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# RULERS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN





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by

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WITH

16 ILLUSTRATIONS

& A MAP

DUCKWORTH

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## PREFACE

**S**OME years ago a friend lent me a copy of a report, printed in the "seventies" for use at the India Office, of the main events of Portuguese history in the east as ascertained from original documents by permission of the Lisbon Government. It was the barest summary of important incidents, and far from complete at that, but its source of information was the fountain head, and its mere relation of facts not only emphasised in itself on almost every page the naval side of a very remarkable record of national exploit and endeavour, but in spite of not a few omissions set it forth in a more connected form than is to be found elsewhere in the English language, as far as I have been able to discover. Fortunately most of the omissions can be filled and much detail added from other accounts dealing with special occurrences or undertakings associated with the whole, such as the Commentaries of Albuquerque, and the writings of Correa and other contemporary Portuguese chroniclers as translated for the Hakluyt Society.

Supplemented thus it unfolds the prodigiously impressive drama of the opening stages of sea intercourse between Europe and Asia; which has an interest not only as the beginning of the contact between East and West, but as the contact of two civilisations taking their stand for more than two hundred years on different elements in dealing with each other; for nothing in the story strikes the attention more than the fact that in every important transaction of peace or war the European consciously figured as ultimate master on the water, and the Asiatic as ultimate master on the land; even if in minor incidents these rôles were sometimes reversed for the moment.

Overwhelming refutation may easily be found here of the theory occasionally advanced that sea power is an attribute of land power, and convincing proof if any is needed that it depends firstly on racial instinct for the sea. Witness, for example, Shah Abbas the Conqueror defied for long years to re-take the great island trading depot of Ormuz by half-a-dozen Portuguese caravels no bigger than modern steam trawlers; and compelled at length to attain his object by seeking

the aid of a few ships belonging to the then recently formed company of London merchants trading to the East. Or take the spectacle of the agents of this same group of English men of business bargaining with the greatest of the Great Moguls—lord of a formidable army and a population twenty times that of England—against whom, though quite powerless on the land, they held in every deal the strong card that they alone could protect his numerous subjects on the water against the attacks of other white men. Even as amongst orientals themselves the same principle may be seen in operation on a lesser scale. Because no Persian could ever learn to handle a ship, a minor tribe of Arab fishermen and seafarers inhabiting a fringe of desert shore centred on the cliff-bound sea pool of “hell-hot” Muscat, kept the coasts of the great Persian Monarchy under a condition of virtual blackmail for half-a-century till suppressed by the still stronger sea arm of Europe.

With the above material for a beginning I ventured upon the task of putting in the form of a continuous account the special history of the sequence of periods of dominion or ascendancy in the Indian Ocean held by various rival maritime States, which as far as I am aware has not been attempted before. Excepting the final chapter, the results first appeared as a series of articles in the *Mariners' Mirror*, the quarterly journal of the Society for Nautical Research, and those articles are now reproduced in their original order as the chapters of this book. In writing a description of the influence exercised by any particular factor in the making of a general page of history it is often difficult for the narrator to avoid over-estimating its importance and losing a sense of proportion from his very absorption in his subject; but I have endeavoured to guard against that by making it clear to the best of my ability throughout that sea power, however necessary in any given situation, is not an end in itself, but a means to an end, and dwelt on that point in special detail when analysing the situation in the great Anglo-French conflicts for India which form the subject of the 12th and 13th chapters.

When passing from the Portuguese era of predominance to

that of the Dutch I still relied largely on the Portuguese account, because the main outline of Indian Ocean history during the first half of the 17th century was simply the tale of the long and bitter struggle between these two nations; but as reports or descriptions of international events—whether official or otherwise—from the pens of writers who belong to the countries directly involved are rarely unbiassed, I compared the Portuguese version as far as I was able with those given in all the Dutch histories bearing on the subject in the British Museum Library. Moreover I was singularly fortunate at this point in enlisting the invaluable aid of Sir William Foster, the Historiographer at the India Office and foremost expert in the records of those regions; who, though disclaiming any qualifications for expressing an opinion on naval subjects, very kindly undertook to edit the historical substance of each chapter from the sixth to the thirteenth before printing. For his freely given assistance I take this opportunity of expressing my sincerest thanks. It has assured to the book the endorsement of the highest authority in regard to its presentation of many historical facts to which only scant reference exists in English works relating to that period.

On coming to the still later stage when Britain and France had risen to the position of chief rivals in the Indian Ocean, I have merely repeated a tale already told by most naval historians, but which could only have been omitted at the cost of making the treatment of the subject incomplete as a whole. I have set it down, however, as I see it myself; that is to say with the light thrown on it by forty years of sea service.

The spelling of eastern place-names is in the old style, to which after some deliberation I decided to adhere, as it facilitates comparison with the records, etc., on which the contents of the book are founded, should any reader desire to make it. As mentioned above, all the contents except the finishing chapter have already appeared in the pages of the *Mariners' Mirror* and therefore passed under the notice of some very competent critics on both their historic and technical sides, but no question has been raised as to their accuracy of statement except on two points. The first of these is my observation

to the effect that the voyage of Nearchus was the earliest instance of the sea transport of a large military force of which a complete and unquestionably authentic account still exists at first hand; and the second is my repetition of the statement made by many historians of the period that the restoration of Louisburg to the French after the War of the Austrian Succession was in exchange for Madras.

As regards the first of these points of controversy I am inclined on further investigation to adhere to my original remarks, because I believe that the accounts of such other and earlier military movements on a large scale as undoubtedly may have occurred have only come down to us at second or third hand, with all the tendencies to error which that inevitably introduces, whereas the log of Nearchus stands exactly as written.

In connection with the second criticism however, that is to say the point raised about Louisburg and Madras, I admit that it is true that no specific mention was made of either seaport in the actual treaty ending the war, although it does declare a general restitution of conquered territory on both sides; but many writers of authority have assumed that the British Government would never have provoked the protests of the American colonists by yielding up Louisburg unless for some obvious and tangible return; and as Madras was the only really important British possession in French hands its reversion to British ownership has been believed by these writers to have been the deciding factor in handing back Louisburg even if not actually mentioned as such in the terms of peace. I am informed however that the original letters of the Lord Sandwich, who was First Lord of the Admiralty at the period, make it clear that the real British object in giving back Louisburg was to induce the French to stop their military offensive in Europe. The view that the two seaports were exchanged is therefore only superficially correct, although so generally prevalent as to find acceptance even in some centres of historical knowledge; and this certainly affords an answer to the otherwise perplexing question as to why British oversea power should have been unequal to regaining so

weakly fortified a seaport as Madras, except by exchange, if it was capable of seizing a first-class fortress like Louisburg.

In conclusion, my thanks are due to Mr Perrin, the Admiralty librarian, for help in many ways and especially in tracing the portraits of some of the makers of Indian Ocean history included among the illustrations. The sketches of ships are made from models or pictures belonging to their several periods; except that of the "dhangi" which was mainly drawn from descriptive traditions. In regard to these I consulted Mr James Hornell, late Director of Fisheries in Madras, whose studies of types of eastern naval architecture, ancient and modern, are well known to all interested in such matters, and whose expert opinions confirmed the results of my own investigations in every material detail.

G. A. B.

CORSHAM

13th March 1927





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## The NAVIGATORS of the INDIAN OCEAN PRIOR to the ERA of EUROPEAN DOMINION

**S**PECULATION has naturally often been rife among authorities on history as to which of the many seas of the globe first carried a floating construction devised by a human brain, and not a few writers have decided in favour of the Mediterranean. But some very weighty considerations seem to point rather forcibly to a different conclusion, which would place the origin of both branches of the mariner's occupation—coasting and deep water sailing—on the surface of the third greatest of the sea areas, namely the Indian Ocean. In prehistoric ages the movements of men were chiefly associated with a search for food, and we are justified therefore in assuming that they first launched a log in salt water to catch fish. Where fish are abundant and other foodstuffs scarce or absent, there the inducements to venture afloat would be strongest; and in no part of the world except the polar zones is the contrast between the harvest of the sea and the harvest of the land so favourable to the former as on the desert shores of Arabia and Persia, facing the Indian Ocean. Here a man will rapidly starve among sand and rocks if he never quits the beach, while the water before his eyes teems with such incalculable quantities of fish that when the shoals are at play whole acres of the surface appear to be on the boil. In the Mediterranean the contrast lies all the other way. The land around is fertile for three-quarters of its extent, and the fish everywhere very much scarcer than on the coasts of southern Asia and Arabia; so that the prime temptation to push out from his native element was absent in the case of the prehistoric dweller on Mediterranean shores; and if coasting began with sea fishing, as we must suppose, all considerations would point to the Indian Ocean as the scene of its birth.

For the contention that the Indian Ocean was also the scene of the first deep-water sailing the reasons are if possible even more convincing, to a seaman at any rate; partaking as they do of a threefold nature, in which astronomy, physical geography



and meteorology all play a part. The astronomical argument derives its sanction from the fact that the ancients of the east were the earliest known stargazers; and that among the many activities of mankind on a grand scale, oceanic navigation has stood apart from all the rest from its very beginning, as the sole human occupation which is quite as much dependent on a knowledge of the celestial bodies lying at billions of miles from the earth in the immensity of space as on an acquaintance with the earth itself. By giving a correct clue to direction when no land was in sight, they made oceanic sailing possible within certain limits to those who were acquainted with their positions in the sky, even when the magnetic compass was as yet undiscovered. The peoples of the east had mapped the northern half of the heavens thousands of years before the peoples of the west had mapped the northern half of the earth; and although the second of these achievements was infinitely the higher it was only rendered possible by the success of the first. Not until men had produced a chart of the sky did they become deep water voyagers, and not until they became deep water voyagers did they produce a chart of their own habitat in the universe. And ages before the races of Europe had emerged from primitive barbarism in their cloudy climate, where the study of the stars is always comparatively difficult, the orientals knew quite enough about these permanent finger posts of nature to use them with confidence for crossing the sea. In the traces still remaining of the most ancient Chaldean cities the ruins of the observatories are on so complex a scale as to prove a high degree of acquaintance with the celestial bodies on the part of their builders. In Egypt, the angle of descent of the first section of the entrance gallery to the great pyramid, so exactly corresponds to the latitude of the spot, that *Polaris* is the only star visible on looking out at night from the interior. With all this early knowledge of the science on which oceanic travel is founded, it seems a fair deduction that the orientals were the first to apply it in entering blue water.

From the geographical standpoint the arguments in favour of the priority of the Indian Ocean over all others are quite as strong. Its configuration offered incentives to sally into deep

soundings far more than that of either the Atlantic or Pacific. These latter are oceanic thoroughfares from the northern to the southern polar circles, and divide the continental land masses on their opposite shores completely. As no land routes exist round their extremities which coasting vessels might follow, the ancients did not possess the slightest notion of what lay beyond them, or to what length of voyage any explorer might be committed who attempted to cross their unknown expanse before he found land again, if he ever found it at all. But the Indian Ocean takes the form of a gigantic bay or *cul-de-sac*, surrounded by land on three sides, with the lesser bights on its northern outline known as the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. After many centuries of coasting round the irregularities of this great circuit, the early seafarers must have arrived at a sufficient knowledge of its contour to realise that in travelling east or west voyages might be greatly shortened by cutting straight across between salient points, if they were not afraid of spending some days or weeks out of sight of land steering by the sun and stars. And with the inducement of commercial advantages to prompt them, doubtless the more enterprising traders took the risk.

And yet again, the meteorological considerations which favour the Indian Ocean theory are very strong, because the winds in its northern parts offer special facilities for deep water sailing on account of the regularity with which they alternate from precisely opposite quarters according to season. This gave the navigator an advantage to be found nowhere else except on the coasts of China, and one which exercised a decisive influence in the days when seamanship had not progressed beyond the art of sailing with a fair wind. At that early period it meant everything to the master of a ship, to be able to rely with certainty on a westerly monsoon all through the summer to carry him one way, and an easterly monsoon in the winter to carry him back. And these were not breezes of the kind that would see him a certain distance on his way and then fail him further. They would last him the whole way across the Indian Ocean if taken at the proper time.

Right in the centre of the northern side of the Indian Ocean

the great land tongue of Hindustan projects far southward into its waters; a fertile and densely populated peninsula of which many of the products have been in demand in other countries from time immemorial. Its people have never exhibited much aptitude or inclination for maritime enterprise themselves, but in ancient times, as at the present day, they were ready to barter and exchange their surplus produce on the arrival of customers from other lands who were prepared to engage in oversea commerce. A fairly regular sea intercourse sprang up gradually between India and Arabia at a remote epoch of history as a result, which was almost certainly in active operation before the reign of Solomon. Originally it followed the long roundabout of the coastline with great waste of time and labour but comparative safety and certainty of movement. By degrees however it edged out to the shorter deep water routes. It seems almost beyond a doubt that at first the only part of the voyage on which land was out of sight was the short stretch between the south-east point of Arabia and the opposite shore of Persia or Baluchistan; which would avoid the very lengthy detour of the Persian Gulf. A day or two would suffice to traverse this cut. But as the ancient pilots grew bolder with increasing hydrographic knowledge they struck out from the Arabian coast-line at points further and further to the southward, until in the process of time it became the usual practice with the larger vessels during the favourable monsoon to face the open passage all the way from somewhere near Aden, whence a run of twelve or fifteen days brought them, steering by the sun and stars, to the west coasts of Hindustan. This true deep water sailing by astronomical navigation had been a very long established custom with the Mecca merchants before any European built ship ever entered the Indian Ocean.

These Arabs however had their rivals in the Chinese approaching India from the other side. No records exist affording any information as to when the first yellow men landed there; but it must have been a matter of very ancient history, for although it is unquestionable that their visits were continued over many hundreds of years they had already come to an end before the later middle ages. No junks were found in the

Indian ports by the first Europeans to sail east, but Indian traditions extend very far back in their references to the arrival of enormous vessels of this class, which left a deep impression by their size. These ancient waggons of the sea with their bamboo spars, mat sails and eye-painted bows must have been thoroughly seaworthy and handy to make so long and risky a voyage; but this is no matter for surprise, seeing that the junks of the present day possess these qualifications in an ample degree in spite of their clumsy appearance, and differ very little from their earliest predecessors as far as traditions and ancient pictures afford any evidence.

Like the Arabs, the Chinese first found their way to India by following the shore, but encountered a more difficult problem, for the circuit of the Bay of Bengal entails some very risky pilotage from which the circuit of the Arabian Sea is free. The oceanic littorals of Arabia and Persia followed by the Arab seaman in approaching India from his side are safe and easy to skirt, being well defined and unobstructed by outlying dangers, especially the shoals formed by the deposit of alluvial rivers, which of all obstacles to coastwise traffic are the worst and in some regions of the world prevent it altogether. Such banks often extend so far to seaward that vessels striking them are lost when quite out of sight of land; and many exist in the Bay of Bengal—as a result of the outfall of several large streams—which reach out in places to a distance of thirty or forty miles. In steering clear of these formidable submerged morasses the Chinese seamen had to feel their way by sounding poles, and as the tides are strong, many must have been carried to destruction in the process. But steering by soundings was a form of pilotage with which they were quite familiar on their own coasts, and enough survived the ordeal of rounding this great bay to acquire by a process of cumulative experience a knowledge of its shape; whereby they came to realise that a cut across was possible, which with the monsoon help would shorten the voyage by quite three-fourths if they were prepared to abandon sight of land at the proper points. They shared with the Arabs the advantage of the regularly alternating winds, but with this difference that the outward bound season for the

junk was the homeward for the Red Sea dhow and *vice versa*; so that the first annual arrivals in the Indian ports from one direction coincided more or less with the first annual departures towards the other.

Gradually, however, the Mecca traders pushed their way eastward of India in their own vessels and overlapped the sphere of the Chinese, so that by the ninth and tenth centuries they had reached the Malay Archipelago; whence in time they found their way to China itself, and eventually absorbed all the carrying trade of the eastern as well as the western half of the Indian Ocean. So completely did it pass into their hands that although Chinese goods remained plentiful enough in the Indian markets when the first white men appeared there as buyers, they had all been imported in Arab bottoms; and although the actual reason for the change is obscure, it was probably connected with rapidity of conveyance. The junk is much handier than the dhow in beating to windward, but slower when running free; and in seas where all commerce swung east and west with the regularity of a pendulum according to the time of year, the faster vessel off the wind had the advantage.

In passing from mere conjecture and speculation as to the scenes of the earliest efforts at navigation to the domain of definitely recorded facts, it becomes a certainty that we must look to the eastward of the Isthmus of Suez, and not to the Mediterranean, for the track of the first salt water voyages of which authentic descriptions still exist as written history; whether carried out in connection with the business of peace or war. The oldest account of all stands cut in stone with profuse illustrations in the ruined Egyptian temple of Deir-el-Bahari, and sets forth as an official narrative the principal incidents of an expedition conducted by five vessels under orders from Queen Hatshepsu, about thirty-three centuries before our own time. It intimates among other things that the main object of the undertaking was the acquisition of a supply of myrrh, a resinous discharge from a tree so much in demand as a preservative and perfume in very ancient times as to possess an extremely high commercial value. The region from

which this was to be obtained was the land of Punt, and judging from the style of the inscription the success of the enterprise was regarded as a most notable event.

Much controversy has existed among antiquarians and scholars as to the precise locality of Punt; but all are agreed, that as myrrh-producing timber is never found far outside the tropics, it must have been in the Indian Ocean direction from Egypt and not the Mediterranean. It must have lain therefore on the coast of either Africa or Arabia, and as the trees have always been plentiful in the former while very rare in the latter, it would appear to be reasonably certain that Punt was an African country; a deduction which receives support from its other products brought back in the ships, which are all of an east African description. From this it follows that the squadron sailed the Red Sea, with certainty, and the Gulf of Aden in all probability; both of which are main extensions of the Indian Ocean. A certain school of opinion holds the belief that they went even further, and sailed the main waters of the Indian Ocean itself, right as far south as the region of the Zambesi; because they returned with gold on board which had not then been mined in East Africa further to the northward. To support this theory the argument has been used that the voyage was evidently regarded at the time as a very formidable undertaking, or it would not have been recorded in so important a position as the chief temple of the period as one of the main events of a celebrated reign.

Others however incline to the opinion that Punt was the country now known as Somaliland, the nearest African region accessible by sea from Egypt where myrrh-producing bush is abundant; a view that is strongly supported by the type of the ships composing the squadron, which were of a design quite unsuitable for a long voyage in exposed waters. As represented in the sculptures these vessels are open river craft carrying a single square sail only useful in a fair wind, and dependent otherwise on long oars or sweeps for propulsion. In general they bear a close resemblance to the larger Nile boats of their own day, shorn of much of their conventional ornamentation—which fact is suggestive of the accuracy of the artist—and as

at that period a canal connected the river with the northern end of the Red Sea, it is not impossible that they actually were Nile boats specially prepared. Craft of that description *could* undertake a coasting voyage from Egypt to Somaliland in summer, when the winds in the Red Sea prevail steadily from the northward; and return in the winter when they are variable. But it would be an enterprising bit of work for mere river boatmen; and as Egyptian seamanship was never on a par with other Egyptian scientific attainments, such a voyage might well have excited an admiration ranking it as a great achievement. Furthermore if the import of myrrh was the object of the enterprise, and if that commodity was obtained in plenty from Somaliland, it seems highly improbable that these river-barges of unscientific rig—for such the pictures show us—would have risked an unnecessary voyage in open ocean to a point 1500 miles further distant. Once to the southward of Cape Gardafui they would have found themselves on one of the most unsheltered and harbourless stretches of coast in the whole world.

Whatever evidence may be forthcoming in support of any theory as to the precise position of Punt however, it remains at least generally accepted that this ancient group of vessels navigated the western extensions of the Indian Ocean; and if further proof on that point was necessary it would be found in the sculptured representations of the fishes and other marine creatures encountered on the voyage, which are easily recognisable as among the species most common in those parts to the present day.

In addition to this association with the most ancient trading sea enterprise of which any contemporary account still exists, the Indian Ocean was also the scene of the earliest salt water voyage connected with operations of war, of which any complete description remains as a part of acceptedly authentic history; and it was the first of the true oceans to be sighted by any celebrated character whose existence such history recognises without question. It carried the flotilla commanded by Nearchus the Cretan, admiral to Alexander, and until Alexander himself stood on the Indian beach no famous figure of whom



EGYPTIAN RED SEA COASTER OF 1600 B.C.  
(From a sketch by the author, based on ancient Egyptian sculpture.)

THE EGYPTIAN RED SEA COASTER





we have any knowledge ever looked out over a true oceanic surface, although many had seen and sailed the Mediterranean. The voyages connected with the early classic wars in the Levant were of course antecedent to the time of the Macedonian conqueror, but the *Iliad* has never ranked as a reliable work on history, and no detailed account is now to be found setting forth any record of the fleet movements which led up to the great concentration at Salamis. The official description of the voyage of Nearchus stands, therefore, as the first full and authentic report now available of the transport of a fighting force on salt water, and possesses an historical value of the highest order for antiquarian, maritime and strategic reasons alike. It stands indeed as the earliest *complete* record of a long sea voyage of any kind; for whereas the actual locality towards which the "Puntward" bound expedition shaped its course will always be uncertain, the track of Nearchus can be followed on a twentieth century British Admiralty chart with ease from start to finish. From a maritime standpoint its special interest lies in the proof that even twenty-three centuries before our own time the seamen of the east were already quite familiar with the navigation of the Indian Ocean between India and Persia, and aware, that at the proper season of the year, a westbound coasting voyage between those countries was safe and feasible even for river craft.

As a most important undertaking connected with one of the greatest wars of ancient history the remarkable military interest of this voyage has perhaps never been quite fully appreciated. It was in 329 B.C., that is to say about a thousand years after the Egyptians visited Punt, that Alexander gave Nearchus instructions to make his way as best he could with a Punjaub built river flotilla from the Indus to the Euphrates, a distance of 1400 miles. The military exigencies calling for this great effort were of an imperative nature. He had reached the high-water mark of his Asiatic conquests by invading Hindustan, but at the end of the Indian hot season his troops were exhibiting such signs of overstrain and discontent that a return to Europe had become a necessity which even he could not afford to ignore. His victorious advance eastward had followed a line

of march far inland across the highlands of central Persia and Afghanistan and through the Khyber Pass, but it was impossible to return the same way in the depth of winter, especially when weighted with the spoils of conquest. Like Napoleon at Moscow, therefore, he had thrust himself into a position from which retreat had become absolutely unavoidable and yet seemed to promise nothing but disaster. Unlike Napoleon, however, he found that the sea offered some prospect of help. As far as his personal experiences went he had no acquaintance with a homeward route for any part of the way by water, or along a seaboard sufficiently flat to be followed by an army; and except as regards the Mediterranean his knowledge of maritime geography in general was of the vaguest. But he learnt in India that a comparatively direct sea route to Mesopotamia existed, and that the coast bordering this route was free from the winter rigours of the much higher inland regions, whatever obstacles it might present otherwise to the passage of a great host of men.

In the circumstances in which he found himself Alexander had no option but to try this route and take his chances. But this entailed a march of 1300 miles before reaching Mesopotamia, across unknown country, with no regular caravan roads and every prospect of great difficulties in the matter of transport. He resolved therefore to make use of his large flotilla of river boats—built in the Punjaub for his movements on the Indus—to relieve his army of its heavy impedimenta and loot, and to carry as many of his troops as would form crews from the seafaring elements in his forces; provided that it was probable that craft of this type could make the sea passage from India to the head of the Persian Gulf. From what ensued he was evidently reassured on that point, probably through the expert evidence of the Arab traders in the Indus delta; and it happened that the time of the year was exactly right for his purpose, being just before the commencement of the north-east or fair monsoon. With the wind in that quarter the land affords a shelter throughout the whole 800 miles from India to the Straits of Ormuz, and the passage can be made with comparative safety by even the smallest

vessels in spite of the absence of any enclosed harbours of refuge.

Finding that the scheme appeared feasible and promised to be of the utmost help, Alexander issued instructions to load up and man the whole fleet; and when that had been done gave Nearchus his sailing orders at the mouth of the Indus in October, which directed him to rendezvous at the mouth of the Euphrates. He then started away himself with the main body of his army on their terrible tramp of many months through the coastal deserts of Baluchistan and Persia. Being under instructions to depart at once Nearchus sailed simultaneously, only to encounter some preliminary trouble; for whatever powers conquering autocrats might exercise in regard to moving their armies, their fleets during the sailing era of navigation took their orders in part at least from the weather; as Napoleon found out more than once to his exceeding discomfort. The season of the fair monsoon was nearly but not quite due, and the wind had not yet blown itself out from the south-west. As a consequence Nearchus found that on emerging from the Indus on to open water he could make so little headway that he was forced to abandon the attempt for the time, and take shelter in the harbour now known as Karachi. There he was kept by adverse weather for a month before starting afresh in November, and thenceforward experiencing the fair winds with occasional calms proper to the season on that particular coast.

Being Macedonians and Levantines for the most part, his crews were the very first Europeans to sail the Indian Ocean, and indeed the first Europeans to sail any ocean at all of whose proceedings a description still exists. Belonging as they did to the countries bordering the Aegean and Black Sea they themselves had certainly never been afloat on an oceanic surface before, and found the experience a test of fortitude. From a weather standpoint the risks were no worse than those of their own home waters, where the winter gales are violent. But as natives of the coasts of a tideless sea the tidal phenomena of an ocean came to them as an alarming surprise when the ebb stream left the whole flotilla for several hours high and dry on

the mud at the Indus mouth. And, as the greater forms of sea life are almost unknown in the Mediterranean, these men had never heard of any fish larger than a porpoise or a tunny; so that when they saw whales, hammer-headed sharks and twenty foot rays, it needed a very strong hand to hold them to their course. But it was there. As a disciplinarian and exemplar Nearchus proved equal to every emergency; and when his crews were unsteadied by the hoarse blast of spouting whales he took the lead in his own galley as if going into action, although these creatures were as strange to him as to his subordinates; until all had learnt that their fears were groundless. In the old account we read that "all praised the sagacity of their Admiral."

In one unforeseen and serious respect, however, his voyage was unprosperous and nearly failed entirely. The weather was favourable, the pilotage was easy, the great fins proved harmless, the coastal pirates fled at his approach. But the lack of fresh food played havoc with the health of his crews; and his experiences in that direction formed the earliest known case of a story of the sea often repeated for more than two thousand years to follow. In their own lands the Greek seamen were accustomed to ports where vegetables, wine and water were always obtainable; nor could they conceive that any country could be inhabited where such supplies were non-existent, for they knew enough of the Mediterranean to be aware that where its coasts are entirely barren no population is to be found. Nearchus expected therefore to find opportunities for obtaining fresh provisions on his way, but either did not ask for information on the subject or was unable to obtain it. Very possibly the seafarers whom he must have consulted at his point of departure made it their practice to take enough fresh supplies on board for a whole voyage; which with larger vessels and much smaller crews, would be an easier matter for them than it was for the Macedonian flotilla. Coconuts are an excellent, easily stowed and easily obtainable anti-scorbutic in the east, and an Arab crew will remain healthy on coconuts and dates indefinitely. If this was their custom at the period in question they would probably know little about the victualling resources

of the coast between the Indus and the Straits of Ormuz, which offered no openings for trade and was inhabited by unfriendly natives. Believing however that green food must be obtainable Nearchus trusted to his power to be able to take what he wanted and found that there was nothing to take, with dire consequences to his men; who suffered incredibly, and even when they survived were reduced to a most loathsome condition of disease and emaciation. To the great surprise of the Greeks they discovered that the sparse population subsisted wholly on fish, abundant here to an extent undreamt of in the Mediterranean. But these people, having been accustomed to such a diet for countless generations, were scurvy proof; and just as the Esquimaux can face the extreme rigours of the arctic climate on nothing but blubber, so these dwellers on the verge of the tropics could live and thrive—as their posterity does still—without tasting anything but fish from the cradle to the grave. So deep an impression did this leave on Nearchus and his crews that they named these shores the land of the fish-eaters; a designation still applicable, for although a few undersized cattle and goats of eastern breeds are now very occasionally to be found in the coastal villages, even this scant live stock is fed on dried fish.

In spite of all privations and losses, however, Nearchus pushed on till he reached in time the north side of the Straits of Ormuz, after a voyage of many weeks. Here he found that Alexander had already arrived with the remnants of his army, having gained a full month's start while the flotilla remained weather-bound at Karachi; but having also lost large numbers, who fell out of the ranks from exhaustion and perished on the way. After a respite the march and the sea voyage were again resumed and the Euphrates was ultimately reached by those who survived either form of the journey.

Eighteen centuries passed before another vessel with a European crew sailed the Indian Ocean, and she was not only European manned but European built. Of the growth of Asiatic seafaring in that long interval only a vague knowledge prevailed in the west, chiefly derived from the accounts of Levantine merchants who met the eastern traders in Egypt

and Syria and occasionally accompanied them to India. That this growth was on a very extensive scale however admits of no doubt, from the situation revealed in the Indian Ocean on the discovery of the Cape route; and for the first fourteen hundred years of the Christian era the brown man undoubtedly followed the sea as an occupation in much greater numbers than the white, and navigated his ships over a far wider extent of the earth's surface. Except for the very occasional venture of two or three Scandinavian vessels to Iceland and Greenland, occidental voyaging was confined to the Mediterranean and the western coasts of Europe until the fifteenth century; while the Moslem merchants were pushing their maritime enterprises constantly eastward till they were well established in China, and southward through the Malay Archipelago on one side of the Indian Ocean and along the coast of east Africa on the other. Thus their trade routes covered in time a span of some ninety degrees of longitude, which meant about 10,000 miles of eastern coast lines.

But the oriental seamen always enjoyed advantages in the pursuit of their business; especially in the regular alternation of the prevailing winds of their particular sphere of navigation. No such certainty of weather is to be found in the seas which wash the shores of Europe, and this handicap inevitably affected the expansion of western maritime activity as regards its local development. Not until the white man had left his own part of the world to sail to far distant regions did he prove himself incontestably the best deep-water seaman that the world has ever produced; the special quality on which Darwin touched for the purposes of comparison with the backward peoples of other lands. Given equal chances by the elements no coloured race has shown equal skill at the helm and sheet; and when the white man invented a rig whereby his ship could make some progress, even if slow, towards her destination in foul winds as well as fair—and could thereby dispense with oars—his excursions into unknown and untraversed seas made up one of the most extraordinary chapters in the world's history.

It was long in coming however, and until it did the seafarers

of the globe were effectually separated into two hard and fast divisions by the barrier of the Isthmus of Suez. In the present days of rapid and reliable through travelling it is very difficult to grasp the enormous effect produced by that slender neck of desert on the history of more than half the population of the world. Freedom of intercourse between different branches of the human family has always been one of the most powerful influences acting on the progress and destiny of the whole; and the sea has been the medium through which it has been most easily conducted ever since men learnt to creep along the coast under oars. Had it not been that a strip of sand connected Africa and Asia the inter-action of east and west must have passed far beyond the point which it had reached when at length European oak scattered the flying fish of the Indian Ocean. If Africa and Asia had been divided by a navigable channel, European influences would undoubtedly have reached Hindustan and left their traces; for by such a route it would have been on the whole a less difficult and dangerous voyage for an ancient Mediterranean vessel to make for the Indus than to make for the Scheldt or Thames, and if she had started from a Greek port the distance to be traversed in either direction would have been about the same. Mediterranean traders might then have established prosperous colonies all the way to China as Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, French and British did in turn in the various later ages.

But the Isthmus of Suez interposed a dam confining the tide of European energy to other outlets, and remained a sharply separating line. Supreme on his own side of this natural obstacle the white man counted for absolutely nothing at all on the other, until he had circumvented it by the discovery of a way round the opposite end of the African continent 4000 miles to the southward. Secured thus against western competition the rule of the Indian Ocean remained as the prize of the fittest of the Asiatic peoples, who proved to be the Arabs from a period certainly not later than that of the early Roman Empire. This Arab domination was not a pre-arranged and intentional sea conquest conducted under an organised system of central authority. It was an unforeseen growth of power



arising through private adventurers acting *en masse*. It received no State recognition or support, it acknowledged no responsibility to anyone, it operated under no system of unified effort or direction. But numbers, enterprise and perseverance achieved results in the aggregate which were eventually decisive in overcoming all resistance and competition, whether from princes, pirates or rival traders, and established a maritime supremacy everywhere from the Gulf of Suez to the ports of Indo China. The Arabs were in effect the first rulers of the Indian Ocean in so far that they went where they pleased and did what they pleased within its waters; and if not actual dictators they were not at all prepared to share this freedom with others who sought equal opportunities for trade.

But it was a mob rule in which every man was independent of the rest, and where a community of interests only produced a sufficient co-operation to deal with a loose and disjointed opposition. It never led to the sacrifices which the discipline and subordination of an organised system of authority demands, and through which the exercise of force on the water has grown into the science known as fleet warfare. And therefore, when the westerners who had attained to this science appeared on the scene insisting on equal opportunities for trade, the Asiatic rule of the Indian Ocean came to an end, although the first white men to challenge it were sent out by one of the smallest and poorest of the States of Europe.

## II

### The ARRIVAL of the WHITE MAN in the EASTERN SEAS

**F**ROM very early times the centres of population of Europe and Asia have lain in regions separated by immense and almost untraversable expanses of wilderness and mountain, although portions of the same continuous land mass. Thus for example China—which in the middle ages was the most important country in the east—stands near the opposite extremity of the longest stretch of dry land on the earth's surface from France and Spain; and up to the middle ages, neither the inhabitants of western Europe nor the Chinese could learn more in regard to the realms of the other than they might hear from the vague descriptions filtering through the sparse centres of trade scattered at wide intervals along the ten thousand miles of sea or land lying between their respective home territories. Mutual intercourse would have been advantageous to both, but the difficulties and expenses of communication were prohibitive to the growth of commercial relations on any but the most insignificant scale; for to reach China from Rome, Paris or Madrid in those days necessitated either three years of laborious and dangerous travel by land; or a sea voyage of scarcely shorter duration with two or three changes of vessel, besides a land journey between the Mediterranean and Gulf of Suez. India lay much nearer to Europe in a straight line than did China, but to bring Indian produce to the cities of the west was only less difficult and costly than to bring Chinese, because the Isthmus of Suez remained a break in the voyage by sea, and the formidable highlands of southern and western Asia remained an almost insurmountable obstacle by land.

So greatly, however, was the imagination of the white peoples fired by the long prevalent traditions of the magnificence of the Orient, and so highly did they appreciate the small samples of its artificial and natural products arriving in western markets, that it became their obsession to find some means of opening up communications with the east; and as no prospect existed of any possible improvement in the land routes, successive

generations of European seamen made it the great ambition of their craft to find a through-route by water. Some sought for it north round Europe and were defeated by the ice-floe. Others, including Columbus, tried steering west so as to circumnavigate that half of the globe and were defeated by the barrier of America; which not only frustrated their efforts but deceived them into believing that they had met with success, for Columbus to his dying day adhered to the conviction that in sailing along the shores of Mexico he was following the coast of Asia somewhere not far from Japan. Others again persistently sought for an eastern outlet through the apparently interminable wall of the great African continent; and for more than thirty years a succession of intrepid Portuguese explorers felt their way along its western strand, each adding a little to the distance covered by his forerunners, but only increasing knowledge to the extent of proving that to find any way through to the east his successors would have to sail further still. One parallel of latitude after another was passed by these undaunted and patient investigators under sufferings and dangers of which the modern seaman has no conception; and so by laborious effort they crossed the tropic of Cancer, discovered the great western recess of Africa and reached the equator and tropic of Capricorn all in due course; but still the land as far ahead as they could see continued to stretch on and on to the southward without a break.

But unlike all those who hoped to find a route to Asia by searching out other directions the Portuguese were not destined to suffer ultimate failure through seeking for something that did not exist. Alone among the brave band of seamen explorers they were on the right track, although the point for which they sought lay a very long way off from the known regions of the earth. Separated from the Mediterranean by four thousand miles of desert waters and virgin forest, and absolutely unheard of by the older civilizations, the precipitous headlands terminating the African Continent had faced the antarctic pole all through the ages across a windy wilderness of grey waters where two oceans meet, beaten round their rocky bases by the long southern rollers and swept from both sides by frequent

and furious gales. Seabirds and fish swarmed round them on one side, large herds of game wandered above them on the other, but of any sign of civilized man on land or water there was none to be seen here until long after many Empires had waxed and waned in the continents of the Northern hemisphere.

It was in the year 1486 that this solitude was at last brought to an end by the speck on the horizon which denotes an approaching ship; so often the sign in bygone ages that a primeval isolation is to be invaded by the artificial creations of the restless brain of man. If an observer with glasses had been watching the scene from the spot where the Cape lighthouse now throws its 2.5-mile beam to seaward his eye would have fallen on a small but high-sided craft about the size of a Mersey tug or a Yarmouth steam trawler, with a square rig carrying devices painted on unscientifically cut "windbag" sails. According to modern standards she was a slow mover, butting her way ponderously through the water with a great smother of foam, or "bone in her teeth" at no more than five or six knots in spite of a strong fair breeze. But such as she was she represented the ideals of the naval architects of her day and as a necessary factor in a most historic spectacle deserved something more than a casual glance. She had carried her crew safely to a great achievement, although it was a curious freak of chance that when the actual corner of land for which these adventurers had been searching in vain during six long months came in sight at last, she was pointing on her homeward and not her outward course.

This pioneer keel was commanded by one Bartolomeo Diaz, a middle-aged seaman of stubborn quality; and the feat which now stood to his credit ranked as the greatest step in the path of exploration accomplished up to his time, and to this day remains only second in its results to the discovery of America by Columbus six years later. And although the enterprise of Columbus was the more daring in conception the task allotted by destiny to Diaz proved infinitely the more difficult to execute, for whereas the discoverer of America picked up a fair breeze only three days after leaving the Canary Islands, carrying him right across the Atlantic in less than six weeks, the dis-

coverer of the Cape of Good Hope had to battle for six months with uncertain and often dangerous winds along an uncharted coast. Columbus was inspired by his own genius, Diaz by the orders of his Sovereign; but for either the only alternative to success was death, for in spite of thirty years of failure to find it, the King of Portugal clung persistently to the belief that an accessible extremity to the African continent existed; and despatched Diaz to go on sailing southward till he did find it or perished in the attempt. A command couched in such terms is obviously a greater compliment to an officer than the bestowal of any decoration, implying as it does an estimate of a sense of duty sufficient to carry the recipient through any conceivable extremity of danger, difficulty or disappointment; but Diaz proved that he merited the recognition, and though for all he knew to the contrary his instructions might have necessitated sailing on till his provisions and water were exhausted past hope of replenishment on some desolate antarctic coast, he weighed from Lisbon to carry through his mission to whatever end might await it.

None can fully appreciate, however, what lay before the first man to double the Cape except the now fast dwindling band of professional master mariners who have followed him without steam-powered vessels; and when in the not remote future the oceanic sailing-ship shall have finally disappeared, with the last of the men who commanded her type, then no man thereafter will remain who can realize from his own experience the magnitude of the task confronting this valiant-hearted leader. Even for those still living who have made the Cape passage under sail, it requires some effort of the imagination to picture his difficulties and risks; accustomed as they themselves have been to vastly larger and better found vessels, accurate charts and reliable foreknowledge of the local meteorology and currents. But these are well aware nevertheless that the navigation of Cape waters without steam often puts the highest seamanship to the test however fine a vessel and her equipment may be, for nowhere in the world does a more tremendous swell spring up than on the Agulhas Bank in stormy weather; and while the fogs are frequent and thick the tide race is strong, and many

parts of the rocky coast are studded with outlying reefs. Even the harbours are sometimes fatal traps in which ships have been driven to destruction by the treacherous shifts of winds in the local gales. Of all this Diaz had to take his chance in a clumsy shell less than half the size of a Ryde or Brighton excursion boat, with no chart, no knowledge of the risks to be encountered and not even a barometer as a weather guide. Little wonder that the priests on board were hardly ever off their knees.

Unconquerable perseverance met with ultimate reward, however, in full measure, although final success was curiously accidental in its manner of accomplishment. When almost within sight of his object at the end of six months of laborious progress, but still unaware of its proximity, he found himself sailing towards nightfall closer in shore than seemed quite safe with the wind freshening from seaward. To give the coast a wider berth he steered more to the westward, and thereby unintentionally lost sight of land altogether before morning. In this position he was overtaken by a heavy gale—his first premonition of Cape weather—which by driving him to the south-eastward actually swept him round the Cape in total ignorance of what was happening. Providentially for him the land terminated where it did, or all his adventures would have come to a summary conclusion by shipwreck on a lee shore, a catastrophe he was dreading all through the gale; and it was much to his surprise and relief that when the weather moderated he found his ship still afloat with deep water under her bottom and no land yet in sight, for he knew he had been driven a long way to the eastward, in which direction he supposed the African coast still to lie. Perplexed by this state of affairs he hauled back to the northward and steering thus ultimately regained sight of the shore-line; which to his immeasurable gratification he found was now running east and west instead of north and south; thus indicating that the vexed problem of African geography was solved. He had arrived at last.

To satisfy himself beyond question of his success he followed the new direction of the shore for several days in spite of a strong adverse current—well known now as the Agulhas stream—till he found it beginning to trend to the north-eastward; a pro-

ceeding characteristic of the thoroughness of all his work. Fully convinced now that he was at the western water-gate of the Indian Ocean he anchored for a few days at the harbour since named Mossel Bay, and then turned homeward to make his report, it being no part of his immediate duty to follow up his discovery further. Hence it was that his ship was already on her homeward-bound course when he actually first saw the promontory forming the termination of the 7000 miles of West African seaboard; the great goal of a whole generation of strenuous search, around, but out of sight of which, the gale had carried him. Here he encountered a second gale, and like the *Flying Dutchman* of two centuries later—whose legendary experiences afford some testimony as to the reputation of Cape weather among seamen—he was so unfavourably impressed with its turbulent climate that he marked it Cabo Tormentoso on his newly sketched chart; a title much better descriptive of the treacherous grandeur of the seascape than the later and more lasting one bestowed on it by his sovereign. Few who have faced a south-wester under close-reefed canvas on the Agulhas bank will question its suitability.

Diaz had now demonstrated that it would be possible to bring the greatly prized produce of the east by sea to Europe, and to hold direct intercourse with all those regions of reputed magnificence described by the oriental dealers in the markets of Damascus and Alexandria, and by Marco Polo in the accounts of his marvellous journeys across Asia. This discovery marked the opening of a new epoch in the history of the old world through the liberation of western seamen from the imprisoning effects of the Isthmus of Suez; and until that natural barricade was pierced itself nearly 400 years later the circumventing route which the Portuguese were the first to trace out remained the chief highway of communication between the white man and the brown and yellow. Centuries before this occurred the Semitic seafarers had been groping their way southward along the African shores of the Indian Ocean, and long ere the voyage of Diaz they had reached a point about halfway between Arabia and the Cape, and there established a large slaving port at Mozambique. But the inducements to push on southwards

further still were not strong enough to tempt them; and hence, although in possession of a long start, they missed achieving the lasting credit among men of being the first to pass a ship from one ocean to the other; a feat which helped with many more of a like nature to establish the fame of the Europeans of the fifteenth century in history for all time. Everything from a navigator's standpoint was in their favour as compared to the white man. The ports of Arabia lie much nearer to the Cape than any starting point in Europe; the south-east trade winds and the Agulhas current are helps towards reaching it from one side although a hindrance from the other; and many good natural anchorages provide facilities for progressing along the route step by step from the Indian Ocean quarter of the compass which are absent from the Atlantic.

The oriental mind, however, is apt to be influenced by severely practical considerations in spite of its traditional idealism, and from the standpoint of material interests the possibility of discovering a southern extremity to Africa had much less attraction for the Arabs than for the Portuguese. As rulers of the Indian Ocean effectively protected against western competition by the Isthmus of Suez, they held the monopoly of a far more voluminous system of sea transport than anything of the kind existing elsewhere, and not unnaturally desired to preserve it against European encroachment. Thus the dream of mingling the ships of the east and west made little appeal to their point of view; and the possibility of extending their own voyages to Atlantic ports by the opening of a new line of sea communications held forth no promise of an adequate recompense for the invasion of westerners of areas which they had long regarded as solely and particularly their own.

One argument only could be advanced in its favour, and even that was dependent on certain problematical conditions. The Moslem shipowners suffered heavily from the exactions of their co-religionists who held authority or commercial power in the ports of Egypt and Persia: and also from the exorbitant charges of the caravan drivers who conveyed goods across to the Mediterranean. An outlet for their trade by the discovery of an alternative line of conveyance would free them from the



power of these grasping tyrants, and be worth seeking out if European vessels could be induced to come no further east than Mozambique; resting content with the use of that port as a general rendezvous for the shipping from the two oceanic areas to meet and exchange cargoes. But no guarantee that the westerners would accept such an arrangement existed and its prospects were too uncertain to make it outweigh all other considerations.

From the standpoint of the Atlantic nations the successful issue of the persistent exploration of the Portuguese bore quite a different aspect and startled all Europe for the moment into a clamour of speculation. But boundless though the possible consequences of the discovery seemed to be a pause of uncertainty and divided counsels followed, prolonged in the end for several years. Various causes contributed to this delay but in the main it was due to the voice of Columbus proclaiming insistently through all the heated controversy of the period that as the world was round a direct route to Asia must lie westward across the Atlantic if men would only dare to follow it, and would prove to be much shorter than the long indirect route found to exist by Diaz. And when the greatest explorer of history disappeared himself into the unsailed western ocean to settle this stupendous question, and in due course returned with the sensational report that land did indeed actually lie within a six weeks' run due west from the Canary Islands—which he declared must be a part of Asia—the Portuguese monarch shared the general belief that Columbus had proved a true prophet. Feeling convinced therefore that the great Asiatic kingdoms lay after all at perhaps no more than a two or three months' sea voyage on a straight westerly course from his own capital, he not unnaturally decided that it would prove a mere waste of effort to attempt to reach them by steering first to pass round a cape, which although only halfway to Asia, was yet six months' sailing distance in the far southern hemisphere. Influenced by this conviction, he relegated the project for opening up trade with the orient *via* the newly found extremity of Africa to the background for the time; and, like all the other crowned heads in Europe, fixed his attention on the develop-

ments arising from the voyage of the *Santa Maria*, in the hope of a chance to thrust himself into the new markets of the world through the gateway flung open by Columbus.

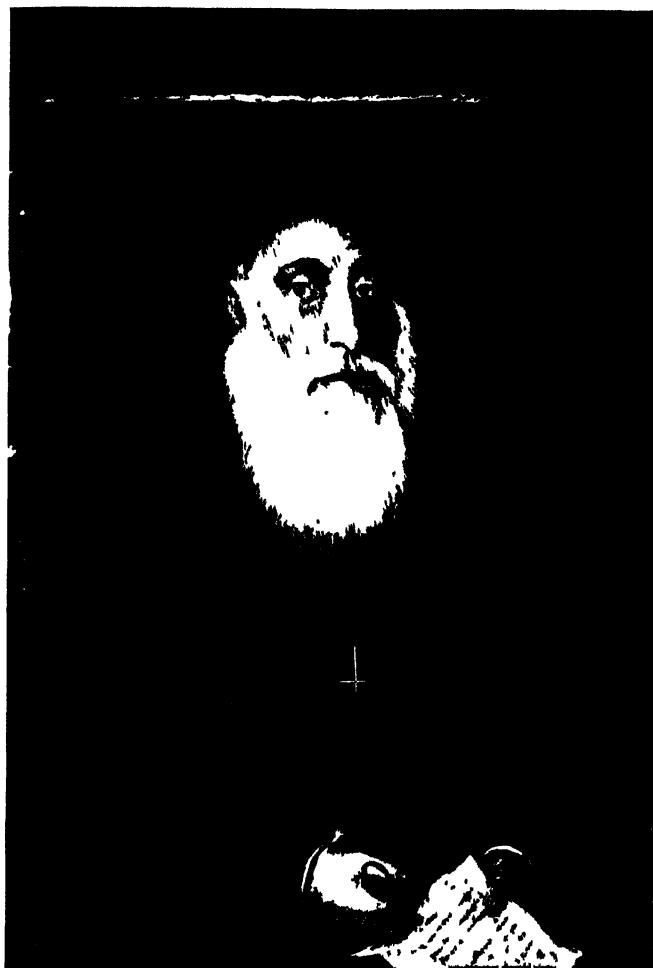
The King of Spain, however, had strong views in that matter. He saw no reason for sharing the advantages of the new discoveries with anyone unless under compulsion; and lost no time in making it clear that any vessels attempting to sail in that direction except those under the Spanish flag would encounter forcible opposition on a scale to leave no doubt as to the result. His fleet, one of the most powerful then afloat, was held in readiness to act in support of this policy; but to give a semblance of legality to his pretensions to undivided sovereignty in the western hemisphere he obtained the ostentatiously announced verdict of the Pope in the notorious decree partitioning off the whole undiscovered regions of the globe, and giving all the western hemisphere to Spain. To the stronger excluded nations this meant nothing but a matter for ridicule, nor would the King of Spain himself have accepted any ruling from Rome that conflicted with his own interests; but the Papal pronouncement provided a minor State such as Portugal with the means for accepting without loss of dignity a prohibition that it was not powerful enough to disregard.

