

### XIII

#### PORTUGAL IN AMERICA

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*“ But scarcely any man, however sagacious, would have thought it possible that a trading company (East India Company) separated from India by 15,000 miles of sea, and possessing in India only a few acres for purposes of commerce, would, in less than a hundred years, spread its empire from Cape Comorin to the eternal snow of the Himalayas; would compel Mahratta and Mahommedan to forget their mutual feuds in common subjection; would tame down even those wild races which had resisted the most powerful of the Moguls; and, having united under its laws 100,000,000 of subjects, would carry its victorious arms far to the east of the Burrampooter, and far to the west of Hydaspes, dictate terms of peace at the gates of Ava, and seat its vassal on the throne of Candahar.”*  
—MACAULAY “ Clive.”

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#### Founding of Brazil—Jesuit Missions—Criminals

**I**N 1500 a strong fleet under Cabral \* sailed from the Tagus with the intention of conquering more of India. They were forced westward, and sighted, to their great surprise, the coast of South America. According to the quaint custom of the time, a Portuguese priest delivered a long sermon to a crowd of curious natives who understood not a word, and this meant that Brazil was claimed by the Pope of Rome. Then

\* It is not known of Cabral exactly when he was born, or in what year he died; indeed little of him has come down in history save his brief but heroic period, when he annexed Brazil and made a successful voyage to the East Indies.

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a notice board was set up, announcing that temporal control was claimed by the King of Portugal. We may infer that colonization pure and simple was not wholly popular at that time, for the reason that of the whole expedition no one chose to settle here excepting two criminals condemned to penal servitude for life!

In those days geography was at best a hazy subject, and even the Pope had to make some daring guesses when he drew the line between the Eastern and Western World. It had been his intention to give the whole of the Western Continent to Spain, and he therefore named a longitude which, in the latitude of Lisbon, seemed to be equidistant between Europe and America. But the well-meaning pontiff learned too late, that the easternmost point of South America was almost on the same meridian as the Azore Islands. At that time, however, Spain's power was abundantly taxed elsewhere, and Portugal herself attached small importance to Brazil, save as a station where her ships might refresh themselves on their way to the Cape. A few years later Spain comforted herself to some extent by seizing the Philippines (1521), which were obviously within Portuguese jurisdiction. Though at that time this excited some geographical controversy, no definite conclusion was reached, because of the confusing evidence as to where they really were. Spain treated them as an annex of Mexico, in spite of the fact that the longitude of Manila is nearly that of Peking. It is no small credit to the Church that it was strong enough in that age to keep the peace between these two colonizing forces.

In the year 1530, about thirty years after its dis-

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covery, Portugal took steps to colonize Brazil. Great baronial estates were marked out, running parallel from the coast like the great *seignuries* which border the St. Lawrence River. These were called *donatarios*, and became practically little colonial kingdoms or chartered companies, whose rulers did pretty much what they chose, although nominally subject to the laws of the mother country. These tracts were given away to those who proved that they had the necessary capital. Portugal reserved to herself a certain share in the profits, but otherwise practically relieved herself of responsibility so far as the internal administration was concerned. One-fifth of all precious metals and one-tenth of the natural products of the soil were reserved to the Crown. But it is not worth while enumerating the details of the compact between the Crown and these colonial chiefs, because there was no adequate machinery for protecting the Government with respect to her part of the bargain. The governors of these great tracts, called *capitanias*, were given a free hand as regards subletting or selling to individual settlers, making internal improvements and, above all, making the natives work for the white man. It is interesting to note that this form of colonization, with all its faults, managed to introduce a certain degree of local self-government, which at that time was so rare that it gave Brazil a relative advantage of great importance. For almost two centuries—at least until 1700, when gold was discovered—Portugal allowed Brazil to go her own way, much as England neglected her New England colonies, and for the same reasons. Although Brazil is now independent, it must be recorded to the

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credit of little Portugal that it was she and not Spain who planted in the western world a colony, not only the largest in area, but the richest and, relatively speaking, the best governed. The separation from the mother country in 1828 occurred without violence, when the population of Brazil, as well as her trade, largely exceeded that of the mother country. That this was the case is due largely to the liberty which the colonists originally secured to themselves, to the agricultural nature of their occupation, to the fact that the colonists came to found a permanent home. It is fortunate for Brazil that Portugal was so weak!

Of course she passed, or perpetuated, pretty much the same laws as did Spain, regarding the exclusion of foreigners from her trade, punishment of heretics, and the other measures of intolerance which characterize those years of monopoly and bigotry. But the harshness of this legislation was enormously mitigated by the regard for pecuniary success which animated the chiefs of the great "chartered companies." None but Catholics were admitted under Portuguese law, but where a *Crown* official would have handed a questionable colonist over to the Inquisition, the agent of a *donatario* comforted himself with the reflection that the money of a heretic weighed just as much as that of a Papist. Liberty gained a still further start in Brazil from the fact that in a few of the great *donatarios* original promoters were shipwrecked, or for some other reason failed to take possession of their estates, and, consequently, communities of "squatters" formed rude republics without any reference to other law than what they made for themselves. If the rest of Spanish-

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America were not so wretched to contemplate, from the stand-point of human development, little could be said for Brazil. Of the fifteen original baronial grants, three only showed any signs of progress at the middle of the sixteenth century—at which time the total population of all Brazil, including the blacks, was only 5,000 souls, less than the number of emigrants who sometimes land in a single week in New York. The mother-country now and then showed her interest by unloading criminals there—the largest cargo, four hundred—arriving in 1549.

In 1549 arrived the first of the many Jesuits, and with them came new life into Brazil. Through their influence the colonists, who had been living rather recklessly with Indian women, were induced to marry and bring up their children in regular ways; Portuguese white girls were brought over and married to settlers; schools were established, and a check was placed upon a condition of life which in a few years would have dragged the white man down to the level of the native. From this day until 1767, when the Jesuits were expelled, they exerted a strong educational influence upon the colony, and while they were pretty generally disliked because of their opposition to slavery, yet even their enemies conceded that it was to their missions among the Indians that the white man owed the security in which he was able to work profitably. The Jesuits secured the passage of many laws regulating, if not abolishing, the enslaving of Indians, and these, though they were not strictly enforced, did much to discourage the employment of “natives” on estates. But the result was only to make slave-raiding the more

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profitable in Africa, for it is curious that the same Church which protected the natives of Brazil should have treated with indifference those of Mozambique and the Guinea Coast. Brazil, like every other American colony, was at constant war with itself over the treatment of natives. The planters unanimous on one side, a certain section of the priesthood and the home government on the other. Thanks to the indifference or connivance of Crown colonial officials, slavery had many centuries of triumph, for it is only in our day that the equality of all men before the law has been acknowledged throughout the Spanish and Portuguese world.

The study of colonies is one that cannot be made merely from books and official reports. The laws of Portugal and the letters of successive governors do not prepare the traveller for the political debauchery that oppresses Delagoa Bay, and the degenerate desuetude that characterizes Macao. Nor does Portuguese history stoop to notice the mighty trifles which in time made Brazil a strong nation.