelling 350 leagues in the interior of Benin. Could he be the Prester John of the legend? The description tallied. The time was opportune for the propagation of the Christian religion and for commercial expansion.

He lost no time in despatching in search of Prester John, Peres de Covilhão and Paiva Affonso whom he knew to be the fittest men as they had been in Barbary before and knew Arabic well. They started in May 1487, went to Naples, thence to Rhodes, Alexandria and Cairo. In Cairo they joined a company of Moors who were going to Aden, where they learned of the profits that could be derived from the trade with Calicut. They parted at Aden and agreed to meet again in Cairo. Paiva went to Ethiopia, Covilhão bent his way towards India. With his good knowledge of Arabic and fascinating manners he made friends with the Moorish traders he came across. In their ships he travelled to Cananor, to Calicut, to Goa, toOrmuz and even to Sofala. His object was to observe and draw a map of his travels for his king. He saw at Calicut an enormous trade of ginger, pepper, cloves and cinnamon. In Sofala he gained the valuable information that all along the west, the coast may be sailed and that not far off lay the Island of the Moon (Lua) now known as Madagascar. He immediately communicated to the King all he had seen and learned, assuring him that if he sent an expedition to sail along the coast of Sofala the vast Island of the Moon would be in his hands. He also suggested the possibility of crossing the eastern seas and reaching Calicut. He at last returned to Cairo in order to meet his friend Paiva, only to find that he had died some time before. Here ended all that Covilhão did for the Portuguese Empire. His future career was quite
singular. He went to Ethiopia and penetrating near Zeila at last reached the court of Prester John whom the Portuguese people were determined to reveal for almost a century. The legend was not wholly a myth. The discovery was memorable. Covilhão was however a changed man. He renounced the west for the luxuries and gorgeousness of the East. He did not even care to give an account of his discovery to the King. Neither did he see Portugal any more. He spent 33 years of his life in the court of Abyssinia, where he was the leading spirit. It is worthy of note that to Covilhão belongs the honour of having been the first to mark the itinerary of the voyage to India showing that the East might be reached by cruising round the south of Africa.

King João not hearing anything from Covilhão, prepared another expedition under command of the renowned navigator Bartholomeu Dias. This memorable expedition consisted only of one tender and two ships weighing 50 tons each. With the object of reaching India he sailed southwards along the route which Diogo Cão had traced and reached the bay named Dias Point. Against rough weather he persisted in a southerly direction until he reached the southern point of the Orange River. He called it Angra das Voltas or Cape of Turn. The storm increased in fury. With ragged sails and battered ships the crew were driven mercilessly along the coast. But Dias did not flinch. Suddenly the weather changed. Why was it so terribly cold? Dias guessed the position of land was some geographical landmark. With the skill of a navigator he turned in an easterly direction and then steered northwards. He had achieved a feat of far-reaching importance and he knew it not. He had rounded the Cape. He continued his course and endeavoured to ascertain where he really was. He reached a small island, where he planted a pillar with a cross on a rock which still survives. This island is known as Santa
Cruz. He hardly realized still that he was treading the land beyond the Cape where no European had yet ventured to appear. He had braved fierce winds. His crew clamoured for return. He turned west and the reality dawned upon him. He sighted the Cape and found to his surprise that he had rounded the southernmost point of Africa. He called the cape *Cabo Tormentoso*, (Stormy Cape) in memory of the tempests and high winds that assailed this vast promontory.

When Dias returned to Portugal the people were in raptures. The passage to India which haunted the dreams of Prince Henry was now within reach. Amidst the acclamation of the people, the King, buoyant with hopes of reaching India, changed the name of the Cape into *Cabo de Boa Esperança* (Cape of Good Hope.) This was the last discovery which King João II rejoiced over, before his death.

The era of navigation saw its climax in the reign of King Manoel who ascended the throne in 1495. Two years later the new monarch with Bartholomeu Dias, was occupied in presiding over ship-building works and the construction of a new fleet. This fleet consisted of only four ships of 100 to 200 tons each. Why, then, this great sensation on the shores of Belem? The King was sending Vasco da Gama to discover the sea-route to India. After attending Mass in the chapel of Santa Maria de Belem in the midst of the nobility of Portugal, da Gama sailed out from the Tagus, on the 8th of July 1497* with the fleet which was destined to lay open the gates of the mysterious East. He passed the Canaries, Cape Verde Islands, San Thiago, St. Helena, and then turned towards the Cape of Good Hope. He sailed to Mombassa, Mozambique and Melinde where there were already a handful of Portuguese. At Melinde they took a pilot and sailing northwards reached the coast of

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* This date is the one given by de Barros. Correa fixes the date on the 25th March, Osorio on the 9th July.
Calicut in August 1498.* The riddle of centuries was solved. East and West had met.

When da Gama allowed a Portuguese convict to land in Calicut a Moor from Tunis asked in Castilian “Al diablo que te doy, quien te trouxe agua?” †

The Moor, the Moor again—in Portugal itself, on the coast of Africa and now again in India. What was the reply?