Professing, therefore, that he was debarred by the Pontifical decision from using the supposed new route to Asia across the Atlantic, and feeling that he was very certainly debarred from using it by the ships of his neighbouring sovereign on the throne of Spain, the King of Portugal once more turned his eyes towards the track of his own countryman Bartolomeo Diaz; which although believed by men to be a much longer road to follow was at least open to Portuguese ships without interference from Madrid. But the protracted and vociferous controversy which sprang from the discovery of transatlantic lands, and the first general settlement of the subject of claims, had occupied a vast deal of time in the days when all international debate and correspondence moved slowly; nor was it until nine years after the return of Diaz that the thread of eastward exploration was again taken up where he had dropped it. Then, with a project for a magnificent and far-aimed enterprise in

eastern waters, King Manoel placed his schemes under the leadership of one Vasco da Gama, a sea officer in the prime of life, of aristocratic birth and Court connection. Very seldom has a selection for a great historical enterprise been better justified by the results. Ordered to find his way round Africa right on to India the Portuguese commander proved his fitness for the control of difficult and dangerous enterprises not only by what he did but by his methods of doing it, and in accordance with his instructions sailed from Lisbon in July, 1497; to undertake by far the longest sea voyage ever till then attempted, with four vessels, any one of which could have passed through Teddington Lock, the highest tidal point on the Thames, well known to London holiday makers on the river. Of these four the *San Gabriel* was "Capitano," or flagship. Unlike the unassuming departure of his great contemporary and rival Columbus, the start of da Gama was made the occasion of much regal ceremony and display by the king's command, who took a large part in it himself. But this was no idle ostentation to camouflage proceedings devoid of serious purpose. Behind all the salutes and flags, and trumpeting lay a full measure of the grim resolve that deserves success, and on this occasion found it.

The Portuguese commander was never a man of half measures, and from the day he left the Cape de Verde Islands at the end of the first stage of his outward passage he entered on his duties in a true spirit of investigation undeterred by any possibilities of unknown danger whatever. In their purely navigational aspects the chief interest of his proceedings lay quite as much in the route he followed before he reached the Cape, as in the more sensational and commonly appreciated events that occurred after he had passed the furthest point reached by Diaz. Properly speaking the log of the first half of the voyage to India belongs more to Atlantic than to Indian Ocean records, but as it was all one undertaking carried through with the special object of reaching an Indian Ocean destination, a glance at its most striking and peculiar feature on the Atlantic side is not perhaps entirely out of place here.

The particular title to celebrity with which this voyage is



VASCO DA GAMA

Portuguese Admiral and Viceroy of the Indies

Oceanic explorer and pioneer in sea communication between Europe and Asia

*(From a portrait in Lisbon)*

*(By permission of the Hakluyt Society)*



invested—quite apart from its fame as the first which ever carried European built hulls across the Indian Ocean—lay in the daring decision of da Gama to abandon the coast route followed by every one of his predecessors including Diaz as far as their efforts carried them, and to steer boldly into mid-Atlantic, so as to cut across the great receding angle of the African seaboard which lies between Senegal and the Cape. The temerity of this proceeding lay in its acceptance of the uncertainties of oceanic navigation prior to the invention of any accurate means of ascertaining longitude; which made the reliable charting of newly discovered coasts impossible on a large scale. With the early cartographers an error of as much as two or three hundred miles in marking the position of a headland or harbour on a new chart was not uncommon, and a tenth part of that might make all the difference between arriving safely at a destination from open sea or failing to see any sign of it. Da Gama proposed to follow an open sea route, which in the straightest possible line necessitated 4000 miles of sailing out of sight of any land known to exist, or actually existing at all; in the hope of hitting a destination regarding the latitude and longitude of which considerable uncertainty prevailed—although Diaz had done his best to fix them with the crude instruments of the day—and the missing of which on the south side would lead him further and further into an unknown oceanic void without any notion of which direction to steer in next. It was like springing from a precipice in the hope of alighting safely on a ledge somewhere about halfway down in a position he could not see. And yet he deliberately set himself to face the risk for the sake of gaining geographical knowledge of the Southern hemisphere.

But an unexpected and much greater difficulty awaited him than that of actually finding his destination. Had it been possible to steer straight in the direction in which he believed the southern point of Africa to lie from the Cape de Verdes the task would have been simple in its idea even if dangerous in its execution from the unreliability of his premises. But it was far from possible to do anything of the kind, because, by selecting the ocean route, he was inevitably destined to encounter head

winds from near the equator till near the southern limit of the tropics; a fact of which he was necessarily ignorant. Throughout this zone or belt of about 1200 miles in width occurs one of the unceasing movements of the earth's atmosphere known as the trade-winds; except where the zone in question borders on the African coast, which accounts for Diaz not having discovered this movement. As in the case of Columbus therefore it was without any previous acquaintance of its existence that da Gama sailed into the area of one of these vast processions of the air with its accompanying surface current of the water. But whereas the trade-wind in which Columbus found himself was helpful in direction that which da Gama encountered was right in the teeth of any vessel making from the North Atlantic for the Cape of Good Hope. Soon after drifting across the belt of equatorial calms therefore he was obliged to brace the yards of the *San Gabriel* sharp up on the port tack and hold a course for many weeks pointing far to the westward of the direct line to the Cape before he again picked up a fair wind. Without knowing it he was actually driven almost within sight of the then undiscovered continent of South America; of which the existence was quite accidentally revealed a few years later to another India-bound Portuguese vessel through the compulsion of the same causes, although some historians have pretended that she was there from choice.

Da Gama's track established the true sailing route from Europe for the Cape of Good Hope; which many thousands of vessels have followed in the four centuries elapsing since then. But they knew what was before them on entering the South Atlantic; and were aware that once past the tropic of Capricorn the certainty of foul winds would give way to a very great probability of fair. In the absence of any such knowledge the Portuguese leader was subjected to one of the most awful periods of prolonged anxiety that any man was ever compelled to endure. Week succeeded to week, and month to month as he sailed steadily onward without any choice in what appeared to be a false direction, and still the wind came up mercilessly adverse, as if it would blow him right westward across the unknown seas; where all the chart was one enormous blank,

in which, as compared to the immensity of the surrounding element, his vessels were as the merest specks of dust on the floor of some vast colosseum, and his crews were isolated by thousands of miles from all other human beings. The nearest land of which the existence was known to him lay far distant and receding; and even the aspect of the sky was undergoing a change by night; for long before the wind shifted to a fair quarter all but a few of the constellations known to Europeans had given place to others on which no white men had ever set eyes except those who sailed with Diaz nine years before. But whereas it was always the task of Diaz to keep the land in sight as the one definite guide towards that which he sought, da Gama sailed for three months with nothing visible except the sea and the sky, and the signposts in the latter were no longer those with which he was familiar. Herein he was at a great disadvantage as compared to Columbus, whose voyages being all to the north of the equator had the help of well-known constellations even in the lowest latitudes. Considering therefore the type of his ships, the long spell of foul winds and his entire ignorance of the astronomy as well as the geography of his environment, his run from the Cape de Verde Islands to the southern point of Africa has a strong claim to rank as the finest feat of pure navigation ever accomplished. His title to fame is generally considered by historians to lie in his leadership of the white race to the Indian Ocean, but in the eyes of the men of his own profession it rests quite as much in his leadership of all mankind as a voyager in the open South Atlantic. Columbus, anxiously scouring the western horizon from under the foresail of the *Santa Maria*, presents one of the greatest pictures in human annals; but the sympathy and admiration of the seaman are perhaps evoked even more strongly by the figure of da Gama fighting the eternal blast of the easterly trade winds under the Southern Cross.

Undaunted and undeterred by all his discouragements he resolutely held a course as near to his direct route as the unvarying wind permitted, until at length he ran out of its zone into that of the westerly breezes normal in further distant latitudes, which at last were fair for his destination; although by this time



he had no idea as to how far off it lay, for all notion of his longitude had been lost for weeks. Diaz, however, had calculated the latitude of the Cape with some accuracy, and as da Gama had an approximation to his own latitude by observations of the sun with the astrolabe, which made him believe he was still to its northward, he estimated that he would strike the African coast at some point or another if he steered due east. This reckoning proved to be correct, but a stretch of 1800 miles still intervened, and not till all land had been out of sight for ninety-three days did the *San Gabriel* and her consorts drop their anchors in an African harbour only a few days sailing to the northward of the Cape, after the longest unbroken sea voyage then on record. With the primitive instruments at his disposal for measuring the altitude of the sun his landfall at the end of so lengthy a period in blue water was remarkably good.

His arrival in Cape waters completed the more heroic if less spectacular stage of his great enterprise. Thenceforward, though a stretch of unsailed sea still lay before him, the line of the coast was his guide to progress, and when land was again left out of sight he was assisted by the services of competent Indian Ocean pilots. Great acquisitions to geographical knowledge had already been made by his voyage, even though he had not yet reached the extreme point attained by Diaz, nor placed any previously undiscovered lands on the chart. Nothing had been known before of the southern half of the planet except that the African continent projected over quite thirty degrees of latitude towards the South Pole, and his track in the South Atlantic proved that an unbroken oceanic expanse at least 2000 miles wide lay to its westward. Starting on again with this important contribution to knowledge already to his credit he rounded the Cape in even more dangerous weather than that experienced by Diaz, which his squadron only managed to survive after the vessels had lost half their upper gear and the crews had been reduced to utter prostration and open mutiny. His next difficulty was the adverse Agulhas current which gave him more trouble than it gave Diaz; probably because he sailed with four ships instead of one; for as the speed of a squadron is regulated by that of its slowest unit, any group of ships in

the sailing era normally moved more slowly than a single vessel because different ships varied in their best points of sailing, some being fastest close-hauled, others when reaching, and others again when well before the wind. Whatever point of sailing a squadron might be on, therefore, it was nearly always the least suitable for one or more of its numbers, which for the time became a drag on the rest. At one stage the Agulhas stream almost put a stop to his advance, but a succession of westerly gales drove him through at last, till he reached the point where the current slackens and eventually dies away altogether.

It was in the month of December, rather more than twenty-one weeks after leaving Lisbon that he reached Mossel Bay, where Diaz had turned back. A gap of 1700 miles of untraversed water separated this point from the southernmost of the Arab East African settlements, that is to say, a distance slightly less than the length of the Mediterranean; and this only remained to be crossed to complete man's circumnavigation of Africa. On da Gama now fell the task, and in its accomplishment he established his second title to a place in the world's record as a leader where none had been before but millions followed. For seventy-six days he sailed along a strange coast unknown to the seafarers of any race, but containing several excellent harbours, at three of which he anchored for a brief spell; and it was early in March 1498 that the large Arab colony at Mozambique were one day thrown into a frenzy of excitement by the appearance of four strange sails of a cut unknown in the east, approaching the port from the direction of the void and unexplored southern ocean. Flocking to the waterside the Moslems swarmed afloat in boats to inspect the incoming squadron with its square rig, stout spars and massive timbers, and when in due course the vessels sailed in and dropped their heavy anchors here was presented for the first time the sight of ships of oak and of palm-wood lying side by side in the same harbour. On arrival at Mozambique he renewed touch with the known regions of the world after an interval of just seven months since leaving the Cape de Verdes. From this point onward the voyage to India presented no risk or difficulty from

unknown dangers to navigation. His work as a seaman now assumed less importance than his work as a diplomatist and negotiator dealing with perfectly strange peoples far beyond the reach of support, whose characteristics were an unknown factor in a complex problem. And if the dangers from the elements were practically at an end he was soon to find that the dangers from human opponents had taken their place.

At Mozambique the seafaring community did not at first adopt a definitely hostile attitude. They were awaiting developments. The arrival of the white man, if not actually expected, had been regarded as a vague possibility ever since the news had filtered through to the east some years before that a European ship had discovered a southern extremity to Africa. And therefore, although their appearance at Mozambique caused a profound sensation, it was not an event that had never entered into eastern calculations. But it was hoped that the total ignorance of the Portuguese in regard to the navigation and geography of the Indian Ocean would keep them satisfied to use some port on the East African coast as their shipping terminus and connection with the Arab system of sea transport all over the east. No opposition was offered in consequence when da Gama asked leave to purchase water and other supplies at this stage of the proceedings; and when he announced his intention of pushing on up the coast a Mahomedan pilot was easily procured, under whose guidance he eventually reached Malindi; the northernmost safe anchorage in tropical East Africa, and the usual point of departure for the blue-water crossing to Hindustan. Here his further programme began to excite Moslem apprehensions, and the services of a Banian native of Malabar had to be procured as his navigator for the run across the Indian Ocean forming the final section of his memorable voyage. Most fortunately for his progress it happened by pure chance that his arrival at Malindi in April coincided with the first breaths of the south-west monsoon; whereby he was absolutely assured of a fair wind for the finishing stage. Thanks to this he made a speedy crossing and entered Calicut harbour in western India on the 20th May, 1498, being then ten months and twelve days from the Tagus.

Calicut has long since sunk to the level of a minor port owing to its lack of capacity to receive modern vessels, but in the fifteenth century it was the focus of the whole network of Indian Ocean traffic. Here Arab, Persian, Malay and Chinese merchants met and bartered, to the great profit of the local Brahmin ruler or "Zamorin," who levied dues on all and sundry using his port, although not a shipowner himself; and as an additional source of revenue allowed Mahomedan merchants to establish warehouses on shore subject to taxation. To this potentate the arrival of European ships was an astounding but not an alarming event, merely seeming to add another race of traders to those already using his port and paying for the concession; and neither he nor the newcomers themselves ever dreamt that it was in truth a first step towards an eventual white sovereignty of Hindustan. But to the Mecca merchants, whose vessels kept the European markets supplied through Egypt and Syria with the immensely valuable products of India, the appearance of competitors at the very centre of eastern commerce was a most disturbing circumstance. "What in the name of Shaitan are *you* doing here?" shouted a voice in Arabic from the dense and interested crowd surrounding da Gama and his officers as they passed through the streets.

Trouble consequently followed. The Arabs were afraid to resort to force on the water, as they were poor fighters on that element compared to the white man, and the armament of their dhows was no match for that of da Gama's squadron even though it carried no heavy metal by European standards. But their wealth always exercised a great influence on the king of Calicut as a source of revenue to himself; and having no knowledge of countries beyond the seas except through their reports, he gave ear to their urgent representations that the Europeans were dangerous intruders, who should be compelled to get out. As this action afforded the Portuguese ample justification for resorting to force in their turn at later stages it proved a fatal blunder on the part of the Moslems, but for the moment it produced the effect they desired. At first the Hindoo Zamorin had been cautiously friendly to the Europeans, who had shown every desire to maintain peaceable relationships

with the native elements; but taking alarm at the insistent denunciations of the Mecca traders he changed his policy and treacherously seized and interned da Gama with a large number of his officers and men while on shore. The purpose of this recourse to violence however seems to have been intimidation rather than any ultimate intention of proceeding to extreme measures, for after a brief period he released and returned them to their ships; and his whole conduct then and afterwards was suggestive of a desire to accommodate the Portuguese if that were possible without alienating the goodwill of the Mecca merchants. But da Gama was not unnaturally deeply incensed by the indignity and humiliation of his treatment, and once back on board took his departure forthwith to try his fortune elsewhere. He never forgot or forgave the insult.

On the same coast at no great distance lay the three minor ports of Cannanore, Quilon and Cochin, the first to the northward of Calicut and the other two to the south. A local rajah ruled at each and between these lesser chiefs and the king of Calicut existed a state of perpetual jealousy and feud. The news of the first arrival of the Europeans quickly spread along the coast, and with it the news of their hostile reception; which suggested to the rival rulers an opportunity for acquiring the friendship and custom of the newcomers at the expense of their more powerful neighbours. Towards the Portuguese they displayed a most hospitable attitude in consequence, so that when da Gama left Calicut in disgust he made straight for Cannanore, where he was handsomely welcomed and allowed to obtain full and very valuable cargoes. While there he learnt of the chronic antagonism existing among the native states on the coast, and realized that it promised to be a helpful factor in the political situation from the standpoint of future Portuguese interests.

After a stay of nearly three and a half months in Indian waters the squadron sailed for home with the change of monsoon, and arrived safely at Lisbon in due course; the return voyage being much easier than the outward, with fair monsoons and trade-winds nearly all the way to the Cape, and thence on till the familiar latitudes of the North Atlantic were reached. A complete set of descriptions of the whole hydrography and

pilotage of Indian Ocean waters north of Mozambique was obtained at Cannanore, which provided an invaluable basis of knowledge for further enterprise. And da Gama had learnt enough about the political conditions in the east to give some guidance to future Portuguese policy. From the course of events at Calicut it was clear that although the Hindoo element might be friendly enough towards further expeditions bent on trade, the Arabs would offer all the opposition that lay in their power to European competitors; and by this attitude the contact of east and west was charged with electricity from the very outset.

When the *San Gabriel* and her consorts shortened sail at the entrance to Calicut Bay a supreme step in history had been taken. These vessels were the vanguard of the white man's advance to the east by a route on which no other man had the power to arrest his movements; for whatever might be the case on the land no oriental race was ever able to prevent the western nations from doing as they pleased on the water until the Japanese encountered the Russians early in the twentieth century. And even then the struggle lay between antagonists of Asiatic stock on both sides, for the Russians, although inhabitants of Europe, are Tartar in their origin and national character. In referring to military operations of a penetrative description the term "tide of invasion" is not uncommonly used by historians of land campaigns, and this metaphor is sometimes even more accurately illustrative of advances made by fleets whether engaged in the business of peace or war. It applies very aptly here. In spreading far and wide over the eastern hemisphere the flood tide of western maritime enterprise travelled down one side of the whole African continent, swept round its extremity with a turmoil resembling the "race" off Portland Bill, and spread by degrees all across the Indian Ocean and right along the southern coasts of Asia towards the rising sun, till it met and somewhat violently collided with the contemporary tidal stream coming round the world from the opposite direction. It entered every navigable harbour and roadstead, every gulf, bay, channel, creek and estuary from Egypt to China sooner or later, and though its movements were often slow and sometimes

checked at isolated points they always proved irresistible in the end. Da Gama's squadron was the first ripple in this great inrush.

To a certain extent the process had the aspect of a reprisal even if in its earlier stages it was not inspired by definitely aggressive intentions. Europe had often been overrun and devastated by Asiatics in previous ages, who always came by land; and only Alexander had retaliated on the same element, for in the fifteenth century the Moscovite conquest of Siberia had not begun, and even when it did it was in the nature of a return by a people of eastern origin to the regions of their not very remote ancestors. At Calicut the Europeans appeared in Asia from the extremest west of their own continent—from the furthest country in Europe by land from the east—and planted a foot where the white man has ever since remained. Da Gama's exploits as a seaman marked the opening of the era in which European domination of the whole Indian Ocean, and of the greater part of its seaboard was to be established. Incidentally, they made British India a possibility through the foundation supplied by a greater maritime power than even that of the Portuguese.

Concurrently with the arrival of Europeans in the east the representatives of another branch of the same stock were demonstrating the material superiority of the white man on the extreme opposite side of the globe in the regions which had been discovered by Columbus; and the demonstration had the same basis, that is to say skill in shipbuilding and deep-water navigation of so high an order that no coloured people could hope to emulate it. This supremacy was so pronounced in their dealings with the races of the far west as to raise them entirely above any attempt at opposition on the sea, and even in the far east, where native maritime activity was widespread, it was quite sufficient to enable Europeans to choose their own time and place of contact with the Asiatics. In other words, it gave them all the advantages of the initiative in the early moves of the worldwide political changes of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whereby enormous tracts in other continents than Europe came under the white man's control.

In the two great simultaneous movements towards the lands of the rising and the setting sun which were led by Portugal and Spain in the closing years of the fifteenth century a marked contrast existed, not only between the policies pursued by these pioneer states, but in the nature of the problems to be faced in the two different hemispheres. Both Spaniards and Portuguese professed the propagation of the Christian faith as one of their principal motives—and honestly meant it—but in their material activities they followed widely divergent ideals. By the Spaniards their unopposed freedom to approach the shores and enter the bays of the indigenous American nations was used as a first step towards territorial conquest on a scale unequalled since the days of the Roman Empire. By the Portuguese a similar freedom was used on the other hand to establish an oceanic sovereignty of trade as distinguished from a continental sovereignty of possession. The Spaniards were never inspired by the commercial instinct in its higher and more honourable sense. The Portuguese were. With the Spanish authorities any dealings where a weaker race were concerned usually took the shape of mere confiscation by force, and where that was impossible they seldom troubled to try bartering on any wholesale system. But the Portuguese, though ready enough to seize whatever lay in their power, were at the same time always prepared to undertake regular commercial intercourse with all the labour it entailed. Hence they secured an immense success in regions where the Spaniards would have made no headway, for it is safe to say that the methods by which the latter carried all before them in Mexico and Peru—and which were the only methods they understood—would never have proved effective against the warrior races of India. Impotent though these races might be on the water, they were much too formidable on the land to go to pieces under the attack of a few score of pikes and crossbows like the armies of Montezuma and Atahualpa.

And the situation to be dealt with by the seamen who sailed east differed quite as much from that which faced those who steered west as the foreign ambitions and policies of one country differed from those of the other. The aboriginal Americans never went afloat at all except in primitive balsa rafts or canoes,



and knew almost nothing of the art of navigation. No necessity arose in consequence for the Spanish navy to exert its formidable strength where the natives were concerned. Its work was entirely confined to exploration, and though suffering terrible losses from the unknown natural dangers of uncharted seas and ignorance of local weather conditions, its ships were exposed to none of the risks involved in encountering even such a minor foe as a Mexican or Peruvian pirate. In the work before the Portuguese navy these dangers were precisely reversed. Once the lengthy outward voyage was over its ships were never called upon to test their planking against unknown rock or shoal, for on arrival in longitudes east of Mozambique they entered waters long familiar to oriental seafarers, where reliable pilots and full sailing directions were always obtainable at a price. But this same familiarity was the outcome of vested interests covering the whole Indian Ocean, so strongly opposed to the advent of competitors that nothing short of superior fighting force could break down their monopoly; and although not actually very formidable when measured by European standards the Arab vessels were sufficiently armed to cause the Portuguese some trouble before the lesson of western fighting superiority had been driven home. Local pirates swarmed, and besides being in themselves something of a pest to the Europeans, their existence compelled all native trading craft to be armed for self-protection and thus made them more difficult for the Europeans to deal with. In short every oriental sail carried weapons whether engaged in commerce or piracy, and all looked upon the white man's galleon as an enemy.

If numbers made them troublesome, however, they were not actually a great danger, and the collision between the white man and the brown could only have one ending on the water. It put a term to the dominion of the first definite rulers of the Indian Ocean and installed an entirely different race in their stead; and although the maritime ascendancy of the Portuguese which was thus established for a time has long since disappeared, their place in the great events of history must always remain secure as the firstcomers of the white peoples in whose hands the mastery of the eastern seas has ever since remained.

### III

## The FIRST PLAN of EUROPEAN DOMINION in the INDIAN OCEAN

**W**HEN Vasco da Gama returned from his remarkable pioneer voyage to India the success of the expedition so completely justified the venture, that in spite of the great explorer's serious trouble with the Moslem sea traders at Calicut, the king of Portugal forthwith resolved to embark on a series of progressively extended schemes of enterprise in so promising a field. These were based on a shrewd policy, whereby it was intended to obtain the best possible returns with the minimum of strain on the small military resources at his disposal. He was determined from the outset that his freedom should remain absolute in the Indian Ocean; a decision rendered possible by Asiatic maritime impotence. But the various native states of the east were far too strong on the land for the Portuguese to entertain any hopes of large conquests of territory, and their plans for action on shore were framed therefore on the modest scale which sufficed to assist in securing their prime object of purchasing marketable goods; that is to say, they were limited to the acquisition of small footholds at selected points on the coast as depôts for trade and bases for fleets. On the foundation of naval dominion they then proceeded systematically to build up a commercial organisation on a far wider geographical scale than ever before attempted anywhere even by the Arabs; which in part they intended should link up east and west, and to which all conquests of territory were to be regarded as merely accessory. In other words, they worked by design and purpose to effect a form of national expansion by measures bearing a close resemblance to those under which many portions of the British Empire grew to maturity at later periods on no pre-conceived policy whatever.

In pursuit of so extensive an ambition for so small a realm the Portuguese despatched soon after Vasco da Gama's return a much stronger and better armed squadron to the east under Pedro Cabral, whose official title as "Admiral of the Indies" afforded some indication of the nature and scope of his pro-

spective duties. And although this force was in its turn succeeded by others on a larger scale still it was invested with a notable historical importance as the instrument whereby the right of any nation to follow its peaceful business on the high seas was asserted for the first time in the Indian Ocean, and the Arab holders of a monopoly of trade taught that the white man was too powerful on the water to submit to exclusion on that element. In the early days of their enterprises in the east the Portuguese had not intended to enter into armed conflict with commercial rivals if they could avoid it; but the unappeasable hostility of the Mahomedan seafarers soon drove them to resort to force in self-defence, and a true appreciation of the basic principles of naval strategy gave their defensive measures an offensive form in due course.

In view of the harsh treatment which had forced Vasco da Gama to quit Calicut and proceed to Cochin some uncertainty arose between King Manoel and his advisers as to which of the Indian ports should be selected as Cabral's final destination. Some considered that the enmity of the Arab traders at Calicut and the weakness of the Hindoo Zamorin or king in allowing it to find vent, were sufficient reasons against any further advances in that quarter. But firmer counsels prevailed, and it was resolved to maintain the original attitude of amicability and forbearance as long as possible, in order that the friendly intentions of the westerners might be demonstrated for a second time. And it was furthermore regarded as highly expedient to make it clear in these opening moves of a game fraught with immense possibilities that Europeans were neither to be intimidated by violent opposition, nor unable to take care of themselves if it was repeated. For Calicut accordingly Cabral was ordered to steer, where after a very long voyage he arrived in due course towards the close of the south-west monsoon season of the year 1500, about two years and a half after da Gama's departure.

The Zamorin was now in a dilemma. Since da Gama had sailed away in anger from Calicut to the rival port of Cochin the Hindoo chief had had ample time to reflect on his error in rejecting the original Portuguese overtures, and was now anxious

to make amendment. Land and buildings were accordingly granted to Cabral for a trading dump, in which a factory staff of sixty Portuguese took up their residence; but the Zamorin was not yet prepared to offend the Mecca merchants by affording the Europeans protection against their furious opposition. This gave the Moslems an opportunity for resorting to force. Afraid as yet to attack their new rivals afloat, they had no such hesitation on shore, where their numbers were as a hundred to one; and they began by obstructing the Portuguese purchases of cargo by every means in their power. Finding, however, that Cabral was persevering with his loading operations they grew more truculent after three months of these tactics, and eventually losing all restraint fell on the factory staff and massacred them to a man with the exception of a few who were at the waterside and escaped to the ships; while the king raised no hand to stay this disorder and assassination in his own city.

It was now Cabral's turn to act. Unlike da Gama's squadron, his vessels carried heavy armaments, and for the first time in history the population of an Asiatic city were to rush distractedly into the streets under the terrifying concussions of European gunfire. That the Portuguese had received extreme provocation cannot be denied, but maddened by the agonised yells of his countrymen, and the heated atmosphere of riot and murder, Cabral lost his head and indulged in an orgy of revenge of the kind which in modern times has come to be associated with the methods of the Prussians. He began correctly enough by sinking all the Arab vessels in the harbour; for which action his vindication was ample in the absence of any authority on shore to whom he could appeal for justice against the Mahomedan authors of the trouble. No officer indeed with a proper sense of responsibility for the future safety of his countrymen could well have done less. But having administered a proper chastigation on the real criminals he allowed the defenceless condition of the city to tempt him to an act of senseless barbarism. His ships were berthed in the creek or estuary of the Beypore river, which forms the true harbour of Calicut, and it was here that the Arab shipping felt his hand. The town proper, however, stands on a perfectly straight and open beach

a few miles to the north of this estuary, with deep enough water to seaward for small vessels to run close in when the wind blows off the land and the sea is smooth. A town so placed is as completely at the mercy of naval guns as the prisoner against a wall is at the mercy of the firing-party, and the Portuguese admiral took a brutal advantage of his power. Emerging from the Beypore creek he steered along the shore till right opposite the Hindoo city and then subjected it to a two days' murderous bombardment at close range while the terrified people fled for their lives and whole streets of houses collapsed in ruins. And then, as if to shake the dust of the place from his feet, he sailed away leaving a harbour strewn with blackened wrecks; a town with its sea front pounded to rubble, and a panic-stricken population of whom by far the greater proportion were innocent of any offence.

Considerations of humanity received little attention in the wars between different coloured races in the sixteenth century, and apologists defend Cabral's action on the grounds that a drastic demonstration of power was necessary to the future safety of all Europeans in the east, and that he was only following the custom of the age. But the perfectly justifiable destruction of the Moslem shipping was quite sufficiently impressive as a warning, and apart from its moral aspects the excessive severity of his further measures was a blunder. Some form of penalty the Zamorin had certainly earned by his omission to prevent wholesale outrage; but a fine under threat of bombardment should have been enough. By his ruthless violence the Portuguese leader turned a probable friend into an enemy and lost the use of the best harbour on the Malabar coast for many years.

Seldom though the bombardment of Calicut is heard of in educational literature, it stands as a most prominent landmark in universal history as the first exchange of blows between European and Asiatic east of Palestine in the Christian era. White and brown had often met as antagonists on the shores of the Mediterranean, but never in a far eastern theatre of conflict since the days of Alexander, more than three centuries before the birth of Christ. Cabral therefore headed the long

list of European commanders—a list which includes such names as Albuquerque, Dupleix, Clive and Havelock—who arrived in India by sea and gave proof of the superior prowess in arms of the western peoples over the numerically much greater races of the east. In its origin Calicut was not a collision on sharply drawn colour lines, for as regards its causes the sympathy of the Hindoo element was quite as much on the Portuguese as the Arab side. All the more was it regrettable therefore that on such a noteworthy occasion, when Europeans were first called upon to show their latent hitting power and justly entitled to use it in self-defence, their excesses should have closed the divisions of the Asiatics at Calicut, and converted the emergency into a situation in which the colour-line meant everything. The oriental weapons were the first to leave their scabbards, and the wielders thereof suffered the fate foretold by the founder of Christianity for those who draw the sword; but the white man can never escape a lasting blame for the lack of self-control which permitted a savage and indiscriminate retaliation, which was made even more deplorable by the later acts of Vasco da Gama.

Very fortunately, however, for the subsequent intercourse of east and west the line of colour antagonism was only drawn at one spot. If events at Calicut had inspired all India, or even the larger part of it with a hatred of Europeans their effect would have been immeasurably disastrous. But bad blood existed between the native states themselves, and the king of Calicut was a despot before whom all the lesser Rajahs of Malabar quailed. When the news spread along the seaboard of Hindustan that the white man could knock down walls and sink ships with an impunity that knew no limits, the minor chiefs saw in him a possible ally and protector against oppressors of their own religion and race; and the news of the bombardment aroused positive jubilation at other ports in consequence. Knowing from the reports of da Gama that this internecine enmity existed, Cabral steered for Cochin on quitting Calicut, just as his predecessor had done, and was received with open arms as a chastiser of the Zamorin. In the sequel, therefore, Cabral's action did not provoke a general rupture between east

and west, as it might have done had the east been united in sentiment. At Cochin the Portuguese were allowed to establish a trading depôt and load their ships, and the same facilities were granted at Cannanore where they went next. It was with well filled holds therefore that Cabral started for home early next year, where he arrived after a ten months' return voyage.

When King Manoel received the report of the Calicut episode he deemed in his wrath that the chastisement so far inflicted on that ill-starred city was inadequate, and placed the next outgoing squadron under Vasco da Gama at the latter's request, in order that he might have an opportunity for wiping out the affront of his own incarceration by the Zamorin on the occasion of his first voyage to India. This squadron was still stronger than Cabral's; and on reaching Calicut after a voyage of the usual long duration, the famous explorer, finding no ships to attack, sullied his great name for ever by a quite unnecessary second destruction of the helpless town which occasioned great loss of life. Having satisfied an appetite for revenge much out of keeping with the religious sincerity of his general character, he departed for Cochin, and after destroying some Arab trading craft encountered on his way with the ferocious severity characterising the colour conflicts of the time, arrived at this place and proceeded with his commercial duties. But these were rudely interrupted by information received from the Rajah, of a nature requiring immediate preparation for more honourable employment than firing on defenceless crowds. It transpired that before da Gama's second appearance at Calicut all the local shipping had withdrawn up the coast in anticipation of another Portuguese attack, and under special arrangements made by the Zamorin, had joined the large Red Sea fleet of heavy ocean-going dhows due at this season; thus effecting a combination of about 170 keels, if we may accept the estimate of da Gama's secretary Correa. The Portuguese admiral had noticed that the Calicut anchorages were empty when he arrived; but attributed this to a fear of further Portuguese attacks, and attached no importance to the matter till the spies of the friendly ruler of Cochin warned him that this whole armada was on its way to overwhelm him, trusting to a superiority of ten to one in numbers.

Twice only in history have Asiatics forcibly disputed the European rule of the Indian Ocean as a definite issue, and this was the first of these challenges. In general conception the procedure of the Zamorin was perfectly sound. Cabral had once referred to his countrymen as "masters of the sea" during an audience at Calicut before trouble began; and the expression had struck his hearer, whose superstitious mind was further unsettled by an old prophecy of some Brahmin mystic of special sanctity, to the effect that India would never be in danger till the people came who were invincible on the water. After a second bombardment of Calicut the Zamorin concluded that his only security lay in a determined attempt to ascertain whether the white man really was master of the sea. If he remained unsubmersible even when subjected to a crushing weight of numbers then that question would be settled in the white man's favour, and all further developments must be accepted in a fatalistic spirit. But the trial must be of the severest possible; and the stratagem whereby the Zamorin hoped to surprise the Portuguese ships while engaged in loading operations with half their men on shore, was sound in idea, provided it could be kept a secret. In that, however, he failed as we have seen. Sufficient warning reached da Gama not only to enable him to get to sea with his twelve heavy ships cleared for action, but to send an urgent message to Cannanore, recalling a detached division of six light and fast caravels under Vincent Sodré, a type of vessel bearing much the same relation to the others that a modern cruiser does to a battleship. With eighteen all told, therefore, he sailed from Cochin; and shaped course to the northward along the coast to meet the advancing enemy, in spite of the urgent representations of the king of Cochin that he was simply rushing on his fate.

A most notable clash of arms followed of great historical interest. In estimating the strength of the contending forces we have no records for guidance except those of the old Portuguese chroniclers, who were naturally biassed; but it remains indisputable that in numbers the Asiatics were immensely the superior side, and if the normal volume of tonnage employed in trading in these waters is taken into consideration, Correa's



statement that the Red Sea fleet comprised seventy dhows and the Malabar coast flotilla one hundred small craft, does not seem impossible. All were strongly manned—some carrying 600 men—and the larger vessels mounted a mortar battery as ship's armament, useful at short ranges. The Red Sea division was commanded by Khojambar, an Arab seaman of great repute in the east, and the Malabar flotilla by Cassim, another leader well known on that coast. Everything was in favour of the oriental Armada therefore in material essentials, except on one point. The Portuguese ships alone carried long-range ordnance—by the standards of the day—and if only da Gama could manœuvre so as to fight at his own range his success was reasonably assured. To get to close quarters and swamp the enemy by sheer weight was the whole object therefore of the Asiatics; to allow the enemy to get just close enough for annihilation by superior gunnery the object of the Europeans.

Converging on opposite courses during the night, the combatants came in sight of each other next morning six miles apart; and by stripping away the masses of trivial details which obscure the accounts of the old historians and comparing what remains of their respective versions, it is possible to arrive at a fair idea of the main events of this memorable day. The wind blew straight from the land on the starboard beam of the Portuguese and port beam of their opponents; but the latter were the further out from the shore, doubtless because Khojambar wished to be in a position to cut off da Gama's escape should he try to break away to the westward. The Mahomedan admiral behaved in fact as if he could not conceive it possible that his adversary would do anything else; a fatally erroneous pre-conception, for when the fleets first saw each other the Portuguese were already somewhat to windward in consequence, and immediately improved the tactical advantage of the weather gauge by close-hauling on the starboard tack and standing more towards the land. This bold and clever move was exactly the opposite of what Khojambar had expected, and virtually settled the issue of the day by placing the Portuguese so decisively to windward that da Gama could fight at his own range, which was all he wanted; but even then the Moslem could not or



### INDIAN OCEAN DHANGI OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

A class of vessel traditionally existing before the Christian era, and now the most ancient ocean-going type in the world that is still reproduced

*(From a sketch by the author)*



would not see its true import; for instead of parrying by hauling to the wind on one tack or the other himself, he continued to steer straight on, sailing large. From that moment da Gama knew that he commanded the situation if the wind remained even moderately steady, which it did.

In the Portuguese formation Sodré's fast caravel squadron was stationed some distance ahead of the main battle line, but with the Asiatics these positions were reversed and Cassim's swarms of small craft followed the main body composed by the Red Sea division, instead of leading it. In these dispositions, therefore, the vans of the two fleets approached and drew past on opposite courses, being separated by a distance across which the European armaments were very effective while the Asiatic were useless; a distance, moreover, which it was now too late for Khojambar to reduce. Thus it came about that one after another the leading Red Sea dhows, including the Mahomedan flagship, were dismantled or disabled by Sodré's gunfire with perfect impunity to himself; and drifting to leeward either collided with the consorts on their disengaged side or forced the latter still further down wind, till Khojambar's division was a welter of close-packed confusion. Following in Sodré's wake soon came the heavily armed division under da Gama, which shortened sail at a safe distance to windward of this huge and struggling mass and lying thus, spent the rest of the afternoon in pulverising ships and crews alike till the surface of the water was obliterated from view by wave-washed wreckage and crowds of drowning Arabs. It was a point of vantage fairly gained by superior tactics, but as all the loss was on one side this part of the action had become an execution rather than a fight. A good many of the dhows, however, which were on the lee side of the mass—and therefore under cover of their more unfortunate consorts—extricated themselves eventually; and finding that they were now too far to leeward to retrieve the fortunes of the day or render help, made off down wind and escaped, the Portuguese having no ships to spare for chasing. In this way a general break-up and retreat commenced as nightfall approached, but before that fairly began Sodré had passed on to attack Cassim's flotilla of small craft, which was coming up

some distance astern of Khojambar's heavy division. Here the Portuguese cruiser commander had to move warily as most of these light vessels were small enough to manœuvre under oars or sweeps which reduced the value of the Portuguese weather position. But the latter retained the tactical asset of superior speed on any course on which they could keep their sails full; and although the vague descriptions of land historians make it impossible now to trace Sodré's actual track, the point emerges that he maintained a successful running fight at this stage of the general action. It was in vain that the enemy rowers strove to close in and board for they were invariably repelled with disastrous loss as they drew near by the Portuguese gunners, and towards sunset their demoralisation was completed by the ruin and rout of their Red Sea allies plainly in progress at no great distance. Under cover of darkness therefore Cassim abandoned further efforts and with what remained of his force joined the general retreat; while da Gama reassembled his whole command, not having lost a single unit, and returned to Cochin without attempting pursuit; partly perhaps because his magazines were getting depleted, but mainly because he was anxious to start for home well loaded before the fair monsoon began to wane.

So ended this decisive battle in which a host of brown men were out-manœuvred and out-fought at every point by a handful of whites. Politically and morally its effects were enormous. When the cherished plans of the greatest native magnate on the Malabar coast went to pieces under the blows of da Gama all the ruling elements of Southern India, whether friendly or otherwise to the new race at their gates, perceived that the latter were indeed masters of the sea, and had come to stay unless they could be opposed successfully on the land. A second demonstration of this same kind proved to be necessary before the States of Northern India were similarly educated; but the battle above described was the first of the two great events which showed that the foundations of the white man's position in eastern longitudes were well and truly laid, whatever kind of structure might happen to be erected on them afterwards; and on the two occasions on which their stability

was put to the test the ordeal was the more searching from its extreme unexpectedness. Nor was the moral effect confined to Hindustan. Survivors spread the tale of their experiences far and wide through the eastern shipping world, which invested the European with a reputation as a warrior bordering on the miraculous, and produced some extraordinary results at later dates.

Tactically the battle was interesting as an illustration of contrasted methods, and a model of most of the fights subsequently waged by the Portuguese over local flotillas in the Malay Archipelago and elsewhere; in which skill and science were pitted against mob weight invariably with success as long as a steady wind permitted manœuvring under sail. Only when the wind failed was the white man ever in real danger on the water. When that occurred he was sometimes borne down and trampled out of existence under mass-attack; but at other times the weather gauge and long-range gun won him the day, though occasionally he was left the victor when everything seemed against him by a fit of sheer and unaccountable panic on the part of his enemy.

As in the case of some other notable naval engagements no special distinguishing name has ever been bestowed on this conflict by historians, who sometimes call it the action of Calicut and sometimes the Portuguese victory of 1502. Both titles are unsatisfactory in a way, as the first is apt to confuse it with the bombardments of Calicut town, and the second conveys no indication of its place or locality. For general convenience it might perhaps be most suitably known as the Battle of Malabar—after the nearest coastline on the analogy of Jutland or Ushant—and as that designation has not been appropriated for any other encounter it may serve in these pages at least.

With this triumph to his credit Vasco da Gama quitted the deck of maritime history and all his subsequent career lay on the land. To few men indeed has it been given to unite the explorer and the warrior in any notable degree, but in his case the claim must pass unquestioned. As an explorer he surveys the ages from a pinnacle on which only Columbus and Magellan are fairly entitled to stand beside him; and as an admiral his

reputation is sufficiently established by the determination with which he faced the issue involved in accepting the challenge of the Zamorin's huge combination when he might have evaded it without serious discredit, and by the tactical skill he displayed when in contact with the enemy.

But even so, his exploits in the latter rôle were completely eclipsed by three of his great compatriots who came on the scene immediately after him; and King Manoel must surely be counted as a most fortunate ruler in the servants to his hand at this brilliant stage in the history of his country. Wishing to obtain an unbiassed and competent opinion on the whole problem of further intercourse with India after the experiences of Cabral and da Gama, his choice for an investigator fell on the black-bearded Affonso Albuquerque; whose commanding personality had attracted attention long before his opportunities had proved the man, and whose name became thereafter by far the most famous in the whole annals of the Indian Ocean, and so remains to this day. To this remarkable figure all historians alike have conceded the stamp of genius, for with an instinctive perception of the highest order respecting all that pertains to oceanic dominion in peace and war—much of which was quite a new science—he combined a phenomenal temerity of character moral and physical, and the complete self-confidence and power of rapid decision in crises and emergencies which is only found in very gifted men. With the heart to execute as well as the head to plan no trace of vacillation ever marked his pursuit of a course once adopted as the best to attain a specific end, no matter what the risks and difficulties might be; and though constantly under the spur of an impetuous temperament he resembled Nelson in a power of enduring wearisome periods of forced inaction without losing any of his vigour of ultimate purpose through the weakening process of long and indefinite delay. In short, it would be almost impossible to conceive of a man better fitted by nature for the great work that was waiting for him. He was ruthless to the last degree on occasion, it is true—though by no means invariably so—and often imposed the will of the white man on very reluctant oriental rulers. But these traits do no more than indicate that he was imbued with

the universal spirit in which the sixteenth century waged its colour wars, and the perfectly honest conviction that it was his duty to his sovereign, his country and his faith to assert the divine right of a Christian king to interfere in the affairs of any heathen land if his interest demanded it.

In addition to surveying the general situation and reporting on it, Albuquerque was directed to take such steps as might be necessary to consolidate the Portuguese position on shore, and if necessary to assist the Rajah at Cochin; but as these measures did not require much naval effort, and as the voyage was otherwise more in the nature of a journey of investigation than anything else, he only sailed with four ships, his first destination in India being Cochin. Here, on arrival, he began at once to strengthen the Portuguese factory by erecting defensive works on the land side, always the threatened point in the early European settlements in the east. He also rendered valuable aid in defending the native town against a long-expected attack by the army of Calicut, which happened to occur while he was there and was successfully repulsed; and then proceeded to fortify the Cannanore and Quilon settlements, the last mentioned being a third trading concession granted by the chief of a Malabar coastal town to the Portuguese.

But all this was no more than the execution of what he regarded as the minor duties of his mission, while his thoughts were in reality absorbed in gigantic schemes in other directions; for Albuquerque's mind was not of the type which could remain content with a merely passive eastern policy restricted in its sphere of activity to a strip of the Indian littoral, when he realised the immense possibilities to be found in the control of the eastern seas. Gifted in a most unusual degree with the power of visualising the prospects of maritime situations on the largest scale, he placed the chart of the Indian Ocean before him and studied its character as a whole from the standpoint of commercial opportunities. And as a consequence he was the first man in history to evolve an organised system of trade on an oceanic scope, and to arrive at an understanding of the proper principles of its defence as a special branch of naval science with rules of its own. He knew that the Asiatic peoples traded



extensively with the Mecca merchants and had reliable grounds for believing that they would sell their goods to anyone else who was willing to pay. And as the Arabs had appealed to the arbitration of the sword in their refusal to recognise the rights of any competitors, they had forfeited by their own act all claim to a share in the business themselves, if the sword gave its verdict against them, which in the hands of Europeans was inevitable. On these premises he elaborated his plans.

The first object of the Portuguese admiral therefore was the removal of an apparently implacable enemy, and the second the acquisition of the industry which the enemy's removal would leave available for a competent successor. As regards attack and defence his natural intuition where large questions of strategy were concerned led him to frame his plans on the same general lines as those which in later periods guided the policy of the British navy in the Anglo-French wars. He discerned that the surest and simplest method of accomplishing the double purpose of extending European trade under adequate protection, and at the same time of eliminating the opposition of ruthless adversaries, lay in the abandonment of the attitude of passive defence which confined Portuguese operations to the coast of Hindustan in favour of an active policy of closing the main lines of traffic to the Arabs; while in order to lay the foundation of an organised system of maritime transport under the Portuguese flag he resolved to adopt their own model in so far as it applied to the *collection* of cargoes. The actual conveyance of the goods to Europe was obviously a matter in which the Arab traffic system offered no guidance because all European bound freight was now to be diverted to the Cape route.

Before Albuquerque's time the main stream of commerce traversing the Indian Ocean travelled east and west through its northern part, between the China Sea on the one hand and the twin termini of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf on the other. To the eastward of India it was all merged on one line, to the westward it became forked into two from Calicut, which was the general junction and centre of oriental water communications. In carrying westward the goods intended ultimately to reach Mediterranean markets the large ocean-going dhows that made

the whole run from the Malay Archipelago loaded with spices at or near Malacca, called in at Calicut in passing to pick up Indian produce, and finished their voyage at a Red Sea or Persian Gulf discharging port. Those starting from no further east than Hindustan usually shipped their full freight at Calicut or Goa and unloaded at the same points as the first. Any effective stoppage of the movement of trade to Europe by this route was only practicable to the Portuguese by holding its sources or extremities, and it so happened that the natural geography of the course which it followed facilitated such a measure if undertaken on a bold and comprehensive scale; for at each point where vessels entered or left the main expanse of the Indian Ocean, in passing to or from its extensions or connections with other waters, they threaded a comparatively narrow channel easily patrolled and closed by a few cruisers. Thus in sailing westward from China or the Malay Archipelago they were compelled to navigate the Straits of Malacca unless they risked a long and dangerous detour; and no way whatever in or out of the Red Sea or Persian Gulf existed except by the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb in the one case and the Straits of Ormuz in the other. Each of these three channels represented in consequence a locality of great strategic importance as a position where a squadron could check the entire traffic on a particular line indefinitely; if able to rely on the use of a suitable anchorage close at hand to which it could detach its ships as necessary for replenishing supplies, or resort to as a whole for shelter in bad weather. All three, however, lay from 1500 to 1800 miles remote from the Indian harbour where the Portuguese admiral was studying the situation, and the easternmost and westernmost were separated from each other by nearly 3500 miles. But the very magnitude of a great problem only served to fire Albuquerque's imagination, and his schemes were planned on a scale of distances rightly proportionate to the wide-spanned requirements of oceanic dominion. On these three bottle-necks of traffic therefore he fixed his first attention as points on which to lay a restraining hand on Arab competition, and on this foundation his whole further policy was based.

The stoppage of Arab trade, however, was only a beginning.

To gather up the freights which the Mecca merchants were no longer to be permitted to handle, it was necessary to step into their shoes at the principal centres of exchange; and of these it chanced that the next in importance to Calicut were the town of Malacca and the island of Ormuz, which lay respectively on the straits of the same names just where the admiral proposed to place barriers on the main thoroughfare. These two seaports were collecting-stations on the main line, towards which a large number of small craft were constantly employed in carrying cargoes from the surrounding coasts to be sold to the Moslem traders, and transferred to the holds of their large vessels for the ocean passage. Each was a point of confluence or pool, where a number of rivulets poured into a main stream, and the acquisition of these points for Portugal became one of Albuquerque's chief ambitions in consequence; but he rightly decided not to interfere with the swarms of small native carriers on the branch lines, of which the encouragement and protection was necessary to whatever nationality they might belong, as the Portuguese ships were too large and far too few to take their place, and the work they performed was a necessary factor in the general organisation of sea traffic.

