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THE COLONIAL BREAK-UP OF PORTUGAL

“*The judgment of history is that France lost Canada through the policy of religious exclusiveness which her rulers pursued.*”—Cf. PARKMAN’S “*Montcalm and Wolfe,*” 333, viii.

St. Francis Xavier—Jesuits in China—Official Corruption—Military Decadence

THE regeneration of the Papacy which followed close upon the heels of the Reformation of Martin Luther was felt in the Indies no less than in America. Goa was the metropolitan city of the Portuguese East Indies, and here in 1542 landed the missionary *par excellence*, whose life has earned for him the title of Saint Francis Xavier. He was the first Jesuit in the Far East, and for so long as his spirit controlled the clerical administration, European culture, if not Christianity, spread with extraordinary rapidity. The Jesuit believed in persuasion. He was prepared to compromise, if necessary, in order to secure an intellectual ascendancy over those whom he desired ultimately to convert. In the Orient he met scholars that by no means acknowledged the superiority of the white man, save in the mere matter of brute force; and as for his religion, it presented few advantages over their own. The Jesuits recognized that if Christianity was to make progress, particularly

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among people so scholarly and tenacious as the Chinese, the ascendancy of the white man's civilization must be demonstrated. Every effort was therefore made to gain access to the rulers, to win their confidence by imparting instruction in mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences. Whether the court of China adopted Christianity to-day or to-morrow, or a hundred years hence, was of minor consideration to the Jesuit Fathers—they were preparing the ground for ultimate harvest.

In the history of Portuguese colonization the only exception to their chronic state of administrative corruption and failure is the work done by Jesuits. The very fact of their expulsion from Goa and Macao, in 1768, is evidence that they were not parties to the vicious administration. It was the excellence of Jesuit missionary work in India and China, no less than in Paraguay and Mexico, that united against this order the vindictive hatred not merely of colonial officials, but of rival orders.

Goa is now a dead city like Macao, existing because England is her neighbor and gives employment to most of her population. It had at one time thirty churches and 30,000 priests, and was a mighty seat of commerce before the British Lion had learned to swim. But from the moment that Portuguese soldiers and sailors had to fight against the white man instead of against negroes and the degenerate people of East India, Portugal commenced to go down, down, down, until even the Chinaman and the Mahratta treated it with contempt. Goa to-day is visited only out of curiosity—to see the burial place of St. Francis Xavier.

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In 1595 the merchants of Amsterdam sent their first fleet to the East Indies, and in 1600 the English East India Company established stations in Sumatra and Java. These were "merchant adventurers," and they asked of the Portuguese merely the right to trade on equal terms. But the Portuguese insisted on absolute monopoly, and so, until their possessions were reduced to a mere handful of feeble stations, they continued to waste what little money they had, in a warfare which ultimately destroyed their prestige among the natives.

In India government positions were offered for sale, plundering expeditions were organized against helpless natives, even the monasteries were called upon for contributions; but all in vain. As fast as Portugal sent forth ships, they were seized and destroyed by the enemy.

At the very beginning she produced a few strong governors like Albuquerque; but after his death the Government adopted the "Spoils" system, of allowing colonial officials only a term of three years of office. The reason for this was that the king, or the party in power, desired frequent means of rewarding political or personal friends.

It is hard to fix upon any one date more important than another in the long down-hill progress of colonial Portugal. In 1640 Goa was not able to send any ships home from sheer lack of men and money. Yet at that time there were *more priests than white inhabitants* in the colony.

Two years after the Puritans landed in Massachusetts Bay, Portugal lost Ormuz and with it the trade

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of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. She gave letters of marque to any ships which desired to embark in privateering against her enemies, but there were no takers. In her desperate straits she forbade the erection of any monasteries. Her soldiers were deserting and turning monks—driven to extremes by the Government's inability either to feed or pay them. Brass guns were stolen from her forts with such frequency that iron guns were substituted. Even for the trade between Goa and neighboring points in the East Indies, the Portuguese flag offered so little security that her merchants chartered English ships. In 1661 the most frivolous of the Stuarts did his country enormous service—unintentionally, of course—by wedding a Portuguese princess, a part of whose dowry was Bombay. At that time, this was considered as of less importance than the 2,000,000 of cruzados that went with it, for Charles always needed money and preferred one cruzado in hand to all of India that could not be hypothecated. When Charles died, his widow, Catharine of Bragança, retired to a house which is still one of the interesting features of Chelsea—now occupied by an American family. Considering that Bombay was the means of England's ultimately acquiring all of India, it would seem fitting to-day that this house be purchased and preserved as a monument for future generations.

Portugal in the Far East furnished little more of interest after this. Bombay, under English rule, at once commenced to flourish and to attract to itself new commerce.

Macao sustained herself for a time by the opium

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trade, but when England (in 1841) settled at Hong Kong, almost within sight, the principal Macao merchants moved to the British island, and those who did not, either went home or became monks. In the year 1860 the coolie trade with the United States made its head-quarters at Macao, but after the close of the American Civil War, even that little "boom" stopped; and since then all that has kept Macao alive has been a few gambling tables, in connection with a big hotel.

On the occasion of my visit the harbor of Macao had so shallowed through neglect, that the commerce of the port had sunk to what might be expected at a neglected way-station near an important market.