“Viemos buscar Cristãos e especiarias”. ‡

Christians first and then spices. The incident shows that the object of the Portuguese discoveries was more to convert new people to Christianity than to establish commercial relations.

Portugal did not still rest satisfied. In 1500 Alvares Cabral set out with an imposing fleet from the shores of Portugal, commissioned by the King to establish commercial relations with India. He had, however, his own ideas. Steering eastwards in the Atlantic he asked himself—what lay to the west? In the northern hemisphere Columbus had discovered the Indies. Were there no Indies in the southern hemisphere? He determined to explore. The result was the discovery of Brazil.§ Within the next five years Ascension Island (1501) St. Helena (1502) and Ceylon (1505) were discovered. In 1506 Tristão da Cunha explored in the Atlantic, the Islands known by his name and in the same year the veil which covered the Island of the Moon or Madagascar was lifted. In 1507 the Malvide Islands, in 1509 Malacca and Sumatra, in

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* It is not quite correct to suppose that da Gama first landed in Calicut. He first landed in Pantalan and not in modern Calicut. As to the exact date of da Gama’s arrival there are quite a dozen different versions. De Barros and Goes give 29th August, Correa 18th September, Castanheira beginning of September.

† “May the devil take you, what brought you here”

‡ “We have come to seek Christians and spices.”

§ De Barros, Goes and Osorio state that Cabral was driven westwards by the gales ascribing the discovery of Brazil to chance. The author of the Lendas has another story. However, recent researches based on the letters written to Dom Manoel show that Cabral deliberately bent his way westwards in the Atlantic.
1512 the Moluccas and China were explored. In 1519-22 Magellan at last penetrated the portentous Pacific, landed in the Philippines and for the first time in the history of mankind sailed round the world.

The discovery of the sea-route to India! What was its meaning for the world? When the Moorish sword was hanging over the fate of Europe, the discovery struck a blow to the Moorish power in Asia checking its onward advance. It gave the deathblow to the trade of three continents that passed through the Arab gates, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf,—to this trade that had made the East proverbial for wealth and embellished the dreams of the Arabian Nights. Portugal was now no longer the discoverer. She was the conqueror. Early in the sixteenth century the entire trade of Europe, Asia and Africa was by force of arms wrested from Moorish hands by the bold Portuguese. Albuquerque that astute and far-seeing administrator, the first European after Alexander the Great to dream of an Eastern Empire and the first European who actually held sway in the East, since the Tartars had driven out the last of the Greeks from Bactria, had already achieved his memorable conquests by 1515. He had secured in safety three most important centres on the Eastern coasts: Malacca, commanding the straits through which the trade of India and China passed; Ormuz that commanded the other channel through which the traffic of the east was forced to pass on its way through Persia and thence to Europe; and Goa, on the Malabar Coast, which eventually became the Portuguese metropolis in the east where flocked the traders from Arabia, Melinde, Sofala, Cambay, Bengal, Pegu; merchants from Siam, Java, Malacca, Persia, China and even America. Every vessel that passed the Persian Gulf had to first pay the Portuguese toll at Ormuz; and even the African vessels that crossed the Red Sea paid their toll at Muscat. The
Portuguese commercial supremacy was now firmly established in the East and her flag waved triumphantly on an almost unbroken coast from Gibraltar to Abyssinia and fromOrmuz to Malacca.

In the reign of King Manoel, the reign immortalized by the discovery of the sea-route to India, factories were established in Calicut, Cananore and Cochin, (1500). The Kings of Quiloa* and Baticola were forced into submission (1502). In 1503 the first Portuguese fortress in India was erected at Cochin. Mombassa was occupied in 1505 and in the same year forts were erected at Quiloa, Angedive† and Sofala. The fortress of Socotra was captured (1506) and a settlement established there and in Ormuz. In 1510 Goa was finally conquered. Malacca (1511) and Ormuz (1515) the two keys to the main Arab channels of commerce passed into the Portuguese hands. In 1517 the Portuguese penetrating into China settled at Canton establishing factories at Shangch’wan and Ningpo. In the same year the Portuguese began to visit Bengal. A fort was erected in Ceylon, in 1518, and treaties of peace were signed with the Kings of Siam (1518) and Pegu (1515). In 1521 the Portuguese supremacy was firmly established in the Malay Archipelago and forts were erected at Pacem (Sumatra) and Ternate (Moluccas).

The reign of Dom Joao III, which followed, marked a period of the foundation of towns and the establishing of settlements. On the Coromandel coast were founded the cities of St. Thomé of Mylapore, of Negapatam and of Jafnapatam. In the Moluccas, Tidore was made tributary to the crown of Portugal.