The whole presence of the Portuguese in the orient, however, and all the great schemes he proposed for its expansion, needed covering on its western side from the permanent hostility of the Moslem countries lying between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Arabia, Syria and Egypt—and in a lesser degree Persia and Turkey—were all interested in the maintenance of trade by the old caravan crossings, and certain to suffer by the diversion of freight to the Cape route. Though not scientifically organised for maritime war at this period some of these countries were geographically in a much better position for controlling the Indian Ocean than Portugal; and the Sultan of Egypt—who at that time was still independent of the Turks—maintained a fleet of war galleys to assert his supremacy in the Red Sea, which vessels though inferior in fighting qualities to the large Portuguese ocean-going ships were far too numerous to be negligible as a factor in the general outlook. Albuquerque foresaw that if the malcontents of the middle east

could effect a junction between these galleys and the shipping of Portugal's enemies in India—proved or potential—another crisis might arise such as that which led to the Battle of Malabar. In point of fact it did arise, though not through any fault of his own. To provide against this permanent danger he proposed—if enough ships were available—to station a squadron in the Gulf of Aden, with a fortified supply and careening base, for which purpose the island of Socotra was eventually selected. This part of his general scheme in itself demonstrates how far ahead of his time he was in his comprehension of the true elements of maritime strategy. Any other man of his day would have tied down this defending force to the coast of Malabar; but Albuquerque proposed to advance it as far as possible towards the starting-point of the enemy, and in his instinctive preference for the “offensive-defensive” was working towards the great policy of war blockade, till then an unknown practice.

In the days of canvas, however, a special complication attached to all strategic questions in the Indian Ocean from the regularity of the seasonal winds, immensely helpful though they were to trade. To those only acquainted with the principles of war on land, a study of the chart of the Indian Ocean might convey the impression that as water is water, a main base in Hindustan would occupy an excellent central position from which to reinforce any outlying position quickly where a detached body needed support against local attack. That, however, was far from being the case. Geographically its position is central beyond a doubt, but in the sailing era no position on the north side of the Indian Ocean was central in the strategic sense on account of the monsoons; which blow alternately from opposite quarters according to the time of year. Thus until the introduction of steam, it took a ship at least sixteen weeks of beating to windward to reach Aden from India in the summer months, though she could run the other way in anything between seven and fifteen days. In the winter these periods were reversed. The same applied to the passage from India to Malacca except that the fair wind for this voyage was in summer instead of winter and *vice versa*. As a consequence the eastern and the western gateways to the Indian Ocean were each by turns

about eight times as far distant strategically from any headquarters in Hindustan during one half of the year as they were during the other; and an admiral on the Malabar coast was practically cut off from sending support or orders to the point to windward at any given moment, or from receiving intelligence from the one on his lee. For this reason all complete exchanges of communication between the Portuguese Commander-in-Chief at his Indian base and detached ships or shore stations at the far ends of the main routes were usually a matter of months, and it was necessary under such conditions that the outlying commercial posts should be able to hold their own against all local enemies without assistance from the centre. To some extent they could be protected by the squadrons which Albuquerque proposed to station in the straits to hold up the Arab traffic; but it was neither possible to rely entirely on these squadrons without interfering with their prime duty, nor to make at all times certain that they would be available in adequate strength in those days when shipwreck was a very frequent occurrence. Such points needed to be fortified, therefore, sufficiently to resist local attack without immediate naval assistance; and in the selection of their sites questions of defence required due consideration as well as questions of trade.

Having completed the fortification of the factory sites at the Malabar ports, loaded with cargo for Lisbon and taken stock of the whole eastern situation, Albuquerque sailed home to lay his report before the king and arrived in the Tagus after an absence of rather under two years. During this period Manoel himself had been developing the administration of the Indian settlements by appointing a viceroy as governing executive in the person of Francisco Almeida; in order to free the admirals of the Indies for wider duties. Almeida arrived out accordingly with some troops to provide guards soon after Albuquerque had started homeward; but during his term in office the new viceroy choose to act rather in the rôle of a sea commander than of a land official, his son being nominally the admiral while he himself did the work. Though never quite the equal of Albuquerque he was one of the very competent band of Portuguese leaders who made history in the early sixteenth century; so much so,

indeed, that certain later events seem to show that too many strong men were on the spot at the same time.

When Albuquerque's proposals had been unfolded in Lisbon they marked his obvious capacity for great enterprise, and found such favour in high quarters that preparations for developing the whole situation in the Indian Ocean along these lines were forthwith commenced. The first step was to be the assertion of a definite Portuguese overlordship on its western shores by capturing the islands of Ormuz and Socotra, and by levying a tribute on all the principal Moslem coastal chiefs—from Mozambique on the south as far as the entrance to the Persian Gulf on the north—as vassals of Portugal, even if their territories were left unoccupied. This utilisation of the command of the Indian Ocean for purposes of wholesale extortion seems at first sight less than one degree removed from state piracy, but it was aimed solely at the Mahomedan element who had declared themselves as the uncompromising enemy of Europeans, and whose co-religionists were at chronic war with Christians in the Mediterranean. The special object of seizing Ormuz has already been mentioned. Socotra, which lies at the mouth of the Gulf of Aden, was to be the base for the squadron or division stationed to watch the exit from the Red Sea.

Fourteen ships were collected and despatched accordingly in the beginning of 1506, and Indian Ocean history entered on a most portentous new phase. For eight years the white man's activities in the east had not carried him beyond the point of chaffering for spices in the squalor of three waterside bazaars; but now the curtain was about to rise on an era of maritime empire on an oceanic scale. Six of the outward-bound vessels constituted a special squadron under Albuquerque, while the rest were under Admiral Tristan da Cunha; but the latter, as senior officer, was in command of the whole force while acting as one. Da Cunha was instructed to proceed right up the East African coast collecting tribute at the Arab trading centres—by force if necessary—and finishing by the seizure of the best harbour he could find in Socotra, where he was to build a redoubt and post a strong guard. After that Albuquerque was to part company and proceed with his division to

the Persian Gulf to take Ormuz—collecting tribute at the few villages on the Arabian coast where it was possible to land—and da Cunha was to cross to Cochin to embark the year's freight for home.

In carrying out these orders one ship of the squadron was blown away to the eastward in a gale and accidentally discovered Madagascar before rejoining the fleet at Mozambique; which caused some delay, as da Cunha insisted on visiting this new land while Albuquerque was impatient to get on. Having lost one vessel in this process, however, and very nearly lost his own flagship the Commander-in-Chief resumed the execution of his mission, and after some fighting at two large Arab settlements, which refused to pay tribute and were plundered accordingly, arrived at Socotra, where he found that an Arab fort already overlooked the best anchorage. This defence work was taken by escalade after a sharp struggle and converted into a Portuguese citadel, where a garrison was installed; and in the bay below the whole fleet refitted after their long voyage of more than a year. The two divisions then separated, da Cunha's for India and home, Albuquerque's to carry out some of the most adventurous exploits in the history of the east. Up to this point the latter had already been entrusted by his senior colleague with the leading share in all engagements.

With the hoisting of the Portuguese flag over Socotra a first step was taken towards the establishment of the great maritime position in the east which Albuquerque had planned; but far more important ones were to follow before it was completed, and all these were carried out by Albuquerque himself in a series of operations extending over several years, some of which were of a most brilliant description. When he separated from da Cunha this great work began almost at once by his remarkable expedition to the Persian Gulf, which first displayed his genius as a leader in the actual presence of a formidable enemy, and in some respects was unsurpassed by any of his later exploits.

## IV

### The WAR of the ARABIAN SEA

**W**HETHER regarded from a purely maritime standpoint or from that of the general history of the eastern world, few periods are more deserving of attention than that covered by the years 1508 and 1509 of the Christian era. To the profession of the sea the interest of the period arises from its two sea campaigns, waged more or less simultaneously in the north-western part of the Indian Ocean, and yet quite independently—and even in mutual ignorance—between representatives of the same European nation on the one hand and a variety of Asiatic adversaries on the other. And to the student of general history the interest lies in the illustrations which these afforded of some of the most profound temperamental differences between the white race and the brown.

When Vasco da Gama defeated the first maritime alliance assembled to drive back the white invaders of the Indian Ocean at the critical battle of Malabar, he provided the initial demonstration of the truth so often proved since, that European armaments in the hands of competent tacticians are a match for a tenfold more numerous enemy equipped with Asiatic weapons and nothing more. This source of victory was the outcome of the European's superiority in practical intellect. Science produced the better implements for fighting and the better ships that carried them; science also taught the wielders how to move so as to make these implements most effective.

But science has its limitations and a point is sometimes reached in which it ceases to function. When the last round has sped the primitive pike is more deadly than the 18-pounder, and where there is no room or chance to move qualities of character rather than knowledge of tactics must save the day if it is to be saved at all. Vasco da Gama showed that on the scientific side of war the white man was far in advance of the brown. But it was left for Affonso Albuquerque and Lorenzo Almeida to demonstrate for the first time the vastly more important truth that on the moral side of war the superiority of the white man was even more pronounced; so great indeed



that on certain occasions he scarcely seemed to need material weapons at all, for situations arose in which science could do nothing and every advantage lay with the Asiatic, and yet the latter behaved after the fashion of the wild creature which encounters a human being in the jungle, whom it could kill with ease but flies from under the influence of an uncontrollable awe. This form of panic was by no means an invariable phenomenon, but Albuquerque proved that the weakness existed and could be played on as a last chance by a resolute leader in a desperate position; and Almeida proved that when even that failed the European could still face certain and awful disaster in a manner which produced a moral effect scarcely less impressive. As the meeting of east and west under arms first took place on the water it was on that element that these portentous lessons were first taught; and saving only where the Japanese have provided the exception proving the rule they stand unaffected by the passage of time; for men who are still no more than middle-aged were alive when three English seamen in a dinghy put to flight and chased an Arab slaver with an armed crew of forty men, under circumstances in which the slightest hesitation would have been fatal to themselves. To conceive such an incident with the human elements transposed would be frankly impossible.

We should hardly be justified in assuming, however, that even so daring an adventurer as Albuquerque was relying on this streak of instability in the oriental temperament for his own success, when he sailed from Socotra with only six vessels and 450 officers and men to attack Ormuz; which he found on arrival to be protected by a fleet he afterwards estimated at 250 ships large and small and a force of 15,000 men. It was ignorance of the material factors in the situation more than anything else that was answerable for the undertaking; for his knowledge of Ormuz went little beyond an appreciation of its valuable strategic position, gained from a study of the chart, and of its commercial importance gained from native reports. Very few commanders would have embarked on so rash an enterprise on so slight an acquaintance with what lay before them; but fewer still would have converted what seemed to

be certain failure into astonishing success through sheer intrepidity of bearing. It was as if a man had entered a tiger's cage expecting to meet a cat, and finding himself there had mesmerised the animal by his gaze while he wrenched a bone from its jaws.

At the period here under attention the Sultanate of Ormuz consisted of several detached coastal villages, scattered between desert and sea on the extreme eastern seaboard of Arabia, and acknowledging a ruler whose capital was on the island of Ormuz, on the north side of the straits of that name which form the gateway of the Persian Gulf. Though too small to produce much in itself, its favourable situation and convenient roadstead made this island the principal collecting and distributing centre of commerce anywhere between Mesopotamia and Malabar. The anchorage lies in the channel separating the island from the Persian mainland, on which, directly opposite, lay the terminus of many important caravan routes to the far interior. By its insular position the town was protected from the raids of wandering desert tribes on the mainland, without being any more exposed to pirates than other ports in those regions, and its harbour was safe and easy of access. To Ormuz accordingly the shipping of the east resorted in enormous numbers; and from a description of the sixteenth century this island was a business rendezvous of merchants from Egypt, Syria, Constantinople, Asia Minor, Persia, Syria, Turkestan, all parts of India, and many much more distant countries such as Burmah, Java, Siam, China, Mozambique and Abyssinia. Commercially, therefore, its status offered a parallel to that of the island seaport of Hong-kong at the present day as the exchange and mart of an immense maritime area. Strategically its situation at the sea gate of the Persian Gulf corresponded to that of Gibraltar at the entrance to the Mediterranean; with the advantage to a strong maritime possessor that it was inaccessible to the march of any hostile army. Like Gibraltar it was powerless in itself to prevent an enemy's ship from passing into or out of the sea at the entrance to which it stood; for the width of that entrance is too great to be commanded by guns on shore and only a fleet can properly close it. But Ormuz was ideally situated for pro-

viding such a fleet with the replenishing and repairing base necessary for long periods of watching the Straits.

Albuquerque started from Socotra to make this great maritime prize a tributary to Portugal during the height of the south-west monsoon, and had a fast run to the easternmost point of Arabia accordingly; but was prevented by the monsoon from landing anywhere till that promontory had been doubled and a weather shore permitted a safe approach. Tribute was then exacted at the coastal towns which belonged to Ormuz—not without some opposition and bloodshed—and the squadron proceeded on to the large seaport of Muscat, where the Sultan of the Oman region of Arabia had his seat of government, and which lay on the route for Ormuz. High cliffs almost completely encircle this landlocked harbour and the town at its head, and so steep are the soundings in the approaches to the shore that the Portuguese ships could anchor within hailing distance of the Sultan's palace overlooking the chief landing-place. Proceedings opened with an exchange of letters which failed to produce any result and were therefore followed by a severe bombardment. When this had started a conflagration and enabled the Portuguese to seize a portion of the sea wall, the Sultan surrendered and agreed not only to pay an annual tribute to Portugal but to grant a site for a fortified trading depôt. This was accordingly erected, and parts of its main structure stand to this day, bearing eloquent testimony to the remarkable power of Albuquerque's men to endure extremes of climate by conducting arduous operations of war under the almost intolerable summer sun of Arabia on salt provisions and a very small ration of water. When it was completed he took his departure for Ormuz where his enterprise was to reach a highly dramatic culmination.

As the roadstead and city of Ormuz lay on the north side of the island they were screened from the Portuguese till the squadron rounded the eastern point of the island at daybreak and opened them into view. The sight amazed them. From the account of Albuquerque himself 60 large vessels besides 200 galleys and smaller craft awaited his approach, while 15,000 troops were drawn up along the sea walls and the air throbbed

and boomed to hundreds of drums and cymbals afloat and ashore. Having only some 400 men, the captains of his own ships, though brave enough officers, hailed him one and all to protest that it would be suicide to provoke a conflict against such crowds where space was insufficient for free manœuvring. But though confronted by such an entirely unforeseen emergency Albuquerque's resolution never wavered for an instant. Feeling that it was at his own instigation that he brought his sovereign's demand for the submission of Ormuz to the crown of Portugal, he resolved to put the issue to the test by presenting an appearance of absolute power to dictate. It proved a trump card, but only because his nerve enabled him to play a game in which the least betrayal of the real weakness of his hand would have spelt disaster.

From the very outset this determined attitude served its purpose, for when the Sultan and his war vizier, with their hosts on sea and land, saw that the half-dozen Portuguese ships were steering straight for the anchorage without a vestige of uncertainty in their advance, their superstition and fatalism, which were already awakened by stories from Calicut and Muscat, convinced them that these strangers were of a breed against which it was useless to strive. Not a shot was fired, therefore, as Albuquerque stood right on under the gaze of the whole town and harbour towards a line of the largest dhows, moored as a first defence and carrying heavy mortar armaments with very strong crews; and anchoring at last within half a cable's length of the leviathan of their fleet, he answered a challenge to explain his business by requesting that an officer of responsible rank should be sent to the Portuguese flagship to receive a letter for the Sultan; which was done. This document demanded the surrender of the whole realm of Ormuz as a tributary State to Portugal; but promised entire liberty of religion, laws and customs, under the direct governorship of its own native rulers, provided that its trade was controlled through a Portuguese agent through whom an annual sum should be paid to King Manoel for effective protection against all other enemies.

Through its seeming consciousness of absolute power the

tone of this demand so greatly heightened the effect of awe already produced by the confident attitude of the Portuguese, that although the recipient could have destroyed them with impunity, he yielded on every point. Even so, however, he could not forego the haggle over details which is inseparable in the oriental mind from the conclusion of any bargain; and when this had been prolonged into a third day, Albuquerque, fearing that the King was regaining assurance, despatched an ultimatum demanding unconditional acceptance without further parley, and ordered his captains to prepare for attack. These officers had been alarmed at the nature of the Admiral's proceedings from the first; but recognising that a point had now been reached from which withdrawal was impossible promised him their full support, and for the time were as good as their word. Had they known that a fleet of fifty more large ships from the Persian ports was already close at hand, as a supporting force for Ormuz, their anxiety would have been even greater; but of this only the king and a few of his councillors were aware. No reply to his peremptory demand having reached the Portuguese commander by the evening he took the sole course remaining, desperate though its chances seemed to be.

Next day witnessed one of those scenes which actually happen, and yet seem so impossible that in distant ages they passed into legends as instances of the miraculous intervention of the gods in person, such as fill the pages of Homer and other ancient writers. At dawn the Portuguese opened a short but intense cannonade on the nearest enemy ships as a preparation for boarding from boats, and when ready the dozen or so of boats which were all that they possessed dashed with as many men as they could carry at the three largest vessels of the enormous Asiatic fleet. This incredible audacity so terrified the remainder that in their thousands these well-armed stalwart men—the majority of whom belonged to the most militant faith in the world—thought of nothing but instant flight, and sprang overboard in whole crews to swim for the shore; so that the handful of Europeans, after the first brief shock of encounter, swept through the entire harbour like wildfire; and finding nothing but empty ships left a few of their own gunners on

board the more heavily armed to use their batteries in sinking or damaging the rest, while the remainder of the boats' crews turned their attack on the struggling crowds in the water. Sixteenth-century writers love to dwell on the horrors of the next act, but it suffices to say here that as no quarter was given by either side in these eastern conflicts the surface of the roadstead was soon "everywhere of a dreadful hue," to use the words of one of these annalists; and the physical labour of massacre became so fatiguing that relief crews were required in the boats to carry on a slaughter in which even cooks and cabin-boys used a pike.

Intoxicated by their amazing triumph some of the Portuguese were not content with victory afloat but pulled for the town. In this madness, however, Albuquerque as usual kept his head. All through the headlong scenes in the earlier part of the day his own barge had led the attack and even his own sword had been busy; but as the conflict drew shorewards several flights of arrows from the sea battlements—one of which slashed his own face—warned the Admiral that the contagion of panic had not yet infected the garrison, and though he permitted the burning of a suburb outside the city walls he withheld any attack on the city itself. No such attack, however, proved to be necessary, for not a single vessel of the original defending fleet now remained in the enemy's hands to prevent him from commencing a general bombardment, and as this was obvious to the defenders the Sultan sent out a small boat to offer an unconditional surrender. On receipt of this submission Albuquerque called off his excited crews and brought a day of unparalleled triumph to an end with trifling loss to the Portuguese arms. It was the crowning achievement of a remarkable cruise, and though his later conquest of Goa was attended by even more important advantages to his country—and was a much more difficult exploit from the navigational as distinguished from the combatant point of view—his victory at Ormuz may be regarded as the most peculiarly personal success of his whole career from having been carried to a finish on his own decision against the advice of all his principal subordinates.

Unfortunately for the Admiral, however, these subordinates

were adventurers of rank and influence, who had volunteered for service in the east as much in the hope of personal profit as from a sense of duty to the State; and their commander's next proceedings did not suit their private ambitions. Having reinstated the Sultan in authority, in accordance with his pledge, Albuquerque commenced the building of a large citadel with native labour and materials—an operation that promised to take some months—and proposed to remain at Ormuz till it was finished. Wishing to get on to India to obtain a share in the lucrative commercial transactions of the government, five of his captains were extremely averse to this prospect of delay and protested that it was no part of Albuquerque's mission; and when he refused to let them go, three of the five took the opportunity of deserting him for India when sent with their ships to the neighbouring island of Larak to obtain water, which was very scarce at Ormuz. Incidentally when starting from Larak, they sighted the large Persian Gulf fleet which had arrived in the vicinity a month before to retake Ormuz, but never dared to enter; and which retreated finally under a press of sail when the three Portuguese hove in view.

By the treachery of these captains Albuquerque was left in an impossible position; for one of the renegades had actually informed the Sultan of their dissensions with the Admiral, and having plucked up courage from this intelligence the Sultan refused to supply any more materials for the citadel when he found that only three ships remained to threaten him. Realising therefore that he was now without the power to enforce compliance except under very doubtful prospects of success, Albuquerque reluctantly took his departure on the autumn change of monsoon, to inspect the condition of the fort and garrison of Socotra; but warned the Sultan that he would certainly return and compel obedience some day. On the passage a fourth vessel deserted him at night for India, so that only one of his original squadron besides his flagship now remained. At Socotra he spent the winter refitting his two vessels and replenishing the post; and being joined there by three newly arrived ships from home returned to Ormuz with the whole five on the spring change of monsoon in 1509.



**ALPHONSO ALBUQUERQUE**

Portuguese Admiral and Captain-General of the Indies, Founder  
of the Portuguese Dominion of the Indian Ocean

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Meanwhile, however, events exercising a most decisive influence on the whole future of Europeans in the east had been taking place on the coast of Hindustan of which Albuquerque was totally unaware at the time; though for a period they placed him in a perilous position without his knowledge, and though they arose from a danger he had foreseen himself from the first, namely, the irritation of the middle east at the Portuguese invasion of the Indian Ocean. Foremost among the malcontents was the powerful Sultan of Egypt, who was in communication on the subject with the Mahomedan king of Cambaya or Gujerat, in north-western India, another bitter opponent of the Portuguese and an able ruler. In order to drive the representatives of the white race out of the east altogether the autocrat at Cairo built a special fleet of war galleys at Suez from the models of the largest and finest war vessels in the navies of the Mediterranean powers, constructed of specially imported Dalmatian oak, armed with bronze guns equal to any in the Portuguese service and manned by highly trained picked crews. This force he despatched on the summer monsoon of 1508 under the command of Ameer Hussein, to the Gujerat seaport of Diu, with orders to join there a numerous local flotilla of small craft under the Gujerati leader Melikaz. The combined fleets were to wait at Diu till the summer monsoon was over, and then sail southward to co-operate with the Zamorin of Calicut in making an end of the presence of Europeans in India; the Zamorin attacking the Portuguese settlements by land while the Red Sea galleys bombarded them from the sea, and then disembarked an attacking force in the light draught flotilla from Gujerat to finish off any resistance. In waiting for the winter monsoon their plans were well laid for three reasons. Firstly, naval operations were facilitated at that season by the comparative safety of a weather shore; secondly, the annual departure of the homeward-bound Lisbon fleet took place in the autumn and left the coast comparatively denuded of naval defence; and thirdly, while the winter monsoon lasted no relief or reinforcements could reach their enemy. They contrived to conceal their intentions with remarkable success from the Portuguese, who do not seem to have been even aware of the arrival of

a formidable fleet to their northward judging by what followed.

Ten years had elapsed since the first voyage of Vasco da Gama and at this period the Portuguese settlements in Hindustan were still no more than a small group on the Malabar coast, with headquarters at Cochin; all under the governorship of Francisco Almeida, the first Viceroy; whose personality exercised so great an effect on the events of his term of office that it claims at this point attention in some detail. Almeida was a man of great force of character and sense of duty; but in his outlook towards the policy of his country in the east he was what would now be called an extremist of the blue-water school; consistently averse to territorial expansion, but perpetually striving to foster and protect sea-borne trade. Though lacking the genius and idealism of Albuquerque he did possess a very shrewd understanding of the foibles of his own countrymen; and feared that the upkeep of a Colonial empire would absorb so much of the profits of commerce that it would be a burden instead of an advantage to the motherland; a state of affairs which actually came to pass a century later through the extravagance and dishonesty of the Portuguese colonial administrators. The influence of this attitude can be traced in all his actions. He took no steps to follow up the visit of the first Portuguese cruisers to Ceylon although he might have obtained a large part of the island almost for the asking; and regarded Albuquerque's schemes with critical reservations which led him to disapprove strongly of the project for a Portuguese citadel at Ormuz. Experience as Viceroy only served to harden these views, so that only where a foothold on shore was palpably in the interests of sea strategy did it meet with his assent. As a result, his own additions to Portuguese territory were confined to the capture of the Arab seaports of Kilwa and Mombasa on the east coast of Africa during his outward passage. Even here he was acting under instructions; for these centres of Moslem hostility so closely flanked the sea route between Europe and Asia where it skirted the African coastline, that they were a permanent threat which King Manoel was resolved to remove. Their seizure laid the foundation of the Portuguese colony of

Mozambique which still flies the flag; and as this occurred before the taking of Socotra these acquisitions were the earliest of all the many European possessions, British, French, Dutch, Portuguese and Italian now washed by the Indian Ocean. It was a curious freak of destiny that a man of Almeida's views on colonial policy should have been the instrument; but as these were the first permanent annexations of Moslem territory by Christian forces anywhere outside of Granada their occupation was noteworthy for reasons apart, and in some degree had the character of a retaliation for the Moslem conquests of Christian areas in south-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

But if Almeida was opposed to ventures on the land no officer was more energetic in asserting the supremacy of his own country on the sea. All his earlier campaigning had been as a land officer in Morocco, but like Blake and Rupert he took to the sea with zest when destiny turned his steps in that direction, and though his own son Lorenzo Almeida was officially Admiral of the Indies he himself spent as much time afloat as ashore. In the end he left his mark on Portuguese history less as a statesman and administrator than as the sea commander, who in conjunction with his son, stamped out a serious menace to the Portuguese supremacy of the Indian Ocean during the infancy of European intercourse with the east. Very fortunately as it turned out for Portugal, one of his first acts was to obtain the king's sanction for the permanent stationing of a small squadron on the Malabar coast, instead of leaving the settlements unprotected for half the year by the employment of all ships on freight. This force he kept constantly cruising for the suppression of Arab trade under his son, who became the terror of the Mecca merchants though still a very young man. It was while searching for Red Sea traders making the trans-oceanic run from Aden to Malacca, in an area never before entered by a European ship, that Lorenzo Almeida was the first European to visit Ceylon, where he met with a friendly reception.

A little later, when on another cruise, Lorenzo was severely censured by his imperious father for not sufficiently pushing home a reconnaissance outside Calicut, in terms reflecting on

his honour. With a reproach of that kind in his ears the young admiral naturally felt that nothing short of the supreme sacrifice could redeem his reputation as an officer; and happily for his country it sustained his resolution at a heroic pitch when shortly afterwards his last hour found him in a position of responsibility that would have tested the bravest and most experienced commander. In the autumn of 1508 he was again sent out from Cochin in command of three ships and five light caravels to visit the port of Chaul (where the Viceroy wished to arrange a commercial treaty) which stands on the river of that name on the west coast of India about 500 miles to the northward of Calicut, and only one day's sailing with a fair wind from Diu. This occurred just as the powerful Egyptian-Gujerat combination was on the point of starting from Diu for its projected descent on the Portuguese settlements; and Lorenzo Almeida was sailing all unaware of the approaching bolt from the blue straight in the direction from which it was about to be launched. It had not actually started when the news of his arrival at Chaul reached Hassein and Melikaz, who were determined that his proximity should make him the first victim, but met with a reception of a kind they had never counted on. With the intention of trapping him in the Chaul river they sailed in full force accordingly, and arrived outside the entrance so unexpectedly that a number of the Portuguese officers who had landed had barely time to get back on board before the beginning of a three days' fight, that was almost a parallel to the story of Grenville in the *Revenge*. Few of them ever set foot on shore again.

From the very outset the odds at Chaul were hopelessly against the Portuguese, but the narrowness of the river prevented their adversaries from bringing more than a fraction of their weight to bear at one time, so that it was a conflict in a defile. Hussein refrained from using his guns, confident in his power to capture the Portuguese vessels in good condition and make many prisoners by boarding, for which purpose he struck a whole succession of blows at close quarters; but these were all thrown back in turn by Almeida after terrific slaughter on both sides, and in this way the fight raged all through the afternoon

of the first day. In spite of their successful defence, however, the Portuguese were so exhausted by the strain of meeting continual relays of fresh antagonists that only nightfall saved them from succumbing. At sunset Hussein drew off and anchored at the mouth of the river, exasperated by failure but still determined to succeed. Almeida's captains now repaired on board his ship and urged him to take advantage of the dark night to break out and escape, for which the wind was fair; but with his father's reprimand in mind he flatly refused to listen to such suggestions and even declared his intention of being the first side to attack next morning, and ordered them to be prepared accordingly.

When sailing-fleets were contending against each other in tidal waters and light winds the movements of the tides often exercised an appreciable effect on the operations; and if both sides happened to be at anchor before engaging the tide sometimes gave the side which chanced to be up-stream for the moment the opportunity of attacking under favourable conditions. From the old account of the fighting of the next two days at Chaul it is evident that the tides played an important part, but these accounts are so vaguely and unprofessionally written that the actual effect can only be surmised from the course of events. It would appear that Almeida's plan was to attack on the ebb at dawn, falling on the two nearest of Hussein's galleys, and having carried them by boarding, cutting their cables and allowing them to drift down as fireships among the rest, while he followed up to take advantage of the ensuing confusion. It was a desperate scheme, but only desperate efforts now counted, and at first it almost promised to be a success. Coming down-stream fast at daylight he attacked as arranged, and the two galleys were captured and set adrift in accordance with plan; but Hussein's other vessels escaped harm either by slipping their own cables or because the fireship idea failed at the critical moment; and in following them up the small Portuguese force was quickly ringed in by a circle of enemies. A furious mêlée ensued, in which the Portuguese fired point blank into antagonists all round but kept them at bay with the utmost difficulty, and suffered so heavily themselves

that only the turn of the tide saved them from annihilation. With the flood stream the whole struggling mass of ships was swept back up the river, and to avoid being carried on to the shoals the heavy draught Red Sea vessels had to break off the engagement; while the survivors of the Portuguese—all of lighter draught—drifted into shallow water and temporary safety. What their actual losses were on this day has never been recounted, but that they were now no more than a sorry remnant is obvious from the rest of the story.

At the same time, when the second day's fighting came to an end in this way, the Red Sea division of their enemies had been so severely mauled that Hussein and his crews had had enough for the moment, and left the next effort to Melikaz and the Diu flotilla of light proas. So far these had been kept in reserve, partly perhaps because Hussein hoped to win the major share of the credit and spoils for himself, and partly because this Gujerat division was to be kept intact for the intended landings on the Malabar coast. But all regularly formulated plans of that kind had been knocked to pieces by the obstinacy of Almeida's resistance, and it was now obvious that if the campaign was to proceed at all every step must be made good in any manner that was practicable at the moment, leaving the next to be dealt with as it arose. Any capture of prizes or prisoners had become secondary, moreover, to the total destruction of Almeida's force somehow, and it was the turn of Melikaz to see what he could do against the half-wrecked and half-manned but still defiant European squadron.

After a second night's breathing space accordingly the engagement was resumed on the third day when the tide served for attack from the lower anchorage; and the Gujerat flotilla swarmed like bees round what was left of the enemy, concentrating their first efforts on Almeida's own ship, and closing in such numbers that the Portuguese guns could not be loaded fast enough to keep them off. The young admiral now faced the end as a leader well qualified to command. Pierced by an arrow and with a leg broken by a petronel ball he was propped against the mast with a rope passed under his arms, and as the enemy poured over the bulwarks on bow, beam and stern, called to his

men to take no quarter. Being driven back on all sides smiting to the last they formed at the end a ring round the admiral, and had nearly all been cut down when the ship sank under their feet, carrying attackers and attacked with her, except a few who managed to swim in spite of wounds. Her cables had been cut in the struggle by somebody, and the tide swept her over some stakes that ripped out her planking. Meanwhile as the main weight of the Gujerat onset had been directed at the Portuguese flagship the other caravels were less overburdened in their defence; but even so, only two of Almeida's whole original force managed at last to break a way through to sea and escape; none of the enemy daring to follow them when once they had gained the manœuvring space afforded by open water. Hastening southward with what speed they could make these survivors reached Cananore after a week's voyage and reported the disaster to the Viceroy, who made all preparations at once for defence in the conviction that the enemy would follow up his success by attacking the Portuguese settlements.

But to his surprise and relief no enemy appeared. For while expecting easy victory and rich plunder Hussein and Melikaz found that they had committed themselves instead to an enterprise formidable beyond all their calculations; and having no more stomach for war of this kind had abandoned the whole project, weighed their anchors and sailed back to Diu with a new understanding which was transmitted to future generations. Material and local victory had been on their side, but at such a cost that moral and far-reaching victory was on the other; and never again did any eastern nation endeavour to end by naval power the presence of the European in the east. Many subsequent conflicts took place in Asiatic seas, especially in the Malay Archipelago, but all these were fought on purely local issues, and in no case whatever was any definite bid for a general supremacy of the Indian Ocean ever made by an oriental state, after Lorenzo Almeida went under its surface destroyed in body but conquering in purpose.

If therefore the consequences of this encounter are viewed in their just proportions, it can scarcely be denied a fair claim to recognition as one of the decisive events of oriental history,



and especially of Indian history; insignificant though the Portuguese were in numbers. For not only did it confirm in permanence the freedom of the Indian Ocean to Europeans on which all their intercourse with the east depended, but it confirmed their selection of Hindustan as their principal point of contact in that intercourse. In its maritime aspects the moral effect was greater than that of the battle of Malabar, because in the latter the Asiatic force was composed of ordinary trading craft, armed only for defence against pirates, unscientifically handled, and formidable merely in numbers; whereas at Chaul the Red Sea division consisted of the type of galley which at that period was the only class of vessel specifically designed and armed for belligerent duties, and manned accordingly. From its effect on Indian history again, Almeida's defence stands as the act which prevented European association with Hindustan from being pulled up by the roots while still little more than a seedling in growth; with doubtful prospects in such a case of being replanted for at least another century and probably much more. Had the resistance of the westerners at Chaul been feeble Hussein would have proceeded on to destroy the handfuls of Portuguese in the factories at Cochin, Cananore and Quilon, aided with zest by the Zamorin of Calicut, and every lesser principality which had been friendly to the new order, would have been savagely wiped out. Merchants who had sold to the Portuguese agents would never have dared to resume such dealings under such risks even if fleets arriving again from Lisbon had endeavoured to reopen trade by force.

It would of course have been possible for King Manoel to despatch a fleet strong enough to bombard and blockade half the coasts of India, but such a proceeding would have brought no profit to compare with the employment of the same numbers of ships in trading elsewhere. It was no desire for conquest that inspired the Portuguese explorers to seek their way to the east, but the prospects of an enormously lucrative traffic; and if commercial transactions with the communities of Hindustan had proved precarious and risky King Manoel's commercial emissaries would have been directed to look for business in the alternative regions which were available for trial in plenty, such

as the Malay Archipelago, Persia and Ceylon, all of which were still untapped sources of wealth. Had the Portuguese abandoned India as an area for commercial enterprise in consequence, its future history must inevitably have followed a widely different course, for to a very large extent the western nations which came after followed in the directions in which the Lisbon ships had led.

When the Viceroy received the news of the battle the only vessels remaining on the Malabar coast with him were the four which had deserted Albuquerque in the previous autumn; the captains of which reported on their arrival at the Viceroy's headquarters at Cochin that they had left their admiral because he was behaving in a manner suggestive of no thought beyond the gratification of conquering ambitions which were no part of his instructions. Almeida's bias against territorial expansion was excited by these allegations, and disbelieving entirely in the necessity for a fortified concession at Ormuz he despatched a letter by a trading ship bound for that port to the Sultan, informing the Sultan that he refused, as Portuguese Viceroy, to authorise Albuquerque's demand for a citadel site, and telling the Sultan to show Albuquerque the letter. The admiral had left for Socotra when it arrived, but on his return to Ormuz next year—as already recounted—the Sultan produced it as a valid release from his promise to provide a site and otherwise assist; also giving Albuquerque his first intimation of the battle of Chaul—which had come with the Viceroy's letter—and the further highly important information that Hussein's fleet had not returned to Egypt but was still lying at Diu. This report was accurate, the truth being that Hussein and his men were afraid that an unsuccessful return would cost the leader his head and reduce his subordinates to slavery.

All this sensational news required very careful attention on Albuquerque's part. Not that the Viceroy's refusal to countenance his action at Ormuz placed him in the serious position of an admiral who had grossly exceeded his orders, for he had the King's own authority for all he had done. But the Viceroy's open repudiation weakened his whole position with the Sultan, making it clear that no support for his proceedings need be

expected from India just when he was counting on it to complete his task. Moreover, a consideration of much greater importance now rose to his mind. When he sailed from Lisbon, nearly three years before, King Manoel had secretly handed him his appointment as Almeida's successor when the Viceroy had completed four years' tenure of office, an arrangement of which nobody but the King and himself had any knowledge. These four years had already elapsed, and Albuquerque was forced to realize that the whole position of his country in the east was compromised by the presence of a powerful hostile fleet at a time when in point of law his own responsibility for its security had begun. Affairs at Ormuz had been reduced to secondary importance by this emergency and everything pointed to the necessity of a departure for the Malabar coast to assume general control of the situation; but some delay in starting was occasioned by having to wait till the winter monsoon was over, which he utilized to bring the Sultan of Ormuz back to a submissive frame of mind by a peremptory correspondence.

With the change of monsoon he sailed, but only took his own ship, and sent the four others with him back to Socotra, to defend it against the possibility of attack by Hussein. His passage was made at some personal risk, for it was necessary to pass Diu on the way, where the Red Sea fleet were lying; but Hussein—who had been well aware of Albuquerque's presence at Ormuz—did not get wind of his departure till it was too late to intercept him, which he would undoubtedly have attempted; and Albuquerque arrived at Cochin without incident. Here, however, he met with a most unexpected reception, for like many men of strong opinions on important questions the Viceroy regarded those whose views were different almost as personal enemies; and when Albuquerque produced his appointment as his successor, took the drastic step of declining utterly to hand over office, on the ground that Albuquerque's policy was inimical to national interests. It was risky to disobey his sovereign's commands in such a fashion, but Almeida was never afraid to answer for his actions; nor did he ever act by half measures, for when his brilliant rival protested he locked him up in the fort at Cananore. To this extreme indignity

Albuquerque could offer no resistance, having only the support of the officers and men of his own flagship, while the Viceroy was supported by those of the four ships which had deserted Albuquerque, whose captains were apprehensive of the possible consequences to themselves of his elevation to a supreme authority carrying the power of life and death. The admiral, however, accepted a situation which he could not control with resolute calm, confident that it must end in his favour if he survived the hardships of internment. Nor did he have very long to wait.

Meanwhile the Viceroy was devoting great energy and ability to other matters of the highest importance. The Red Sea fleet had not carried out the expected descent on the Portuguese establishments in Malabar, but neither had it withdrawn further than Diu. It was still, therefore, on the Indian coast in the sullenly threatening attitude of a Fleet in Being; while all the native rulers of western Hindustan watched for the next move with anxious attention, to see in which direction it would be expedient for them to shape their own future policy. All the Moslem sympathy was naturally with Hussein, but the majority of the Hindoos secretly favoured the Portuguese. In such a condition of affairs delay in attacking is invariably attributed by the oriental mind to fear, and knowing this, Almeida had decided that if Hussein was not going to attack him he would attack Hussein whenever he had the power; but he had to wait for the appearance of the annual fleet from home to provide him with enough ships. When this force arrived in due course he assumed command as admiral in person, and filled a rôle to which he was always partial with great competence. To some extent possibly a desire to win the fame attaching to an important success in arms may have influenced him in arresting Albuquerque, whom he knew was ardently longing for a chance to attack Hussein also; but in part at least he was undoubtedly actuated by a strong desire to avenge his son's death in a blow struck under his personal direction. When the end of the summer monsoon permitted him to undertake the enterprise he sailed with nineteen ships, and after calling in on the way to raid the seaport of Dabul, where a

hostile chief held sway, arrived off Diu on a fine autumn morning.

Ever since the battle of Chaul nearly a year before, the Red Sea fleet had remained inactive at the Gujerat port, equally disinclined to advance again or to return homewards. So little indeed did Hussein contemplate going back to Suez that a large portion of his crews had taken to living permanently on shore, with the result that when Almeida appeared the Moslem galleys were only partially manned, though under some apparent protection from the forts of the town. The Portuguese commander was not to be deterred by forts however, or anything else now, and sailing straight in boarded, captured and burnt every vessel in Hussein's fleet except four of the largest which were kept as prizes, after a brief but sharp encounter in which his own losses were very small. The shore defences made no effort to stay his attack, either because they were afraid to do so, or because the alliance with the Egyptians had grown lukewarm through lack of achievement; and the town was left unmolested in consequence, though some of Almeida's officers urged him to land and plunder it. But the admiral contented himself with sending a warning to the King of Gujerat by a released prisoner to the effect that if ever again he molested the Portuguese his town of Diu would pay the penalty; and demanding at the same time the right of Portuguese ships to use the harbour for the purposes of peaceful trade. By this annihilation of the powerful fleet of the Sultan of Cairo the middle east was taught a lesson which it never really forgot. A whole generation elapsed before another attempt—and a last one—was made from the same direction to forcibly interfere with European interests in Hindustan; and even then the mere rumour of the approach of a Portuguese fleet was enough to put a summary end to the venture and send the would-be raiders back to Aden in precipitate haste. No Indian prince who was disposed to be hostile to Europeans could look to that quarter thenceforward for effective aid, and all realized that if they adopted an unfriendly policy they must rely upon themselves alone; a point which Albuquerque frequently emphasized in his negotiations as Governor-General with native rulers in after years.

Having reasserted the European rule of the Indian Ocean by bringing the war of the Arabian Sea to an end Almeida returned to Cochin, but what direction his further activities might have taken can never be known, for very shortly afterwards another fleet arrived from Europe with the beginning of the next monsoon bearing orders from King Manoel which directed him to hand over the supreme authority to Albuquerque forthwith and return home. This mandate could not possibly be disregarded, especially as it was personally delivered by Marshal Coutinho, an officer holding the highest rank in the service of the Crown. Albuquerque was liberated accordingly and commenced his famous term of Governor-Generalship, though for some reason he was never invested with the title of Viceroy. With a truly regal magnanimity he forebore to take any disciplinary action against the captains who had deserted him at Ormuz, merely saying that as he had no further need of their services they must return home for the King's decision on the merits of their case. Very possibly he may have been influenced in this action by a memory of the conspicuous gallantry they had one and all displayed in the actual fighting, not only at Ormuz but at Socotra, Muscat and elsewhere.

Almeida sailed for Lisbon shortly afterwards, but met with an untimely and tragic end on the voyage, being killed on shore near the Cape of Good Hope while endeavouring to assist some of the crew of the ship who were attacked by a mob of Kaffirs. By his death Portugal lost a devoted public servant of a fine type; somewhat arbitrary and extreme in his views perhaps, but always brave and zealous in furthering the interests of his native land according to his lights.

Ormuz and Chaul must stand for ever as monuments to the Portuguese arms of a kind that would add lustre to the reputation of any combatant service in history. In the first a leader who was on the verge of old age attacked with a vigour and brilliancy which nothing could have surpassed. In the other a leader who was scarcely out of his youth displayed equal merit on the defensive. Both helped very materially to open the eyes of the peoples of the east to the quality of the strangers who had arrived in the Indian Ocean from the shores of the North Atlantic.

## ALBUQUERQUE'S OPERATIONS on the WESTERN SEABOARD of INDIA

**W**HEN ALPHONSO ALBUQUERQUE emerged from incarceration in a fortress cell at Cananore to assume the highest office in the gift of his sovereign, as the supreme representative of the white race in the Orient, he was already sixty-three years old, and had therefore reached an age in which few men find their physical powers equal to strenuous labours in a tropical climate. In many respects his remarkable career offered a parallel to that of Blake. Neither had much opportunity to gain distinction till past middle age, and both then crowded into a few years enough historical achievement to raise any man to renown even if spread over the whole working life of an octogenarian. Neither was originally brought up as a naval officer, but both took to the sea as elderly leaders, and thenceforward thoroughly identified themselves with their new service. It was Albuquerque's frequent habit to refer with pride to the crews of the Portuguese fleet in the Indian Ocean as "my cavaliers," and he explained his inability to make the customary handsome present to a great Asiatic ruler on the grounds that he had nothing valuable at hand as he was always on board his ship. Moreover, both these great men died in an admiral's cabin without returning to their native land, though Plymouth was in sight when Blake breathed his last.

Both were superbly daring commanders, sternly principled in all their dealings through the influence of pronounced religious convictions; and to both it fell to leave their mark on history chiefly in the somewhat specially distinct branch of warfare in which the scene of encounter is on, or very near, the dividing line of land and sea, such as attacks on hostile fleets lying in defended harbours, or on strong shore positions overlooking the water. In the complications introduced by the imperative necessities of pilotage is to be found the particular characteristic distinguishing this class of operation from all others; a factor in the tactical problem of engaging, which, to

a certain extent, corresponds to the influence exerted by the natural features of the ground in a purely land battle, entirely absent from engagements in open sea.

Albuquerque's predecessor Almeida had never considered that the routine responsibilities of civil authority demanded the permanent presence of a Viceroy of the Portuguese Indies at his headquarters at Cochin, and went afloat in person to conduct war. Albuquerque himself carried this view of his duties even further and only went ashore at intervals throughout his whole long term of Captain-Generalship; though towards its close his own conquests had increased the Portuguese possessions in Asiatic longitudes from three small enclosures covering some ten acres in all, to a widely-extended list of seaports with a capital city and seat of Government in Hindustan, which he made the commercial centre of the Indian Ocean. His administration was decentralised under a system by which commercial and civil affairs were delegated to assistant officials, and sometimes priests, and judging by the highly prosperous condition in which he left Portuguese interests in the East, these subordinates provided a very competent staff. The position of Captain-General was precisely the same as that of Viceroy—though for some reason King Manoel never invested him with the latter title—that is to say, a supreme head over all branches and departments of eastern government; but by Albuquerque the functions were made those of a travelling inspector, rather than a resident chief executive, and for the rest his whole attention was constantly occupied by endeavours to complete and consolidate the great fabric of commercial and maritime domination laid before King Manoel five years previously, but only executed in the Persian Gulf direction so far, and even there not entirely to his satisfaction as yet.

Above everything else, however, he was concerned at the outset of his rule to secure Portugal's whole position and prosperity in the East against overthrow from Cairo. The Portuguese themselves had not yet discovered the profound impression created on the oriental mind by the outcome of the battles of Chaul and Diu, and Albuquerque's anxiety was aroused by persistent rumours to the effect that a second Red Sea fleet



was on the stocks for the Sultan of Egypt. One of his first acts on assuming the Captain-Generalship, therefore, was to assemble all the captains and other senior officers afloat and ashore at Cochin, on board his flagship, to point out that, while this menace continued to exist, the entire question of the ability of their country to retain any sort of connection with India remained in doubt. To put an end to the uncertainty as to who should command that part of the Indian Ocean lying between Hindustan and Egypt, he informed them that he had determined to take the initiative himself, and settle the issue on the enemy's side of the disputed water area instead of the Indian side, when enough ships were at his disposal to sail to Suez and destroy this new fleet before it ever started to attack him. How far his views on naval strategy were ahead of his time is indicated by the reason he gave for this policy, which was the desirability of making contact with the enemy at a point where the attacking fleet covered the threatened water-space.

Before this project could materialise, however, all his plans came near to a summary conclusion through an episode which seriously endangered his life. When Marshal Coutinho had brought out the King's command from home that Albuquerque was to replace Almeida in supreme authority, he also brought orders for a land attack on Calicut, which was to be sacked and burnt. No worse conceived or worse executed scheme was ever embarked on by the Portuguese in all their history in Asia, involving as it did great risks for no object whatever, beyond the gratification of an insatiable spirit of reprisal. The Zamorin of Calicut was doubtless in a thoroughly truculent and vengeful mood, but the Portuguese were themselves to blame for it by twice bombarding his city from the sea, in retaliation for his outrage on Cabral, in addition to ruining its great commercial pre-eminence by raiding the harbour so constantly, that for nine years it had been in a virtual state of blockade. And after his defeat on the sea at the battle of Malabar, and on the land at his failure to take Cochin, the Zamorin was powerless to do them any more harm. In their own interests it would have been a better policy in every way under

such circumstances, to have offered him terms of peace, instead of driving him to desperation by further punishment; and had he been approached as Almeida approached the King of Cambaya, after destroying his ships at Diu, with a promise to consider his antagonism as sufficiently chastised if he would allow the Portuguese to trade, the Zamorin would have accepted the offer with alacrity. But King Manoel could not curb his thirst for further revenge, and brought misfortune on his own subjects in consequence.

The attack, when it took place, was not only unnecessary and unjustifiable, but badly managed, partly through over confidence and partly through defective organisation for command. The Portuguese had still to learn that the oriental warrior is a more serious adversary on the land than on the water, and that the mere gesture of drawing a sword had therefore less chance of carrying all before it on approaching a walled city than it had on entering Ormuz Bay. Even Albuquerque's judgment was at fault here, though he would have retrieved that error before it was too late had he been in sole command himself. But the assault was carried out under all the disadvantages of a dual control through the lack of a clearly-defined gradation of rank and responsibility in the Portuguese service. Albuquerque was the King's immediate representative east of the Cape of Good Hope, but Coutinho was the Marshal of Portugal, and as such always vested with supreme command in the field in the King's absence. Neither would yield precedence in what he considered a personal point of responsibility, but the problem was solved by a compromise, in which it was arranged that each was to attack Calicut with an independent force, only acting in conjunction to the extent that they were to attack at the same time and afford mutual support if required. Both disembarked simultaneously from the fleet—which was lying outside the harbour about four miles from the town—but made for different points on the shore. Coutinho reached the city first and forced the gates with an ease that would have aroused the suspicion of a more wary leader. Thinking that all opposition was at an end he allowed his men to scatter for pillage, and in this dispersed condition his force was suddenly

attacked and driven out in utter confusion by a large body of the Zamorin's soldiers, who had been in ambush in the houses. Not a man would have survived had not Albuquerque's party come up fresh and intact at this critical juncture and covered the retreat to the boats; and even as it was the Marshal was killed and the Captain-General severely wounded before gaining the safety of the water.

In Asiatic eyes this well-merited reverse had a temporarily weakening effect on the Portuguese reputation for invincibility, gained through such noteworthy encounters as the battles of Malabar, Ormuz, Chaul and Diu. The news travelled over the East like wildfire and was accepted as a proof that the white man was only invincible on the water. It was very fortunate for the prestige of the race therefore, that so exceptionally brilliant a commander as Albuquerque was there to restore it; but the momentary success of the brown man made the Captain-General's next operations more difficult than they would otherwise have been, and for a period left their ultimate success in doubt.

The attack on Calicut took place in late autumn, and therefore during the north-east or fair monsoon from India to the Red Sea. Several months of the season still remained to Albuquerque in consequence for his intended Red Sea expedition, but his wound kept him disabled till February. Had he known as much about the weather and pilotage of that part as he knew later, he would have been aware that it was already by then too late to start till the season following; but the Arab navigators kept the secrets of the Red Sea closely to themselves, and here as elsewhere the Portuguese were at the disadvantage, as compared to their opponents, of having to face unknown conditions and dangers whenever they assumed the offensive. In February accordingly the Captain-General took his departure from Cochin, first sailing up the Malabar coast to complete his force by picking up ships at Cananore and the island of Angediva; the latter being at that time the northernmost point of visit in frequent use by the Portuguese in Indian waters. At Angediva, however, he received intelligence which altered all his plans, through a Hindoo soldier of fortune named

Timoja, who, to gain ends of his own, had been very friendly to the Portuguese, acting as a useful informant in regard to the internal affairs of native States, and even for a sufficient consideration placing his mercenaries at the Portuguese disposal.

Timoja's report concerned a political crisis at the large native city of Goa, within a day's sailing from Angediva, a port which combined the finest harbour with the strongest natural position of any place on the western seaboard of Hindustan south of Bombay except Cochin, and was more centrally situated than Cochin for trade. Goa harbour is formed by the northern or main branch of the river Mandawi, on the south bank of which the city stood in the sixteenth century, about five miles from the mouth and overlooking the inner anchorage. Lower down is another or outer anchorage, just inside the bar, which lies between the headlands on either side of the entrance; and in Albuquerque's time this lower anchorage was commanded by a fort on the southern headland known as Panjim, an outwork about four or five miles distant from the town. The whole situation of the city and its suburbs and defences was rendered insular by a minor branch of the river, which forks from the main stream about nine miles inland, and flows to the sea on the rearward or southern side of them. The position is in fact deltaic, and this subsidiary outfall of the river formed a natural protective ditch covering its rear; not deep enough for use in its upper reaches by anything larger than boats or barges, but not shallow enough for fording except at two points, and only there at low tide. In its military aspects, therefore, the site of the port was strong on all sides, the bar being an obstacle to attack from seaward, except when conducted by pilots with thorough local knowledge, and the two branches of the river obstacles to attack from the land except on a very narrow front at the fords.

During the summer monsoon Goa is inaccessible to heavy draught ships from outside owing to the breakers on the bar, but that drawback is shared by the other Malabar ports, and excepting Cochin—which is partly surrounded by lagoons—none of the others occupied a position so easily defended

against land attack in the time of Albuquerque. But Cochin is too far south for an ideal trading centre for western Hindustan and has rather less water on the bar. Taken all round, therefore, Goa offered more advantages than any alternative harbour south of Bombay for possessors who did not own the hinterland but were supreme or strong at sea; a description which applied to the Portuguese. In the fifteenth century it was the capital city of the principal Moslem State in western India—though with a large subject Hindoo population—under a Sahib or Khan of its own, whose territory reached as far inland as the border of the Deccan and as far south as the adjacent minor port of Dabul. As a Mahomedan centre of power it attracted the followers of that faith from a wide circle in southern Asia; and thus it was that after Almeida had destroyed the Sultan of Egypt's first Red Sea fleet at the battle of Diu, and cut off the return to their own country of such of the crews as escaped ashore, these survivors found their way by degrees from Gujerat to Goa in considerable numbers. Here they settled down permanently, and furnished the Khan with a useful and highly trained addition of men-at-arms for a division of his army chiefly recruited from Turks. The old Khan had just died, and as his heir was absent on an expedition inland with the majority of his troops, the Moslem rule was only upheld in the capital by a small guard, in the midst of an oppressed Hindoo populace ripe for insurrection. According to Timoja's intelligence this discontented mass would welcome a Portuguese capture of the city, which he urged Albuquerque to undertake.

Except that he was already on the move for the Red Sea, the Captain-General had every inducement to fall in with this suggestion. The old Khan of Goa was a member of the triple alliance of Indian Princes who were—or had been—rabidly anti-European; the other two being the Zamorin of Calicut, who was still of that mind, and the King of Cambaya or Gujerat, who had seen the error of his ways by the light of a fleet in flames. No wanton breach of peace would be committed, therefore, by attacking a declared and constant enemy; and strategically the possession of Goa had every possible advantage from a Portuguese standpoint, as it offered the



EUROPEAN OCEAN-GOING SHIP OF THE PERIOD OF ALBUQUERQUE  
(From a sketch by the author)



combination of a natural harbour and natural fortress, which would sooner or later be necessary at some place on the coast, if it was to be their future policy to continue to make India their principal region of commercial activity in the East. Other forcible reasons for its capture also existed. Having a large shipbuilding industry, it was always a threat to northward coasting by Portuguese vessels, as a stronghold from which an enemy might issue in force, unless perpetually blockaded in force; but so formidable was its position and so large the Khan's army that any attempt to take it had never been seriously considered, even by Albuquerque, and Goa had so far remained one of the prospectively troublesome and apparently insoluble problems with which King Manoel's officers had to reckon. All this was changed instantly and entirely by the substance of Timoja's report, who represented that the nineteen ships present with Albuquerque placed an ample force at his disposal at a moment of unique opportunity.

It was characteristic of Albuquerque that when a choice of alternatives lay before him, he took his senior subordinates into his confidence. He called them all on board, therefore, and explained the whole situation. Personally, he was strongly in favour of adhering to his original intention of going in search of the Red Sea fleet in spite of the chance at Goa. He regarded the removal of this menace as the most pressing need of the moment, and on general principles was undoubtedly right, provided that it was feasible. But nearly all his officers were in favour of the Goa alternative, some because they were opportunists with no definite ideas on large questions, and some because they were frankly attracted by the prospect of plunder. It was to the arguments of a third section, however, composed mainly of the professional sailing masters of the fleet, that he was compelled to pay most attention. These represented that as the winter monsoon might now end before they ever got as far as Aden, the chance of reaching Suez before next season had become remote, whereas Goa could be reached in a day. Meanwhile Timoja insisted that as regards Goa it must be done at once if done at all, for the change of monsoon shortly due would close the port till the autumn.



Councils of war are usually the resource of a weak commander, who wishes to shift his responsibility or find guidance from better heads than his own; but Albuquerque had proved at Ormuz that he could take a strong line against even the most vehement protests of subordinates, and it was not from weakness but from strength that he now agreed to the general sentiment of the fleet that Goa should be substituted for Suez as the immediate destination of the assembled force for the reasons set forth. But the responsibility lay with him and not with them, and the change was not one which could be accepted without a certain sense of anxiety, for he foresaw that it was not so much the immediate capture as the subsequent retention of the fortress that would prove a searching test of Portuguese power at this juncture. Even when taken it would be liable to counter attack by the main army of the new Khan when his expedition to the interior was at an end, and though the position was strong the Portuguese could hope for no reinforcements for five months after the breaking of the summer monsoon—which was soon due—had closed the harbour. In the event of an unsuccessful defence against an attempt by the Khan to recapture the island, the Portuguese would be driven back on board the ships, which would be unable to get out, and the question of water and supplies might become serious.

Once committed to the undertaking, however, he proceeded to act with energy and promptitude, as usual, and the fleet sailed for Goa, where it arrived and anchored outside the bar the day after. Here the first difficulty presented itself, for none of the native coastal pilots in the Portuguese ships would take the larger ones across the bar till it had been carefully examined. A survey was immediately necessary, therefore, which was entrusted to Antonio Noronha, one of the most promising of Albuquerque's young officers. Noronha crossed the bar at high tide with three light galleys, sounding and buoying the channel as he went, until he arrived in the deeper water of the lower roadstead under fort Panjim, which was as far as he had been told to proceed. It was a daring reconnaissance, not only because it brought him under fire from the fort itself, but because the inner harbour is concealed from the outer by a

bend in the estuary, round which the enemy's ships might have appeared in force at any moment, when he was beyond supporting distance from his consorts. None appeared, but as he worked his way closer in, the fire from Panjim became dangerous, and the question arose whether he could push on without risk of losing one or more of the galleys. Observing, however, that only one or two guns were in action, he surmised that the battery was not fully manned, which agreed with Timoja's assurance that the whole island was temporarily denuded of troops; and as Panjim was distant four or five miles from the main city it was an isolated work. Emboldened by these considerations, Noronha had the hardihood to land and rush it, with the thirty men who were all he could disembark from the galleys without leaving them helpless in case of enemy galleys coming round the point; nor did he experience any great difficulty in driving out the handful of defenders and disabling the guns. With this surprising good fortune to report, he sent one of his galleys back to the Captain-General, and within the next forty-eight hours the whole Portuguese fleet was over the bar and anchored as far up the river towards the city as the depth of water would permit. Next day natives belonging to the disaffected party came on board and reported that the small garrison holding Goa had fled to the mainland during the night; and Albuquerque at once landed and took possession of the whole island for Portugal in the midst of great popular excitement, not having lost a single man.

So far his only obstacles had been navigational; and even in regard to overcoming these he had been fortunate, for where unknown shoals are backed by an energetic defence, the combination may render a harbour almost inaccessible. For Albuquerque, therefore, it was no trifling bit of luck to have been able to discover and buoy the deep water channel under such very easy conditions. Had the surveying galleys been attacked by the enemy's ships, which the Portuguese found lying in the Khan's dockyard unmanned, they must necessarily have retreated before so superior a force with their work unfinished and no possible means of resuming it, while the heavy vessels lay idle and impotent outside. Thenceforward, whatever

course events might take, Albuquerque knew at least the way in, and this first condition of success rendered further measures possible. The problem now became military. He could enter and occupy the harbour, but his object was only half gained in that, and the permanent possession of the island was dependent on his power to hold the fords on the southern side against the Khan's numerous army with the few hundred men at his disposal.

To the new Khan, at his headquarters in the field, the news of the seizure of Goa came, of course, as a complete surprise; but being doubtful of his ability to retake it, he endeavoured to negotiate for its retrocession before making the attempt, and wrote to Albuquerque offering him another harbour if he would give up Goa. The Captain-General declined the exchange, but offered to reinstate the Khan in local power if he would accept the position of a vassal of King Manoel, and allow the Portuguese to use Goa as their headquarters in place of Cochin. As a further inducement he promised that the power of the Portuguese to control the sea would be used to insure to the Khan a monopoly of some of the most valuable imports arriving in India, such as horses from the Persian Gulf.

Encouraged by the Portuguese reverse at Calicut, the Khan was not disposed to agree to these terms and sent no answer, but in order to avoid any unnecessary risks he postponed attacking till the advent of the summer monsoon closed the harbour and isolated the Portuguese from any reinforcements while it lasted. He then attacked in great strength, and with his Turco-Egyptian division carried the fords, driving the Portuguese back on board their ships and regaining the whole island. As the first occasion on which Asiatics assumed the offensive against European opponents, this was a very notable development in the relations between East and West, and the native success attracted even more attention than the Zamorin's defence of Calicut. It placed the Portuguese in a most difficult and peculiar position, to which it would be hard to find a precise parallel in naval history; imprisoned in a hostile harbour on board their own ships, although with their flags flying, and with enemies all around. No danger of close attack on the

water was to be seriously feared, but the enemy's fire from the land could be annoying, and the risk of running short of water and fresh food was grave. Four or five months of the hottest, wettest and most trying season of an always relaxing climate had now to be faced on a very small daily ration of water and salt provisions, with no active work to distract attention from hardship and sickness. Albuquerque's first trouble arose with his own captains, several of whom protested that the bar was re-passable, in spite of the assertions of the native pilots; and so insistent were these malcontents that, in a moment of weakness and irritation, he allowed one of them to make the attempt, with the result that his ship was totally wrecked. The next trouble came from the enemy, who managed to bring two long-range guns in Fort Panjim to bear on some of the ships at the lower anchorage for which there was not berthing space higher up. For some reason never recorded he was unable to make any effective reply with his own much heavier weapons, but probably because the fort stood too high for his limit of elevation. As the damage increased, however, something had to be done, and with his usual ardour he led an attack on the fort from boats in person, which was brilliantly successful, and ended with the slaughter of the gunners and the disablement of the whole armament before reinforcements from the main army in the city could arrive. As all the heavier artillery in the Khan's possession had been moved to Panjim this was an important success, compelling the Khan to resort to other methods of annoyance, or leave his enemy alone. From a native fishing boat, which Albuquerque managed to seize, it was learnt that the Khan's galleys were being prepared as fireships, and when ready would be set adrift on the ebb tide among the Portuguese vessels. This necessitated another defensive raid without loss of time, five miles up the river, where the galleys lay on the slipways; which was most gallantly carried out by Albuquerque's own galleys, under the leadership of Noronha, who first encountered and defeated the Khan's guard boats, and then, after a long pull of several hours, reached and burnt the dockyard where the Khan's flotilla was lying. But the Portuguese losses were heavy and Noronha himself was mortally wounded.

Worse enemies than the Khan, however, now began to trouble the Captain-General. May, June and July were being passed through, the unhealthiest months of the year, and scurvy, malaria and dysentery made such ravages in the fleet that he began seriously to fear that the ships would be left too weakly manned to take the sea, even when the monsoon was over, unless he could get fresh provisions somehow. Grave demoralisation also showed itself in offences against discipline, for which Albuquerque hanged one of his captains under violent opposition from some of the others. In this extremity he saved the situation at last by organising a series of night forays on the smaller islands in the south branch of the river, that not only afforded exciting occupation for officers and men, but resulted in the seizure of enough live stock and fresh vegetables to enable him to keep the remnants of his crews fairly healthy till the monsoon ended. But it was only by a narrow margin that he had escaped crippling losses through sickness when at length, after two unsuccessful attempts to negotiate the bar, his ships reached open sea at the end of August, six months after first entering the river, and returned to Cochin carrying a greatly reduced and dispirited body of survivors.

The outcome of this remarkable enterprise—unique in some of its incidents—affords a good example of the limitations of a fleet when employed as an instrument of direct attack on a continental position. A century later, Goa—as a Portuguese colony—was destined to experience the power of a fleet to ruin a seaport without entering it at all; but its permanent capture could only be effected by military methods as distinct from naval, because the fords enabled an enemy advancing from the mainland to enter the island without the necessity for any kind of water transport. Geographically it was an island, and its insularity facilitated its defence when held by a belligerent commanding the sea, by restricting an attacking army to two narrow lines of approach; but the fact that such an approach remained possible nevertheless denied it the full character of an island from a military and naval standpoint. For the same reason, a fleet could not reduce the position by cutting off its

supplies. All this would doubtless have been pointed out by Almeida, had he still been alive, as a proof of the wisdom of his policy in opposing Portuguese acquisitions of territory, and even Albuquerque would probably have left Goa alone thereafter had it been a European fortress. But a much more serious issue now confronted Portugal than any problem of strategical expediency. After the double failure of Calicut and Goa, colour prestige was in danger of disappearing, and the deep impression produced on all the shores of the Indian Ocean by the earlier victories of the white man—which had done so much to stimulate trade—was now certain to suffer eclipse unless he could make some fresh and convincing demonstration of his power. At Calicut the Portuguese had failed to capture a position, which was bad enough, but at Goa they had failed to hold one, which was infinitely worse; and for the first time in history an Indian ruler had not only taken the initiative against Europeans, but had actually hauled down a European flag in a city over which it had flown in undisputable power for two months. With such vital matter as this at stake, Almeida himself would have recognised that a prompt and permanent reversal of this arbitration of the sword was absolutely imperative to vindicate the white man's reputation in arms, on which his whole presence in the East took its stand. Until driven out of it, Albuquerque had regarded the possession of Goa as secondary in importance to other projects in his mind; but after that humiliation everything had to stand aside till it was wiped out in permanence.

It is not by any means the least of the advantages of assured maritime supremacy that when using it as a foundation for an attack on a land position, a reverse is not at all necessarily final if the attackers wish to resume operations. Now that he knew the pilotage there was nothing to prevent the Captain-General from returning and entering the river as soon as his losses in men were made up. And return he very soon did. Fortunately for him a strong reinforcement was already at Cochin when he arrived, in the shape of the annual fleet from home; and having refitted his ships, recruited his sick and replaced the gaps in his crews with new men, he sailed for Goa again in November

with twenty-three vessels of various classes—carracks, caravels and galleys—knowing that whatever else happened he could not be trapped for a second time by the summer monsoon till a full five months had passed. Entering the river without any difficulty, in spite of some submerged obstructions placed by the defenders, he pushed his way up with his whole fleet as far as the depth of water would permit the passage of heavy ships, and thence sent his light draught ships right on till actually above the city. The Khan had been unable to replace the galleys destroyed by Noronha and had no means whatever of opposing the Portuguese on the water; and as Albuquerque kept both his upper and lower divisions continually moving up and down the river for a week, the Khan's troops were utterly at a loss to foresee his probable point of attack. At length at dawn on 25th November he threw his whole available forces ashore at three different places. Two columns stormed the city itself, while a third gained entrance to the palace castle by the stratagem of attacking an outlying stockade first and following its retreating defenders in when the gates were opened to admit their retirement. After ten hours' fighting the Portuguese had decisively routed the garrison everywhere, and when the Hindoos realised that their Moslem oppressors were losing the day, they joined the attackers in a three days' general massacre of the Khan's co-religionists. When Christian and Moslem crossed swords in the sixteenth century quarter was seldom extended on either side, and as Albuquerque's aim was to exterminate the Moslem element in Goa, the fury of his onslaught spared neither age nor sex in spite of the protests of some of his own priests. In his despatch to his sovereign he reported that with the help of the Hindoos 6000 Mahomedan men, women and children had been slaughtered, and he hoped that not one remained in the island of Goa. To the Hindoos he showed every favour and help.

But this intended annihilation of the Goanese Mahomedans was incomplete in one of its most important directions, for it neither included the Khan himself nor the best troops in his army; who on this second occasion of a Portuguese attack on Goa were absent as on the first, being again engaged in war

with their neighbours of the interior. Against the possibility of a repetition of the Khan's former successful attempt to retake his capital, Albuquerque was obliged therefore to make thorough and careful preparation by the erection of permanent fortifications at the principal points of the island covering the fords, which were destined to be put to the test before another year had passed. As a representative head of the native population he installed a Hindoo prince in power, with complete administrative authority in all municipal affairs except the trade and finance of the port, which were under a Portuguese factor. In the event of war, however, both these officials were to be subject to the orders of the Portuguese commandant of the garrison. At the same time he made arrangements for the transfer from Cochin to Goa of all the staff and departments of the Portuguese headquarter offices, civil, naval and military, in order that Goa might take its place thenceforward as King Manoel's capital and seat of Government in the Indies. The Khan's palace was converted into the official residence of the supreme head and representative of the sovereign.

This transformation of Goa was internal, but externally the position of the seaport underwent an even more fundamental change when it passed under the Portuguese flag. By placing cruiser patrols to close every other harbour in south-western India to import trade, Albuquerque compelled all incoming freights to be diverted to Goa for discharge; and in order to provide the shipping thus forced to unload at Goa with return freights, he established a supply market stocked with all the main products of the southern states of Hindustan, in which a Portuguese agent acted with great profit to the Lisbon treasury as a middleman on a vast scale between the Indian producer and the foreign buyer. So ably indeed did Albuquerque deal with the financial and commercial aspects of this venture on dry land, that the profits made by the acquisition of Goa not only covered the cost of civil and military occupation, but of the upkeep of the blockading patrols as well. Moreover, in order to divert all export trade leaving India for the Red Sea—where Portuguese naval supremacy was unestablished—he refused to allow any vessel to sail westward from any of the



ports under watch, or from Goa, except to a Persian Gulf destination; which hit the Cairo and Mecca merchants hard, and when similar action was taken at a later stage in the Malay Islands ruined them altogether. Not the least remarkable consequence of this absolute dictatorship over the seaborne trade of the Indian Ocean was the power it placed in Portuguese hands over certain native princes—inaccessible to direct naval attack—by regulating their import of army horses. In all the native armies the proportion of cavalry was very large owing to the campaigning conditions of India, but as no regular horse breeding was practised their troopers were mounted on Syrian and Mesopotamian bred Arabs, arriving in ships from the Persian Gulf in hundreds every year. With their complete control over shipping movements the Portuguese could ration the Rajahs in the matter of horses exactly as they pleased, and used this power with great effect.

All this commercial concentration at one point naturally raised Goa to an unprecedented position of wealth and eminence in the East, but it was a forced growth, entirely dependent for sustenance on the ability of the Portuguese navy to keep the rival inlets and outlets for Indian trade plugged up, and when the rule of the Indian Ocean passed to another flag in later history, Goa lost its monopoly and fell into insignificance as rapidly as it had sprung up. Meanwhile, greatly to the disappointment of Albuquerque, he found that King Manoel was by no means enthusiastic over this extension of his kingdom when he received the conqueror's despatch ten months later; not so much from any doubts as to its purely commercial potentialities as from a fear that the expense of its maintenance and defence would be out of proportion to its value as a source of revenue to the realm in general. Opinions among Manoel's councillors were sharply divided on this point, one party holding to Almeida's theory that the territorial responsibilities of Portugal in the East should be kept down to a minimum as burdens on the mother country and joints in her harness. To this view the King was inclined to lean, and in the long run its upholders proved to be true prophets, though partly at least from causes other than those which they anticipated. The

other party were in favour of territorial expansion, on the principle that trade follows the flag; which, under Albuquerque's methods and power afloat was certainly the case, though the very opposite held good in England's connection with India, where trade came first and the flag came after.

For the time at least, however, Albuquerque was able to answer all criticisms most effectively by pointing to the immediate general effect of his second conquest of Goa on the Asiatic nations. After sinking temporarily to a low level Portuguese prestige in the East now rose like a river in flood. With the second seizure of the Khan's capital city the triple league of anti-European princes dissolved, and the King of Cambaya and Zamorin of Calicut were in such haste to reverse their policy that they sent embassies at once to Albuquerque offering him sites for forts and trading factories by their harbours. Hearing that not a single Indian coastal ruler remained who did not now profess friendship, outwardly at least, towards the Portuguese, the Sultan of Egypt stopped work on the building of a new fleet at Suez, which had caused more anxiety to King Manoel and Albuquerque than anything else. This in itself put the whole situation in the East on a new footing, for the Captain-General confessed to the King that if a new Red Sea fleet had effected a junction with the fleet which the Portuguese had found and destroyed on the stocks at Goa, the sojourn of his countrymen and subjects in Hindustan would have been ended for ever.

At the same time subsequent events made it clear that this new attitude of submission and deference on the part of the eastern princes was directed towards the personality of Albuquerque himself rather than the Portuguese in general; an important matter which he did not at first perceive. Brilliant qualities of leadership are particularly impressive to the oriental mind, and his personal triumph was so marked that he became the central figure of eastern observation throughout the few remaining years of his life; so that wherever he went in his ceaseless movements on the Indian Ocean the watchful attention of all in high places followed him. Of his assistants the Asiatic rulers stood so much less in awe that when his back

was turned, and when an adverse monsoon kept him for some months at an outlying point, Portuguese interests at others were occasionally in serious danger. Moreover, the overconfidence which was at once the inspiration of his great schemes, and the chief danger in their practical application, led him to the omission of precautions which most men of lesser genius would have observed, in order that he might press on with the completion of the great plan of Portuguese maritime dominion in the East, which it was the main ambition of his later years to establish.

True to his principle, therefore, that the proper place for a Captain-General of the Indies in those days was on board his flagship rather than in his palace, he handed over the local command at Goa to selected subordinates, before the newly annexed fortress seaport had properly settled down under its changed conditions; and though the Khan with a considerable remnant of his army was at no great distance inland, embarked once more, that he might, in his own words, "attend to the further service of the King." As there was no secrecy about this proceeding the Khan soon heard of it and laid his plans accordingly.

## VI

### THE MARITIME EXPEDITIONS of ALBUQUERQUE after the CAPTURE of GOA

**F**OR twelve years after Vasco da Gama traced the great sea route to Asia the oriental activities of the Portuguese were confined to the western half of the Indian Ocean for a variety of reasons, and no European vessel had ever been seen beyond Ceylon. Having made Hindustan their first field of Asiatic enterprise they found enough trade awaiting them on the Malabar coast to employ all the ships that could be spared for freight for a good many seasons, and as the sword of the Middle East was constantly held over them, they were compelled to keep a fleet stationed in the Arabian sea as the only shield which could parry its blow.

But the far wider scheme of oceanic trade accepted by King Manoel was only awaiting the means and opportunity for its execution, and as the fleets of Portugal increased in size under the stimulant of lucrative employment in eastern waters, more ships became available for the purpose. At last in the years 1508 and 1509 Manoel was in a position to despatch two successive trading squadrons of six ships each, under orders to find their way to Malacca, of which place native accounts had reached the Portuguese as the most important commercial centre on the far side of the Indian Ocean, and which the Portuguese themselves recognised from the Arab charts as standing in a position of great strategic value on the principal route connecting the traffic of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The first of these squadrons was intended to convey Manoel's greeting to the Sultan or Sovereign of whose territory on the Malay Peninsular Malacca was the seaport capital, with a request to be allowed to engage in trade on the same terms and conditions as the other foreigners visiting his coast; and the second was to follow up the anticipated acceptance of the proposal. Both were to offer full market prices for any freight obtainable. Both, however, were detained on the passage to partake in urgent service in India; the first by Almeida, and the second by Albuquerque.

Under Lopes de Sequiera the first squadron reached Cochin outward bound in the autumn of 1508, just as the north-east monsoon was due, which prevented it from continuing its voyage till the spring. But this occurred precisely at the time when Almeida was concentrating all the force he could muster in order to attack the Red Sea Fleet on the Gujerat coast, and though Sequiera was sailing under direct orders from the King, the Viceroy exercised his authority as the King's representative on the spot to requisition his ships temporarily for the intended offensive. Sequiera's squadron proved in fact to be just the additional force needed, and did excellent service in the notable battle that ensued. But when the Red Sea Fleet had been destroyed, Sequiera was no longer required in Indian waters, and with the Viceroy's sanction sailed on for Malacca with the spring change of monsoon in 1509. On arrival he was at first outwardly well received by the Sultan, but a little later underwent the same experiences as Cabral at Calicut from the same causes. Though now debarred from trading to the ports of Hindustan by the Portuguese cruisers, except at great risk, the Red Sea merchants were still able to maintain a highly profitable connection with the Malay Archipelago by keeping far to the southward of India in making the oceanic crossing between Aden and the north point of Sumatra. As at Calicut, therefore, vested interests in Mahomedan hands at Malacca were vehemently opposed to the arrival of white competitors in business; and the Arab trading community persuaded the ignorant Sultan to believe that the newcomers were a grave danger to his realm. Alarmed by this assertion the Sultan ordered a secret and treacherous attack on a large party of the Portuguese, when guests at a reception of his own, many being killed and a few seized as prisoners. Some, however, escaped to their ships, and Sequiera at once weighed and left the port for home *via* India, vowing vengeance sooner or later. Thenceforward the relationships between Portugal and Malacca went from bad to worse, till the Sultan was driven a fugitive from his kingdom.

The second Malacca bound squadron had started from Europe under Mendez Vasconcellos before news of this

tragedy reached Lisbon, and, like the first, called in at Cochin for supplies and pilots too late in the year to proceed onward thence before the winter monsoon. As in the case of Sequiera, however, Vasconcellos found his services in temporary demand on the spot, for Albuquerque was assembling every available ship to make his second attack on Goa, and kept the squadron with him all through the operations that followed. With the completion of the second capture of Goa and the advent of the spring change of monsoon, Vasconcellos requested the Captain-General's permission to proceed with the execution of his original orders; but in the meanwhile a letter had been smuggled through by a friendly Indian trader to Albuquerque from one of the Portuguese officers held prisoner in Malacca, which warned him that if any further visit to Malacca was in contemplation, either as a rescue or as a second attempt to open up trade, the visiting fleet should be very strong, or the movement would only lead to further disaster. With this warning in his hands, the Captain-General did not consider that the six vessels under Vasconcellos provided a sufficient display of power, and declined to let him undertake his mission in the altered circumstances of the situation.

Albuquerque himself was not yet aware that when the news of his recent and final capture of Goa reached Cairo it had so discouraged the Sultan of Egypt that the orders for the building and equipping of a second fleet at Suez for a renewed attack on the Portuguese had been cancelled; and the Captain-General was still convinced, therefore, that his most pressing duty at the moment was to proceed to the Red Sea and deal with this grave danger at its root, though the fair monsoon for west-bound sailing was already nearing its end. He notified Vasconcellos accordingly, that as the latter could not go to Malacca he would take him to strengthen the Red Sea expedition; but discipline was an uncertain quantity in all navies at that early period, and Vasconcellos was persuaded by the captains of his squadron to defy his superior. With flagrant insubordination he weighed from Goa and was beating out of the lower harbour when caught up and fired on by a division of galleys sent in chase from the main fleet, which shot away some spars in his

own ship. Thus disabled he signalled to the others to abandon the attempted break away and anchor again; after which he himself and all his captains were arrested, tried by court martial, deprived of their commands and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment in Goa.

This discreditable incident occurred when Albuquerque was on the point of sailing for the Red Sea, and having appointed new captains in place of those who had disgraced themselves, he took his departure from Goa with his fleet thus reinforced. Before sailing, however, he detached a small division to withdraw the handful of troops garrisoning Socotra, which was abandoned as an unsatisfactory base; and left another division on the Malabar coast to enforce the closure of all ports competing for trade against Goa, and as a support for Goa itself in case of an attack from the mainland by the evicted Khan. In leaving Goa so soon after its conquest and taking all but a very small proportion of the fleet with him he certainly accepted great risks: especially as the change of monsoon was almost due, and when that took place Goa was isolated for several months from naval support by the impassable condition of the bar. He did, however, have the excuse of the still uncontradicted reports of the preparation of the Suez armada. Up to this point, therefore, his movements were not unsupported by at least some show of good reason. But after this he committed the worst error in judgment of his career, which is so unaccountable that we can only suppose that the long strain of anxieties temporarily affected his usually unerring grasp of the general situation; an error, moreover, which would have proved disastrous to the whole future of his country in Hindustan, had he not been a notably fortunate as well as a singularly able commander. Nothing succeeds like success, however, and because his mistake led to an historical Portuguese triumph in one quarter, even if it nearly involved his country in a catastrophe that would have far more than counterbalanced it in another, the historians of the epoch have highly lauded his proceedings.

When only a few days out from Goa his fleet encountered the unsettled weather which presages the great seasonal change

of wind, and he was forced to recognise that his Red Sea enterprise must be postponed till the winter following. He ought properly, therefore, to have returned to Goa for the summer, before the full burst of the monsoon closed the harbour. Failing that, if he still believed in the Red Sea menace, he should have maintained a watching attitude from Diu, a harbour that could be entered at any time, and which was certain to be the first point of arrival of the expected enemy if he came at all; because the Sultan's vessels would assuredly need supplies after the voyage before undertaking attacks on the Portuguese harbours, and there was no other port in western India where he had so much prospect of a friendly reception for them, in spite of the fact that his former ally, the King of Cambaya, had deemed it prudent to abandon his previously hostile attitude towards the Portuguese. Especially was this precaution incumbent on Albuquerque now, for the same monsoon that prevented him from getting to Suez was a fair wind for the Suez fleet to get to India, and if they meant to attack that year, it was during the season now setting in that they must advance.

But Albuquerque seemed suddenly to forget the existence of the Suez fleet altogether; and finding that he could not reach the Red Sea for the present, precipitately decided to deal with the Malacca question in person, leaving not only Goa but all the Portuguese interests in India to look after themselves as best they might. By starting for Malacca as he now did, he was sailing for a point 1800 miles to leeward, and thereby depriving himself of the power to protect any Portuguese position in India, no matter by whom threatened, while the monsoon lasted, that is to say for a period of about five months. Nothing in his own commentaries explains this decision, but it may have been prompted by a strong desire to rescue his captive countrymen. If so, however, his reasons, while creditable enough to his heart, were quite insufficient to justify him in leaving the station which he should have occupied under every known principle of war, to go off on a side issue, and while succouring compatriots at one point, leaving them exposed to serious risks at others.



In the sequel the greater danger never came to a head, but the lesser took full shape. No general onslaught on the Portuguese in Hindustan was delivered from the middle east, for, as already observed, the Sultan at Cairo had decided not to proceed with the fitting out of a Red Sea armada—although this was still unknown to Albuquerque—but Goa was attacked from the mainland by the Khan and almost recaptured. Fortunately for the Portuguese, intelligence in eastern waters travelled very slowly against the monsoon, and the Sultan knew nothing about Albuquerque turning his back on India and going off all the way to the Malay Archipelago with the fleet till it was too late in the season to take advantage of it; otherwise it is highly probable that he would have fitted out his own fleet in all haste and despatched them to seize such a golden opportunity, which he never had again. But as soon as the monsoon had cut off Goa from the possibility of outside help, the remnants of the Khan's army, which had escaped to the mainland when that island was taken by Albuquerque and had been reorganised, were put in motion for its recapture, and not only forced the fords but occupied the defences built by the Portuguese to defend them. From this dominating position the Khan's generals cut off all supplies from the mainland, and so harassed the inadequate garrison by raiding the whole nine miles of the island outside the city all through the hot season, that the defenders were worn out before assistance was possible. If the native leaders had been at harmony among themselves—which they were not—they might have forced the surrender of the fortress with much more serious injury to Portuguese prestige in Asia than on the first occasion of their driving the white man out. A partial relief came at the end of the monsoon by the arrival of the small division of ships detailed under Manoel Lacenda for stopping the trade of the rival Malabar ports; but the reinforcement was insufficient to expel the attackers from the island, and the withdrawal of these vessels from their other employment just as the monsoons were changing enabled a large group of Arab traders to escape for Jeddah. Albuquerque's well-devised plan for establishing a dominant Portuguese position on the western seaboard of

Hindustan went in fact temporarily to pieces, through his own rashness in removing the main fleet far from Indian waters.

Meanwhile the Captain-General for his part was making a fast passage eastward with eighteen ships, and having touched at two points in Sumatra, and captured several Gujerat traders and a very large Javanese war junk carrying a Sumatran prince, who was allied to the Sultan of Malacca, he arrived in due course off Malacca itself. This seaport stands at the mouth of a narrow river—dividing the town into two halves—which is navigable for any light draught vessel, provided she can lower her masts to pass under the bridge spanning its entrance. Heavier tonnage lies in the roadstead outside, which, though open, is a perfectly safe anchorage owing to the complete freedom of the straits from serious gales. Shipping anchored there, however, was under no protection from the town against a hostile fleet while Malacca remained under Asiatic rulers, and Albuquerque could lay hands on anything outside the river with ease. Of the town itself the bridge was the key from an attacker's standpoint; for once in an enemy's hands his light craft could ascend the stream and get in rear of the stockades along the water front, or bombard the city on both banks at close range.

On his arrival in the roadstead the Captain-General received a messenger from the Sultan, who in great alarm asked for an explanation of his appearance in such force. Albuquerque replied that he had come with the fleet which the King of Portugal maintained "for the government of India" to request the immediate release of the Portuguese prisoners seized in so treacherous a manner two years before, and the payment of an indemnity for the outrage; failing to receive which he would proceed to forcible reprisals. To this the Sultan answered that he would concede nothing until the Captain-General pledged his word unconditionally to peace, and a long exchange of similar communications followed with no results. Finding, therefore, that time was passing fruitlessly, Albuquerque started coercive measures by burning all the shipping in the roadstead belonging to the influential Arab and Gujerat merchants, who had been the instigators of the Sultan's anti-

Portuguese attitude from the outset; though he spared the vessels of other nations. This so far frightened the Sultan as to make him give up those of the Portuguese prisoners who had survived two years of captivity; but as he would neither pay an indemnity nor grant permission to trade the Captain-General was disappointed in his hope that the destruction of the shipping would produce a complete and immediate general surrender as on the great day of Ormuz.

Further steps were consequently necessary, and the precise form which these were to take had to be decided with due regard to ulterior considerations. To bombard the sea face of the city was easy enough; but the whole eastern policy of the Portuguese was founded on a commercial inspiration, and they were extremely anxious at Malacca, as at other great centres of trade, to avoid measures which might ruin or destroy the mercantile quarter with its long established conveniences and advantages for storing, handling, buying and selling. Moreover, the military quarters, the treasury and the palace, all lay behind the maritime portion of the town, and had little to fear from a sea bombardment, though these were the true objects of military attack. With the means at his disposal Albuquerque had no chance of striking at them except by getting guns up the river, but that necessitated first seizing the bridge and some of the cargo lighters in use at the outer roadstead. Before actually forcing his way up the river, however, he resolved to test the moral effect of capturing the bridge, which the Malays held in great force and protected by strong stockades in the approaches from each side. At dawn, accordingly, he landed two strong parties to storm the stockades and advance simultaneously on the bridge from opposite sides, which was successfully accomplished after a severe struggle causing considerable losses to the attack and defence alike. But so far from intimidating the Sultan, the loss of this important position only stimulated him to make strenuous efforts for its recapture, and though these were all defeated the Portuguese force on the bridge was not provided with food or munitions for a prolonged occupation and had to be withdrawn; an error in foresight for which Albuquerque can hardly escape criticism.



Finding that nothing short of extreme measures would reduce the Sultan to terms, the Captain-General prepared to take the bridge a second time, and to send gun barges up the river to bombard the official and military quarter of the town, but was obliged to wait for a fortnight to get the full benefit of the spring tides. He spent this time in preparing the attacking flotilla, including a large junk taken at the outer anchorage, floating very high in the water, which was to be driven against the bridge on the flood tide to fire down on its defenders, while the stockades on either side were rushed once more. The plan succeeded, and the bridge again fell into the Portuguese hands, who, being on this occasion well provided with provisions, munitions and engineering appliances, were in a position to hold out against prolonged counter-attacks by the Malays. A safe passage under it being now secured for the gun barges these ascended the river, and opened a bombardment on the flank and rear of the enemy's position, sustained for ten days and nights, till the whole garrison and population had either fallen or retreated into the surrounding country and the greater part of the rear and centre of the city been reduced to ashes, though the maritime quarter was little damaged. The Sultan fled to the jungle with a few followers and never came back, but the people returned by degrees for food, and in accordance with the usual Portuguese policy the *bona fide* natives were well treated and placed under a native governor, while the large alien Moslem element were ruthlessly exterminated. In keeping with his usual practice on conquering a seaport, Albuquerque then proceeded to build a citadel for the double purpose of the safe storage of goods awaiting shipment and the domination of the native quarter; which fortress, in this instance, was situated on the south side of the river entrance, so as to command the bridge on one side and the outer roadstead on another. To this proceeding many of his captains were opposed on the score of expense, but the Captain-General considered it necessary, and proposed to pay for its upkeep by levying dues on the city. He next despatched a division to explore and survey the southern portions of the Archipelago—never previously visited by European ships—and sent an

ambassador to the powerful King of Siam, who was well received. When the citadel was nearing completion he took his departure for India, towards the end of the fair monsoon, with only four ships, leaving the fourteen others as a permanent force to hold the Straits of Malacca under a commodore of his own appointing. This squadron was soon to have an opportunity of distinguishing itself, and made the most of it in one of the important fleet actions of eastern history.

By the acquisition of a commercial and naval base at Malacca Albuquerque's comprehensive scheme for Portuguese sovereignty over the Indian Ocean was brought another step towards fulfilment; and in his despatches to the King after his return to Goa he reported that the trade using the harbour and Straits of Malacca was so great that even if no seaport had existed it would have been a desirable point at which to found a trading emporium. "Maintain there a squadron and garrison," he wrote, "in order that Your Majesty's name may be respected in these regions, and the neighbouring rulers will desire your friendship and agree to treat. I write this in order that the object may be accomplished without recourse to further war." The confidence expressed in these concluding words proved in later periods to be ill-founded, for the history of Malacca was a tale of frequent wars for a century or more to follow; but they illustrate Albuquerque's character as a man with a preference for peaceful methods, who, in spite of a career chiefly celebrated for deeds of arms, did not resort to war for the love of war in itself.

The Captain-General's return passage to India nearly ended his existence through the wreck of his flagship on a Sumatran reef, from which he barely escaped on a raft to another vessel, after a personal exploit of fine courage in saving life. Having been absent for a year his arrival at Cochin was a cause of unmeasured relief to the Portuguese residents, who had heard nothing of him since his departure, and had gone so far as to report officially by the season's homeward bound freight fleet that he must have been lost in some disaster with all his force, which would produce a most alarming situation for Portugal in India. Already the Sultan of Egypt had energetically

resumed the arrested fitting out of his new Suez fleet, and the three Indian princes who had composed the defunct anti-European alliance had begun to re-arm. But so great was Albuquerque's personal reputation in Asiatic eyes, that the mere report of his return from Malacca sufficed to bring all these warlike preparations to an end, though he only brought back three ships with him.

On arrival at Cochin his first anxious enquiries were directed towards the state of affairs at Goa, which had never been entirely off his mind all through the Malacca campaign; proving, apparently, that he himself had not been without some doubts as to the wisdom of leaving the new Portuguese capital when he did. He now heard for the first time of its serious straits, but had no effective force at his disposal for its relief, having left the main fleet behind at Malacca as above described. All he could do for the moment, therefore, was to send a message to the Governor of Goa, urging him to hold out till the arrival of the outward bound season's fleet at Cochin, which the Captain-General himself would bring to his succour. This fleet arrived towards the end of August, and as the Goa bar was now navigable the Captain-General started at once with seventeen ships to undertake the relief of the fortress.

His plan of operations was to surround the redoubt of Benasterim, which he himself had built to command the lower ford from the Goa side, and which had been for several months held by the enemy, as a pivotal point for his operations and advanced base. The branch of the river running below it was navigable even for some of Albuquerque's larger vessels up to a point within range of the work itself, and therefore of the ford it overlooked, which was the principal crossing from the mainland. Anchored there they could bring the fire of heavy armaments to bear not only on the redoubt, but on any hostile reinforcements attempting to cross. To press this side of the attack gun barges were specially lightened by empty casks lashed along the water line, reducing their draught till they could float even in the shallow water of the ford itself after a barrier of stakes placed by the enemy had been demolished; and with great boldness they were pushed forward under cover

of darkness till actually bumping the walls. On the land side ships' guns on special mountings were brought to bear, and caused such injury that the garrison made a sortie in force to destroy or capture them, but were thrown back with tremendous slaughter. Finding eventually, after several days' bombardment from all sides, that though they could still resist direct assault they could make no effective return fire, nor break out nor receive reinforcements, they capitulated on condition that they were allowed to return disarmed to the mainland; terms which Albuquerque accepted, though some of his officers were desirous of putting them all to the sword. The whole island then passed again into possession of the Portuguese, who immediately strengthened the defences at all the principal points, and thereafter maintained a more adequate garrison; of which the heavy expense was met in part by local shipping dues, and a system of safe conducts to navigate the Indian Ocean granted to vessels of any nationality on payment of an annual fee.

The Khan now became anxious to establish amicable relations on a clean slate, and sent a cartel to Goa to endeavour to arrange a treaty. He pointed out that the Portuguese had not only deprived him of Goa but were blockading Dabul, his only other seaport, whereby the trade of his main territories was suffering grievously. Albuquerque decided, therefore, to use the trade of Dabul as a security for the Khan's future behaviour, and lifted the blockade on condition of the maintenance of peace on the Khan's side; a politic move, especially as it enabled him to add the two blockading cruisers to the fleet that he now at once began to assemble for his twice postponed but never abandoned project for an expedition to the Red Sea in search of the Suez armada; in regard to the existence and intentions of which a state of uncertainty still prevailed. So anxious was the Captain-General to press on with this enterprise that he even removed the blockade of Calicut, which had been established on account of the Zamorin's withdrawal of the offer made by him to the Portuguese after the conquest of Goa to provide them with a site for a fort.

When ready for sea again Albuquerque sailed on what was



to prove the least spectacularly successful of all his maritime expeditions, though not the least important in its political consequences. Being the month of February he still had a fair monsoon with him—though it was late in the season—and made a good run with twenty ships to Socotra, the first point at which he touched. Crossing thence to the Arabian side of the gulf, he arrived outside Aden on the 23rd March, the day before Good Friday. The next forty-eight hours were spent in warping up the harbour with caution—as he had no local pilots—and in parleyings with the messengers of the Ameer who governed the city for the Sheikh of Southern Arabia. Both sides professed friendship, but on Albuquerque's side this was conditional on the opening of the watergate to admit the Portuguese freely to the city, and on the Ameer's conditional on Albuquerque coming with no more than twenty men to meet him at the water side outside the walls. As neither would concede the demands of the other, and as the commercial element in the Arab population made it a hotbed of anti-European sentiments, the Captain-General at length notified the Ameer that failing an agreement he would attack the walls in two days' time. An assault was delivered accordingly when that interval had elapsed without a reply; but the Portuguese land operations were not always so well organised and conducted as their work on the sea, and failed entirely at Aden owing to the provision of inadequate scaling appliances.

After a serious repulse all the Portuguese officers except the Captain-General were strongly desirous of delivering a second attack at once, but Albuquerque had three very good reasons for deferring such an attempt till a more convenient occasion. Firstly, the northerly winds in the Red Sea—which prevail during the season of the south-west monsoon in the Indian Ocean—were already nearly due, and would be foul for Suez. Secondly, his ships were very short of water, which he had counted on obtaining at Aden, till prisoners captured from vessels in the harbour informed him that the city contained no wells but was dependent on a daily supply brought by camels from far inland. And thirdly, the Portuguese losses had already been too severe to be risked a second time while an encounter

with the Suez fleet was still a possible eventuality. For the time, therefore, he accepted a local reverse, and leaving Aden entered the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, having kidnapped Red Sea pilots by the stratagem of sending a captured and disguised dhow ahead of the fleet the day before, with orders to seize the men who boarded her from the pilot village, who were handsomely recompensed when no longer required.

But within a few days of entering these waters—never previously traversed by a European ship—he began to experience trouble from the changing season, and for a third time was too late to reach Suez. And as he anchored on the coast every night, in order to avoid any treachery under cover of darkness by the pilots, his progress was so slow that when the steadily adverse winds of summer set in—which even the native craft never attempted to face—he had only fetched the Kamran Islands, less than a quarter of the distance from the Straits to the head of the Red Sea. With his men suffering terribly from the heat he lay here for two months inactive—though his presence alarmed the whole surrounding regions—and then resolved to postpone the entire enterprise till next winter. Weighing from Kamran, therefore, he passed out of the Straits, subjected Aden to a bombardment, and shaped course for the Gujerat port of Diu, where he intended to make a display of power before proceeding on to Goa.

At this stage of the return voyage he made a great haul of Arab merchantmen with very valuable freights. These vessels had been shut in at Calicut by the Portuguese blockade earlier in the year, but when, as already mentioned, Albuquerque withdrew the blockading cruisers to join the Red Sea expedition, the port was free. Knowing, however, that they were there, and that their intended destination was Jeddah or Suez if they escaped, he calculated that by getting to the Red Sea first he would have a good chance of capturing them on that side. But being uncertain as to where the disappeared blockaders had gone, the Arabs did not dare to slip out of Calicut for a couple of months, and when at length they sailed were so late that they were caught by the breaking of the summer monsoon and driven back to India. Not venturing to return

to the Malabar coast they made for Gujerat and Cambaya to endeavour to secrete themselves till the autumn; but when Albuquerque reached Diu on returning from the Red Sea this came to his knowledge, and a squadron of galleys was ordered to search the Cambayan and Gujerati ports, which found and seized them all. With this whole fleet of captures he arrived back at Goa.