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* Quiloa is not the same as Quilon. The former is an island off the coast of Lamzibar, and was a kingdom in Africa. The latter (Coulão of the Portuguese) was a kingdom and a city south of Cochin.
† Angedive is an island two miles off the coast of North Canara.
On the northern coast rose the Portuguese cities of Chaul Bassein and Damaon and various towns on the coast of Cambay. Forts were built in Diu and Chale. In Ceylon were raised the towns and forts of Galle, Negumbo, Baticola and Trincomali. On the coast of China was founded Macau which still belongs to Portugal.

On King Sebastião ascending the throne, the Portuguese empire in the east flourished for a time but soon after its decadence began. In the earlier part of his reign the conquered foes were pacified and Portugal was reaping the benefits of her former struggles. It seemed the new King might easily occupy the throne of the Great Mughals and the destinies of a vast empire pass in his hands. The successes were, however, the last flashes of a flickering flame, about to be extinguished. Mombassa was secured and a fort erected; more forts were raised in Mangalore, Barielore and Onore (Canara province), in Siriam (Pegu) and in Sena and Jete on the rivers of Cuama. And then the town of Hooghly was about to be founded in Bengal. The Moorish vessels were swept from the Indian Ocean while the Portuguese vessels sailed with safety in the eastern seas commanding all the principal sea-routes.

Well may Faria y Souza be stirred to ecstasy when he speaks that his country's power extended from the Cape of Good Hope to the frontiers of China embracing a coast line of not less than 12,000 miles.

The riches which the Portuguese commercial enterprises brought to the nation are inconceivable. From Japan came fleets laden with silver. China furnished gold, silks and musks. Cloves were shipped from Moluccas; spices and nutmegs from Sunda, cinnamon from Ceylon, wood from Solor, camphor from Borneo. From Bengal came rich varieties of cloth; from Pegu the finest rubies; from Masulipatam valuable diamonds;
from Manar pearls and seed-pearls. The Maldives were explored for amber; Cochin was sought for raw hides; Malabar for pepper and ginger; Canara for all sorts of provisions; Cambay for indigo and cloth. Linseed was conveyed from Chaul, incense from Casem; horses from Arabia; elephants from Jafnapatam; carpets and silks from Persia, aloes from Socotra; gold from Sofala; and ivory, ebony and amber from Mozambique. Above all vast sums of money came from the gateways of commerce—Ormuz, Goa and Malacca, and from the tributes paid by the kings under Portuguese suzerainty.

One can scarcely imagine this violent superhuman impulse which led a small nation to immortalize two centuries of discovery and conquest. To say that a fort was built in Ormuz or that Malacca and Goa were captured is easy enough. It is difficult, however, to realize what sacrifices it entailed. The East which the Portuguese found was far, far different from the East which the English and Dutch found when they sought for facilities of trade. The Portuguese had to overthrow the influence of the Moors when their avalanche was threatening to sweep through the whole of Europe and make the way easy for themselves and, incidentally so, for other European nations. They succeeded, but the nation small as it was, and is, soon exhausted itself in the attempt. When the Portuguese came to India they had not to deal with savage tribes as the Spaniards and the English found in America, but they were confronted with a civilization much older than that of Europe and with theological and philosophical speculations whose antiquity extended far beyond the times of Greek and Roman legends.

Fortunately the soul of the nation found expression in an epic—the sublime epic of Camões in which, as Montesquieu says* the poet combines the charm of the Odyssey with the magnificence of the Aeneid. Though the golden age of the Portuguese has

* Spirit of Laws (Nugent), xi, 21.
departed, the song that the poet sang still burns bright immortalizing the flame of Portuguese genius. By a strange irony of fate the Lusiadas, “that Homeric apotheosis of a great, heroic people” was voiced forth at the hour of their fall. Were Camões to add any more strophes to the Lusiadas they would constitute an elegy, not an epic.

Fallen, as is the Portuguese Empire in the East, it may be well to quote the verdict pronounced on the Portuguese by the Historians’ History of the World.*

The Verdict

“If the Portuguese had been as skilful speculators as they were intrepid sailors and distinguished warriors, Henry the Navigator, who set the example of maritime conquest, Dias, Vasco Da Gama, Cabral Albuquerque, valiant captains identified with all the glories of the Aviz dynasty, would have imitated the speculative prudence of the Dutch, their rivals. And if, when the illustrious house of Braganza opened the era of national liberties, the people had had in their heads less of poetic imagination, and more power of reason; if, courageous and adventurous as they were, they had shown themselves more positive, the French, at first, and then the English, would never have invaded their treasury, exploited their soil, and paralyzed their industries. Truly a child-like nation, satisfied with little, pursuing the ideal, economical without avarice, pure in morals, sober, generous, hospitable, the Portuguese have bred heroes in place of diplomats, poets in place of capitalists."

In the glowing picture of the heroic age of the Portuguese one cannot fail to discern the shadow of crime that followed in the wake of their triumphs; but which nation has been spotless? Portugal abused her power; but when was not abuse the curse of mankind? The Portuguese efforts for dominion in the East have been attended with much violence

and bloodshed but one cannot help gazing in wonder on the enterprise and valour of a small nation that taught the world a new geography and opened the gates of the East to the West.