These prizes represented the sole material or tangible result of the cruise, which has been treated as a complete failure by nearly all historians, because the fleet neither reached Suez nor captured Aden. Nevertheless, failure to encounter an enemy does not necessarily entail an entire waste of effort, and although Albuquerque was repulsed at Aden, and never came within 800 miles of the main force of the Sultan, the political results of the venture were immense. From time immemorial the Red Sea had been forbidden water to all navigators except those who lived on its shores, on account of the extreme intricacy of the pilotage near the coasts; and to foster their monopoly of its traffic the local seamen kept alive reports of mythical rocks and reefs over and above those which actually did exist, so that its reputation for dangers exceeded even that which it fully deserved. On this tradition the Sultan of Egypt and other rulers of the surrounding realms reposed great confidence as a security against attack from the Indian Ocean; and consequently, when a fleet of twenty large vessels boldly entered the Straits their consternation was profound, and the apprehension at Cairo somewhat resembled that which was produced in London when Dutch guns were heard in the Medway. As an incident that had never occurred before it was rudely subversive of a long established popular faith, and transposed the whole situation by putting the Sultan on the defensive thenceforward in his own waters. His fleet at Suez was neither damaged nor destroyed by a single Portuguese round-shot, but by the next account of it to reach Goa it had been dismantled and hauled up on the slipways for safety, where it eventually decayed, though false rumours that it was fitting out for sea occasionally reached Lisbon from Alexandria for many years afterwards and created scares from time to time.

On his return to Goa the Captain-General devoted himself for the next few months to diplomatic and civil affairs, receiving emissaries from the Kings of Siam, Burmah and Cambaya, and from Sheikh Ishmael, who was the acknowledged head of all the nomad tribes dwelling in northern Arabia, Syria and Mesopotamia. Ishmael's principal source of wealth was his brood mares, and the best market for their colts was India. When his ambassador to the King of Cambaya reported that the harbours of Hindustan were opened or closed as Albuquerque chose to dictate, he recognised that one of the mainstays of his finances was at Portuguese mercy and naturally sought their friendship. Generally speaking, the Captain-General was not on particularly good terms with the great Moslem rulers, but as Ishmael belonged to the Shia sect of that faith he was perpetually at feud with Egypt and Turkey, and Albuquerque readily responded in his case, sending a return mission which was regally treated.

He also sent missions to the King of Gujerat and the Zamorin of Calicut, both of whom had offered Albuquerque sites in their seaports for citadels after the sensation caused by his subjugation of Goa, but both of whom had raised difficulties in the matter as soon as he sailed for Malacca. Albuquerque was determined that these sites should be obtained and the forts erected, partly for the usual reasons, and partly in order that by their command of the harbours they might render it unnecessary to employ a blockading squadron to close them when such action was required, a proceeding that removed ships from other and more directly profitable duties. It was chiefly this last-mentioned consideration that obtained the approval of his sovereign, who, under the advice of many of his advisers in Lisbon, had been sceptical as to the advantages of adding to the Portuguese land positions in India. But though the Captain-General hoped to persuade the Zamorin he learnt from secret sources that the latter, however friendly in his professions, was in reality deeply pledged to associate his policy with the powerful league of Cairo merchants who headed all the anti-European parties in the East, and would never agree to any Portuguese footing at Calicut of a military character.

This report was confirmed by the endless procrastinations and difficulties encountered in the attempted negotiations; and as Albuquerque did not intend to risk a repetition of the previous disaster at Calicut, he fell back at last on methods which, albeit fully in accord with the political expedients of his time, stand in marked contrast to his usual codes and standards of ethics. Apparently, like Warren Hastings, he considered that the end justified the means in dealing with Orientals. He resolved, therefore, that the Zamorin must be removed to make way for his brother, who, in addition to being a strong friend of the white man and head of a very large faction in Calicut friendly to the Portuguese, was very ambitious for power. Promising this brother the full support of Portugal in the future Albuquerque wrote to him suggesting the means of removal. Poison was applied with fatal results, the brother was proclaimed as the Zamorin's successor by the party supporting him, Calicut was released from all blockading interference and restored to the prosperity which it had lost for twenty years, and the Portuguese, obtaining the site they coveted for a fort, proceeded at once with its construction.

At this same period the first despatches arrived from Malacca, a year and a half after Albuquerque's departure. Andrade, who commanded the fleet left by the Captain-General, reported considerable fighting and asked for more ships. A squadron was accordingly sent eastward with the spring change of monsoon, and arrived very opportunely, just before a fleet of ninety war proas, belonging to a league of chiefs headed by the King of Java, appeared in the Straits with the intention of re-taking Malacca. Finding the Portuguese awaiting them with eighteen vessels the Malay armament anchored some miles from the port to deliberate on their plan of operations, while Andrade remained in the roadstead to watch developments, hoping that the Malays would disembark for a move against the town, and so leave their vessels weakly defended for him to fall upon. But their councils of war recognised that it would be suicidal to land in the presence of the Portuguese fleet; and as they could effect nothing without landing, and were at the same time afraid to attack Europeans on the water, they abandoned

the whole enterprise and tried to slip away during the night. Andrade, however, observed their departure, and finding that he was no longer required on the defensive, followed them at once, catching up the rear of the retreat next morning and maintaining a running engagement all day which inflicted very heavy losses on the Asiatic side, though he failed to capture the King of Java himself. This was the first of ten fleet actions fought by the Portuguese navy in the Straits of Malacca, during the period of one hundred and thirty years in which that important strategic channel was watched by their seamen; and no other water area of equal space in all the world has witnessed more encounters on a large scale by the standards of the day. This first battle produced a great impression throughout Malaysia for a long time, and deterred the Javanese from threatening Malacca again for sixty years: though it did not prevent the Sumatrans from trying their fortune with no better success in that interval.

Before this had taken place Albuquerque had once more assembled all the ships available on the Indian coast for another cruise, which was destined to prove his last. Though he was ageing fast Aden and the Red Sea still held the first place in his larger plans for the future, but before resuming so critical a venture, he was desirous of consolidating the Portuguese position at Ormuz, which had never been quite to his satisfaction since he left it partially established nine years before. His citadel there had remained half finished, and though Portuguese trade at this great commercial centre was flourishing, the annual tribute payable by the Sultan was in arrears. On arrival he found that all power had passed for the moment into the hands of a political adventurer of the common oriental type, a bold and reckless man who compelled the Sultan to do his bidding at the dagger's point, and who was caught and despatched on the rapiers of Albuquerque's personal staff in the very act of endeavouring to assassinate the Captain-General with secreted weapons. The Sultan was so grateful for this relief that the Portuguese experienced no further difficulty in completing the citadel and settling all other local matters to their satisfaction. To such a height had Albuquerque's celebrity

attained in western Asia by this time that oriental notabilities came by every caravan and sea route to see him in person, from even as far inland as Tartary and Kurdistan; but in the midst of an atmosphere of fame and wonder, such as probably no white man in the east has ever since so fully experienced, his health suddenly gave way so completely that he recognised he had very little longer to live. Ten years of incessant and anxious labour, begun in an unhealthy climate at the age of sixty-three, had broken him up at last; and having transacted with rapidly failing powers such business as remained to be done at Ormuz he sailed for Goa, which he was most desirous of reaching before his fast-approaching end.

It so happened that his successor, Lopes Suarez—of whose appointment as Viceroy the Captain-General knew nothing—had already arrived at Cochin with the annual fleet a few weeks before. For years past an envious but influential faction at Lisbon had intrigued against Albuquerque, and the irresolute King had at length credited the industriously circulated defamation of his character and decided to recall him. It may have been difficult for a man of Manoel's mediocre powers of discernment to sift the true from the false among all the plots and parties surrounding the throne; but in giving Albuquerque no chance to answer his accusers before taking drastic action on their reports he was certainly guilty of an unpardonable injustice to the best among the band of brilliant servants who held his commission. And very shortly afterwards his proceedings presented him in an even worse light as a vacillator who was guided by fears for the future rather than gratitude for the past. Within a couple of months from the departure of Suarez a highly sensational rumour reached Lisbon from Venice—where from motives of self-interest it had probably originated—to the effect that the Suez armada was fitting out again for India in great strength. Much disturbed by this intelligence Manoel despatched a reinforcing fleet of twelve ships for the East at once, and by them he sent a letter to Suarez, informing him that although he would retain the title and emoluments of Viceroy, his actual authority was to be confined to the minor land settlements of Cochin, Cananore and

Malacca—all subordinate responsibilities—while, until further instructions, Albuquerque, though only holding the status and pay of Captain-General, would remain in supreme command of Goa and of all naval and military forces of Portugal in the Indies, in order that, in Manoel's own words, the greatest danger which could threaten the Portuguese position in the East should be met by a man of proved competence. Thus at the very time when his sovereign was removing Albuquerque to make room for a favourite he was relying upon him to save a threatened situation. In the end nothing came of this ambiguous arrangement, for the rumour proved false and Albuquerque was dead before these orders reached Suarez, but the stigma on the King's name remains in history. In justice, however, it must be said that he heaped honours on the Captain-General's only son.

Albuquerque received the first intimation of his supercession on the voyage to Goa from a native vessel making from Cochin to Muscat, which he communicated with at sea. To find that after ten years of exceptionally meritorious services to his country the King regarded him as deserving of censure produced a most depressing effect on the few remaining days of his life, and when the ship anchored in the outer harbour of Goa late in the evening of 15th December, 1515, he was sinking fast. Early next morning he died in the full dress of a Commander of Santiago, and was buried at Goa amid extraordinary scenes of feeling in which the Hindoos bore quite as large a part as his own countrymen.

With the close of this remarkable man's life ended a very definite chapter in the history of the Indian Ocean. Perhaps it has never been quite sufficiently appreciated how much the nations of central and western Europe owe to him as the real founder of the white man's power in the east. Before he took up his vast labours Europe was unrepresented on that part of the earth's surface which lies to the eastward of Africa, except by a small squadron of ships moving within a restricted area, and a handful of officials in three fenced enclosures, any one of which could be walked round in ten minutes; while all around were swarming millions of the brown races whose ships



covered the eastern seas. At Albuquerque's death the white man—though only represented by citizens of one of the smallest European States—stood like a Colossus astride of the Indian Ocean, with one foot in the Malay Archipelago and the other at the gates of Persia: between which points not a vessel dared to show her sails without Portuguese goodwill. And though the Portuguese resisted the determination of other white races to share in this great position afterwards, it was their own pioneering work that cleared the way for all the European flags that followed nevertheless.

In some of its aspects the rule of the Indian Ocean founded by Albuquerque has no precise parallel in history, for it subjected a whole oceanic area to the condition of territorial waters. Other nations with a naval superiority over enemies in war have so far applied it as to drive their enemies off the sea and blockade them in port, but none even in war have attempted to set up a permanent regulation of sea traffic applicable to anything afloat in an entire ocean. Albuquerque began at first by a wholesale forced reduction of traffic through his expulsion of the Arab merchants from the eastern seas, but found it more in Portuguese interests to modify this extreme policy by allowing them to trade between Goa and the Persian Gulf, instead of Calicut and the Red Sea; and under a system of licences encouraged the flow of maritime commerce through channels of his own selection. But he recognised both the moral obligation and the expediency of policing the great water space over which he asserted an arbitrary control based on force, and strove to free it from the curse of piracy under which it had suffered from the earliest beginnings of navigation. No sea in the world was safer in that respect, at the time, than the Indian Ocean in the early part of the sixteenth century; and at that period the freighters crossing its surface sailed on their business in more security than their sisters of the Atlantic, Pacific or Mediterranean, always provided that they carried the Portuguese pass. For these safe conducts they were charged substantial fees, and here again in levying a tax on oceanic navigation applicable within certain vastly extended geographical limits to all vessels but their own, the Portuguese

action was historically unique; but the trade was so lucrative that it easily carried the impost, and an Arab shipowner confessed to Albuquerque that he could afford to lose a dozen cargoes of Malabar pepper for every one which he landed at Jeddah or Suez. Fifteen hundred per cent. was a not uncommon profit for one voyage.

In matters of general policy his strategic breadth of outlook enabled Albuquerque to keep essentials consistently in view, and through his understanding of the necessary limitations of Portuguese power in so immense a field of enterprise he never attempted—in spite of a natural bent for adventure—to undertake the conquests of great blocks of Asiatic territory like the Dutch, British and French. Wherever he planted or helped to plant the flag of his country, the sea was either actually visible, or at most within a couple of hours' march; in which respect he steered a middle course between the policy of his predecessor Almeida on the one hand and his successor Suarez on the other. Almeida was opposed to any addition to the two original Portuguese footholds on the land at Cochin and Cananore. Suarez came to an agreement with the principal of the three kings dividing the rule of Ceylon, whereby the greater portion of that island, amounting to an area equal to more than half Portugal itself, was added to the realms acknowledging the sovereignty of the Portuguese crown as tributary states. No effective military occupation of so extensive an acquisition of territory was within the power of the Lisbon government, but they could cut off its external commerce, and for a long time that proved a sufficient means of controlling the interior through native rulers, as well as the coast. At a later stage, however, rebellions far inland involved them in military operations absorbing more than all the profits of tribute and trade, which was precisely the nature of eventuality that Almeida and Albuquerque had apprehended.

One fatal mistake, however, Albuquerque did commit with the best intentions, which went far towards undoing his own great work in after years. He was directly responsible for racial adulteration on a scale that proved one of the main causes of the ultimate decay of Portuguese power in the Orient.

The men he led himself so often to triumph were all full-blooded whites born of Lusitanian mothers; but with the idea of manning the fleets and forts under the Portuguese flag in the East with a locally raised *personnel*, he deliberately encouraged the marriage of these men to the daughters of Malabar Hindoos, the least virile of the eastern races with whom he came in contact. The hybrid posterity of these unions provided soldiers and sailors of a type that was good enough—as a rule—for meeting Asiatic enemies, but it was flimsy material with which to face the seamen of Nordic Europe, who arrived a few generations later to contest the Portuguese supremacy of the eastern ocean, especially as the stock was still further watered with the passage of time.

Though not a sea officer from youth Albuquerque's career as a war commander was almost entirely naval in character, or directed towards objects having an immediately maritime purpose, such as the acquisition of bases for fleets and freight storage. But in spite of this, fate denied him the opportunity of ever proving his capacity as a fleet tactician, for although his many engagements involved conflict with great numbers of enemy vessels, these were either encountered at anchor or singly, and he never fought a hostile fleet in open sea like da Gama, or his own subordinate Andrade and many later commanders of the Malacca Division. On the other hand, few admirals have dealt with wider problems of attacking rival sources of wealth through control of sea communications, and none have conducted so much coastal warfare of the kind which stands quite distinct from mere raids. He never had to fence for the weather gauge, but no man ever led a fleet into action so often with the leadsman calling the soundings; than which nothing is so distracting to the nerves of a seaman when manœuvring to attack in uncharted water. Striking directly at the land from the sea Albuquerque might almost be described as the commander whose strategy was naval and tactic military.

He was singularly free from avarice, and the intrinsic value of the share which he kept for himself of the immense booty taken in his operations was almost negligible. As a disciplinarian he was strict and used the brutal punishments in vogue

at that period, but proved extremely forbearing towards those whose offence was disrespect towards himself. And in spite of his conquering activities he left a name held in the highest reverence by Asiatics for generations afterwards, who discerned in him a man recognising that power has its duties as well as its advantages. Unceasingly though he laboured to promote the supremacy of Portugal, it was always his aim to make it a source of prosperity to those who came under it; and so deeply did this impress the natives that for years after his death they were in the habit of invoking his spirit as a protection against the tyrannies of his successors.

Here and there may still be seen traces of the work of Albuquerque. Goa still flies the Portuguese flag, and at a few widely-separated points crumbling walls overlooking the eastern seas indicate the sites of his citadels, long since abandoned to a decay of which he did not live to witness even the beginning. At his death these were among the new and visible signs of the rule of his country, as established by him throughout that immense oceanic area in the history of which his name still occupies the foremost place.

## VII

### THE CENTURY of PORTUGUESE SUPREMACY in the INDIAN OCEAN

**F**OR a term of almost exactly one hundred years after Vasco da Gama first anchored in a harbour of India the Portuguese remained the sole representatives of Europe in the eastern seas; and this period happened to coincide very closely with the precise span of the sixteenth century, for whereas da Gama's outward voyage came to a finish about a year and a half before that century opened, the first Dutchmen rounded the Cape about a year and a half before its close. After the establishment of the great commercial and defensive organisation evolved by the genius of Albuquerque, they occupied what might be described in strategic language as a position facing north, resting on the water throughout, although with footholds on shore, and extending over a front of roughly 5000 miles along the northern coasts of the Indian Ocean, from Aden on the left or western hand to Malacca on the right or east. Across the entire length of this line the European envisaged the Asiatic, and at many points came into contact with him as friend or foe.

On their own side of the clear-cut and unchanging natural trace dividing land and sea, the Portuguese when they chose were always able to keep their interior and posterior lines of communication absolutely secure against interruption, so long as they only had Asiatic rivals to face. But that could only be effected by the maintenance of sufficient naval force at all the important points, which they sometimes failed to provide through errors in judgment. Wherever an adequate display of ships was present, there peace reigned and trade flourished. But the knowledge of the superior fighting design of their individual models over any type of native vessel occasionally engendered over-confidence and this, in conjunction with their business desire to utilize as many craft as possible for trade, sometimes led them to reduce a squadron or division, stationed for protective purposes at some particular strategic base, below the margin of safety. Whenever that happened one or more

of the neighbouring natives States was always on the watch to strike a blow at the weakened point; not with any hope of permanently getting rid of the white man's presence, but solely for the sake of plunder or revenge. These encounters were not infrequent, and caused the Portuguese occasional temporary losses, especially through dislocation of local trade; but, as long as their general command of the Indian Ocean remained unshaken, local reverses were invariably remedied sooner or later by the arrival of reinforcements and relief in the area of disturbance. It was as if that great water-space was an empire with frontiers which could be rendered impregnable against direct attack by the use of highly mobile defensive forces, whose concentration on any threatened point the enemy was absolutely powerless to prevent; though the elements might cause its delay. The monsoons, by rendering the despatch of fleets towards certain directions impracticable for months at a time, compelled the Portuguese to submit to a corresponding dispersal of strength, which under other conditions would have been unsound; but behind that lay a reserve of moveable power that always came into play with the change of season, and so enabled them to be ultimately superior anywhere. Thus although the Malays to the east, and the other Moslem nations to the west, were permanently inimical and often actively hostile, their incapacity to combine invariably left them exposed to defeat in the end, even if at times they gained a momentary advantage; and the undisputed maritime superiority of the Europeans not only enabled them to select their points of contact with the Asiatics exactly as they pleased, but owing to the great mobility of fleets—in which Raleigh was the first to discern their potential influence on war—invested them with the power to dominate 5000 miles of coastline along which lived some fifty million people. A somewhat parallel situation was presented during the same period by the command of the shores of the American continent in the hands of Spain; but most of those shores were inhabited by primitive savages, whereas many of the races whom the Portuguese faced across the high water mark of the eastern seas had reached a comparatively advanced degree of prowess in arms on the land at least.

This era of an undisturbed monopoly in eastern commerce marked the zenith of prosperity in the history of Portugal. The entire business in all its branches remained under government, subject to the immediate authority of the sovereign; and although at a much later stage an attempt was made under crown patronage to float a chartered company as a substitute for official control, on the system which was successfully adopted by the British and Dutch, it met with no private support from the public, who always regarded oversea enterprise as within the proper domain of national administration. The State treasury reaped an immense harvest in consequence from the sale of eastern produce in Lisbon, whither the merchants from all parts of Europe flocked to buy; but the nature of the commodities which gave rise to the strenuous trade rivalry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seems curiously trivial in the economic conditions of the present day, when the severe competition for the real necessities of existence lies so much at the root of all international relationships. In our own time the welfare of civilisation is largely dependent on the transport and exchange of staple foodstuffs; raw materials for clothing, such as wool and cotton; and various descriptions of fuel. But in the sixteenth century all Europe, high and low, was clamouring for pepper and cloves, Asiatic-grown luxuries arriving only in very small quantities through Egypt and Mesopotamia, before the Cape route was discovered.

By the sale of pepper and cloves brought direct by sea the Portuguese prospered in consequence so highly that for a period their national wealth compared not unfavourably with that of far greater and more populous monarchies. Spain amassed riches by laying ruthless hands on South American gold and silver mines, Portugal during the same era by loading peppercorns in Malabar and selling them at 500 per cent. net profit on the Tagus; for so pronounced was the craving for spices among all classes in the west, as a seasoning for a monotonous and flavourless diet, that their price was high in proportion. For spices, accordingly, men faced death by shipwreck or the sword, and hazarded some of the most remarkable exploits in the early annals of oceanic navigation. In nine-

tenths of the written treaties between the Kings of Portugal and the various reigning Princes of Hindustan, the matter of pepper came up almost in the first clause, and in quite a considerable number it was the only subject to receive attention at all. Spices were the Golden Fleece of the Orient, and not even the story of the adventures of Jason in search of the article of classic legend exceeds in romance the epic of Vasco da Gama and his successors in their quest for sackfuls of these pungent little seeds; to obtain which the Portuguese eventually extended their commercial exploration right southwards through the rock strewn passages of the Malay Archipelago, till they were approaching unaware the northern shoreline of Australia.

Speaking generally, it was their policy to spread their mercantile net as widely as possible in the regions on the north and east of the Indian Ocean—in which directions lay the lands where the commodities they sought were chiefly to be found—while holding the approaches from the westward against the threat of Moslem incursion. Although not to be ignored for its marketable value, the produce of Arabia and Persia was of much less importance as a source of wealth than the produce of Hindustan and the Malay countries; and the comparatively small number of Portuguese vessels that were despatched to embark cargoes in the ports to the westward of India seldom actually entered either the Persian Gulf or Red Sea, but anchored at Ormuz or Muscat—and at one period at Aden—to load up the goods deposited at their warehouses by the native coasters from the surrounding area. But the exits from the Persian Gulf and Red Sea required incessant watching, for behind them lay the lands of the Arabs—who were always scheming to retrieve their lost trade with India and China—and their Turkish conquerors, who became ambitious of extending the Ottoman power towards Hindustan. And thus, although orders from Lisbon directed the successors of Albuquerque to keep constantly pushing forward on the Malay side, they were instructed to remain content on the Arabian side with the positions Albuquerque had captured; except to form an eventual alliance with the Sheikh of Aden, whose independence was threatened in the course of time by the



Turkish invaders of Egypt, and whose original hostility to the Portuguese was turned thereby to friendship in the hope of their support.

Along the coasts of Hindustan the Portuguese gradually extended their footing year after year, till almost every anchorage where the embarkation of freight was possible had its Portuguese factory or depôt; and as their ships forcibly prevented any native vessels from using these harbours, except with Portuguese passes on payment of a substantial consideration, the peoples of India had no option but to trade with the white man if they wished to trade at all. In this way the whole export business of India had fallen into the hands of Lisbon agents before the century was half through; and there it remained until other Europeans made their appearance on the scene in the century following and in their turn seized it from the Portuguese. In the Malay Archipelago the Lisbon monopoly of commerce was for a time contested by Spanish ships arriving from Panama across the Pacific; but as the Spaniards were never traders in the true sense, and were much more engrossed with their expansion of empire in America, this competition was not so harmful to Portuguese interests as it might otherwise have been. Starting therefore from their commercial base at Malacca, they worked steadily southward through the islands on that side of the Indian Ocean, and within fifty years of Albuquerque's capture of Malacca had established half-a-dozen trading outposts at widely separated points in the Archipelago.

By the eastern nations the spectacle of the white man's assumption of rule over the entire Indian Ocean was viewed with feelings which varied in accordance with its effect on the particular interests of each. Broadly speaking, most of the Asiatic races with whom the Portuguese came into contact were separated into two general divisions from a mercantile standpoint; one division consisting of those who produced the export commodities of the east, and the other of those who bought them at first hand and transported them for a second sale elsewhere. In the first category came nearly all the coastal population of India, and a considerable portion of the peoples of the Malay Archipelago. In the second came the seafaring

elements on the north-western side of the Indian Ocean—mainly Arabs—and the inhabitants of the lands which lie between the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean, a mixture of Egyptians, Syrians, Levantines and southern Turks, known comprehensively to the Portuguese as “Rumes.” The producing sections were not greatly concerned as to whether they sold their goods to Arabs or Europeans, so long as they fetched a fair price; and though some of their principal rulers were apprehensive of Portuguese conquest, the industrial and agricultural masses shared this fear very little. The transporting section, however, found themselves being supplanted as the commercial middlemen between east and west by the Portuguese, and not unnaturally regarded this European invasion of eastern sea and markets as an unmitigated evil.

Apart from these two commercial categories, a third element was very materially affected, namely, the people and rulers of those Malay islands where existence was maintained rather by predatory methods than by peaceful traffic. Here the arrival of the white man was as deeply resented as it was on the opposite side of the Indian Ocean, not because it interfered with a long-established business intercourse, but because it threatened a long-established system of extortion. Though not ocean-going seamen, like the Arabs, these islanders were quite at home on the water; and being brave and truculent by nature took a full advantage of their geographical position in the passages between the Pacific and Indian Oceans for enforcing a ruthless toll on passing sails. To these obstructionists the transfer of a large part of the freightage flowing through the Straits of Malacca to ships carrying heavy armaments was a great blow. And therefore, although the Malays were incessantly fighting with one another, they were in full agreement in detesting these new developments, and lost no opportunity of showing it.

But whatever the sentiments might be with which Arab, Hindoo or Sumatran regarded the European, all alike realised that the security of his position in eastern ports was due to his power to act as he pleased on the water. If once deposed from the mastership of the sea, on which he frequently and openly took his stand in his discussions with the princes of the east,

his settlements on shore would soon be starved out. Fortunately, however, for the European, no Asiatics had any knowledge of naval warfare as a science, except those of the middle east; and even with that knowledge, the middle east never attained to the true oceanic vision of the Atlantic races. Though not unskilful navigators in their own way, neither the Arabs nor the Malays were ever capable of building a vessel comparable in fighting design to the galleon or frigate, nor did they ever come to understand that a mere mob of ships without organisation or power to manœuvre as a fleet is not a certain instrument of victory. After a time they learnt a little from the European example, but not enough to regain their lost position, and the improvement was almost solely confined to weapons. For naval tactics proper they never displayed the slightest aptitude; and thus it was that the European dominion of the Indian Ocean established by da Gama, Almeida and Albuquerque has never been seriously threatened, except by Egyptians and Turks. Against the Egyptians the Portuguese were able to bring their whole strength, although the attack took place in the very early days of their eastern naval supremacy, because they had no distant positions requiring detached defence; but when the Turks came on the scene at a later stage they were handicapped by calls arising in other parts of their then very widespread eastern position.

For these various reasons, the history of the Indian Ocean during the hundred years following the death of Albuquerque was not a tale of conquest or change like the ten years immediately antecedent, or the century that came after. It was an era of repeated stress and strife, but of stationary general conditions nevertheless; for in spite of being constantly attacked at this point or that, the Portuguese were never permanently driven away anywhere, and even when suffering temporary local reverses always recovered their supremacy sooner or later, except in one instance. To a seaman or a soldier the full account of such a period is often of extreme interest, as illustrating some particular system or policy of defence continually under test; and in this case the details of the methods whereby the white man held his outlying positions is remarkably instructive



PORTUGUESE GALLEON OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The earliest instrument of European rule in the Indian Ocean

*(From a sketch by the author)*



professionally. For example, the seven great attacks on the Portuguese seaborne trade and land settlement in the Straits of Malacca, delivered by the various Malay Sultans, are worth a technical book in themselves, quite apart from the operations against the Turks, Arabs and Cingalese. But to the general reader a lengthy series of conflicts which never effect more than a momentary shifting of the alignment on a fighting front, are apt to be as tedious in the narration as the daily reports of a prolonged period of trench warfare, in which cross raiding is incessant but no material change results; and as the treatment of the subject in these pages is neither in the form of a detailed history or a technical commentary, the chronicles of that phase of Indian Ocean history must here be condensed.

As already observed, the general strategic front of the Portuguese position was represented by the northern shores of the Indian Ocean from Aden and Ormuz to Malacca. These three outlying points were the regional centres for the collection and shipment of the produce of their surrounding areas in the holds of the Portuguese Indiamen, after it had been brought in by small native vessels; and to understand the general interests of the Portuguese as they themselves viewed them, it must be borne in mind that cargoes were at this stage always regarded as of more importance than the settlements on shore, which were merely warehouse lots in fortified enclosures to store goods awaiting embarkation, only considered as valuable possessions from the goods they might contain at a time of attack. Even Goa had its prime importance as a trade centre. The loss of one of these points for a few months only involved the destruction of a few warehouses and the deaths of a small staff if it happened to be empty. But if it was full the whole treasury budget in Lisbon might be affected for a year till a second accumulation was completed. On the same principle the protection of the goods afloat in native bottoms destined for landing at the dépôts was quite as important as the protection of the dépôts themselves.

It was the regular Portuguese practice to despatch the loaded vessels homeward each year in company early in the favourable north-east monsoon—that is to say in the autumn

—so that they might make a good run to the equator. Only a few remained near each of the three above-mentioned outlying points, for the double purpose of protecting the local native craft engaged in bringing in cargoes from the neighbourhood for deposit at the settlement in readiness for the next year's despatch, and for keeping down Arab competition. These guardships were also the chief protection of the settlements, because any enemies powerful enough to attack on land with any prospects of success happened in all cases to be so situated that they had to cross the water first—the settlements in Hindustan being of course an exception. Of the outlying squadrons that which was stationed in the Straits of Malacca was in a somewhat specially isolated position, being cut off from any hope of reinforcement by the monsoon from the time of the departure of the homeward bound fleet in October till the arrival of the next year's fleet in May. The squadrons at Ormuz and Aden could be supported in summer from the Mozambique quarter and in the winter from Goa. As a result at Malacca the exigencies of trade came into conflict with the requirements of strategy, for the greater the accumulation of goods to be carried home the fewer the vessels left behind as a defence. It was always a difficult matter, therefore, for the local commodore to strike a right balance, for if he sent off too many ships he risked the safety of his area, and if he sent off too few he was liable to be called to account by the authorities in Lisbon, whose demands for cargoes were insatiable.

Through this uncertainty the margin of safety was sometimes overstepped and commerce paid the penalties, for within easy striking distance of Malacca lay several large and formidable Malay Sultanates possessed of numerous fleets of proas, all permanently hostile to Europeans. Seizing the favourable opportunities in the winter monsoons, the various rulers of these States attacked the Portuguese with a tremendous superiority in numbers no less than seven times during the sixteenth century. The first attack was delivered by the King of Java in 1514, the second by the Sultan of Bintang in 1518, the third by the very powerful King of Acheen in 1538, the fourth and fifth by his successor in 1572 and 1573, the sixth

by another King of Java in 1574, and the seventh by the King of Acheen again in 1575. Yet other attacks followed in the century after by the Dutch.

The first, fourth and fifth of these enterprises were defeated on the water, after hard fought fleet actions, and failed in every respect; in the other four the small Portuguese squadrons were either destroyed or blockaded in harbour, and the local traffic which they were protecting was held up for the whole season. On each of these four occasions naval success was followed by the landing of an army to capture and plunder the Portuguese settlement, but in no single instance was this effected before the arrival of a relieving fleet, on the spring change of monsoon, forced the Malays to retreat in haste. In every case a handful of Europeans held an outpost of the white race against oriental assailants with a superiority of fifty to one in numbers, and the greatest heroism was displayed. But the impregnability of the walled enclosure on shore on each occasion to every form of assault known to the Malays, was a poor consolation to the Portuguese for the loss of four winter seasons of trade, and to that extent these four raids must be set down as Asiatic successes. The European command of the sea was locally overthrown in an area where it could not be re-established for half a year and the financial blows were severe. Moreover, the effect of these attacks was felt right across the Indian Ocean, because they compelled the Portuguese admirals to strengthen the detached force permanently stationed in the Straits of Malacca at the expense of other points where equally dangerous adversaries had to be faced before many years had passed.

It will be observed from the above dates that the first three attacks took place in the first half of the century, and were divided by a wide interval of time from the last four, which were a series of sledge-hammer blows delivered in quick succession in the second half; and to obtain a proper mental picture of the phases of the general situation they should be grouped in this way. Taught by the successive experiences of the first three, the Portuguese increased the squadron in the Straits of Malacca and enjoyed thirty-six years of security at that end of their line in consequence. Their attention was in fact



focused on that side, and they even turned the tables on the Sultan of Bintang—a formidable pirate chief at enmity with everybody—by capturing his island and breaking up his forces after a violent tussle and one sanguinary failure.

All this, however, entailed a weakening of their squadrons at the Persian Gulf and Red Sea entrances, and it so happened that during this same half century the Ottoman Turks were carrying their irresistible advance southward from Asia Minor through Syria, Egypt and Mesopotamia, till they reached the heads of the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, where their arrival caused considerable apprehension to the Portuguese Admirals. Being much more scientific seafighters than any of the other eastern races, they represented a menace to the white man's eastern interests needing constant vigilance; although at first they did not exhibit any immediate signs of aggressive intention, and called a lengthy halt at the water's edge, where for a space they remained content with the rôle of spectators of Portuguese maritime activity. Not being in any sense a mercantile people themselves they displayed no inclination to enter into competition with the sea traders, whose industry they had indeed some inducement to leave alone, for the caravan tracks which connected with the sea routes traversed their newly-acquired territories and offered a fine subject for exactions and tolls.

But to the Turks the slow gains derived from customs dues and other similar levies are always less attractive than the rapid profits of successful plunder, and after contemplating the prospect for some twenty years they decided to adopt a more forward policy. Soliman the Magnificent was now on the Ottoman throne, a great monarch whose navy in the Mediterranean had proved so efficient an instrument of rule and conquest that it fired him with an ambition to assert his power in other seas. For a long time he had resented the hold which the Portuguese maintained on the exit from the Persian Gulf by keeping one of their squadrons based on Ormuz; and like the Sultans of Egypt whom his father had conquered and superseded, he kept up a correspondence with such of the western rulers of India as professed the Moslem faith. Chief among these was the King of Gujerat, a grandson of the prince

whose attempt to oust the Portuguese from India in alliance with the Sultan of Egypt had been defeated in the fleet actions of Chaul and Diu. After those defeats the reigning monarch of Gujerat had granted permission to the Portuguese to visit Diu for trade, and in time so completely reversed his anti-European policy that he gave them a site for a settlement of the usual type, which was later enclosed and fortified. His son and grandson, however, were encouraged by Soliman to revert to the original attitude of hostility to Europeans, with the result that the son was killed after a brief reign, in a skirmish with the Portuguese in Diu harbour, and the grandson, on succeeding to power, secretly schemed with Soliman to drive the Portuguese out of Gujerat, if not out of India, by seizing their Diu citadel.

The aggressiveness of Soliman's eastern outlook was evidenced by the building of a fleet of the finest war galleys at Suez, which were certainly not needed for any purposes of defence and compelled the Portuguese admirals to keep a constant watch in that direction with the lessons of Chaul in memory. But since that battle the expansion of Portuguese commerce in the east had been so great that their maritime strength was no longer equal to protecting it from local attack at all points, except by withdrawing tonnage from trade, and the financial loss consequent on such a step promised to be greater than that arising from an occasional Turkish raid. No steps were taken, therefore, to increase the divisions based on Ormuz and Aden; nor did any increase prove to be necessary so long as there was no reduction, for Soliman kept the lesson of Chaul in mind also—and perhaps even more the lessons of the fleet action of Malabar—with no intention of risking repetitions. He was quite ready to engage the Portuguese on land, as he proved more than once; but he knew just enough about naval tactics to realise that, at that period anyhow, the Portuguese knew more, and dreaded the possible combination of weather gauge and long-range gun in the hands of adversaries who could display such spirit as Lorenzo Almeida. His Suez fleet never ventured outside the Red Sea therefore while there was any prospect of encountering the ships of Portugal in respectable force.

But a chance came at last. When the King of Achcen delivered his great attack on Malacca in 1538—of which mention has already been made—the relief of that place called for the services of every Portuguese vessel in Asiatic seas to deal with the Achinese fleet—including the Aden and Ormuz divisions—and left the western half of the Indian Ocean clear of the flag altogether for a time. This occurred moreover during the summer monsoon, which meant that all had sailed to leeward and could not get back till the autumn. Here was Soliman's opportunity, a fair wind to India and not a single enemy to bar the way. News of the departure of the Portuguese vessels from Aden and Ormuz having soon reached him he despatched express orders to his namesake, Soliman Pasha—who commanded the Red Sea fleet—to sail to Gujerat at once, plunder the Portuguese settlement at Diu in alliance with the Gujerat army, and return to Suez on the change of monsoon with all the spoil and prisoners he could collect before the Portuguese came back westward from Malacca.

It was a vain enterprise however, because it relied for success on evading the Portuguese fleet instead of defeating it; a cardinal error in sea strategy, which meant that unless Diu could be reduced before that fleet appeared on the scene it could not be reduced at all. Through this mistake the whole scheme failed. A rapid run to Diu was followed by a two months' siege and bombardment of the Portuguese position by land and sea; but Mascarenhas, the valiant commander, kept the flag flying in spite of terrible losses, till the autumn change of monsoon brought rumour of a relieving fleet, which was too much for the Turkish admiral. Whether he had been definitely ordered to avoid action by sea under all circumstances, or whether his own cowardice was to blame, will never be known, but the sight of three strange sails on the horizon drove him to retreat in such haste that he left many of his men and guns on shore. Turkish historians relate that he retired before a vast armada, but in actual fact the strange sails were only three small reconnoitring caravels, unsupported by any fleet within 800 miles.

Unfortunately for the Portuguese this poltroonery made

them too confident of their power to keep the Turks in check, and even when the successful relief of Malacca released ships for other duties the divisions thenceforward based on Ormuz and Aden remained almost negligible in quantity. Soliman discovered this in course of time, and, though he had no intention of trying his fortunes in India again, planned an attack on the Portuguese fortresses at Ormuz and Muscat, which were quite close to his own bases in the Persian Gulf, and towards the end of summer held large stocks of valuable freight awaiting removal on the winter monsoon. But before this he had employed his Suez fleet in reducing the Arabs all round the Red Sea to subjection under a new admiral, the celebrated Piri Reis; and at the same time had built a second fleet of galleys at Busrah, at the head of the Persian Gulf. Being now in a much stronger position, therefore, than when he assayed to capture Diu, he undertook another expedition in 1546, in which his new Persian Gulf fleet was intended to sack Ormuz and Muscat.

Unfortunately for Soliman his admiral went the wrong way to work. Sound strategy would have dictated an attack on the very small Portuguese division first, whereby one or two ships of a useful type might in all probability have been captured. But so intent was he on loot that he passed these vessels by night—which were at anchor off Ormuz quite unaware of any Turkish advance—and made straight for Muscat. There he met with disaster through the fire of the Portuguese artillery, which reduced him to so shattered a condition that he straggled homeward to Busrah without attacking either Ormuz or the Portuguese ships at all. Had the latter been aware of what was happening so near at hand they might have converted the Turkish retirement into a rout.

This reverse exasperated Soliman, who had no mind to let it be final, and as a form of immediate retaliation turned his attention to the handful of Portuguese vessels and the small shore depôt at Aden. The conquests of western Arabia by Piri Reis had earned for the Turks the bitter enmity of the Arabs, and the original hostility of the latter to Europeans had been proportionately abated. One outcome of this reversal of attitude

had appeared in the form of an approach by the formerly inimical Sheikh of Aden to the Portuguese, with a request for help. This was promised on the condition that he paid an annual tribute to the Crown of Portugal and allowed the Portuguese to make full use of Aden as a commercial centre and squadron base of supply. For sixteen years this mutual obligation had remained in force, and proved effective in preventing Turkish aggression; but the volume of trade had been too thin to induce the Portuguese to spend money on erecting special shore defences for their warehouse as at other places, and the naval protection had been reduced to a minimum. Consequently, when, the year after the Turkish defeat at Muscat, a fleet of eighty war galleys under Piri Reis suddenly appeared off Aden at daybreak, the three Portuguese vessels in the harbour hastily embarked the agency staff and fled, leaving the unfortunate Moslem sheikh to pay a terrible penalty for his alliance with a Christian Power. Thenceforward Aden was lost for ever to Portugal alike as a vassal state, a trading exchange, and a naval base. By a great effort the Portuguese might perhaps have driven the Turks out again, but the results would have been out of all proportion to the expenditure of force where the commercial profits were so small, and their expulsion from that quarter was the first permanent curtailment of their scope of dominion in eastern seas.

This misfortune, together with the narrow escape of Muscat and Ormuz, now compelled the Portuguese to realise that some rearrangement of their defensive units was necessary if they meant to keep any hold on the north-western entrances to the Indian Ocean. It was impossible to foresee any limit to Turkish schemes of extension while Soliman remained alive, or to predict the scale of his naval activities; and whereas everything had been subordinated so far to a firm hold on the Straits of Malacca, a revised appreciation of their general position led them to a shifting of their balance of forces across a space of nearly 4000 miles, whereby the Malacca end was lightened in favour of the Persian Gulf, at first only in a minor degree, but by increasing instalments with the march of events. Ultimately the process was carried too far.

The abandonment of Aden set free a small squadron which was applied as a first augmentation of the straits of Ormuz division. Further additions were then made by drawing on Malacca, and for six years the increase answered its purpose although Soliman still had predatory intentions on Ormuz and Muscat. In part his ambitions in that direction were held in check also through calls on his finances to meet his commitments in Europe, which delayed progress with his shipbuilding projects in eastern waters. But by 1552 these were completed, whereby a considerable number of galleys were added to his fleets in the Gulf and Red Sea; and the experience of wars in the Mediterranean had taught the Turks the importance of concentration. Being now ready for a second dash he ordered Piri Reis to run the Red Sea fleet up before the summer monsoon to the vicinity of Muscat and there join the Persian Gulf division from Busrah, taking care to avoid the Portuguese till the junction had been effected, and then attack *first* their ships and *afterwards* their positions on land. It was a scientifically conceived scheme, and well carried out up to a point. Effecting his combination as pre-arranged, the Turkish admiral fell on the Portuguese squadron and put it to flight, then in overwhelming force bombarded and took Muscat, sacked the warehouses, blew up the magazines, disarmed the citadel and sailed away with the survivors of the garrison as prisoners, having no intention of retaining his capture. He next passed on without delay to Ormuz, where he besieged the citadel by land and sea for a month, but without success, and, fearing the appearance of a relieving fleet with the change of monsoon at a time when he was getting short of munitions and supplies, he abandoned further operations and retired to Aden.

This attack was a serious matter for the Portuguese, even though Ormuz had withstood it. Not only had they lost a whole season's goods and a number of comrades-in-arms—whose lot as galley slaves in the Red Sea was the most miserable fate that could befall a white man—but a blow had been struck at their prestige in native eyes which might have affected their whole position in the east. At Aden their retreat had been unavoidable in face of a hopelessly superior adversary as regards

numbers, and even if the incident had not done them any good, it did not actually lower their reputation in arms. But at Muscat they had been squarely defeated in both elements, and for the first time a Portuguese flag had been hauled down and trampled on. Knowing that this would soon be the talk of every port on the south coast of Asia, and that only immediate action would save their credit in the eastern mind, they lost no time in re-hoisting the flag at Muscat and re-arming and garrisoning the citadel. And to make quite certain that, as far as their resources would permit, the Turks should not approach in future, they again increased their squadron in the Straits of Ormuz at the expense of the Malacca division.

These steps answered their purpose in so far as the immediate safety of their position at the entrance to the Persian Gulf was concerned, which the Turks made no attempt to threaten for nearly another generation. But in truth the whole Portuguese position in the east from the Cape of Good Hope to China was only saved from extinction in the century of its pre-eminence because the Turks were incapable as a nation of rising to oceanic opportunities. Had they felt the trading impulse which drove the North Atlantic peoples to undertake some of the most hazardous feats in the history of the sea they might have thrust the Portuguese out of the Indian Ocean altogether, and diverted the westward flow of wealth back from the Cape route to its old channel across regions now in their own hands. As a very powerful military nation firmly planted on the brink of the Indian Ocean, in a position of supreme strategic advantage, everything in its waters was theirs for the display of a little enterprise. No scruples deterred them, and during this same period they made rapid progress in the art of naval war through their experiences in the Mediterranean. But being constitutionally averse to standing on wet decks, unless urged by the sight of plunder within easy reach—as in the Levant and Black Sea—they never summoned the resolution to head out for blue water, and except for a few snatches at points close to hand, halted and looked on with envy while a handful of representatives from a diminutive European State came half round the globe to gather up the immense riches of a hemisphere right under their eyes. And therefore, though

constantly desirous of demolishing the Portuguese supremacy of the eastern seas—with all which that implied—they only succeeded in fraying its edges.

Meanwhile the Portuguese trade continued steadily to expand from India and the Malay Islands all through the middle part of the sixteenth century, reaching its highest volume towards the end of the third quarter, during an interval of twenty years of peace on all sides following the second attack on Muscat. But this prosperity was gradually exciting the cupidity of the new generation of rulers in the Malay States, who had not been born at the time of the earlier attacks on Malacca, and were disposed to believe that they might have managed them better. A long period of cessation from strife had done much to lessen the respect in which the Portuguese squadron in the Straits of Malacca had been held by their fathers and grandfathers; and their own flotillas were not only much larger than those of their predecessors, but were now partly armed on the European galley model, with guns in the bows. The pendulum of war, therefore, which had swung westward during the reign of Soliman, began to swing back across the Indian Ocean. The Malacca division had been maintained on a reduced scale ever since the Turkish raid on Muscat, which was undoubtedly a contributory factor in the situation; and the second series of attacks began in 1572 on that end of the line, and for four years in succession occupied all the energies of the Portuguese during the winter monsoons in meeting them.

With each return of autumn during that period, one or other of the Malay princes launched a formidable armament against Malacca. The first two attempts were made by the King of Acheen, but were met on the water and frustrated by the crushing defeat of his fleet, which left him impotent for a brief spell. For the time these reverses were enough to keep him at home when the next season arrived, but the Portuguese committed the serious error of supposing that such a lesson would be taken to heart by the other Malay rulers, and made no effort in consequence to strengthen their local squadron. For this mistake they paid. The King of Java was anxious to



try his fortune when the Achinese stood aside, and in the autumn following their second failure he arrived in the Straits with 300 well-armed vessels full of troops. Before this great display of force the Portuguese squadron was compelled to retreat to open water, and the way being thus cleared their enemy's army disembarked to attack the town. With a view to hastening its capture, the Javanese fleet pushed its way up the river, but like most of the streams in southern Asia, this river fell in volume at this season, and before the stockade on the banks had been broken through, the proas were all hard aground for the winter. Intelligence of this state of affairs somehow reached the officer commanding the Portuguese squadron—which after evading action by superior sailing qualities remained hovering in the offing—and gave him a chance for effective intervention. Promptly covering the sea approaches to the harbour, he managed to intercept the food supplies for the besieging army which were coming in unarmed trading craft, with demoralising consequences to the Javanese. The besiegers became blockaded themselves, and between starvation in camp and repulse at the ramparts, perished in such numbers that when their grounded fleet was refloated with the spring rise of the river, so small a remnant survived that they raised the siege and re-embarked for home in time to escape the outcoming Portuguese fleet due with the advent of the summer monsoon. It would appear that even so they were strong enough to deter their enemy's squadron on the spot from molesting their retirement.

In this way ended the third of this series of attempts to take Malacca, and so sure now were the Portuguese that it would be the last, that they even reduced the local squadron to three ships. But the Achinese had had a breathing space for a year, and emboldened by the weakness of the force confronting them struck once more. Collecting a hundred proas they embarked an army and advanced for the third time. On this occasion naval success awaited them, for the small Malacca division was caught and totally destroyed, probably on account of light winds. The army was then landed to make one final effort to capture the town, but failed, as on every previous attempt; for so determined was the defence that it held out till the next year's fleet was due and the Malays abandoned the enterprise.

The second series of attempts to capture Malacca now came to a conclusion, and more than half a century was to elapse before it was again threatened by an Asiatic enemy. Its defence had been an epic of stubborn courage. For two generations of Portuguese officers this centre of commerce had been the chief post of honour and danger in the service of their country, but in spite of seven attacks the flag had remained flying; and it was reserved for a European hand to haul it down when the time came at last, thirty-seven years later. Repeated failure to plunder the Portuguese cargo storehouses finally disheartened the Malays altogether—for this had always been their chief temptation—and as it appeared to their fatalistic eastern temperament that the decree of fate doomed all such ambitions to disappointment, they left the white man in peace. But the Portuguese had been badly shaken, and decided after the last Achinese attempt that if the Straits were worth holding at all they were worth holding effectively. Two successive seasons had seen all trade at a standstill, and nothing but adequate naval protection could absolutely guarantee them against this happening again. It was resolved once more, therefore, that Malacca should have the first claim on their winter dispositions, next to their ports in India itself, and that Ormuz and Muscat must take their chance, as being commercially less important.

Five years passed without incident, and then in 1580 the Turkish menace flared up momentarily for the last time. Twenty-eight years had elapsed since their loot of Muscat, and after that experience the Portuguese Ormuz division had been strengthened. But it had been again reduced to meet requirements in the Straits of Malacca, and after waiting for a period to see if the reduction was permanent, the Turks took advantage for the third time of Portuguese naval weakness at the Persian Gulf entrance, to make a rush on Muscat, which for the second time they sacked, carrying off plunder and prisoners, although on this occasion they made no attempt to molest Ormuz. This was the last appearance of the Ottoman as a figure of any consequence in the episodes of Indian Ocean history, even though for 335 years more the empire of the Sultans extended to its shores.

The sixteenth century was by this time well into its last

quarter, but before it came to a close the Portuguese experienced some trouble in a fresh direction. In 1587, after Ceylon had by the voluntary action of its rulers remained for eighty years a vassal state of Portugal, King Singa repudiated the treaty of his predecessors and attacked the Portuguese station at Colombo. It held out and was soon relieved by a fleet from Goa, but the movement spread, involving the Portuguese in the nearest approach to field operations at a distance from a sea base that they were ever called upon to undertake in the east; and although these were successful the Viceroy deemed it advisable to fortify their Cingalese coast depôts at Trincomalee and Baticaloa as well as Colombo. In 1598 they were also compelled to deal with a Hindoo chief who had boldly resorted to piracy on a large scale from a small harbour on the Malabar coast itself, and for a winter monsoon season attacked Christians, Mahomedans or Hindoos impartially as occasion arose. In stamping out this common enemy the Portuguese admiral was ably assisted on the land side by the Hindoo King of Calicut.

But these were comparatively minor occurrences. A far more serious and unfortunate event for the Portuguese at this period was the union of their country in 1580 with the kingdom of Spain under Philip II, by which they were dragged into his prolonged and disastrous wars in Europe. So great was the share they were compelled to pay in the expenses of his campaigns that their treasury was practically depleted, and they had no means left for financing their eastern trade. During the last decade of the century their imports declined very rapidly in consequence, their Asiatic depôts became all but empty and their ships having nothing to carry almost disappeared from the sea, except a few stationed at various points for defensive purposes. All this depression of trade, however, might possibly have passed away with the return of peace in Europe, or the recovered independence of Portugal which took place later, had it not been for the fatal blow to Portuguese prosperity dealt by the ordinance of Philip II which prohibited any sales in Lisbon to merchants or dealers from Protestant countries. Being unable after this to get the pepper and spices which they had obtained regularly from the Lisbon official market for more

than a hundred years, other nations' seamen set out to get these things for themselves in the lands of their origin and when that movement began the fate of the Portuguese commercial and strategic dominion of the Indian Ocean was sealed. It was not so much that they lacked the ships to uphold it—at first at any rate—but that they lacked the right sort of man behind the gun. Albuquerque's scheme of intermarriage between the earlier Portuguese forces and native women, in order to provide seamen and soldiers for the future without drawing on the population of the mother country, had been carried so far in three successive generations from its original inception, that by the beginning of the seventeenth century the fleets and forts under the Portuguese flag in the east were manned by locally-raised recruits with scarcely a streak of European in them. When led by European officers they were able to deal with such enemies as Malays and Arabs, or even Turks. But racial superiority is quite as much dependent on the female as on the male element and the rule of oceanic areas is too great a prize to remain in the hands of a mixed breed. When therefore these descendants of Hindoo mothers and grandmothers were pitted against ships with Dutch and English crews—full-blooded Europeans and the finest seamen in the world—their defeat was a foregone conclusion. Before the birth of the new century the first Dutch keels had already rounded the Cape, and within another fifty years the great fabric of Portuguese maritime sovereignty in the east had been shattered for ever.

For Portugal, however, the sixteenth century was a period of such remarkable renown as seldom falls to the lot of a small nation; spread over a geographical area unrivalled in extent in the annals of any small nation but Holland, and richly earned by gallant exploit and strenuous labour, even when marred by excesses and avarice. The great place once held by the Portuguese on the sea has long since vanished, but nothing can take away their great place in history as the bearers of the first European flag ever seen in longitudes east of the African continent since the days of Alexander, 1800 years before those of Vasco da Gama.

## VIII

### The ARRIVAL of the DUTCH and BRITISH in the INDIAN OCEAN

**N**o short war ever waged in human records produced an effect on the subsequent history of so great a portion of the surface of the globe as the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. For generations prior to that cataclysm the Iberian peoples had been so supreme on the sea that they dominated all the oceans of the world, and in virtue of that power exercised an appreciable influence in all the continents. In America they were lords of the soil as far as the European had penetrated from the coastline. In Asia and Africa—outside the shores of the Mediterranean—they were the only representatives of the white race known to the natives by actual contact and presence. In Europe the military resources of the Spanish ruling house threatened the independence of every Protestant nation, and the naval supremacy of Spain compelled all the western States, whether Protestant or otherwise, to pay extortionate prices for the products of trans-oceanic countries. No rivals could hope to found oversea colonies while the obstacle of the Spanish fleet stood in the way, and still less could they hope to engage in traffic with oversea countries. All Europe on its Atlantic side was enclosed by the wall of Spanish maritime ascendancy, and if that barrier had lasted to our own time New York would never have been either Dutch or British—and might never have come into existence at all—and India would probably have remained under Asiatic rule unless conquered throughout by the Portuguese.

This sea wall, however, was not destined to stand in permanence, for, led by the Anglo-Saxons, the virile northern branches of the white race, always impatient of restriction in any form, broke it down and poured across its wreck to the four quarters of the globe. To quote the words of Froude, in reference to the English, "within the space of a single ordinary life these insignificant islanders had struck the sceptre from the Spaniard's grasp and placed the ocean crown on the brow of their own sovereign." But if it was the English who were

mainly instrumental in overthrowing this formidable obstacle to free sailing, it was the Dutch who were the first to follow up in some directions the long roads thus cleared to the far regions of the world. And having followed them they tried in their turn to close those of the more important once more against rivals; though never accomplishing so wide or effective exclusion as the Spaniards in their national prime.

While Spain remained all-powerful by land and sea Portugal benefited indirectly, as long as she kept on good terms with the succession of autocrats at Madrid, whose territory shielded her against the approach of any other possible enemy by land, and whose fleets made the Atlantic too dangerous for vessels under other flags to navigate; although by a pact arising from the Papal decree which divided the oceans of the world between Spain and Portugal, the Spaniards abstained from interfering with the Portuguese traders as long as they only sailed for eastern destinations. But when the Armada had been destroyed, the Atlantic became comparatively secure for any vessel that could hold her own against ordinary pirates, and the route to India lay across that ocean in its first lap, as well as the route to Mexico or Peru. Thus the defeat of the Grand Fleet of Spain was the initial step of a series of developments which led to a change in the command of the Indian Ocean as well as of the seas of the western hemisphere; and of these two changes the first-mentioned was much the more rapid in its process. Before the last vestige of Spain's naval power in the west was to disappear a full two centuries were yet to elapse, but less than fifty years sufficed to sweep the Portuguese dominion of Asiatic waters clean out of existence, and leave a remnant of greatness trembling on the defensive before a relentless adversary. The sixteenth century had witnessed Portugal's power and prosperity beyond the Cape of Good Hope reach its culminating point, but before the seventeenth had run half its course, that power had vanished as completely as the pre-eminence of the Arabian seamen whom the Portuguese admirals had driven from the same seas in the reign of King Manoel I.

This passing of a maritime rule had a double aspect. It was a forcible supersession of Latins by Nordics, and of a State

organisation by private enterprise. By natural aptitude the northern nations of Europe were better men on the deck of a ship than any others, whether engaged in the affairs of peace or war: the Dutch being perhaps the best of all at that time. A relative poverty, however, had compelled them so far to do their best with very inferior material, and the vastly greater wealth of Spain and Portugal had provided the Iberian seafarers with much more formidable fleets and armaments. Not until the Armada had been reduced to planks and driftwood did the inequality in equipment between the Iberians and their northern opponents sufficiently disappear to give the English and Dutch an opportunity to prove their inborn fitness for sea life; of which they soon took full advantage in every direction of the compass.

The second aspect of the change lay in the character of the administering authority under which the new era of maritime supremacy in the east came into existence. In the Portuguese cycle of domination the whole organisation of power in the Indian Ocean remained a government responsibility down to its smallest detail; but with their successors it passed to the hands of privately promoted associations, whose aims were officially sanctioned by express charter, but whose actions and methods of operation were in practice free from government control. Three such corporations sprang up, one English, one Dutch and one French; but the last named played a very minor part in eastern maritime affairs during the seventeenth century as compared with the other two, and had no share worth mentioning in the overthrow of the Portuguese command of the eastern seas. Though established—ostensibly at least—for the purposes of trade only, these syndicates controlled a respectable fighting force, from the very nature of their work. For in those days of lawlessness on the high seas every vessel employed in oceanic transport had to carry her own means of defence; and as the distinction in design of the fighting from the trading ship had not yet appeared in vessels built for distant voyages, all hulls of oceanic tonnage were constructed to mount a battery as well as stow a cargo.

Hence when these commercial adventurers set their faces

eastward they were fully equipped for war on the sea if necessary, and their respective states found it not merely convenient to leave them to protect their own interests when threatened by foreign opposition, but even to use them as means for extending national prestige. Authority was inserted in their charters therefore to engage in distant theatres of war, not only against local native potentates and rival companies, but also against the national forces of hostile European Powers; and so extensively did they avail themselves of this right to undertake naval and military operations that in time they became important factors in international affairs, while in eastern waters the position of supremacy to which they attained within little more than a generation, in spite of constant quarrelling among themselves, was sufficient to overawe the whole coasts of southern Asia and the Malay Archipelago.

An entirely novel situation arose in eastern history in consequence, for now the Indian Ocean—the scene of so long and varied a record of maritime incident—passed from under the dominion of a Crown to that of groups of sober men of business, seated in offices at a distance of a ten months' voyage. And although few of these had ever sailed a ship or handled a weapon in their lives, their influence on the course of oriental events thenceforward for a long period was greater than even that of the Mogul Emperors on the Peacock throne, or the "Sons of Heaven" in the Great Hall of Audience at Peking, or the Kings of Persia in the Courts of Ispahan. Remarkable and complete though it was, however, and vigorous while it lasted, this reign of unofficial power was not destined to remain permanent. As a temporary delegation of great national interests on the sea to private hands in three countries it was a success, but in the sequel it proved to be a preparation only for fuller developments on State lines, and the command of the Indian Ocean had again reverted mainly to fleets under national ownership, in the great struggles for its tenure that took place in the century following.

Private European enterprise in eastern waters had its origin in some small Dutch ventures towards the end of the sixteenth century, which were the direct outcome of the interdict of



Philip II against any transactions in the Lisbon market with Protestants. From very minor beginnings the Hollanders succeeded within a few years in establishing a pepper market of their own, where at first they numbered the British among the customers who were barred from Lisbon by the same decree. But the English themselves were looking towards the east, and as the Dutch vendors made the mistake of demanding exorbitant prices without any such security against competition as the Portuguese had enjoyed in the days before the decline of Spanish sea power, the London business community resolved to procure pepper at its native source on their own account. To that end, and also to avoid undue rivalry among themselves, they amalgamated in 1600 to form the company of "London Merchants trading to the East Indies," under a charter signed by Elizabeth. Next year their pioneer squadron sailed on the first of a long and highly profitable series of annual voyages.

Meanwhile the Dutch were feeling the disadvantages of competing against each other, and to obviate this followed the English example of combination to float a similar trading syndicate in 1602, on a much larger and more powerful scale. Seeing these movements in progress the French came next with the formation of a third such corporation in 1604, although in their case on less ambitious lines than the others. Thus three companies were in the field in a very short period, whose respective policies and methods of operation afford an interesting contrast, for though all were founded on a professedly mercantile basis, their pursuit of business was conducted under widely different ideals and systems.

By far the most important position in this great expansion of European intercourse with Asia was held in the earlier stages by the Dutch. Energetic, aggressive, soundly conceived from the strategic standpoint and skilfully carried out, the policy which received its direction at Amsterdam displayed all the teutonic characteristics of thoroughness, foresight and capacity. Trade in Dutch hands was not merely defended by force of arms but pushed by force of arms scientifically and resolutely applied. To obtain the products of any region which they had marked out as an area of prospective enterprise, they

began by conquering and annexing the land itself, as far as that lay within the capability of their somewhat limited military forces; but, if territorial conquest was beyond their powers, they applied their naval strength to kill rival trade in the coveted field, by a series of relentless, patient and effective blockades, enforced for any number of years that might be necessary to attain their object.

Having about eight times as much capital as the London Company and about four times as many ships, nothing indeed set any limit to their activities on the coasts of the wealth-producing regions of the east except the fear of vigorous counter-measures directed against their mother country by such of their injured or protesting rivals as might be strong enough to take them; and no treaties of peace between the States General—or national governing body of Holland—and other rulers or governments in Europe were treated by the Company's officials in the Indian Ocean as worth observing on the far side of the Cape of Good Hope if they could be ignored without serious danger, which was always possible where Portugal was concerned after the Dutch navy had thoroughly destroyed that of Spain in European waters in 1607, five years from the date of the Company's birth. Portuguese trade was incessantly subjected to their forcible interference in consequence, and for half a century a ceaseless antagonism existed in Asiatic waters between the seamen of the Portuguese Crown on the one hand and those of the Dutch merchants on the other, in which the former were everywhere worsted in the end. Of the English the Hollanders were equally jealous, and when the period arrived in which they could no longer count on English goodwill in their long drawn out hostilities with Spain, the Dutch officers in the far east showed little hesitation in resorting to violence when local disputes with the English arose. But with the further passage of time they were compelled to modify their attitude by Britain's advance to the rank of a first-class naval Power, holding a position across the home end of a route connecting Holland itself with all the Company's distant possessions. Towards the French they displayed more restraint, partly because they feared Bourbon military pressure on the

mother country's land frontiers—in which respect Holland shared none of the security of Portugal, as a small country completely screened on the land side by a powerful and well-disposed neighbour—and partly because for a long time the French Company confined its attention to Madagascar, in which the Dutch took little interest.

In every point of importance the methods and procedure of the London Company offered a marked contrast to those of their rivals, for quite the first hundred years. No such idea as a British rule of the Indian Ocean, or still less a British rule of India, ever entered the imagination of its governing body for generations after it was floated. Entertaining, therefore, no ambitious schemes for securing a monopoly of eastern commerce, and working on no pre-arranged plan of expansion, they refrained in general from attacking competitors who made no attempt to thwart their business and movements by open violence; and beyond insisting on a share in Asiatic trade, their whole policy was haphazard and opportunist towards the political problems bulking larger year by year from the presence of several European flags in eastern seas. Except when exposed to persistently serious opposition, they maintained in the east an attitude towards the Europeans which was in accordance with the relationships of the mother countries towards each other at the moment. That is to say, if the mother countries were at war, the British Company treated all representatives of the enemy State in the east as adversaries in arms, legitimately subject to attack, but when the mother countries were at peace they abstained from violence towards these representatives, so long as the latter on their part remained peaceable also. In the matter of the proper observance of treaties made between nations in Europe, the Portuguese historians are very favourable in their comments on the rectitude of the London Company, as compared with their rivals at Amsterdam. But while making no bid for maritime empire on that side of the globe, the London merchants uncompromisingly refused to acknowledge the right of any third party to intermeddle in their intercourse with independent native rulers.

For a century after the foundation of the first French Com-

pany this body and the succession of similar syndicates which arose after its early liquidation and were dissolved themselves in turn, occupied a position of marked inferiority to the Dutch and English, and exercised little influence on the course of Indian Ocean history. But in these earlier stages they were left undisturbed by the Dutch for the reasons already given, by the Portuguese because the latter were being desperately harassed themselves, and by the English because at that period the French activities did not cut across their own.

Such were the aims and such the methods of the three private mercantile syndicates whose sails were now to be seen from many of the capes and beaches of Asia. Through a long series of warlike operations spread in a disconnected fashion over a vast area, and conducted at intervals for more than half a century—some of which had a military as well as a naval side, though all were necessarily based on the naval situation of the moment—the appearance of these ships heralded the turning of a page of Indian Ocean history. In the era which followed, the dominion of its surface was still to remain absolutely in the hands of the white man; but instead of being the monopoly of one European flag it was to become first a rule shared by three and then by two: not under any expressed understanding or spirit of co-operation, but simply because at first none of the three was strong enough to throw the other two out, and later, when one of them did possess that power, it was held back by the compelling influence of certain events on the other side of the world.

The very early Dutch trading voyages, which were the germ of this great change, were made by individual adventurers before the creation of a wealthy and powerful Company, and their small scale rendered it prudent for them to avoid the northern shores of the Indian Ocean where the Portuguese power was chiefly centred. But a promising alternative quarter lay in the centre and remoter parts of the Malay Archipelago, where highly valuable spices of many kinds grew in plenty, and Portuguese opposition was less to be feared owing to the distance from Goa and the weakness of their outposts. In that direction they steered accordingly and, thenceforward, the

general region which became the specially Dutch area of enterprise lay on the eastern or Malay side of the Indian Ocean, as contrasted with the northern or specially Portuguese side, though each had at some period outposts lying in the sphere of the other. And if the Dutch region was thus to some extent selected from purely commercial and political reasons at the beginning, its subsequent retention was due in part at least to a shrewd appreciation of the strategic value of a windward position. For it so happens that the southern parts of the Archipelago are situated in the zone of perpetual south-east trade winds, and a fleet lying there is to windward of the whole Indian Ocean throughout the year; on any part of which it can make a descent with the minimum of delay or difficulty inherent in navigation under sail. Even when the south-west monsoon is blowing in the northern latitudes of that ocean, a fleet starting from southern Malaysia had only to run far enough westward in the trade wind to get the great advantage of the weather gauge of any enemy in the monsoon area. Thus from the very outset of their half century of conflict with the Portuguese the initiative was always in Dutch hands.

As soon as the individual traders had merged in one large association and fairly organised their resources, a first voyage was despatched, in which fourteen ships took part under Admiral van Warwyck. Such a fleet was amply strong enough to make for India as far as the Portuguese could do anything to prevent it, but the Company had decided to begin their business by following up the contact already established with the Malay islands by the pioneer voyages of their countrymen, and it was to the archipelago that Warwyck sailed accordingly. Next year thirteen more ships started under van der Hagen, but this time India was their first destination. It was not as yet any part of the Dutch intentions to acquire trading factories or ports ashore in Hindustan, for their troops were still too few to garrison such positions, and their proximity to the Portuguese headquarters at Goa rendered strong garrisons necessary if ships were to be free for trading purposes. But they were determined to anchor in Calicut roads and assert a right to enter into any commercial dealings with the natives outside the

Portuguese settlement; and here van der Hagen's arrival in due course excited great alarm at the Portuguese factory and great surprise among the Hindoos. As between the Dutch newcomers and the long established Portuguese colony the local Native Prince was in a like embarrassment to his ancestor of a hundred years before between the then newly arrived Portuguese and the Red Sea merchants. He was anxious not to sacrifice the goodwill of a rich trading element of long standing on the spot by dealing with their competitors, but found the latter advertising their presence and pressing their claims to his favour with a stronger fleet than had ever been visible from his palace roof before; and being afraid of the possible consequences of rejecting their advances agreed to sign a treaty of commerce. In actual practice the Dutch made very little use of Calicut for many years thereafter, but the action taken had a sensational political importance as a widely proclaimed announcement to the trading classes of India and their rulers that henceforth the Portuguese factories would not be the only markets in which their goods would find a sale. And it taught them also that the Portuguese were not so omnipotent on the water as the east had long believed. With the treaty in his pocket the Dutch admiral tripped his anchors and sailed on to the Archipelago through the Straits of Malacca, keeping outside the range of the guns on Malacca sea citadel, in perfect safety and without any difficulty in navigation, although some writers have called it the "key" of the eastern gateway to the Indian Ocean, in the misleading fashion in which Gibraltar has as often been called the key to the Mediterranean. Following on van der Hagen came a regular succession of annual voyages continued for generations, but for a good many years these left India unvisited and the squadrons employed stood right across the Indian Ocean to Malaysia. And as each arrival usually took place shortly before the homeward bound departure of the squadron immediately preceding it, the Dutch were in a permanently strong naval position in the far east almost from the first, save for the want of a good naval base.

Meanwhile the Londoners had also been pushing ahead on

their own minor scale, but under serious handicaps, for the peace-loving King James had strictly cautioned their officers that though they might defend themselves by arms if attacked, they were to avoid exciting trouble by overstepping Portuguese claims; which left them little option but to keep clear of the northern parts of the Indian Ocean altogether and stand across to the east, though on that side the powerful Dutch squadrons were already laying hands on almost every trading market worth having. A long series of heated disputes arose in connection with that area between the rival companies in consequence, conducted by conference and argument in Europe and not unfrequently by blows in the far eastern tropics; but for the first few years the anxiety of the Dutch nation to retain the support of England in their struggles with Spain at home kept their Company from extreme measures, and the English managed to establish several trading ports in the islands, the chief of which was at the Javanese port of Bantam, just inside the Straits of Sunda. But not one of the London Company's settlements or factories was fortified, and a time came in which, through the defeat of their ships, they were eventually driven out of the Archipelago altogether, and very nearly out of the whole eastern seas.

Thus an entirely new situation was arising in the Indian Ocean whereby a complete transfer of its supremacy to fresh hands was commencing. As long as no possible enemies but Asiatics had to be reckoned with the general strategic position of the Portuguese in the east was always simple and clearly defined, for if the true outlook of a frontier is away from the metropolitan base and centre of government, their Asiatic frontier faced landward and was formed by the coast lines of the Indian Ocean, on the sea side of which their power was absolute and their home communications lay, while on the land side their power was small, in spite of a few strips and patches of territory touching the water. Being unassailable by Asiatics on the Ocean—except for a time by the Turks—their rear was free from all danger, and their touch with Europe so secure that their fabric of Imperialism in the orient was never left to stand uncertain of the support of the mother country.

All this was now inverted. Once the vessels of other European Powers could sail eastward without fear of the Spaniards the oceanic communications of Portugal ceased to be immune from molestation; and with the prop of the mother country thereby knocked away—or at best made unreliable—all Portuguese national life on the far side of the globe was left to exist as best it might, on its own local resources. Instead of facing inland in all matters of defence and diplomacy, the Portuguese garrisons and communities in the east were now compelled by degrees to turn right round and face the sea, looking towards their former rear. The trade which had been the original incentive of their long search and eventual doubling of the "Cape of Storms," was now threatened with a competition certain to diminish profits and possibly extinguish them altogether, but that could not be prevented. A possibility remained, however, that their possessions on the land, such as they were, might remain under the flag, for even if left to shift for themselves and turned strategically upside down, they were not altogether without some means of self support. As a result of a century of ownership a generation of Portuguese colonists had taken permanent root in the more important of their Asiatic settlements, from whom—together with a large half-caste and native community—the *personnel* of local defensive forces could be raised; so that although reinforcements could rarely be expected from home in the event of trouble with Holland or Britain, garrisons of a sort could still be maintained at such points as Goa, Malacca, Colombo and Ormuz, poor in quality, but strong enough in numbers to cause an attacking enemy considerable trouble. Moreover, as regards weapons, the native armourers working under Portuguese engineers could now turn out ordnance, equipment and ammunition little if at all inferior in quality and model to the simple patterns produced at that period in the arsenals and dockyards of Europe. Money was a difficulty, but even here the Portuguese Indian authorities were not without expedients.

When the command of the Indian Ocean passed out of their hands, therefore, the strategic position of the three Viceregencies, into which the organisation of Portuguese authority in the



east had been divided before the end of the sixteenth century, became gradually similar in all essentials to that of native Asiatic States when confronted by the forces of a European Power such as Britain or Holland. Though not without local resources their downfall was certain, sooner or later, unless these resources sufficed for all defensive purposes without aid from Lisbon. Not that this condition reached an extreme form immediately, however, or even without lapses and difficulties for their adversaries; for even if at the commencement of the seventeenth century Portuguese fleets were no longer able to exclude all other flags from the Indian Ocean, a period of quite twenty years had still to pass before their own freedom of movement had become so greatly restricted that they could no longer carry succour to a beleaguered garrison.

The first twenty years of the new century, therefore, were marked by a stage of contending but approximately balanced naval pressures, in which Portuguese, Dutch and English were all able to hold a general position in the east without being powerful enough to encroach on each other's spheres, except at their fringes. Even the Dutch, whose fleets were far the strongest, failed in their attempts to wage offensive war on a major scale, and only succeeded in annexing remote Portuguese trading points in the Moluccas and their neighbourhood. For Portugal this period was the pause of high water which precedes the ebb tide of prosperity, and the final act in which she filled a great place in oriental history. While it lasted her sails were still to be met anywhere between Mozambique and China and all her possessions on or near the coasts of the Asiatic mainland were still under her flag. But the forces destined to reduce her to poverty and insignificance in the east were taking form and direction, some with deliberate aim at her overthrow, and others through totally unforeseen but none the less fatal developments. The Dutch Company during these twenty years were steadily consolidating their hold on Malaysia by seizing and fortifying important points, and by arranging anti-Portuguese alliances with the principal Malay Chiefs. The London Company were adding to their tonnage so as to spread their operations and here and there even acquiring small holdings on

shore in good trading sites, though without defences other than any ships that might be on the spot.

Several collisions marked the tension of this period of unstable equilibrium, in which sometimes one nationality and sometimes another sought to snatch a position or assert a claim at the expense of a rival, but these encounters usually ended in the discomfiture of the antagonists who first drew the sword. By 1607, five years of successful minor attacks on Portuguese property afloat and ashore in the more distant parts of the Archipelago emboldened the Dutch Company to try for something big; especially as in that year their national fleet in Europe was utterly defeating the sea forces of Spain, to which Portugal was then of course united. A blow was attempted at Malacca, therefore, as being a first-class Portuguese commercial and strategic possession, and a strong fleet under Admiral Matalieff was despatched to undertake the eighth attack of this repeatedly assailed but still virgin fortress, in conjunction with a numerous native army, provided by the Sumatran King of Acheen. In the main the story of this attack was simply a repetition of that of five of its seven predecessors: that is to say, firstly, a defeat of the defenders on the sea; secondly, a successful but almost collapsing defence on land; and lastly, a succour at the eleventh hour by a relieving fleet strong enough to recover the local command of the sea. Intelligence of the desperate situation of the garrison reached the Portuguese Viceroy de Castro at Goa in time for him to collect all ships in the ports of Malabar and Ceylon, and hurry eastward on the spring turn of monsoon to fall on Matalieff's fleet off the town, and the Dutch had just time to re-embark their heavy guns landed for siege operations, or it would have gone hard with them. Two severely contested fleet actions ensued, with an interval caused by temporary mutual exhaustion; and after the second the Portuguese so far attained their end that though they suffered much the heavier losses, they left their enemies in no condition to continue the siege. Matalieff therefore withdrew to the Moluccas, leaving his Achinese allies to look after themselves, who were very soon broken up. For eight years thereafter the Dutch left Malacca alone,

though their outward bound fleets arriving in the Archipelago passed through its straits unmolested themselves year after year.

Here we see the Portuguese still strong enough to hold a main position if attacked, but their next engagement with a European enemy in Asiatic seas five years subsequently, proved that the day had passed in which they could control the course of eastern maritime history by enforcing their behests on others. This time their adversaries were Englishmen, and the collision arose from the new direction in which the enterprises of the London Company were moving. Year by year it was becoming more apparent that the attitude of the Dutch in the Archipelago was making English commerce in that quarter increasingly difficult, and though so far no actual armed conflict had arisen, all disputes ended in the Dutch favour; partly because they were the stronger on the spot and therefore impossible to resist by force, and partly because their Company was consistently supported by the government of the nation, whereas the English Company at this stage scarcely received any official support at all. It behoved the London merchants, therefore, to look round for business somewhere else, and in 1610 their group of ships—three in number—outward bound under Middleton, steered for the west side of the Indian Ocean instead of the east, and tried to open up trade with the Turks in the Red Sea. But the Turks proved unfriendly, and Middleton with several of his men were seized when on shore, though by good fortune they contrived to escape from prison and regain their ships, where they were safe enough. Finding no trade opening here, Middleton quitted the Red Sea, ran across to the north-west coast of India before the monsoon, and entered the Gulf of Cambaya to try his luck at Surat. As the Portuguese, however, claimed the whole trade of India, whether in their own ports, such as Goa, or in the ports of independent native kingdoms, they hastily despatched some big galleons from their adjacent sea fortress of Diu to warn Middleton off, and as their appearance alarmed the local native governor, he refused to have any dealings with the English. Middleton departed under protest; but two years later, nevertheless, a pair of outward bound London ships, under Best, made straight for the Surat

coast, determined to assert a right to trade at any point not actually under the Portuguese flag, and anchored in Swally roads. The Portuguese from Diu appeared again—four heavy vessels and a galley flotilla—and ordered him to quit at once. He refused.

Thus it fell to Best's lot to be the first man to decide that Anglo-Saxons were to have a share in making the future history of India. Finding him obdurate, the Portuguese attacked, and Best, accepting battle at odds of something like four to one in weapons and far more in men, saw the matter through to a successful conclusion, repulsing the Portuguese in two engagements separated by a month's interval, not by superior gallantry but by much superior seamanship in making tactical use of the local shoals and tides. It was in 1612, therefore, that the sound of British guns was first heard in India, a prophetic sound indeed, of the full portent of which none of the hearers, or even Best himself, had the faintest notion. It seems almost a matter for regret that the name of the seaman who touched off the first round has never been left on record. Having produced a great sensation among the native officers of the Mogul Emperor on shore, by his successful resistance to the hitherto omnipotent masters of the sea, Best had little difficulty in obtaining four trading sites on the coast, which were the first British footholds in Hindustan.

The enemy, however, though thrown back for the time, were not satisfied that the fight had been properly conducted, and three years later Azevedo, the Viceroy of Goa, assumed command himself of a fleet of nine galleons and numerous small craft, with which he sailed northward and fell on four English ships lying then at Surat under Commodore Downton. For a second time vastly better pilotage work saved the day for the weaker side, and though the Portuguese delivered a succession of furious attacks lasting with intervals over three weeks, the Viceroy—no seaman himself—was decisively outmanœuvred and driven back at every point through Downton's masterly handling of his squadron in intricate soundings, and eventually obliged to retire on Goa with a shattered remnant of his original force.

But the Portuguese were still strong enough on the defensive to score in the very same year one more triumph in holding the possessions acquired by their forefathers as the first Christian conquerors in the far east; and their failure on the shores of India had a momentary compensation in a hard-won success at their eastern gateway to the Indian Ocean. In this year 1615 the Dutch made a second attempt on Malacca, and for the ninth time in its stormy history under the flag of Portugal its assailants attacked in vain. On this occasion, as twice before, the enemy was checked on the water and never reached the stage of operations on the land; for in the inevitable fleet engagement which opened the struggle the Dutch were not so decisively successful as to justify the risk of landing their troops and guns, and the whole enterprise was abandoned. After this second failure to carry amphibious warfare on a large scale to a victorious issue, the Dutch changed their whole methods of dealing with the Portuguese when hostilities between the two broke out again fifteen years later, and ruled any kind of land attacks out of their plans. During these fifteen years Malacca remained undisturbed by any European enemy, and in twice holding it against the redoubtable Dutchmen the Portuguese achieved their only notable victories over European forces in Asiatic regions. Once more, before it was finally lost twenty-six years afterwards, they were called upon to resist the utmost efforts of Asiatic opponents in prodigious numbers at its tenth siege by land or sea or both.

As matters now stood, the Dutch and Portuguese had each suffered twice within eight years by provoking conflict: the Portuguese at the hands of the English, and the Dutch at the hands of the Portuguese. For several years this experience kept the Portuguese from further effort; but the Dutch, foiled in one quarter, turned the more aggressively towards the other outlet for their expansive energy to be found in ousting the English from the Malay Archipelago, which promised a line of less resistance. Obstruction of the work of the London Company's agents in the islands was intensified, therefore; all the more in the knowledge that it would meet with the approval of the Dutch home government; who were no longer able to



**JAN PIETERZOOM COEN**

Dutch Admiral and Governor-General of the Indies. Founder of Batavia  
(From *Onze mannen ter Zee in Dicht en Beeld*, by permission of Herr M. Nyhoff)



count on British support in their antagonism to Spain since King James had taken to cultivating Spanish friendship, and who had no fear of England at that time, as being an inferior naval power to Holland. This obstruction reached its climax under Commodore Jan Coen, the Company's fourth Governor-General. Like the Portuguese, the Dutch made it a practice in the early days of their intercourse with the east, to appoint officers who had held command at sea as their chief executives in their oversea possessions; and in 1618 selected Coen for the post, who became a tower of strength to their interests and a most formidable opponent to all others.

Coen has been likened by some writers to Albuquerque, but the comparison is only permissible in so far as it applies to one side of Albuquerque's character and career. The "Portuguese Mars" was not merely a magnificent schemer in peace but a first rate leader in war, and though Coen was also a competent commander in the presence of an enemy, nothing in his war record proved that he could or would have undertaken Albuquerque's attack on Ormuz against odds of fifty to one, or equalled his conduct of the operations ending in the captures of Muscat, Malacca and Goa. But in his grasp of a far extended maritime situation, his resolute singleness of purpose and his masterful activity, he certainly did resemble King Manoel's celebrated officer. Moreover, he was faced by a much more complicated problem than the Portuguese Admiral, for the latter only had Asiatics to deal with, while his lines of communication were everywhere secure and his freedom of movement by sea consequently absolute. It was no fault of Coen's therefore that he did not enjoy the good fortune of carrying out his own great plans like Albuquerque; for with the means at the disposal of the Dutch these required a whole generation to complete, and he died when their execution was only begun.

When Coen took charge he realised at once—probably he even realised it before—that the most immediately pressing requirement of the Dutch Company was an established eastern capital in a carefully chosen site. For twenty years their ships had been moved about from point to point in the islands, without any definite headquarters, and the need of some



central base had become imperative, as a depot for reserve ammunition and refitting equipment, a commercial focus for the storage and transshipment of freights, and a seat of general administration and intelligence. The position selected had to be alike suitable for the requirements of peace and war, and in fixing it Coen had to take into account the international condition of affairs throughout the whole area of the Indian Ocean. The Dutch frontier of commercial expansion faced eastward, and its chief danger—apart from the state of politics in Europe—lay on its northward or left flank, where the Portuguese were firmly established at a series of posts all along the southern coasts of Asia. Coen's first care, therefore, was to plant the Dutch headquarters where he could meet this danger most effectively, and a very important natural factor in the problem ruled out any site north of the equator. On a previous page the great advantages in sailing days of the weather gauge have already been set forth; and on account of the monsoons a position permanently to windward of the Portuguese could only be found in those parts of the regions of Dutch activity which lay in the trade wind belt below the line. Another requirement for a Dutch capital, in peace or war, was a near exit from the interior of the Archipelago to the open water of the Indian Ocean. Two such openings exist, one being the Straits of Malacca between Sumatra and the mainland, and the other the Straits of Sunda, between Sumatra and Java. The former channel had the attraction for the sailing traders of old days that it offered a good entrance to the Archipelago for half the year as well as a good exit, because approachable during the summer monsoon with the certainty of a fair wind from the open ocean; whereas the Straits of Sunda, being in the southern, instead of the northern tropics, are always difficult of approach on that side under sail, owing to the perennial trade wind. The very same natural factors indeed that made it the best alternative strategically made it the worst from a purely commercial standpoint. Nevertheless it was on this opening and not the other that Coen fixed his eye, and his selection was one of the most interesting moves in Indian Ocean history. Some writers, in searching for his motives, have concluded that they arose from

a desire to establish his headquarters near the Clove islands. Such a consideration may have received his attention, but it was not sufficient to outweigh the navigational advantages of the more northern entrance as mentioned above, and in any case offered no more than a local and minor appeal. The real truth is that this remarkably far-seeing officer took large views, and having constantly in mind the chief menace to the Dutch future in the east, to which reference has just been made, recognised as a trained seaman that the site of the future headquarters should be such as to leave the power of the initiative against the Portuguese always in Dutch hands. A Dutch capital near the Straits of Malacca would lie helplessly to leeward of Goa during the south-west monsoon; a Dutch capital near the Straits of Sunda would be to windward of Goa all the year round.

Very shortly after assuming office as Governor-General, however, Coen's attention was urgently required to deal with the affairs of the present rather than the future, through English rivalry in the Archipelago itself. Most fortunately for him the blunders of one of England's own officers settled this problem definitely in his favour. At the Javanese coast town of Bantam—already mentioned on a former page—which lies near the Straits of Sunda on the eastward or inner side, the chief trading factory of the London Company had been fixed for a good many years. The Dutch also had an agency there and another at the smaller town of Jacatra, which lay to the eastward of Bantam again. Here they were on bad terms with the natives. In 1619, a few months after Coen had taken the helm, he happened to be at the Banda islands with the majority of the Dutch ships engaged in loading spices. But four other of his vessels were receiving cargo at Bantam, together with a squadron of six English under Admiral Dale, an officer more celebrated for dash and vigour than ability. Dale's choleric temper, already affected by malaria, was heated by ever increasing wrangles with the Dutch, till he lost all power of sober judgment in an anxious and critical situation, where a cool head, a clear understanding and sound health were essential to avoid mistakes. Matters were in this condition when the

Javanese chief of Jacatra asked Dale's help to turn the Dutch out of his territory, to which Dale agreed as a retaliation for a series of armed and forcible Dutch interferences with English vessels. As a first step the English admiral attacked and defeated the Dutch ships in the roads and then assisted the natives to capture the Dutch enclosure at Jacatra. But having asserted the policy of the English Company in this fashion, he next proceeded to give his adversary a chance to hit back under every possible advantage, which Coen seized with alacrity. When the Jacatra business was settled Dale dispersed the English ships to embark freights at various points while he himself sailed for India a dying man. It seems impossible to believe that he was aware of the force concentrated near at hand under the Dutch admiral.

News of these proceedings soon reached Coen and in a double sense gave him just the openings he wanted. With all his squadron he hastened first to recapture Jacatra, which exactly answered the requirements of a Dutch headquarters as he saw them, having a good anchorage with a plentiful water supply from a river, in a position conveniently near the Straits of Sunda. On this spot, therefore, by right of conquest, he founded shortly afterwards a Dutch oriental capital under the name of Batavia, which to this day remains one of the most flourishing cities in the east. Having seized Jacatra he proceeded at once in search of the scattered English ships, which were all captured in succession after severe engagements; a round-up inflicting such disaster on the London Company that they were reduced to complete impotence in the Archipelago. Thus both of Coen's most immediate principal objects—that is to say the acquisition of a good site for the future Dutch headquarters and the stamping out of English competition—were obtained through the faulty dispositions of the English admiral.

But in the early seventeenth century the situation in the far east was always ten or twelve months behind the times as regards affairs in Europe—that being the period required for sending out orders from home—and so it came to pass that in this very same year 1619 in which the fleet commanders of the Dutch and English Companies were lashing at each

other in the straits and channels of Malaysia their governing Boards in the mother countries were concluding an agreement for joint action in eastern seas against Portugal and Spain. Before very long this mutual understanding took an aggressive form, which was based on a sound comprehension of the strategic possibilities open to combined effort. Two failures by the Dutch to seize Malacca had proved that the main Portuguese possessions on the land were too strong to be carried by direct assault with the limited military resources of the London and Amsterdam merchants; but on the other hand the ships at their common disposal were sufficient to lay a restraining barrier on the sea trade which gave the enemy's fortresses their real value in the eyes of the Portuguese nation. The Companies proceeded accordingly to test the feasibility of holding this traffic up altogether; not by chasing Portuguese galleons all about the enormous expanses of the Indian Ocean, in which their escape would be easy, but by picketing the very starting point of the homeward route from Goa in sufficient strength to make the capture of any emerging vessel a certainty when once she was beyond the protection of the batteries at the harbour mouth.

This, of course, was simply the form of warfare which has come to be known long since as commercial blockade, but at the time it was a novel method of attacking an enemy's property, for which the only precedent anywhere was Albuquerque's sea closure of Calicut after the Portuguese failure to take that city, early in the sixteenth century. Portugal was now herself to be the first European State in history to experience the commercial blockade of one of her harbours. Its previous non-existence as a principle of war had been due partly to the unimportance of foreign traffic to any country in an age when all were self-contained in the matter of necessities, and partly to the difficulty of watching a port with sailing ships in bad weather. At Goa, however, the conditions were specially favourable, both to the conduct of the operation and to the effect on the enemy it was likely to produce. Though no longer the channel of so great a stream of homeward bound wealth as it had been fifty years before, the line of communication between the western and

eastern capitals of the Portuguese realm was still a highly sensitive nerve in Portuguese national life; and the complete severance of this line at its outer end was not difficult even for sailing ships, because gales are practically unknown on the Malabar coast except during the south-west or on-shore monsoon, and when that monsoon is blowing the weather itself prevents sailing vessels from getting out of Goa.

It was at the change of monsoon in 1621 that its citizens were first struck with dismay at the sight of approaching British and Dutch squadrons, which presently hove-to in the offing under easy canvas and there remained, for there was no force in the harbour strong enough to drive them away or molest them, and though the garrison stood to arms, it could do nothing. This was to be a common enough spectacle in Goa later, but the raising of the curtain on the first act came as a shock; for even if the Portuguese power of controlling all traffic in the Indian Ocean had passed from their hands already for some years, their own freedom of navigation had not so far been impeded except by sporadic attacks on single vessels, and its wholesale interruption if only for one season was a portent of the worst description. National pride might to some extent be salved by the sight of the flag still flying on the citadel, but colonies which contributed nothing to the wealth of the mother country had little to recommend them at Lisbon, and more than one Viceroy afterwards advocated the total abandonment of Goa and its sister fortresses as mere sources of anxiety and loss to the nation.

Secure in the knowledge that they had nothing to fear, either from the elements or the enemy, the blockaders haunted the approaches to Goa all through the mild Malabar winter, safely beyond range of its land defences; while the Portuguese gunners watched them from the ramparts of Fort Panjim, powerless to strike a blow, and the Portuguese seamen in the few ships inside saw the homeward bound season slipping away month by month in idle exasperation. The moral effect of all this on the native mind was naturally very detrimental to Portuguese prestige, for the peoples of India who came into dealings with them saw that the regular departure of a group of ships for

Lisbon, which had been the chief annual event in Goa for a hundred and ten years, was now being forcibly prevented.

Moreover, the Portuguese were suffering in another quarter simultaneously with the blockade, for the boxing up of a division of their galleons in Goa, even though a comparatively small one, was a sufficient reduction of their sea striking force to give the agents of the English Company at Surat a favourable opportunity to undertake an enterprise already in their mind; not only as a means of extending their business in a new quarter, but as a reprisal for Portuguese interference and intrigues against the Company's interests in general. Two years previously a few English ships had visited Jask, a small port at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, to try and open up communications with the great Shah Abbas and obtain a permit to trade; which move was regarded by Admiral Andrade, commanding the Portuguese squadron stationed in Gulf waters, as an encroachment on the long established monopoly of the local commerce held by his country. Andrade therefore attacked the English vessels, but suffered a repulse, chiefly through the poor quality of his native crews, for he was a brave and competent officer himself. His failure to drive them away enabled them to carry out their mission, on the completion of which they returned to Surat without further adventures; but as his squadron, though defeated, had withdrawn without serious loss, it remained a menace to English aspirations in that region, which had to be removed if they were to prosper in safety.

The matter, however, went further than that, for the presence of the Portuguese in the Gulf was a standing offence to Shah Abbas also, who ardently desired to recover the island of Ormuz so long lost to Persia, but having no fighting ships was powerless to send an army across while Andrade stood in the way. In the well-armed vessels of the London Company this astute monarch saw the solution of his difficulty, and he made it a condition of allowing them to trade in his realms that they helped him to take the coveted Portuguese possession. The English therefore found that their prospects in Persia were more than ever contingent on the destruction of the Portuguese squadron; but as Andrade could always be reinforced from Goa

during the winter monsoon, which was the only season when he could be attacked by a fleet from Surat, his destruction or dislodgement was too formidable a project for the Company to care about till Goa came to be shut up. With the Portuguese headquarters blockaded the English officers at Surat knew precisely what force they would have to deal with in the Gulf; and as Abbas was urging them to get on with the business they despatched nine vessels to take it in hand under Captain Blithe of the Company's service, but kept the British government in ignorance of their proceedings. Blithe did his work well, and on his approach the six ships of the Portuguese squadron retired under the guns of Ormuz citadel. A multitudinous riff-raff of Persian troops were then brought over for the land investment, who with Blithe's help conducted a siege which could only have one end, and in spite of a gallant resistance Ormuz was lost to Portugal for ever by a general surrender of the garrison and destruction of the defending squadron.

Thus went the first of the three principal sea fortresses established by the genius of Albuquerque a century before, as centres of trade and strategic bases for the forces controlling the traffic of the Indian Ocean; and its downfall can be viewed as an event in either British history or Portuguese. British historians' references to the episode have perhaps naturally all treated it from the British standpoint, but none seem to have pointed out the important influence of the blockade of Goa on the story of the expedition, without which it would in all reasonable probability never have been launched till at least long after. To obtain the true perspective of the general maritime situation we must realise how the Portuguese saw it; who make it sufficiently clear that the capture of Ormuz, though providing more spectacular material for history than the sealing up of their eastern capital, was certainly no more serious as a blow to their interests. It was advertised by powder-smoke and bloodshed, the burning of a small squadron, the surrender of an admiral and the garrison of a rather obsolete work; whereas the blockade did not cause the firing of a single shot. Yet the loss of Ormuz was no more than the amputation of a limb to Portugal in the east, while the closure of Goa was a

grip on the heart itself, completely stopping its beat for the moment. And though on this occasion the blockaders relaxed the pressure before commercial life became extinct, the temporary paralysis it caused served to show that the method could be used with fatal results if long enough maintained, of which the Dutch duly made a note.

In so far as it prevented any possibility of Andrade's squadron coming to the rescue, the attack on Ormuz was as helpful to the blockade as the blockade was to the attack, and the fact that two separate series of operations were possible at the same time proved how completely an Anglo-Dutch partnership could dominate the eastern situation. From this point onward it is highly instructive to note how the once great status of the Portuguese on the seas and shores of Asia deteriorated step by step with each phase in the waning of their maritime power. Less than a quarter of a century had elapsed since Portugal dominated the Indian Ocean without a rival and her trade and possessions were alike secure. Then came an interval in which, though not called upon to face armed opposition on a serious scale, her trade began to suffer from a competition which she was no longer strong enough to exclude. And now a further stage was reached, in which through a forcible and wholesale restriction of the movements of her ships, not only did her trade fall away almost to the vanishing point, but her chief land strongholds began to fall away also, of which Ormuz was the first to see the flag of Lusitania hauled down. A brief pause on the downward path followed through the despatch of her only naval reinforcements from home in a last effort to hold her own; but when these were again outnumbered by her enemies, her decline once more set in and continued with gathering momentum till nothing but a parcel of fragments of the position she held throughout the sixteenth century remained to pass on to posterity.



## IX

### The DOWNFALL of PORTUGAL in the EAST

**T**HE first blockade of Goa with the simultaneous loss of Ormuz taught the Portuguese that if they wished to retain any semblance of power or importance in the East they must reinforce their fleet in the Indian Ocean without delay. Such additional ships as were still at their disposal in Europe were sent out accordingly, and for some time this local increase of strength sufficed to prevent their antagonists from embarking on further operations—such as blockades—of a nature demanding prolonged and serious effort. But the policy adopted in 1619 by the Dutch and English Companies of mutual aid in opposing the Portuguese remained in force for ten years, and, though not applied as a foundation for any regularly planned scheme of conquest, did nevertheless bear fruit in occasional acts of aggression in which the ships of the two companies operated in concert. Thus in 1624 and 1625 Anglo-Dutch squadrons attacked the Portuguese division stationed at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and in 1626 made a descent on the small Portuguese settlement on the island of Bombay. It could hardly be claimed that any of these attacks were notable events, for the first two had no decisive issue—and even led to the loss of the only British vessel ever destroyed by the Portuguese in the East—and the third was no more than a raiding and burning enterprise. But their significance lay in the fact that now the Anglo-Dutch combination always took the initiative. Matters therefore had arrived at a point in which the Portuguese were relegated permanently to the defensive, and, though Goa was again an open port for the time, the fact that they had reached the end of their tether as regards naval reinforcements, while the fleets of the Dutch and English Companies were growing stronger every year, cast a serious shadow over their outlook for the future.

It chanced at this stage that their relations with the Mogul Emperors who ruled all northern Hindustan underwent a change for the worse from a variety of causes, not least of which was the friendly attitude of these magnificent autocrats

towards the agents of the London Company, who they had permitted to settle in Surat. And by this estrangement the English profited in an unforeseen fashion, for it was the practice of the Portuguese Viceroys, when on bad terms with the court of Delhi, to hold up the native craft engaged in taking pious Moslems from India on their annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Such interference caused much exasperation to the Emperors; for these lords of formidable armies, like the great Shah Abbas of Persia, were as helpless as sheep against any white men on the water, and followed his example by turning to other white men to help them, in the shape of the English, whose services were available at a price. Once more, therefore, ships belonging to Deptford and Wapping were placed at the disposal of an oriental prince, as a condition of facilities for trade; and this time the facilities were forthcoming, for the Moguls were better at honouring a bargain than the Shahs. The Portuguese were given to understand that the pilgrim carriers and all other vessels in which the Moguls had an interest were thenceforward under the protection of English guns, and the English factories in Surat were raised to high favour at Delhi.

The whole position and policy of the London East India Company at this period—and for quite sixty years thereafter—merits indeed the attention of all who are interested in the various forms of national effort exerted across oceanic spaces, as disclosed in general history. If Francisco Almeida, the first Portuguese Viceroy of the Indies, had been alive in the first half of the seventeenth century, he might have pointed with no little justification to the growing power and wealth of the English commercial adventurers in north-western Hindustan as a complete vindication of the views on Asiatic enterprise, which he urged in vain on his sovereign's acceptance; for the Company and its servants pursued their business precisely on the lines which he recommended. "Devote all your attention to strength on the sea," wrote Almeida, "and avoid misplaced expenditure on fortresses or other commitments on the land. So shall Your Majesty's interests prosper in the east." King Manoel did not approve of these principles. The merchants of

London did. They were content to thrust an office manager ashore as their chief representative at Surat, between Goa and Diu—the two greatest sea fortresses in all Asia—and provided him with a bungalow, a “factory” or warehouse, a few clerks and boatmen and a stand of flintlocks. Not a rampart, wall, ditch or gun defended his five-acre plot. But he was empowered to control the movements of all the ships of the Company’s fleet in the Indian Ocean; and because they outnumbered the fleet of Portugal, this private gentleman and commercial accountant commanded the entire sea area between Arabia and Hindustan; in virtue of which he not only sent home more wealth from the East than the Crown officers of Portugal, but outbid them for the goodwill of the great rulers of Asia, Mogul or Persian, and conducted diplomatic negotiations on fully equal terms with the Viceroy of Goa, who lived in regal state surrounded by men-at-arms and almost impregnable fortifications.

It cannot, however, be doubted that the officers commanding the ships under his orders were sorely harassed by the want of an adequate dockyard and arsenal under the Company’s own control; and the fact that in spite of the absence of any maintenance facilities other than those obtainable from native sources, they did somehow contrive to keep the upper hand of the Portuguese, with all Goa docks at the latter’s disposal, proves them to have been past-masters of their profession, as indeed we know from other evidence that they were. The truth is that all oversea enterprise conducted at a great distance from the mother country should preserve a certain proper ratio between its number of ships and its oversea holdings on shore, if the best results are to be obtained, which the Dutch realized with their usual shrewdness at an early stage. But the effective ascendancy of the English over the Portuguese from the period here under notice proved nevertheless that in the sailing era, as Almeida had insisted, ships *could* command a large sea area without the support of fortresses in the same general region, though under a handicap. Fortresses with insufficient ships most certainly could not, and never have or will.

To the general trading element in the native population

these changes were at first perplexing; as the native mind is more apt to be impressed by the sight of troops than of ships, and the traditions left by the naval bombardments of a hundred odd years before had grown dim. As far as the Hindoo vendor of merchandise could appreciate the outward evidences of authority, the handsomely accoutred garrisons at Goa and Diu seemed a proof of power that was entirely absent in the English concessions, where the only white men to be seen were a few perspiring clerks and sea skippers in very unpretentious garb. But when the natives realized that these latter were quite as well treated by the officers of the great Mogul as the plumed Portuguese, and furthermore, that of these two white peoples the English had much the most money to spend, they gained confidence to enter into business relations which became permanently established.

In 1625, the private quarrels of the London East India Company with the Portuguese became merged in a national war between the mother countries arising from affairs in Europe. As the Company was authorized by the Crown to fight against all enemies of the State, its hostile attitude towards the Viceroy of Goa assumed a national and regular character, which remained during the five years elapsing before the return of peace in Europe in 1630. But after the already-mentioned raid on Bombay in 1626 the Company remained content to follow its commercial pursuits, and a somewhat curious situation ensued; for though a condition of formally declared war had succeeded a condition of unrecognized private hostility, the actual exchanges of blows became few and insignificant. The truth was that the sentiments hitherto uniting the English and Dutch Companies in opposing the Portuguese were weakening on the English side, as a consequence of increasing commercial rivalry and the menacing growth of Dutch sea-power. Fears were aroused that the London trade would have more to suffer in the future from the ostensible allies of the Company than from its ostensible opponents, and when peace between the sovereigns of Britain and Portugal was restored, the policy of the London merchants began to move in the direction of an understanding with the Portuguese Viceroy. The latter, for his part,

had long since realized that in remaining perpetually at feud with both the Companies the Portuguese were making a mistake; for the blockade of Goa, with the simultaneous loss of Ormuz had proved their inability to withstand two such adversaries at once. And though the subsequent arrival of several more ships from Lisbon had helped them in some measure to reassert themselves, the English compact with the Mogul Emperors had added another difficulty to their future. Meanwhile the steady expansion and implacable enmity of the Dutch were constant and growing sources of anxiety at Goa. When, therefore, the English Company made its advances, these did not suffer the peremptory rejection that would certainly have been their fate a few years before; and though the Viceroy moved with diplomatic caution, the situation was slowly but surely eased on both sides, till after a prolonged exchange of views, lasting till 1635, a formal accord was reached whereby each party pledged itself to settle all disputes with the other by peaceful methods.

Relieved of anxiety on that side, the Portuguese were left to confront the Dutch alone for a whole generation, and the main thread of Indian Ocean history during that period was simply the tale of the struggle between these two white nations in the East: a conflict marked by occasional brief pauses in the actual clash of arms, but never relaxed in spirit. The English Company watched its progress with close attention, as spectators whose own interests sometimes benefited and sometimes suffered under a perpetual atmosphere of strife between their neighbours, and whose sympathies were increasingly evoked on the side of the Portuguese as it intensified, partly because Great Britain and Portugal were being drawn politically together in Europe by the events of the time, and partly because it was obvious from their whole conduct in the Archipelago that the Dutch would be an aggressive and disturbing element in Eastern seas if in a position of undisputed dominion. But it was a one-sided fight for supremacy from first to last, in which the Dutch struck where and when they pleased, and by superior force, staying power and weight of blow left their enemy weaker after every exchange, till finally laid prone altogether.

With the Dutch Company, early commercial profit had proved as usual an immediate stimulant to expansion, and in an extreme degree. Hence in the period following the first twenty years of its existence, its record of accomplishment lends a remarkable prominence to the share of Holland in the making of maritime history. In pursuit of an oceanic hegemony of the East, somewhat on the model of Albuquerque, Governor Coen and his followers—having little scruple about seizing anything that they were strong enough to take, after a not uncommon sea fashion of the period—travelled a long way towards complete success, and furnished in the process a most conspicuous example of a wide acquisition of political and commercial power through a skilful use of naval armaments. Towards the question of property and influence on land their attitude differed from that of the English Company, who held no more land than was absolutely necessary as little patches for their factories, and sometimes even censured their servants for increasing the number of these. The Dutch believed that the best way to secure trade was to establish an effective control of the area from which it sprang, and carried their forcible subjugation of the native rulers in the regions where their commercial operations were chiefly centred much further than even the Portuguese; though in many cases they adopted the Portuguese precedent of leaving to these rulers a considerable measure of delegated local authority. In this way the large islands of Java, Sumatra and the Moluccas were compelled to submit to a Dutch monopoly of their exports. Others, which were smaller and held by the Portuguese, they seized and placed under governing officials of their own.

Of the English Company they stood in no fear until Cromwell's time, a generation later. Their own syndicate had acquired in twenty years so important a place in the national prosperity of Holland herself that it could always rely on government support, and Holland was superior then to England as a sea power. The English Company, on the other hand, contributed a much less important share towards the general prosperity of the mother country, and could rarely count on official protection in any material form, even had the King's

navy been strong enough to extend it. As a result of confidence in the approval of his compatriots, one of the higher servants of the Dutch Company pushed matters to their farthest extreme in 1623 against the handful of Englishmen stationed in the clove island of Amboina, where one of the last small trading ports of the London merchants in Malaysia still remained. In the temporary absence in Europe of Coen, during the interval between his two commissions as Governor-General, this official arrested and executed the whole Amboina staff, after torturing them to extract confessions of offences against Dutch laws which they had never committed. And the Dutch State upheld his action. It can hardly be said that the incident had any material effect on the general strategic and commercial situation in the East, either at the moment or for long afterwards, as in spite of a great explosion of public feeling when the news reached London, English efforts to obtain redress were confined to vociferous protests and threats of action that never took shape till Cromwell was in power thirty years later. But it did direct English national attention to the activities of the London Company far more than ever before, which increased as England became by degrees a sea state, till a period eventually arrived when the Dutch had to think twice before offering violence to the Company's interests.

After the Amboina episode, however, the English—having already abandoned Bantam for the time—were no longer in any way an obstacle in the Archipelago, and, with the Dutch position on the eastern side of the Indian Ocean well consolidated, Dutch ambitions for the control of its whole surface next required that the Portuguese should be eliminated on the north. That this would be a formidable undertaking, their own experiences at Malacca made evident; but so long as they could be kept from competing in trade, the actual seizure of the main Portuguese colonies and fortresses might wait. When ready with a sufficiency of ships a few years later, a general offensive against this rival European state in the East was therefore resumed, and carried through with great concentration of purpose, thoroughness and patience, though the ensuing war proved lengthy.

It would be perhaps too much to say that the Dutch worked to a programme in the matter of time, for though they never rested they were never in a hurry, and taught by the lesson of their former reverses at Malacca, avoided risking further checks through attempting too much at once. But they always knew what they meant to do next, and how they meant to do it; and every forward move was not only carried out in methodical fashion for its own immediate purpose, but so arranged as to be if possible a stepping stone for the next. Thus, though constantly aggressive, they were seldom rash; not because the Dutch service lacked venturesome officers, with such notable leaders as Heemskerck, Van Diemen and Piet Hein, but because they foresaw that with the means at their disposal they could more surely reach success by slowly tightening an irresistible screw, under which their opponents were powerless to retaliate, than by any precipitate forcing of the issues at stake. For nearly twenty years, in consequence, the policy of a brilliant or spectacular onslaught made no appeal to their councils, but not Albuquerque himself could have accomplished more in the end with the instruments at their command.

As all their schemes depended on retaining the power of the initiative, their prospects of success were necessarily founded on absolute liberty of movement by sea, demanding firstly a windward position from which to launch all maritime enterprise, and secondly, an eastern fleet with a margin of superiority over any reasonably likely combination of enemies. A windward position they already had, but not as yet a sufficient number of keels. When, therefore, the Portuguese sea forces were augmented after the blockade of Goa in 1622, the Dutch Company devoted their attention even more than ever towards increasing their own, till they were strong enough to face even the contingency of an Anglo-Portuguese armed coalition, which, though at the time improbable, was not beyond the bounds of possibility. If they could have increased their troops in the same proportion, they would have made much shorter work of the Portuguese than they did; but the military resources of the Dutch Company at that period, though enough for the overthrow of the ill-equipped native armies of the



Malay Sultans, were still far below the standard required for direct assaults or sieges of powerfully defended positions held by Europeans, such as the main Portuguese sea citadels, and in operating against these they were compelled for many years to rely on naval action alone.

A purely maritime offensive, however, when conducted by such masters of the science of sea warfare as the countrymen of the Van Tromps and de Ruyter, proved quite sufficient to secure their primary object: that is to say, the stoppage of all Portuguese sea-borne traffic in the East. Having seen the serious injury which a single season's blockade had inflicted on Goa on the first occasion of its trial, the Dutch, when ready to begin a fresh general offensive in 1630, based their whole strategic plans for fifteen years of unbroken warfare on the principle that though an enemy's ports may be too strong to be themselves a direct object of attack, the trade which brings them into existence and maintains their importance as a national source of wealth, may be diverted elsewhere by a superior naval adversary who is under no necessity to force a quick decision. Ships alone, therefore, were to be used to depose Goa and Malacca from the position they had occupied for a century as the chief points of intercourse of the men of the East and West; and on these two cities a close sea blockade was imposed for a long term of years, which strangled their industry till the grass grew in their streets and half their populations had deserted them.

But at the outset the Dutch did not possess enough vessels to seal up both points simultaneously without a dangerous division of force, for the Portuguese fleet stationed on the Malabar coast with a detached squadron at Muscat was not a negligible factor. As they were thus compelled to restrict their opening move to one direction, their choice fell on Malacca, which was the nearest to their own headquarters. Fifteen years had passed since the second of their two former attempts on this fortress had failed; and in the interval their ally, the Malay King of Acheen, whose father and grandfather had both attacked it without success, tried to take it in his turn with an immense and well-armed expedition, but suffered

a like disaster through the same cause: that is to say, the timely arrival of a relieving fleet from Goa on the change of monsoon. This was the tenth occasion, during one hundred and twenty years of Portuguese occupation, in which a hostile fleet conveying strong land forces had found it impossible to reduce this unshakeable position; sometimes through being defeated by a defending fleet before the troops were ever put ashore, and sometimes through defeat by a relieving fleet when a land siege had begun. Never did it fall back into the hands of the brown man after a European flag had been hoisted over its walls, and never was it destined to be wrested from the Portuguese by any assailant, white or brown, except through the sheer exhaustion of eleven years' severance from all help, which was now about to commence.

Under the Portuguese, as under the native Sultans who preceded them, Malacca was chiefly important as a point of collection and transhipment of cargo; whither goods were conveyed in small craft from the Malay Islands, Siam and China, to be put on board large ocean-going ships for the long westward voyage; and the special aim of the Dutch was to divert the incoming coasters to their own port of Batavia, which, though not quite so well situated for the collection of freights, provided on the other hand an excellent starting point for the homeward passage *via* the Straits of Sunda, through its locality in the fair trade wind for west-bound sailing. Round Malacca, therefore, they proceeded to place a sea encirclement its defenders could never hope to break, even if assisted from Goa; to which end a very strong Dutch squadron arrived off the port in 1630 and slammed its sea gates. Incoming native craft, with goods for sale or transfer, were pointed the way to Batavia; outgoing were relieved of any cargo on board—under compensation unless Portuguese property—and then allowed to proceed in peace, on the understanding that they came to Malacca no more. One and all were notified that as a place of any importance its history was at an end till the day should come when it flew the Netherlands flag. As the season's homeward bound Portuguese ships had sailed, and the small squadrons stationed in the Straits retired on the Dutch approach, no

Portuguese vessels were captured; but none ever anchored in that roadstead again.

Though the action taken answered its purpose by diverting trade at once, the Dutch found that they were never able to relax their vigilance without some tendency of the stream to slip back a little to the old channel; and as Malacca—unlike the Malabar ports—was at no season of the year regularly closed to exit by the weather, blockade-running was always possible if the blockaders kept a bad look-out. It was the fault of the Dutch themselves, that when on one or two occasions they withdrew the watching ships in order to meet the requirements of homeward bound transport before others were ready to take their place, some trading actually occurred, though it was impracticable to send reinforcements or munitions from Goa, owing to the adverse monsoon blowing at the time in the Bay of Bengal. These lapses, however, were few; and as the same weather conditions that permitted blockade-running when no enemy was in sight also permitted the enemy always to be on the spot if he chose, it was the rarely violated practice of the Dutch through summer and winter alike to keep a sufficient force within sight of the port but outside the range of its guns from 1630 till 1641.

By cutting off the garrison from any outside maintenance or relief the effects of the blockade were military as well as commercial; though from that standpoint they were necessarily very slow in producing results as compared to a successful direct assault. But they were sure, for though no shortage of food troubled the defenders—owing to its procurability from adjoining native territory on the land side—no replacement of the losses to man power by frequent deaths and desertions in an unhealthy climate was possible; and the long and complete isolation from the mother country was naturally demoralizing to the comparatively small and steadily decreasing band of Europeans, upon whose military efficiency the Portuguese hold on the city against enemies external or internal was immediately dependent. After holding out for eleven years their number had dwindled to such a point that the fortress was like a withered apple, ready to fall at a touch, and the Dutch

decided that the time for gathering had arrived. A direct assault was delivered, therefore, on the sea front of the citadel, after a preliminary fleet bombardment, which met with so little resistance that the attackers almost walked straight in; and the fortress passed into the hands of the Dutch a hundred and thirty years after Albuquerque had raised its walls, having survived ten separate attempts at capture in the interval. The great position of Portugal in the East created by his genius was crumbling through the lost Portuguese rule of the Indian seas on which its foundations rested.

Five years before the end came at Malacca the Dutch had added still further so greatly to their fleet that they began to impose a similar infliction on Goa, where a strong blockading squadron arrived in the winter monsoon of 1636. Here the problem was profoundly different both tactically and economically. Tactically it was an easier operation than at Malacca, because, owing to the closing effect of the summer monsoon, the blockade was only necessary during the winter; but economically it was more difficult, because Goa was an exporting rather than a transshipping point for goods, where they arrived for sea loading by land routes over which the Dutch had no control. To prevent these goods from passing out again by sea was not in itself the ultimate aim of the Dutch, who wanted to go further than that and ship the goods themselves. But as they were powerless to compel the traffic to change destination in the simple and summary fashion employed at Malacca, they were obliged to offer alternative markets on the Indian coast in their own hands, and trust that the laws of supply and demand would operate, which in time they did. Acceptance of delivery was already possible at several such points when the blockade began, through the previous acquisition of factory sites at certain harbours and anchorages on both sides of southern Hindustan by negotiations with native Princes; and to these outlets—which were being increased in number—the native producers naturally turned their eyes when they found after a time that selling was no longer possible at Goa. Thus, though trade could be forced away from Malacca, it could only be lured away from the

Portuguese capital in Malabar; and the process was longer, as the sellers had to be well satisfied that, in deserting the port which had been the commercial headquarters of southern India for four generations, they were acting with prudence. On the other hand, traffic, when once diverted, had less tendency to drift back to its former goal if opened again than it had at Malacca; for whereas the latter port held in many ways a more convenient situation for the traffic requirements of its own region than Batavia, no such advantages over the Dutch ports round India were enjoyed by Goa or any of those in Portuguese possession. Hence it was that though the Dutch were always set upon acquiring Malacca itself sooner or later—and there kept up the effort of blockade till the city fell—they never harboured any such intentions towards Goa, where the blockade was lifted when it had effected its purely commercial consequences. Goa was certainly a more difficult place to capture, but its reduction was possible by a similar process of military exhaustion, had the Dutch considered the inducements sufficient.

The blockade of Malacca lasted with scarcely any intermission for eleven years, but eight successive seasons answered the purpose at Goa. As already observed, the latter sea investment was started before the former had come to an end, and the periods of the two overlapped and ran concurrently for five years. In undertaking the second while the first was still in hand the Dutch acted with more precipitance than was usual with them. They were merciless taskmasters to their own seamen and ships in the seventeenth century—as the British were in the eighteenth—and in expecting their admirals to conduct both blockades simultaneously and successfully with the fleet available, the Dutch Company were asking almost too much; for the division detailed for duty at Goa had so narrow a superiority over the Portuguese squadron stationed there in the first and second seasons of blockade, that the latter sallied out to attack them three times, and were only prevented with great difficulty from breaking up the investment after severe engagements. Each season, however, a fresh set of vessels were employed, and after the third Portuguese sortie the force

watching Goa was strengthened and maintained at a standard sufficient to prevent any further attempts of that kind till the end.

From 1637 till 1645 this stoppage of the homeward flow of eastern freights from Goa remained in force; and the fresh direction which it gave to the intercourse between Europeans and the natives of India had far-reaching and long-enduring effects on Indian developments by establishing the Dutch in a position of high importance in native estimation. And in one respect its interest and consequences were world-wide, for at Goa the Hollanders introduced a new and extremely controversial policy, by refusing to allow neutral ships to enter or leave any more than Portuguese, and thus practised for the first time commercial blockade in its fullest sense. For some years previously the London Company had obtained permission from the Viceroy to load two ships annually at Goa; and the Goanese authorities chartered others in which, by placing their pepper sacks under British hatches, they hoped to send them home unmolested by any Dutchman on the voyage; thereby raising the vexed question of the usage of neutral flags, which has furnished international lawyers with a topic of argument for centuries.

The blockade upset all this. The Dutch were aware of the practice, but on the high seas did not care to risk provoking armed conflicts by trying to search vessels under British colours whose port of departure they did not know, on the chance that they might have sailed from Goa with Portuguese goods; for such a universally recognized belligerent right at the present day had never been acknowledged or even raised. Immediately outside of Goa the case was different, for here they could be seen emerging, and everything that sailed thence was indubitably a source of profit to the Portuguese authorities in some way, either as owners or as collectors of export dues. This the Dutch were determined to stop; and their attitude, with its potentialities of trouble with the English Company, affords a good indication of the confidence and sense of power animating their whole proceedings at this period. The English remained content with verbal protest; though only two years

before, the alarm they shared with the Portuguese on the arrival of the first Dutch visiting fleet in the Bay of Bengal, had resulted in the Anglo-Portuguese truce which became an active alliance twenty years later. But until the alliance took shape nothing in the truce laid any obligation on either party to help the other if attacked; or even to abstain from profiting indirectly by the other's losses, as the Londoners to some extent now did by the flow of native trade from Goa to other Indian ports. Thus they violated no letter of the agreement by a cautious if selfish policy.

By the fourth year of the blockade of Goa—which was the ninth of the blockade of Malacca—the state of Portuguese affairs in eastern seas appeared to the Viceroy to be so hopeless that in a despatch to the Lisbon government—sent overland to the Mediterranean and thence on, to avoid Dutch interception—he expressed the deliberate opinion that with their ships no longer able to sail the Indian Ocean, there was nothing left but to haul down the flag in all their Asiatic possessions and quit the East for good. Ormuz had gone, Malacca was now in the last extremity, Goa was fast becoming a dead city. This counsel of despair was supported by such hard logic that it might perhaps have found a resigned acceptance, had it not been for the fact that the affairs of the Portuguese people were just then taking a turn from which their political leaders expected great results. Some sixty years before, their ancestors had made the mistake of assenting to the claim of Philip II of Spain to the Portuguese Crown; an error regretted ever after, for though Philip and his successors allowed them domestic self-government, they bled Portuguese finances mercilessly on behalf of the Spanish wars. The Portuguese nobles, therefore, were scheming to re-establish a separate kingdom on a basis of friendship with Britain and Holland, both of which countries still detested but no longer feared the Spaniards. This scheme materialized in its main outline, though its consequences did not extend so far in their favour as the population of Lisbon had hoped. In 1641 the Spanish dynasty was repudiated by the enthroning of King John IV of Portugal, who proceeded at once to arrange anti-Spanish treaties with the British and

Dutch governments, for the purpose of securing the safety of his crown and the integrity of his realms at home and abroad. Believing that Goa would be freed from Dutch persecution by some understanding of this nature, the authorities at Lisbon had not approved of the Viceroy's bag and baggage policy of withdrawal when preparing to declare for independence from Spain; and if the Dutch government had been masters in their own house this confidence would have been justified. Unfortunately for the Portuguese, however, the officers of the Dutch Company refused to regard European made treaties as carrying any authority or sanctity east of the Cape of Good Hope; and so great was the difficulty of enforcing official decisions in those days at a distance of 12,000 miles, that, in spite of positive orders to the contrary from the National Government, the Company's executive at Batavia continued to blockade the Malabar ports.

Nor were the misfortunes of the Portuguese confined to these vital centres of industry, for they suffered from attacks in a fresh quarter, soon after the blockade began, which, though of less immediate consequence to their political and commercial interests, afforded a significant forecast of the growth of Dutch ambitions. The large and fertile island of Ceylon—one of the great prizes always held by the premier power in the Indian Ocean—had acknowledged the suzerainty of Portugal for 120 years, and all its external trade had been under Portuguese control during that time. But the Dutch were now casting covetous eyes on Ceylon. As already observed, they were greater annexationists of territory than the Portuguese; but, depending as they did so much on sea armaments for safety, it was towards insular rather than continental situations that their inclinations turned, and all their really important foreign possessions were islands, of which Sumatra and Java were the largest. Sumatra in fact was so large that the mountain tribes of the interior gave constant trouble and were never really subjugated. Ceylon, though much smaller than Sumatra, had a greater export trade and was far more easy to hold against revolt; partly on account of its lesser area and partly because its population had little of the warlike quality of the Malays.



Offering as it did, therefore, every advantage which could attract the Dutch, its loss to Portugal sooner or later was a foregone conclusion when once the rule of the Indian Ocean had passed under the flag of the Netherlands Company; a symbol of perpetual feud against all things Lusitanian.

As usual, however, the Dutch methods here were deliberate and cautious rather than hasty, though none the less effective. Ceylon was not slashed away from the realms of Portugal at one blow, but carved away piecemeal; good care being taken during the process to prevent any help reaching it from outside, towards which end the blockade of Goa naturally contributed very materially. It was the blockading squadron itself—when released from its watch every year by the south-west monsoon—that formed the instrument whereby the first slices were cut off. All through the winter, when the weather would have permitted the transport of reinforcements from Goa to Ceylon, the blockaders held them up; and when the summer monsoon made the blockade and the sea movements of troops alike impossible, the blockaders took the opportunity of delivering an attack at some point in the weakened island possession for three successive years, in sailing past it on their way to the Bay of Bengal. This began in 1638, when the blockade was under van Diemen, who, in passing Ceylon for the first time eastward anchored at two points on the east side, at a safe distance from the Portuguese military centres in the island, and there set up two commercial agencies in well-defended positions. Next year, reinforced from Batavia, he made the first move towards attacking the Portuguese in their actual military centres, by bombarding the sea fortifications of Trincomalee and Baticaloa. Trincomalee, which is the finest natural harbour, not only in Ceylon, but on the whole western side of the Bay of Bengal, now became available as a shelter for weather-distressed Dutch Indiamen, even if not yet a point for trade; but as its exit faces north-east it was a bad harbour to emerge from during the winter monsoon in the days of sailing ships. To secure a footing in Ceylon free from this drawback the Dutch resolved to seize Galle, a bay at the southern end of the island facing the opposite point of the compass to Trincomalee and

held by a small Portuguese garrison only. Next year, accordingly, the fleet *en route* from the Goa blockade to the Coromandel side attacked and captured Galle, which for several years became the Ceylon headquarters of the Netherlands Company. These losses were in themselves less serious of course to the Portuguese than the commercial ruining of their Indian seat of government and capital city by Dutch sea power; but as indications of the scope and direction of their opponents' policy they greatly increased the alarm and anxiety felt in Lisbon. For a few years after the capture of Galle, however, the Dutch suspended offensive operations in the island, for they found that further acquisitions by force would call for the use of more troops than were at their disposal. But this was only a respite, and in no way denoted any change of ultimate intentions.

By the year 1645 eight seasons of maritime investment had so completely killed the trade of Goa that it never fully returned, the blockade having proved to the natives that the Portuguese were no longer able to hold their own at sea, and thus destroyed the confidence without which commerce never thrives. Thenceforward Albuquerque's great focus of eastern sea intercourse sank into insignificance for all time. It was in vain that the Portuguese struggled to throw off the iron grip of the enemy. Thrice they sailed out in attempts to drive away the blockaders, but only one of these sorties—made in the first year of the blockade when the Dutch were in comparatively small force—met with even a temporary degree of success by compelling a brief retirement. Both the others were repulsed with heavy loss. By 1645, therefore, Lisbon had finally lost its position as a European market for the sale of eastern wares, Malacca and Ormuz having passed out of Portuguese possession and Goa having ceased to send home any cargoes. Finding no spices to buy on the Tagus the merchants of the West—Catholic as well as Protestant—turned to Amsterdam and London; and having thus attained their prime ambition of wresting eastern trade from under the flag of Portugal, the Netherlands Company brought the blockade of Goa to an end, and for several years thereafter employed their whole fleet in

sending home the freights that were falling into their hands on every side. The movements of merchandise in the Indian Ocean thus passed finally from the control of a Catholic crowned head to that of Protestant private speculators.

Even so, however, the Portuguese were not to be left in peace; for the obvious decay of their power had not unnaturally awakened unrest among the many Asiatic races who had once trembled before it, and some were now scheming to recover lost possessions. Foremost among these were their ancient enemies on the Arab side of the Persian Gulf, to whom soon came intelligence of the Goa blockade, as it did to all dwellers on the shores of the Indian Ocean. Though not at first greatly excited by the news, they discovered after a time that the fortress of Muscat—mainly held by Indian troops from Goa under European officers—was no longer receiving either drafts of men or supplies from that quarter; and only the occasional arrival of a ship all the way from Lisbon kept the garrison from the direst extremity of distress. Encouraged, therefore, by the apparent weakness of the defence, the Arabs of the Oman regions combined to attack and plunder the city; but so slowly did their plans mature, that the blockade of Goa was finished and the Muscat troops relieved by fresh contingents from India long before they were ready to move; nor was it till 1648 that a loosely knit but very large coalition of surrounding tribes besieged the fortress by land and sea during the summer monsoon, when they knew that no help could reach it from Goa. For two months and a half they were held at bay by a very valiant defence, but an Indian native merchant, who had quarrelled with the Portuguese, betrayed weak points in the lines which compelled surrender. By the terms of capitulation the Portuguese pledged themselves to demolish all their minor fortified outposts at Kalyat, Khoryat and other points on the Arabian coast, and to refrain from any further interference with Arab sea trade. But as eastern Arabia did derive some advantage from Portuguese trafficking with the natives, small though these might be, the victors permitted the vanquished to retain their factory in Muscat with a limited armed force, confident that this settlement would always be at

their mercy. A year later, however, the appearance of a Portuguese squadron in the offing, convinced the local Sultan that a recapture of the fort was intended, which instantly provoked a general massacre of every Portuguese subject on shore, European or native. By the old accounts this might have been prevented had the admiral displayed any resolution; but not being an officer of the type of the earlier Portuguese commanders he left his compatriots to their fate and retreated back to Goa, where a court martial sentenced him to death.

In a final effort to reassert in some degree the once powerful position of his country in the Persian Gulf, the Viceroy sent the fleet to Muscat a second time next fair monsoon, under another admiral ordered to spare no effort to recover it. He was so far successful as to compel a large Arab fleet to retire to shelter beneath the guns of the citadel built by Albuquerque to command the harbour, and thus proved once more the superiority of the white man over the brown on the water. But there his success ended, for realizing that the enemy intended to make full use of the defensive strength of the fortress he deemed his squadron insufficient to attack it, and returned to India with his mission unaccomplished. From the fact that he suffered no penalty it seems obvious that he persuaded the Viceroy that nothing more was possible, and Muscat passed to the Arab races by whom it has been held ever since. Thus the close of the first half of the seventeenth century saw Portugal's position in the Indian Ocean, as established by Albuquerque with its centre in Hindustan, shorn of the last feather of its two wide wings whose shadow had spread thence east and west over the Asiatic seaboard for 3000 miles; Ormuz having already been taken by the Persians with British help and Malacca by men bred on the shores of the Zuider Zee.

The loss of the two Persian Gulf fortresses of Ormuz and Muscat has a peculiar historical interest of its own, for of all the points on the shores of the Indian Ocean where the planting of a European flag had brought the benefits of a strong civilized rule these two were the first to revert to permanent Asiatic control, with its attendant tyranny, barbarism and slavery. That the Dutch might have occupied both had they so desired

seems probable, but they decided that their own policy could best be furthered by leaving them in native possession. The trade on the Muscat side had never amounted to much at the best, and the Portuguese hold on the city had been as much prompted by a desire to deny its fine strategic harbour to their Arab enemies as by anything else. But as the Arabs were always too much afraid of the Dutch to molest them, the Dutch, for their part, saw no good naval or commercial reason for seizing this stronghold. Reasons of another kind restrained them from annexing Ormuz, which lay in Persian hands on the other side of the Gulf entrance. So highly did the Shah Abbas and his successors value this possession, from which British ships had helped them to expel the Portuguese, that the island was virtually a hostage which the Dutch fleet could seize at any time if their Company was denied commercial advantages at the Ispahan Court. With shrewd judgment the directors let it stand at that, and established their agency for a newly opened trade in Persian silks at Bunder Abbas or Gombroon, which stands on the mainland exactly opposite Ormuz. From the day when they ceased to be under European rule the degradation of Ormuz and Muscat began. The former has long since sunk to a wretched fishing village surrounding an immense deserted citadel, and the latter to a warren of dilapidated houses with a small trade in dates and dried fish, though for an interval it enjoyed a prosperity as a great slave market of the worst description.

To the Portuguese only patches of the coasts of Hindustan and Ceylon now remained of their former territories on the margin of the Indian Ocean, but for a space the turn of international events in Europe seemed to offer a possibility that farther shrinkage might be averted. In 1652 the long series of desperately contested struggles between Britain and Holland of the later seventeenth century broke out; which in their cumulative effect diverted the whole course of Indian Ocean history by shattering Dutch sea power. When the announcement of a state of hostilities between the mother countries reached the East a year later, the employees of the Dutch and English Companies in those distant regions stood towards each

other as adversaries in war on a perfectly legal footing, both having the right by their charters to attack declared enemies of their country. This of course meant that in the Indian Ocean the Dutch had two flags to meet instead of one, and in aggregate numbers of ships the odds were in favour of their opponents. By this change in the situation the position of the Portuguese was naturally much improved, on paper at least, and their hopes of revenge rose accordingly.

Fortunately, however, for the Dutch, the Anglo-Portuguese comradeship in arms was of the loosest description, and suffered in an almost exaggerated degree from the drawbacks inevitably attaching to alliances between partners whose ultimate aims are independent. Each had their own policy, and no proper understanding of the true principles of war induced them to look beyond it for a moment. The immediate object of the Portuguese was to recover what they had lost; the immediate object of the British to retain what they held; but it never seems to have occurred to either that the first step towards both ends should have been a concentration of all their ships to defeat the main Dutch fleet, after which they could act separately if they pleased. The Portuguese vessels consequently remained inside their strongly defended base at Goa, undecided on any plan of action; while the British lay at their anchorages on the coast of Surat—which had no sea defences of any kind—and while waiting for something to happen went on bargaining for pepper. To this futile inactivity the conduct of their adversaries offered a marked contrast. The Dutch Company had a definitely positive policy, knowing not only what they wanted but what they should do to get it. Aiming at an absolute monopoly of the sea trade of the East by controlling its outflow from every port on the Indian Ocean, a total expulsion of the British and Portuguese flags was their first necessity. After that, a Dutch East India Company's rule of Hindustan would become a possibility of the future. The authors of this policy realized of course that as a last sanction everything was dependent on Dutch victory in the home waters; but they were confident that van Tromp would drive the English off the seas of Europe while Goens, their admiral in the

East, drove them off the seas of Asia. Forthwith the Dutch Company's fleet sailed from Batavia to search out the enemy.

No records seem to be in existence now to show whether the Dutch commander was aware of the scattered disposition of the allies, which gave him such an opportunity for striking at them in detail, but with the slow spread of intelligence in those days it seems unlikely. If he gave them credit for proper measures, he probably expected to meet their combined fleets on his arrival on the Malabar coast somewhere not far from Goa; but no such demonstration of force appeared, and as it was very rightly foreign to his intentions to chance weakening his fleet by engaging strong fortifications before the enemies' sea power had been broken, he passed Goa by and sailed on up the western side of India. In this he undoubtedly took risks of a kind; for whether he knew that the Portuguese fleet was inside the harbour or not, the fact remained that its presence there was always a possibility, and when he was anywhere to the northward of this base he left the Dutch possessions uncovered against the danger of a blow from the Portuguese headquarters, which indeed was actually delivered in an irrelative fashion. But an admiral in search of an enemy is bound to take such risks sometimes, as history has amply proved, and in persisting to hunt for hostile fleets where there was a chance of finding them in accessible situations he followed the basic law of sea strategy till he met with his fit reward. Arriving on the coast of Surat he encountered and defeated the British Company's forces in an engagement which the countrymen of the vanquished can recall with little pride; for though some of the captains behaved gallantly, others showed no stomach for the fight, and the Dutch success was quite as much due to better men as to more powerfully armed ships.

For a brief interval nothing then in the eastern situation stood in the way of wholesale Dutch conquests on the shores of the Indian Ocean, for with the British thrust out only the Portuguese remained to be engaged, whose maritime strength single-handed had long been utterly inadequate to face them. If only the eastern situation had counted therefore no man can say what the future course of Indian history might have been.

Certain it is that the existence of the British East India Company—from which the British Empire in India eventually took its rise—would have been ended there and then. Very fortunately for the Company, however, the western situation counted for even more as a factor in shaping the ultimate destinies of the rival white nations in the orient, and in the West the hopes of the Dutchmen had been shattered by Blake, Monk and Deane in the terrific struggles of the North Sea and English Channel. Forced by these disasters to submit to the British conditions for peace, the government of the United Provinces found itself compelled not only to recognize the full rights of the London Company in the East, but to pay its shareholders a handsome compensation for past injuries at the Dutch Company's hands, including the atrocities in Amboina a whole generation earlier. This brought to nothing the fruits of the Dutch victory at Surat; where their efforts for a general dominion in the East reached their high-water mark. Thenceforward a Dutch Empire of Hindustan became a vanished dream and a British Empire of Hindustan a potentiality, though nothing was further from the minds of the London Company at the time.

When intelligence of the Dutch defeats and the terms of peace reached Batavia about a year later, it naturally fell as a great blow, which placed a limit on their indefinite expansion and destroyed all hope of a monopoly unless the day should ever come when Dutch sea power should again assert a superiority over British in European seas. It was impossible to ignore the treaty in the fashion of treaties between Holland and Portugal. British fleets could now cut off the arrival of the Company's great convoys at the home end of the voyage, or prevent the departure of others outward bound. But nothing in the terms of peace prevented them from continuing hostilities against the Portuguese, especially as the short-lived and ill-fated anti-Dutch alliance had been terminated as far as the English were concerned by the peace itself. On the Portuguese, therefore, their full weight now fell with disastrous results. Mercantile prosperity under the flag of Portugal was already practically extinct; and a considerable increase in the



military forces of the Company since the periods of the blockades twelve to twenty years before, now enabled the Dutch to carry the war ashore, where cities, settlements and trading posts were ruthlessly seized one after another till only a few commercially ruined fortresses and factories remained in Portuguese possession.

If the Dutch had wanted any pretext to lend this extended aggression a semblance of political justification—which may be doubted—the Portuguese themselves had to some extent provided it by striking one solitary blow on the offensive while the alliance with the English Company was still existing. At the time when the Dutch ships were watching the coast of Surat, after defeating the English, the Viceroy took advantage of the temporarily clear route to Ceylon to despatch a raiding squadron from Goa against the fortified Dutch settlement at Galle. But, though the Dutch fleet off Surat had no knowledge of this move till it was too late to intercept it, the expedition effected nothing beyond stopping the Galle trade for a few months, through the reluctance of the Portuguese admiral to risk disembarkations or bombardments while there was a possibility that the enemy might run south from Surat and catch him at a disadvantage. Even if he had destroyed Galle altogether, however, the general situation would not have been materially improved for the allies so long as the main Dutch fleet dominated all sea approaches to India; and in the end the incident merely fired the Dutch with an ambition for wholesale conquests on the land as well as the sea at Portuguese expense, which was a new line of objective. Not long afterwards, disappointment at being baulked of the fruits of their victory over the English intensified this spirit of reprisal against the London Company's late allies.

On the return therefore of the winter monsoon—the favourable season for naval operations on the west coasts of India and Ceylon—they initiated a series of annual attacks on the Portuguese possessions on that side, lasting over four years. Beginning at Colombo, a strong fleet in conjunction with a body of troops captured all the Portuguese defended points in Ceylon one after the other—the ships preventing the

arrival of any help from Goa, while the troops attacked the small isolated garrisons—and by 1658 had swept their adversaries out of the island altogether, after an occupation of 141 years. For a certain period Ceylon now belonged to the Dutch entirely, through the strategic causes whereby it has always fallen under any flag which for the time may have asserted a stable ascendancy in the Indian Ocean since the days of the first arrival of the white man in the East. With Ceylon conquered, the Dutch struck next at the south-western shores of India, the scene of that first arrival, and of the earliest European connection with Asia in the Christian era. Quilon, Cochin, Calicut, Cannanore—all names associated with the imperishable fame of Vasco da Gama, Pedro Cabral, Francisco Almeida and many others of their valiant countrymen—fell in succession beneath the Dutchmen's guns in two seasons of attack. By the year 1660—fifty-eight after the founding of the Dutch East India Company—its admirals had not only whipped the Portuguese flag off the water on that side of the world, but stripped the maritime empire founded by the admirals of King Manoel “the Fortunate” of every holding on shore left after the English and Arabs had cleared their Persian Gulf positions, except the defunct seaports of Goa and Diu and a few smaller scattered posts of which the fishing village on the inner side of an island close to the coast, known as Bombay, was one. Goa and Diu, though dead to trade under the Portuguese, could have been resuscitated by the Dutch and were worth the effort of capture; but the Dutch stayed their conquests at Cannanore and left the Portuguese cities to the northward unattacked for significant reasons, which can best be examined in dealing with the Dutch period of general ascendancy on a later page.

Thus the star of Portugal had finally set over the waves of the Indian Ocean five generations after rising. That period had witnessed the transfer of the rule of this great waterspace from the brown men who lived on its shores to white men arriving from a very distant continent, as a direct result of the latter's superior aptitude for sea enterprise. So revolutionary a change must always stand by itself as a landmark in history;

for not only was it the germ of the present close intercourse between East and West, but the subversion of the authority of a whole branch of mankind over an immense area to make way for the authority of another. Many changes have occurred in the Indian Ocean since then, but all these were merely sub-racial and had their origin in the rivalry of white man with white and not white with brown. But all reached completion through the operation of the same law of the survival of the fittest, as the great change which preceded them; and from first to last the fittest here were those who could best build and use a ship as an instrument of oceanic war. The initial step in the process of elimination had removed the Asiatic to make way for the European. Then followed the sifting out of the Europeans themselves; and when that ordeal commenced the next to go were none other than the Portuguese, who introduced the whole series of contests by challenging the Asiatics, and proved the victors in the first stage.

As is often the case with the eclipse of a period of strenuous national achievement, the close of the Portuguese maritime dominion in the East was not without a certain element of tragedy; for though marred by many gross defects towards the end, it began with a display of fortitude, valour and sagacity that any nation might recall with entirely legitimate pride. But a certain justice attended it nevertheless, as in the downfall of all holders of a monopoly which they abuse. King Manoel's admirals forcibly dispossessed the Arabs of any share in the trade of the East because the Arabs for their part tried by force to keep the whole of this trade in their own hands. And then the Dutch dispossessed the Portuguese for the same reason. In time the turn of the Dutch also came to go under for similar tendencies, but a great era of prosperity awaited them first.

## The EFFECT of the ANGLO-DUTCH WARS of the SEVENTEENTH CENTURY on INDIAN OCEAN DEVELOPMENTS

**T**HE thirty years of acute antagonism between the Dutch and Portuguese on the shores of Asia, which ended with the Dutch conquests of Ceylon and the southern Malabar seaports, were fruitful not only in great political changes in the east, but in the development of the material instrument whereby these changes were forcibly effected, that is to say, the deep-water sailing ship. Increasing knowledge of naval architecture arose from increased experience in navigation and war, and tended towards specialisation of model; whereby new ships ceased to embody the compromise of purpose characteristic of the old, in which an attempt was made to meet the requirements of both peace and war in one hull. A new practice began to spring up, by which in a progressive degree every keel laid down was completed for launching with either the fighting or the trading object primarily in view; and the reserve buoyancy of the design was devoted to the carriage of additional guns, or to freight accommodation, as the case might be. In the middle ages the only specially built fighting ships were the galleys, which were neither capable of weathering a true oceanic gale nor of mounting a broadside battery; but the large sailing ship could be built to do both if the exigencies of the advancing science of war demanded it, and thus the ocean-going ship-of-war came into existence.

At first her difference from the ocean-going merchantman was not pronounced, as the latter continued to be armed for self-defence through a long succeeding period, on a scale only secondary to that of the true fighter. Many of the Dutch Company's larger ships were in fact included in the battle fleets of the Van Tromps and De Ruyter. But the discrepancy in weight of battery went further and further with the passage of time, and although in the seventeenth century nothing but the true ship-of-the-line had any terrors for the 50-gun East Indiaman, by the middle of the eighteenth even the lightly armed frigate could hold up the biggest merchantman afloat.

With changes in naval architecture went changes in the organisation of the crews; but in that respect efficiency called for unification instead of diversity, and while the number of types of ships was being increased, the number of separate branches in the manning arrangements of a fleet was being reduced. In the pioneer days of Vasco da Gama and Albuquerque the complement of a Portuguese vessel on service in the Indian Ocean comprised three distinct elements. First came the seamen proper, who worked the ship under the immediate orders of the professional sea officer who navigated and handled her. In action with an enemy's ship—or if engaging a shore position under weigh—they manœuvred their own vessel and were all on deck or aloft. In storming a shore position they manned the boats carrying the assaulting forces till the land was reached, and then carried the scaling ladders and incendiary appliances. As body armour hampered their activity, they went into action afloat or ashore semi-naked, and suffered from arrows and all kinds of other missiles that left their armoured comrades unscathed. Next came the gunners, who manned the armament of the ship herself under an officer known as the Constable of the Artillery. These did all the fighting outside close quarters, but they were seldom disembarked, and when a position on land was to be stormed covered the advance of the boats by fire from the ships. Thirdly came the men-at-arms, trained to the use of manual weapons only, who were simply infantry soldiers serving at sea under their own officers. In the gunnery stages of an action these were usually kept well below to minimise casualties; but when the close-quarter stages were reached afloat or ashore, the conflict passed entirely into their hands and they were armed and armoured accordingly. The officers of the three branches interchanged duties much more readily than the men; and in the Portuguese navy—as in all others of the sixteenth century—the supreme command of the ship or the fleet was sometimes in the hands of a sea officer with experience in land warfare, such as Diaz or Da Gama, and sometimes in those of a land officer with an acquired knowledge of practical seamanship, such as Albuquerque or Almeida.

Disproportionately heavy losses among the expert seamen—who could not be replaced abroad—led to the first simplification in the organisation of the Portuguese by amalgamating the seamen and gunners as one branch, the latter having been found to sustain on an average the lowest ratio of casualties. The men-at-arms remained separate, however, for a considerable further period. But in the case of the Dutch and English Companies all three branches were merged from the beginning, and the seamen were not only trained to serve the guns but to use manual weapons as well, while every officer combined combatant duties with a professional knowledge of navigation, so that as occasion required he could con the ship, drill the guns' crews or lead the boarders. Troops were often carried as passengers when attacks on land positions were projected, but these troops were in no sense substitutes for any portion of the regular manning of the fleet, nor was it usual to embark them while the enemy's fleet remained a source of danger, as by unavoidably overcrowding their own ships they impaired their fighting efficiency.

It was under these advancing conditions of naval organisation, both in regard to the vessels and the men, that the Dutch conducted their principal maritime operations in the wars of the seventeenth century; and when they began a regular policy of blockading the chief commercial centres of the Portuguese in the east in 1630, their power on that side of the globe had already risen above that of any existing rival. Before receiving the check which indirectly but profoundly altered the whole subsequent course of history in the east it was destined to rise higher still; for the general political conditions of the world in the second quarter of the seventeenth century were such that no real barrier had yet appeared to prevent the Dutch from acquiring as complete a monopoly of eastern sea trade as that held previously by the Portuguese. Nor did the possibility of a check ever enter at that time into the calculations of the Netherlands Company. So confident indeed were they of their ultimate power to establish a complete dominion over the Indian Ocean that at one critical stage in European politics, when the security of their homeland was

menaced by continental armies, the project was actually mooted of transferring the national seat of government from Holland to Java. The era of Dutch pre-eminence in the east, therefore, may be said to have commenced before 1625. It lasted for about ninety years—which was rather less than that of the Portuguese—and may be roughly divided into three periods of growth, maturity and decline. First came about thirty years of steadily expanding power and wealth; next some forty years of successfully maintained precedence in trade, without further extension of territory; and lastly, twenty of decreasing lead in eastern affairs, at the end of which the British had passed into the premier position in the Indian Ocean.

During the first of these three stages the Dutch Company tolerated no rival flag beyond the Cape of Good Hope except the British; and even that concession was only due to the political expediency of remaining on good terms with the British nation in the unsettled condition of Europe, though they were then feeble at sea. Holding such a position in the east, the Dutch merchants controlled not only the entire trade of the Malay Islands except a very small part, but a constantly enlarging proportion of the trade of the Asiatic mainland also, and with all this in their hands were able to regulate the rationing of the whole of Europe, except the British Isles, in the produce of these distant lands. Save only in north-western India the Dutch ships met the eye in every harbour or anchorage where they permitted the brown man to transact commercial business with the white; and in the places where they chose that no such dealings should take place—as, for example, in the harbours of the Portuguese—the ships remained very much in evidence as the material appliances whereby the prohibition was enforced. All through these twenty-five years of eastern history the Dutch ensign feared no strange sail on the horizon, but every strange sail feared the Dutch ensign between the Cape of Good Hope and the China Sea, unless herself under the joint crosses of St Andrew and St George. Dutch commercial enterprise on that side of the world dwarfed all competition, and to the seaboard populations of Asia the Hollander superseded the Portuguese as the living proof of

European power. At the time of the outbreak of the first Anglo-Dutch war the fleets of the great Dutch organisation counted their ships by the hundred, while those of the London combine were not yet to be counted by the score, and those under the flag of Portugal were scarcely any longer to be seen.

Such was the state of affairs in the Indian Ocean when the seventeenth century had run half its course, and nothing then on the political horizon suggested that Holland should not obtain in time a dictatorship over the whole of its area, as complete as that held formerly by Portugal. But in point of fact a very far-reaching change in the international balance of maritime power was at hand, and only two years later Cromwell challenged the naval supremacy held for a generation by the Dutch. Through the issue of the stubbornly contested battles which then took place within sight of the cliffs of Sussex and Kent, all possibility of a Dutch monopoly of eastern trade based on an assured command of the Indian Ocean vanished; whereby the whole future history of the intercourse between east and west was materially affected. It is true that Dutch territorial expansion on the shores of the Indian Ocean did not at once reach finality, for the conquest of the Portuguese settlements in southern Hindustan followed immediately after. But if the Dutch had gained the upper hand over the British in Europe, there can be little doubt that this conquest would have been carried right up the Indian coast, instead of halting where it did. Indirectly, therefore, the limits of the Dutch possessions, in western India at least, were established by the outcome of this vitally important conflict in western waters, and though their sea-borne trade continued to increase for another generation, the spread of the Dutch Company's property on the land was brought to an end when they turned the Portuguese out of Cannanore.

But the eastern incidence of this war of Cromwell's went far beyond its effects on the Dutch, and indirectly produced a complex situation in the Indian Ocean, lasting till the middle of the succeeding century which was notably different in its main aspects from the situations before and after. The first



contact of east and west existed under the well-established command of the Indian Ocean held by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century; and from the middle of the eighteenth to the present day an equally effective control has been held by the British. But between the two came an interregnum in which nobody exercised a general authority over this great area, though the Dutch were far ahead of any rivals in the extent to which they sailed it. This absence of any supremely powerful flag was caused, firstly, by the preventive effects of Cromwell's maritime policy on Dutch ambitions to succeed to the place vacated by Portugal's downfall; and secondly, by the absence of any such ambitions on the part of the British themselves for the time. As a consequence, all through this period the history of the Indian Ocean loses its previous comparative simplicity and is split up into several disconnected lines of evolution running concurrently; each requiring to be followed separately for a clear understanding of its development, in which process the strict chronological order of events over the whole region has to be set aside. Viewed as a whole the maritime aspects of this stage seem very intricate and even chaotic, but when scrutinised with care and a regard to proportion, the fact emerges that in all the cross currents of a confused general stream, the industrious rivalry of the Dutch and English Companies, though often obscured by side eddies, remained the principal movement; for even if the English were not fired by any aspiration to fill the vacant rôle of dominant sea power in the east, their tenacity in the pursuit of business continued undiminished.

Next in importance to the Anglo-Dutch competition certain other manifestations of maritime activity in varying forms merit attention, as exercising an appreciable though transient effect on the general state of affairs in eastern waters. Thus, for example, we find that several oriental rulers acquired a sufficient degree of naval power to add quite considerably to the tale of sea conflicts in this era of unrest, not only by engaging Europeans but by falling on each other. Arabs attacked Portuguese and Mahrattas. Mahrattas and Moguls attacked British. Malays attacked Dutch. Another point of interest



**DUTCH EAST INDIAMAN OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY IN HURRICANE LATITUDES**

For 80 years the premier type of ship in the Indian Ocean



was the temporary revival of the Portuguese coasting trade through the abatement of the Dutch menace. And a third was the general appearance of piracy in both its western and eastern forms—that is to say oceanic and coastal—to the serious detriment of all peaceable sea industry whether in native or European hands. This noxious development arose simply because neither Dutch, British, Portuguese nor Asiatics had a sufficient interest in the security of the Indian Ocean as a whole to suppress piracy systematically, and each remained content to protect their own shipping by measures devoid of any co-ordination or combined effort.

To trace out these separate factors in the general conditions prevailing in eastern waters during the period now under survey in their proper order of importance, therefore, it is necessary to deal first with the long-sustained conflict of interests between the Dutch and English Companies through its phases following on the earliest of the Anglo-Dutch wars. Before that war the general strategic position of the Hollanders on the Asiatic side of the globe offered many points of similarity to the position held by the Portuguese all through the sixteenth century, though with a different compass direction of outlook. Both arrived in the Indian Ocean by the same route from the westward, but on first entering it the Portuguese had turned north, and after taking up a central position on its northern side, had deployed thence east and west along its shores, with their right wing curving southward through the Malay Islands. The Dutch, on the other hand, had steered across it eastward, and having taken up a central position on its eastern side, had deployed thence north and south with their left wing curving westward along the mainland. Both had the Indian Ocean at their backs in the initial stage of their respective great enterprises, and both looked landward strategically so long as no danger threatened from their oceanic rear. But when that rear became insecure their strategic front was inverted; and instead of facing away from the water they were compelled to turn and face towards it, though their general commercial frontier or line of contact with the Asiatic races remained the same. In the case of the Portuguese this turn about became necessary

when the Dutch and English arrived in the east on the downfall of Spanish naval supremacy; and in the case of the Dutch it followed as a consequence of the first war with Britain. The close of that maritime campaign still left the Netherlands Company with a great preponderance of force east of the Cape of Good Hope; but in Europe the British had the upper hand, with the result that the home end of the only line of touch between the Dutch East Indies and the mother country lay for the time under a suspended sword. Hence it was that although by this time the Dutch Company were maintaining squadrons of regular fighting ships in the Malay Archipelago, Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf, while the London Company had only armed merchantmen, the former were always obliged to regulate their political activities by the knowledge that in the event of trouble with the English in eastern regions, they themselves could hope for no reinforcements from home while their rivals might be reinforced decisively.

Among its other effects this consideration restrained them from carrying their conquests of the Portuguese possessions in south-western India beyond the point at which they might be regarded as approaching imprudently near to the general region which the English Company had made its particular sphere of interest; and it was at Cannanore that these conquests were accordingly brought to an end. Vastly important consequences resulted not long after, for not very far to the northward of Cannanore lay Bombay Island in the hands of the Portuguese; which forms the outer enclosing side of the most spacious and best sheltered harbour in all Hindustan, unhampered by any bar, and open to the arrival or departure of sailing vessels even when the monsoon closes all the ports to the southward. The commercial and strategic potentialities of this fine anchorage had long been recognised by both the rival Companies; but though the island was only held by a few Portuguese soldiers quartered in a defence work overlooking the village, which then stood on the site of the present enormous city, neither had seized it; the English being held back by the obligations of their general understanding with the Portuguese in the east, and the Dutch by having their hands full before the war with

Britain, in consolidating their position elsewhere, and after that war by their disinclination to risk British protests. In 1662, however, this valuable prize—greatly appreciated in the commercial world, though little sought after by politicians—passed under the British Crown by the arrangements for the marriage of a Braganza princess to King Charles II. In reluctantly surrendering it, the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa complained to his sovereign that the foremost strategic position in India was being thrown away; but so little did Charles realise its true value that in 1668 he handed it over to the English Company, by whom it was afterwards made the head-quarters of their eastern administration, in place of Surat.

Three years after the transfer of Bombay to the British Crown the second Anglo-Dutch war broke out, and again the moral effect on the Dutch of their defeat in the first war is traceable in their proceedings. Though still stronger in the Indian Ocean than the enemy, their Company now recognised that the ultimate issue in the east depended on success in the central theatre of operations, which lay, of course, in Europe. Many of their best ships were attached, therefore, as reinforcements to the State fleets in the North Sea—in accordance with a provision to that effect in their Charter—and by this redistribution they were so much reduced in power in eastern seas that their activities on the offensive were confined to the capture of a few small ships and a demonstration outside Bombay. As a large proportion of the British Company's ships were also serving in the war at home Bombay had no naval protection, and if the Dutch had been aware that that island—still a Crown possession at the time—was so weakly garrisoned that the Governor had appealed to the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa for help which was refused, they might perhaps have raided it. But the squadron which made the threat was too small to risk a reverse; and the Dutch knew that if victory attended their efforts on the coasts of England, attacks on Bombay and other ports under the London Company's flag in India might all be taken in hand in due course under an ultimate certainty of success. So Bombay was only threatened prospectively; and as neither the English Company nor the

Crown officer governing the island had sufficient naval force to attack the Dutch colonies on their part, no serious echo of the tremendous struggle in home waters disturbed the serenity of the Indian Ocean.

The Dutch Company lost heavily in ships by this second war through such incidents as "Holmes's bonfire," the popular appellation bestowed on the exploit of that enterprising commander in forcing his way with a few cruisers into a Dutch roadstead and burning 160 vessels lying there in wait for the tide to reach the safety of the inner ports; including the whole annual convoy from the Indian Ocean, which had just arrived in sight of the dykes of Holland richly laden, after their long voyage of nine months. But the wealth of the Company pulled it through the crisis, and the terms of peace left the situation in eastern waters much as it was before, except that the great unexplored island continent of Australia—discovered though not occupied by the Dutch—was ceded to Britain. Important consequences were to result from this four or five generations afterwards; but at the time it meant little, for though Australia flanked the southern extremity of the general Dutch line of front in the east, it offered no potential advantages as a base for an enemy, because at that early stage in the science of deep-water navigation no vessel cared to approach it or leave it except by the Malay Archipelago. Thus in practice Australia was only accessible by a route passing for a thousand miles or more right through the region of the Dutch Indies, where their greatest strength was permanently concentrated and where only Dutch seamen were acquainted with the intricate pilotage. They had little to fear, therefore, from a British Australia till the introduction of great circle sailing long afterwards, by which ships followed the direct oceanic track through the "roaring forties" of southern latitude.

Seven prosperous years for both Companies followed the conclusion of the second war between the mother countries, during which period the Hollanders reached the high-water mark of their prosperity. In spite of war losses some 200 vessels took their orders from the governing council of the Dutch association, inclusive of about 50 regular ships-of-war,

and the clear profits of the shareholders rose to 40 per cent. of their capital. Then Louis XIV of France dragged Britain into a third conflict with the Netherlands in the hope of destroying Dutch independence finally. But though he contrived to gain the assent of Charles II to his schemes this third war was never popular with the British people, who, even if they had little enough cause to love the Dutch, did at least regard them as nearer akin in race and religion than the subjects of the "Grand Monarque." In the immediately previous war France had fought on Holland's side, but now that she was allied with Britain instead, the naval defeat of the Dutch was a foregone conclusion in spite of a remarkably gallant defence. And when at length they were thrust off the sea by weight of hostile numbers their British enemies saw no good reason for not concluding a separate peace and leaving Louis to continue operations by himself if he chose. By prolonging the war single-handed the French King suffered misfortunes on land and sea. On land the Dutch maintained a victorious defence, and in the Indian Ocean a French squadron of six ships-of-the-line specially sent out under Delahaye to attack the Dutch in Ceylon met with utter disaster in spite of some initial successes. These were the first true battleships ever to round the Cape of Good Hope, and thus the expedition, though unsuccessful, indicated a step in the rising importance of the Indian Ocean in European politics. Delahaye captured the Dutch settlements at Trincomalee in Ceylon, and San Thomé on the Bay of Bengal, without much difficulty. But he lost so many vessels by various forms of disaster that he was forced to return home with only one left, whereupon a Dutch squadron retook both places.

Thus the Netherlands Company had the best of such fighting as occurred in the Indian Ocean in their encounter with the French in this war as with their other enemies in the wars which preceded it; and, as the terms of peace once again left them with all their Asiatic possessions intact, none of the prodigious struggles in Europe made any direct or immediate alteration in the political chart of the eastern hemisphere, where for some forty years longer the Dutch retained their



commercial pre-eminence. But cumulatively the indirect effect of these great maritime conflicts of the seventeenth century on the subsequent history of southern Asia was most pronounced, for by exhausting Holland in ships and money they raised the British to the position of first maritime nation in the world, with all the power in distant regions which that implied: a position stabilised by sea victories over the French before the century drew to its close. An effective barrier was thus imposed on further Dutch ambitions in eastern seas, and their Company was compelled to remain content thereafter with the great situation to which it had risen; for the interests of England in preventing the growth of Dutch power in that part of the world was a source of protection to Portugal's trade and colonies as well as those of the British themselves; and, just as the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean had been secured in the sixteenth century by the policy of Spain in keeping naval rivals in check, so now what remained of their former holdings was again secured by a similar policy on the part of Britain in the latter part of the seventeenth.

For about forty years after the third Anglo-Dutch war, however, the Netherlands Company succeeded in retaining the premier place in eastern trade by sheer expenditure of effort, and still employed more ships than their British rivals. But the strain was too much for a small country to sustain indefinitely, just as it had been for the Portuguese before them, and by the first decade of the eighteenth century their finances were becoming embarrassed and their revenue more dependent on the taxation of their colonies than their earnings from trade. Moreover, while Dutch colonial extension had been coming to an end that of their English rivals had been in truth only just beginning, through the founding of trading stations all round the coasts of Hindustan, in direct opposition to the original policy of their Board though ultimately with its approval. Thus Madras grew up round a fort built on a site obtained from a local Rajah after various shifts and trials at other points on the eastern side of the peninsula, and in 1690 the acquisition of another site about eighty miles up the river Hooghly in Bengal permitted of the erection of Fort William,

round which sprang up Calcutta. In this way the British flag was coming to the front as an emblem of territorial sovereignty in the east, while the political power of the Dutch was relatively on the wane; and the opening of the eighteenth century marked the closing chapter of the history of Dutch ascendancy beyond the Cape of Good Hope.

By holding a foremost position in the Indian Ocean for three generations, however, the Dutch could quite justly lay claim to an even more remarkable achievement than that of the countrymen of Vasco da Gama, for it was held under no covering protection from a great Power such as Portugal enjoyed under the Spanish domination of all Atlantic routes. In fortitude, endurance and contempt of danger there was nothing to choose between the early explorers of the two countries, for though the work of the pioneers who sailed from the Tagus bore much the greater fruit, the efforts of those who sailed from the estuaries of Holland to search for northern passages to India demanded fully equal sacrifice. In the spheres of conquest the Portuguese produced the greater leaders but the Dutch the better men in the mass; and the quality of its population in the mass rather than the brilliancy of individual figures fixes the place of a nation in the end relatively to others of the same size. No superiority in wealth or numbers enabled the Hollanders to oust the Portuguese from the foremost place in the trade of the east, still less any advantages in the geographical situation of the mother country. In the latter respect Lisbon had a better position than any seaport in Europe except Cadiz. The success of the Dutch, therefore, can only be attributed to the superior sea aptitude of Nordic blood, against which only another northern nation could hold its own with anything like numerical equality of forces.

In any comparison, however, of the war histories in the east of the Dutch and of their European rivals, it should always be borne in mind that where Asiatic enemies had to be faced the Dutch capital and principal areas of commerce were much more easily protected than those of the British, French or Portuguese. Whenever the active hostility of the brown man

was encountered in his contact with the white the ultimate security of the latter lay on salt water; and as the headquarters and chief possessions of the British and Portuguese in the east were all continental in situation, while those of the Dutch were all insular, the pronounced naval superiority of Europeans over Asiatics conferred defensive advantages on the Hollanders in a far greater degree than on anyone else. Goa and Diu, Surat and Bombay, were each more or less exposed to land attack by neighbours who were formidable on the land, such as the Mahrattas and Moguls. But Batavia, though often enough attacked on its land side by Javanese in numbers, was inaccessible to any of the great military races of Asia except by crossing the sea; and though the Dutch, like the British and Portuguese, had many scattered footings on the coasts of India, these were merely outposts of their general position in the east. The present position of the British in the east is secured by military strength supplementing naval supremacy, on a scale which would be impossible to Portugal or Holland. For want of such strength the Portuguese constantly lost ground under native attack even after the Dutch had ceased to molest them. But as no great efforts on the land were ever necessary to safeguard the Dutch colonies their lack of a large army has not prevented their eastern possessions from remaining intact, except when approached by a European adversary, and their only purely military problems have been concerned with the suppression of internal risings.

As noted on a previous page, developments of other kinds were running their course in the Indian Ocean during the same era; and of these the next in order of importance to the progress of Anglo-Dutch competition was the rise of an Asiatic State on its western side to a certain point of temporary naval importance, as a consequence of the Dutch overthrow of Portuguese sea power. When the disappearance of the fleet once sailing the Indian Ocean under the flag of Portugal enabled the coastal tribes of south-eastern Arabia to expel the Portuguese finally from Muscat in 1650, the ancient maritime position of which the latter had deprived their forefathers was re-asserted by the victors, and a line of Sultans or Seyids rose

as rulers, with seafaring ambitions—chiefly of a warlike description—by whom a fleet of respectable strength was gradually founded. The backbone of this force eventually comprised five large square-rigged vessels of European model—armed in part from the ordnance captured in the Portuguese forts at Muscat—to which were added a numerous flotilla of native craft useful for operations in light winds or shallow waters. With this instrument in their hands successive Sultans of Muscat maintained an attitude of consistent and active antagonism to the Portuguese, the Persians and the Mahrattas of India. Towards the Portuguese this was merely another flare-up of the chronic enmity between the two which had existed ever since the Calicut massacre of a century and a half earlier, always smouldering even when suppressed by force. Towards the Persians their hostility was excited by a variety of causes, racial and religious, and towards the Mahrattas by their revolt against the Mahomedan rule of the Moguls. With the Dutch and British Companies, however, the Sultans maintained peaceful relations, partly because they feared to incur their enmity, and partly because the Dutch were usually hostile to the Portuguese and the British to the Mahrattas.

As the Persians never had any navy in spite of all their wealth, military power and extent of coastline, the Muscat fleet raided their shores with impunity and devastating effect for fifty years, except round the flourishing port of Bunder Abbas, which enjoyed the moral protection of a large Dutch trading settlement. But the Arabs were faced with a more difficult problem in dealing a blow at the Portuguese either on the land or the water. On the water little or nothing remained under the flag of Portugal since the extermination of Portuguese sea trade by the Dutch, and on the land the Portuguese possessions all lay at some distance from Muscat, besides being well fortified. For twenty years after recovering Muscat, therefore, the Arabs confined their activities to harrying the Persian fishing villages; but by 1670 their fleet had reached a point of expansion sufficient for more serious enterprise, and crossing to north-western India on the tail of the summer monsoon, ran into Diu harbour—once a most important naval

base for the Portuguese—where it sacked the town outside the citadel though unable to capture the citadel itself. Thence it sailed on to Daman, another fortified Portuguese town standing on the east side of the Gulf of Cambaya, which was similarly treated. These proceedings alarmed the Viceroy for the safety of his capital at Goa; but either because Goa was too strongly defended, or because they were already overladen with loot and captives, the Arabs steered homewards after ravaging Daman while the winter monsoon was still in their favour for returning.

Forty-nine years were to elapse before the Portuguese, once all powerful in the Indian Ocean, were able to retaliate for these injuries at the hands of an Asiatic sea enemy, and meanwhile the incident depreciated still further their already lowered prestige in native estimation. This aspect of the matter could hardly pass unnoticed by other Europeans in the east; for though the naval weakness of the Portuguese was not brought about by any martial exploits on the part of the brown man, the fact remained that for the first time since the Turkish attacks on Muscat and Aden four generations before, the sea had been no defence to a European flag against Asiatic enemies. If the Portuguese had still been serious competitors in trade the London Company might have regarded their chastisement by the Arabs with a certain measure of complacency; but they counted for nothing now in the rivalries of the commercial world, and the Anglo-Portuguese amity, which had long been a cardinal factor in eastern politics was necessarily affected to some extent at least by loss of political standing to either. This was appreciated at Muscat, where the Arabs were anxious to avoid incurring British resentment. For the next twenty-five years, therefore, they remained content with harrying the Persians, and when next they descended on the shores of India left the Portuguese carefully alone and devoted all their attention to attacking natives.

Meanwhile the confused general situation prevailing in the Indian Ocean was still further complicated by the revolt of the Hindoos of western India led by the Mahratta chieftain Sivaji against the Mogul Emperor Aurungzeb. This rebellion lasted

for many years, and the Mahrattas—who lived near the sea—equipped a fleet of native types with which they conducted warfare afloat in conjunction with their armies on shore. Though never attempting distant oceanic expeditions, the Mahratta light flotillas harried the Indian seaboard under Moslem rule so effectually that the Moguls were compelled to equip adequate sea forces of their own; and between these native opponents the whole western waters of India were kept in a state of incessant unrest by partisan fighting all through the last quarter of the seventeenth century. In the efforts of each to gain the upper hand both expanded and improved their naval forces to such an extent that both became local factors of some consequence in the general maritime outlook, and even attacked European sea interests when circumstances were in their favour. But whereas, in the case of the Moguls, interference with Europeans only occurred when the Emperors were at formal war with the British or Portuguese, the Mahrattas were little better than pirates, whose sole object was plunder and whose hand was against everybody's, whether Asiatic or European.

Though any detailed account of all the conflicts and skirmishes arising out of these unsettled sea conditions would be out of place in a general survey such as is presented here, it will be readily understood that they were detrimental to trade, and the climax was reached in a dispute between the officials of the London Company and Aurungzeb, in which the Mogul followed the example of his brother Moslem of Muscat in embarking on a sea expedition against a white enemy. For half a century or more the relationship between the British and the Moguls had been cordial in general, and the former had even helped the latter to defend Surat against the Mahrattas. But in 1688 the Company appointed Sir John Child as chief factor, who initiated his term of office by a morally indefensible and diplomatically ill-judged seizure of Mogul trading ships in the Persian Gulf for no other reason than their removal from freight competition. This arbitrary and unjustifiable action provoked Aurungzeb to retaliate by imprisoning the Company's Staff at Surat; never a difficult

proceeding, as they lived unprotected within his own city. From that step, however, he proceeded to the much bolder measure of despatching a fleet of 80 native vessels under his Admiral to attack Bombay; to which island the headquarters of the Company had been transferred from Surat three years before. Such an enterprise dramatically illustrated the magnitude of the change in the eastern seas since a few years previously, when the Moguls had relied on the flag of the Company as a protection for Mahomedans on the water; and with it European naval power in the Indian Ocean fell to the lowest point in its history as compared to the contemporary power of Asiatics. Portugal was still smarting under the humiliation of Arab violence at Daman and Diu when for the moment the British centre of administration in the east was menaced from *seaward* by an Indian armament.

For the moment only, however, and to understand the whole position it is necessary in this instance as in so many others to look beyond the immediate point of conflict. Aurungzeb's expedition against Bombay was merely one of the cases in which a local command of the sea has been temporarily established and utilised under conditions of exceptional opportunity. He was doubtless fully aware that Britain was already at war with France and so hard pressed afloat that it was quite certain that neither the London Company nor the Royal Navy could do anything at the time to assist remote British interests which the forces on the spot might be insufficient to protect. The Company's ships actually in eastern waters were very few, partly on account of the situation in Europe, and partly because the homeward-bound vessels for that year had sailed as usual soon after the autumn change of monsoon; which in itself prevented any relief from reaching Bombay till the spring, even if the progress of the European war allowed naval succour to be sent out. In launching the enterprise, therefore, he had little to fear on the water for some months at least, and as events turned out, for more than a year; for the outward-bound ships which arrived in the spring had necessarily sailed from home long before anything was known in England of the Mogul proceedings, and were not enough to deal with

Aurangzeb's numerous fleet in Bombay harbour. But, contrary to his expectations, the small garrison of Bombay fort made such a gallant defence that at the end of a year's siege the flag was still flying, by which time the prospective arrival of further annual ships from London was not far off. And as the Emperor must have known that intelligence of his attack on Bombay had almost certainly reached London before these last mentioned had started on their voyage, he probably anticipated the appearance of a sufficient force to turn the scales against him, if by any chance the course of the war in Europe had moved in a direction more favourable to the British than that of a year earlier, which in point of fact it had. Some such consideration at any rate seems to have weakened his resolve at this juncture, for when matters had reached the stage in question he abandoned hope of capturing Bombay, and in spite of all his efforts and expenditure agreed to peace, on condition that the Company paid him an indemnity of £15,000. This sum was handed over, for even when deposed from a temporary position of supremacy on the water, Aurungzeb was still powerful in the northern mainland of India, where he could always stop British trade if otherwise unable to enforce compliance with his demands. But the lesson was not lost on the rulers of the east, and after the failure of the greatest native autocrat of the age to reduce Bombay, the British Company was never again subjected to wholesale maritime restraint by an oriental sea force, though constantly troubled in a minor degree by the Mahratta pirates, who became more and more numerous and aggressive as the century drew to its close.

It is rather hard to say whether Aurungzeb entertained any hope of permanently annexing Bombay to his empire or not. As a southern base it offered great advantages for prosecuting sea war against the Mahrattas; and even in British hands the anchorage was often used by the Mogul fleet, which led to more than one engagement between these native belligerents inside the harbour itself. But it was obvious that as long as the English Company could always sooner or later occupy it in stronger force than the Moguls, the permanent acquisition



of the port by the latter remained impracticable, even if it fell temporarily into their hands. Its definite addition to Aurungzeb's realms was dependent on such a collapse of the Company as would follow on a decisive overthrow of British naval power by the French; and though the news of the French victory of Beachy Head probably reached his ears, and may have raised his anticipations for a time, it was not sufficiently final to bring about wholesale consequences of that nature. Probably, therefore, his attack on Bombay was aimed more as an act of retaliation with good prospects of spoil, than as an attempt to add the port to his possessions; and in the temporary absence of any effective sea opposition he hoped to deliver the blow without much trouble. In these respects as in most others, the episode bore a close resemblance to the numerous sea attacks on Portuguese fortresses made by Asiatic fleets in the sixteenth century. In every single instance these occurred when the local Portuguese squadron had been withdrawn or reduced below the proper margin of strength, and in all, except the case of Muscat, a relieving fleet saved the defenders before it was too late; though at the Turkish siege of Diu it was not the fleet itself but the mere false rumour of its approach that sent the assailants into hasty retreat.

The next naval moves in the Indian Ocean, of sufficient importance to deserve notice, came from the Muscat quarter, after four years of general quietude, only broken by the chronic strife of Moslem and Hindoo in the waters of western India. As Mahomedans themselves the Muscat Arabs were in sympathy with the Mogul side, and knowing that neither the British nor anyone else would raise objections to a chastisement of the Mahrattas, took advantage of a weak point in their position. The bulk of the Mahratta sea forces were usually kept operating in a region of which the general centre was the vicinity of Bombay. This covered the Hindoo seaports to the southward of that area against an advance down the coast from the northward by Mogul flotillas, but not against a blue-water enemy approaching from the open ocean to the west or south. From this direction, therefore, the Muscat Arabs delivered a series of forays on certain native towns of Malabar, yielding

considerable loot, which the Mahratta flotillas were too far to the northward to prevent. But though effecting a fairly useful temporary diversion in favour of the Moguls by placing the defenders in a difficult position, these adventures produced no permanent political result; and as the coastal population was forewarned by the first attack, those which came later were less profitable in the way of plunder, and less tempting to undertake in consequence.

Other matters, therefore, fixed the attention of Seif-bin-Sultan, the reigning Seyid of Muscat. Inspired by wide ambitions, this capable autocrat had been scheming for some time to use his ships as instruments of national aggrandisement on a more substantial and permanent scale than was possible by ravaging waterside bazaars in Hindustan, though that indeed afforded better practice for his men than they could get in their usual training ground on the shores of Persia. His eyes were fixed on Portuguese East Africa, a much more distant objective than any so far visited by the Muscat war fleet. Political expediency was all against any repetition of his predecessor's attacks on Daman and Diu; but no such consideration applied to Mombasa and its neighbourhood, where Portuguese authority had sunk so low as to excite the contempt of a large Moslem faction ripe for revolt in favour of a revival of the Islamic rule of earlier generations. Less than a single platoon of European troops backed by a handful of native auxiliaries comprised the whole garrison of that part of the Portuguese possessions which lay to the northward of Mozambique, and not a single ship was stationed there.

Though a fair amount of general sea trade passed out from this region its main attractions to Seif-bin-Sultan were the unlimited opportunities it offered him for exporting African slaves to all the Mahomedan countries accessible from the Indian Ocean. On a minor scale this export business already existed at Mombasa; nor was it anywhere regarded in those days as other than a perfectly legitimate and honest traffic, which on the opposite or Atlantic side of Africa reached such proportions in European hands—in order to supply labour for the colonies in America—as to become a constant subject of

international and diplomatic rivalry. By formal treaty rights with Spain the British held the monopoly of Asiento or slave purveyance to the west during a long period; and the Portuguese would have been only too ready to establish a corresponding business connection between East Africa and the nations of Asia, but Europeans were unwelcome traders at the principal markets of Islam. Moreover, the large armed bands necessary for man-hunting in the interior were not available in the African colonies of Portugal, because the Portuguese themselves were too few for the purpose, and the resident Mahomedans too many to be allowed to carry arms without a risk of rebellion. Under the Portuguese rule, therefore, the slave industry made little headway, though subject to no official disapproval whatever.

It was sufficiently obvious, however, that these obstacles to its expansion would disappear if any considerable portion of that part of East Africa which contained good harbours could be brought into Moslem ownership. Such a change could only be effected by force applied in a region remote from Muscat; but the Portuguese defences were weak, the inhabitants largely Arabic in race and sympathy, and the home waters of the Seyid in no danger even from the Hindoos, whose vessels were unsuitable for anything but coastal operations. Having completed his preparations, therefore, by 1698, Seif despatched a squadron composed of all his larger vessels southward early in the winter monsoon, with orders to attack the Portuguese African littoral 2400 miles distant. As being by far the largest organised oversea descent ever delivered by an Asiatic force against a point under a European flag, this enterprise unquestionably holds a notable place in history, to which only the two Turkish expeditions against Diu in the sixteenth century are in any respect comparable, though these had no more than 1600 miles to cover in starting from Aden. And though no Portuguese fleet stood in the way and all the general circumstances were favourable, it must be admitted that the project was a singularly bold conception for an Oriental ruler, which none of the many great Princes of India, or even the Sultans of the Malay Archipelago, would ever have thought of

attempting, with all the horror of the brown man for deep water. It proved that the oceanic aptitude, which distinguished the Arab alone among all the branches of the brown race and gave him the dominion of the Indian Ocean in the middle ages, was still alive in spite of long suppression.

The expedition was successful in every respect. Mombasa, Kilwa and Pemba were all captured without difficulty, and thus the northern half of the very first European possession ever acquired by armed conquest east of the Cape of Good Hope reverted after 193 years to Asiatic subjection, though Asiatics were quite as much aliens on an east African beach as Portuguese. Here again the enterprise is invested with a special historical interest of its own as the only case in history of a definite curtailment of European sovereignty on the shores of the Indian Ocean by an unaided Asiatic sea attack. Ormuz would never have been taken from the Portuguese by Shah Abbas except with the direct and decisive help of a British squadron. The Turkish sea attacks on Diu ended in failure. Muscat itself and the many Portuguese settlements in India lost to native enemies at a later stage all fell before assaults on the land side. The Arab success in East Africa therefore stood in a category by itself. And as far as the Portuguese were in any position to defend the remainder of their territory—lying to the southward of that portion which they lost now—Seif-bin-Sultan's ships might probably have sailed on and seized the whole coastline. But the Arab force embarked to garrison the conquered lands against tribal risings, or the possible eventuality of Portuguese counter-attacks in the future, was too limited to hold a larger area, and Kilwa was fixed as the extreme point of conquest accordingly.

These acquisitions became oversea colonies governed from Muscat, and an Arab maritime sultanate was thus founded on that side of the Indian Ocean which flourished as one till divided up in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It brought evil days on the indigenous natives of equatorial Africa through the great increase of the slave trade which followed in accordance with the hope of the conquerors. By penetrating far and wide inland the Arab raiding bands in time

almost exterminated the villagers over vast tracts of country, under circumstances of indescribable brutality, before British intervention put a stop to their practices in the reign of Queen Victoria, a century and a half later. Opinions differ as to the effect which this had on the subsequent history of Africa, and it is only possible to affirm with certainty that, as the negro is a very prolific breeder when left in peace, the sub-tropical regions of that continent would have been much more densely populated than they are now if the slave trade had not reached the proportions which it did under Arab sovereignty. On the one hand it may be maintained that a larger population would have facilitated the modern development of these lands under European control; but on the other hand stands the belief of some well-qualified judges that an unlimited increase of the negroid races must always be a serious potential menace to the rest of the old world. If such indeed be the case then perhaps the Arab man-seller, in spite of his atrocious methods, was in reality serving the interests of civilisation in a blind and unconscious fashion. Such speculations, however, open up a field of conjecture foreign to the true subject matter of these pages; and here it is only proper to observe that as a result in the first place of the overthrow of Portuguese sea power by the Dutch, some 600 miles of the African seaboard with an indefinite hinterland passed under Moslem dominion with all which that implied. The displaced administration had been the worst of any under a European flag, but with all its faults it was better than that which came after, in its effects if not in its intentions; and the infliction of an enormous degree of suffering on the natives of the soil was among the other direct consequences of the enforced substitution of an Asiatic for a European rule, defective though the latter happened in many respects to be.

This transfer of territory by sea conquest was the last important event of Indian Ocean history in the seventeenth century, and almost coincided with its close. Nothing perhaps could have proved in more illuminating fashion the extent of Portugal's downfall in the east. In the year 1600 that whole Ocean had been in effect Portuguese territorial water from which the Arabs had been relentlessly expelled. But in the

year 1700 these conditions had become so completely reversed that the blue and white bunting charged with the Braganza heraldry was no longer able to protect Portuguese coasts from Arab sea attack, and thenceforward the Muscat slave dhow went freely about her affairs, crammed to the hatches with human goods. For several generations she passed unhindered, as the disinterested idealism which eventually suppressed the occupation of the slave vendor found no official acceptance anywhere till the Victorian age, when Britain alone among Powers with possessions in the east took active measures against it. As the traffic was entirely in native hands and clashed with no European trade it was the only extensive branch of Indian Ocean commerce to remain quite unaffected by the great wars and political changes which occurred during the eighteenth century in eastern as well as western seas. Moreover, the Arab slaver enjoyed certain special immunities in peace, for alone among the larger sails navigating eastern waters she had no interest for the European pirates infesting them from the end of the seventeenth century.

## XI

### The GENERAL SITUATION in the INDIAN OCEAN DURING the EARLY GEORGIAN PERIOD

**T**HOUGH the eighteenth century was a cycle of great conflicts in Europe from its outset, and proved to be one of the most eventful epochs in the history of the Indian Ocean as time passed on, its early part was marked by a total absence of war on any major scale in eastern waters, which were only disturbed by regional or minor unrest of the sort arising from the enmity between Moslem and Hindoo, and the ravages of piratical adventurers white and brown. It was a period of incessant sea skirmishing, chiefly between Asiatics, but set up no prominent landmarks in eastern nautical history.

As between the representatives of the European nations with possessions or large commercial interests on the Asiatic side of the globe peace remained unbroken for a variety of reasons, till the first half of the century was nearly over. Chief among several contributory causes to this condition of stability stood the anti-French alliance organised to oppose the dangerous aggressiveness of Louis XIV, which included Britain, Holland and Portugal among its partners. This gave a long pause to the formerly incessant strife of white man against white in the east; and other influences tended towards the same result. It happened that these same three had been allied on paper sixty or seventy years before, in joint opposition to Spain; but as the menace of Spanish hostility was not sufficiently threatening to carry this alliance beyond the paper stage in far distant parts of the world it brought no peace to the Indian Ocean, where the officers of the Dutch Company persisted in their sea campaigns against the Portuguese. The new conditions were different, for not only was Louis a real anxiety to the homelands of the allies, and therefore a proportionately cementing influence, but the Hollanders were no longer powerful enough on the water to act in any fashion they pleased, as they had been when Spain was the common enemy. Constant wars had drained away the wealth accumulated while they remained for three generations

in the van of the white man's colonising and maritime enterprise, and their great effort had spent its force. The power to injure Portugal had passed therefore from their hands, and since Portuguese competition no longer interfered with Dutch interests, the wish to injure had passed with the power. As for the Portuguese themselves, they were even less in any position to violate treaties than the Dutch, though their ancient skill with the trident was yet to flicker up once more for a final thrust at an Asiatic sea adversary. Thus the new triple alliance of the Indian Ocean was endangered by no internally disintegrating tendencies like its predecessor; and even if not called into active operation against the general foe, exercised a moderating influence on political rivalry from the mere fact of its established and recognised existence.

For the first nineteen years of the eighteenth century, moreover, no hostilities took place on or across the water between Europeans and Asiatics on any scale comparable to those of the two centuries preceding; not so much because former antagonisms had died out, as because the victors in former conflicts could push success no further without a probability of disaster. Neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch were any longer in a position to engage in wars of conquest against native States; but on the other hand they were not yet so weak as to be unable to defend the territories still in their possession against the sea attack of native enemies, such as Malays or Arabs. These latter, therefore, were disinclined to put the issue to a test, and, seeing no prospect of being able to wrest more coastal territory from the Portuguese after seizing Mombasa, the Seyids of Muscat settled down to make the most of their recently extended domains after their own fashion. It was the same with the Mogul Emperor, whose disputes with the British Company during this particular period led more than once to an internment of their staff at Surat, but whose failure to reduce Bombay had taught him that this island headquarters of theirs stood in a different strategical category. All of which kept schemes of oversea conquest in the background, alike on the part of white man and brown.

Thus the absence of serious disturbances during this phase



of Indian Ocean history was due in part to the political influence of affairs in the west, and in part to a more even balance of maritime power in the east. The turbulent energy which gave rise to the endless conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Asiatic waters had been generated by the consciousness on the part of attackers of naval superiority acquired by a high degree of commercial prosperity. When the trade of Portugal and Holland declined their fleets declined also. And though a similar condition of prosperity in other hands was destined to breed another series of wars in the same general region at a later date, an interval of half a century of comparative mercantile stagnation had first to intervene. During that period of slackened industry, and partially arrested development in the intercourse of east and west, the flag of Britain alone covered an increasing oceanic tonnage, and even there the advance was irregular and slow. But the movement towards the unrivalled position eventually reached was due, nevertheless, to the urge of forces making progress as certain in the end as may be predicted of any humanly managed process of evolution. Through the decisive naval victories of the seventeenth century the professional competence of British seamen had made all the seas of the world safer for British commerce than ever they had been before; and the business competence of British merchants and their officials on the shores of the Indian Ocean was making now the most of the enhanced security thus afforded to their investments in eastern enterprise. By the second quarter of the eighteenth century the colours of the British East India Company had become the only European symbol of advancing strength and prosperity on a large scale within the range of oriental vision. But they threatened nobody at the time, for the officials over whom they flew were careful to observe the national alliance with Holland and Portugal; and seeking no quarrel anywhere only drew the sword on the defensive against native adversaries. Thus, unless forced to protect itself, the only European organisation of importance at that time with the power to provoke disturbances in the Indian Ocean consistently avoided trouble.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, the position of

the old London Company had been undermined by the encroachment of other British commercial bodies on its monopolies; but by 1708 it had amalgamated with these rivals, and enough fresh capital had been subscribed to keep it solvent. Since first formed in the reign of Elizabeth, the original syndicate or association had been reconstituted under Crown authority on several occasions, and for some time before the eighteenth century began the purely commercial traditions of its earlier history had been giving place to a new line of ambition, whereby, after the fashion of the Dutch example, the Court of Directors were making the acquisition and sovereign administration of tracts of Asiatic territory a recognised part of their business policy as a source of revenue. The area thus far under their rule was still no larger than some English parishes; but it was the germ of a future empire of almost continental dimensions, sheltered on its seaward frontiers against all enemies by the naval power of its creators. A day, doubtless, did arrive, on which Madras, as one of its chief seaports, had to pay ransom to a French fleet: but it was rescued from a subsequent French occupation, nevertheless, by the terms of a treaty of peace extracted from France by British victories on the sea.

At this same stage of European dealings with the east, when the new policy of the British East India Company was adding territorial ownership to other branches of business, the ebbing dividends of the rival Dutch association were leading to a reduction of the land already under their flag. After the third war with England, the shareholders were unable to raise the capital required to replace their lost ships; and in proportion as their profits on the sale of eastern goods fell off in Europe from lack of carrying capacity, they were less able to afford unproductive expenditure of any kind. Colonial taxes soon remained their sole source of revenue, and colonies yielding neither taxes nor saleable produce had to be evacuated if they cost money to retain. Financial exigencies of this sort called for the abandonment of Mauritius; though the French, who afterwards occupied it for strategic reasons, proved that with sufficient outlay for development the island could be made to pay a good return. So far its history had been uneventful. As

an uninhabited mid-oceanic patch of mountain and forest, devoid of spice-bearing flora, it presented no commercial attractions to the original Portuguese discoverers, and lay too far to the eastward of their normal route to India for any strategic or voyaging advantages from their particular standpoint. They left it unoccupied accordingly. But when the Dutch came on the scene a hundred years later, and selected the Malay Archipelago as a special region of exploitation, the island filled a very useful object by providing a conveniently placed half-way replenishing stage for Dutch ships on the long ocean run between the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Malacca or Sunda, whether outward or homeward bound. From the very beginning of their eastward movement, therefore, the Hollanders established there a *dépôt* for fresh water and provisions—including dodo meat—and all through the great shipping activities of the seventeenth century it answered that purpose, though unpopulated and uncleared, except immediately round a group of sheds and store huts at a good natural harbour on the southern or opposite side of the island to its present-day capital of Port Louis. With the number of Dutch Indiamen steadily on the decrease, however, the value of any port of call depreciated as such; and in Dutch eyes Mauritius had no other, for its undoubted strategic potentialities as a naval base south of the monsoon area, and flanking the main route to India, were discounted in their case by the possession of a base even further to windward at Batavia. Moreover, the increase in the size of individual ships, due to the advancing science of naval architecture, had rendered them fitter to undertake oceanic passages without a break, which still further reduced the importance of a half-way stage. By the year 1710, therefore, the Netherlands Company had arrived at the decision that Mauritius was not worth the cost of maintenance, and hauling down the flag, left the island as unclaimed property.

This significant indication of the direction in which the affairs of the Dutch were moving occurred in the far south of the Indian Ocean. But in its northern half contemporary events seemed to promise the possibility to the Portuguese of at least a partial return of their ancient prosperity; for, after some

seventy years of almost completely suspended animation, their coastwise traffic was showing signs of a revival under gradual relief from the active hostility of their former Dutch enemies. Being carried on in small native-manned vessels only, this renewed industry assumed no portentous scale, but brought back a certain degree of life to the long empty harbours of Goa, Daman and Diu, and through its comparative insignificance provoked no opposition or molestation on any side for some years.

But whether waxing or waning in importance, the property of every State, European or native, with interests in sea trade in eastern waters, suffered to some extent during this phase of political peace from the attacks of general though irregular and undeclared enemies. The absence of any strong rule in the Indian Ocean through the successive naval declines of Portugal and Holland did not escape the notice of the lawless elements of the maritime world; and for quite sixty years its highways provided a well-stocked field of plunder for the criminal type of seaman of many widely different nationalities. European and American sea robbers faced the long and hazardous outward passage to fill their chests from the wealth afloat on the far side of the Cape of Good Hope, whether of European or native ownership; and in some parts, where important traffic routes ran parallel to the shore, whole sections of the local Asiatic waterside population developed similar habits, and made considerable stretches of coastline dangerous to approach. As the western pirates necessarily arrived in large ocean-going ships they were able to range over a wide area, but suffered from the lack of any properly equipped refitting base for their vessels, and from tropical epidemics among their men. They operated, in fact, under precisely the usual difficulties of all armed forces, large or small, separated by a great distance from any source of replenishment in men or material, and the careers of individual gangs seldom lasted for long in consequence. But others appeared in their place as they broke up or retreated back to the Atlantic with whatever spoil they had chanced to gather. The Asiatic pirates on the other hand—with certain Arab exceptions—operated in flotillas of small coasting craft unsuitable

for deep-water cruising. These infested only the sea area immediately adjacent to their own territory, and were no danger out of sight of land; but being natives of the locality they were formidably numerous within their own special neighbourhood, and enjoyed the great advantage of secure refitting bases close at hand, besides a comparative immunity from climatic diseases of the kind which kept white piracy under a heavy toll.

In the days of Albuquerque or Coen such seahawks would have found it comparatively difficult to remain for long on the wing east of the Cape of Good Hope. But as no flag held an indisputably foremost position in the Indian Ocean at this stage of its history in any way comparable to that of the Portuguese in the sixteenth, or the Dutch in the middle seventeenth century, none were interested in the same degree in policing it as a whole. For three generations the Portuguese had given up all pretence of acting as general guardians of the eastern seas; and the fleet of the British Company was still very far from being strong enough to succeed to such an exacting responsibility: while the Dutch were barely able to hold down piracy systematically even round Java. No other flag counted for anything, and all remained perforce obliged to protect their own interests by the expedients of the moment. The native rulers, such as the Mogul Emperor, left the native shipping under no protection whatever, except what they could obtain from Europeans in return for permission to trade on shore. Neither the British nor the Dutch governments were prepared at this stage to send out cruisers of their regular navies, partly because they were fully occupied nearer home, and partly because it was considered the duty of their East India Companies to take their own steps in the matter, on the grounds that they were legally permitted to arm their ships. Years passed, in consequence, before any attempt was made to deal with these plagues by an organised offensive of the kind by which the Portuguese had diminished piracy in the days of their sea power in the east.

Under such chaotic conditions the evil naturally flourished. By the end of the seventeenth century as many as ten European or American manned vessels, carrying from twenty to fifty guns

each, were terrorising the coasts of Hindustan, the Straits of Malacca, the entrances to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, and the Madagascar vicinity of the home route. When commanded by malefactors of such historical notoriety as Avory or Kidd, they not only seized native craft—of which they captured many with valuable freights—but sometimes successfully attacked the large well-armed ships of the European Companies. But the damage they inflicted on British or Dutch interests was by no means confined to the direct loss of ships and cargoes; for by their frequent plundering of native property on the sea they brought wholesale discredit on all Europeans in eastern ports, through the inability of the natives to discriminate between one class of white seafarer and another. It was a frequent custom of these pirates sailing in western-built ships to fly the British, Dutch or French colours as a disguise, and the exasperation produced in the popular native mind against the national bunting of these States by this practice found expression through the Mogul Emperor himself, who warned the officials of the Companies that as vessels under the flags of their several countries were committing acts of war against his subjects on the seas, he would retaliate on those flags at the only points where he could strike an effective blow, that is to say at the trading stations of British, Dutch or French subjects within his dominions. Ignoring their protests he soon put his threat into execution; for after Avory under British colours had captured and looted another Mogul trader, Aurungzeb imprisoned the whole British factory staff at Surat until the Company's President at Bombay had promised compensation and a regular future escort for native vessels sailing to the Red Sea. But the effect of the compact was no more than temporary, for within three years the pirates had again become so aggressive that the Emperor was only prevented from putting a stop to all European business in his territories by a joint guarantee of recompense for future losses on the part of the chief agents of the three nationalities principally interested, and a pledge on their part to take more energetic measures. By this arrangement the Dutch agreed to be responsible for the safety of native traffic with the Red Sea, while the British watched the southern routes,

and the French—whose position in India was becoming increasingly important—attended to the Persian Gulf.

No such schemes, however, stood any real chance of permanent success in the end. It was impossible with the very small number of fighting ships proper at the disposal of the Companies to organise any efficient system of convoys, and freight carriers could not be spared for sea police work. For a third time, therefore, Aurungzeb applied pressure from his side, and now more drastically than ever. Maintaining, not without some reason, that Europeans should restrain the violent practices of their own countrymen on the element where the white man was supreme, he stopped all European trade under whatever flag within his Empire, and confined every white man at Surat within the walls of his own particular national enclosure. To this the British and Dutch sea commanders replied by blockading Surat to seaward and thereby stopping all native export as well. In this particular quarter of the east, therefore, a most peculiar situation arose. European supremacy afloat remained unchallenged by Asiatics, who, unless in overwhelming numbers, were unable as ever to face an armed ship with white men at her guns, whether these were reputable or criminal in character. But the power of Europeans on dry land was almost negligible when compared to that of a potentate such as Aurungzeb, and their dominion over the Indian Ocean was proving unable to control its own vices. As a consequence Asiatics strangled European commerce ashore, and Europeans strangled Asiatic commerce afloat, each on account of the misdeeds of a common enemy detested by both.

The sea blockade of Surat, however, was not much more than a gesture of protest, as the ships were required for loading at other ports where no embargo existed, and were soon withdrawn. But the incarceration of the European elements in Surat within their own concessions remained in force for several years, during which time all trade between the Companies and northern India was suspended. On the whole, perhaps, the Emperor had the more reasonable arguments on his side; but whether that was so or not, he certainly occupied the stronger position in the dispute, as the eventual outcome was to prove, for his

unrelaxing attitude produced reiterated appeals to the home government by the British Company to send out ships of the Royal Navy and end the deadlock by suppressing the pirates, which at length received some attention. Even then the number of cruisers despatched was too few for decisive results, but the fact of their arrival in the Indian Ocean did at least make the pirates more cautious and to that extent improved the situation. It was not, however, till as late as 1722 or thereabouts that they found the Indian Ocean too hot to hold them, and abandoning the base which they had used for many years in a remote harbour in Madagascar, dispersed and ceased to be any longer a source of serious complaint on the part of eastern magnates against western flags.

But in addition to the white pirates were the local or coloured, who within certain areas were quite as noxious, although of course their ravages brought no odium on Europeans. These belonged to several races, and in some respects were even more difficult to deal with than the others, not only because in their case piracy became almost a national occupation—which as natives of the east they could follow on the spot in thousands—but also because they possessed all the advantages attending on an armed force which operates close to secure retreats and ample sources of supply. Such were the Muscat Arabs, the Sanganians of Cutch, and the Joasmi of the Persian Gulf. But foremost of all stood a section of Mahratta breed, who took to the water in a local and limited sense during their revolt against the Mogul dynasty, chiefly in the type of coaster known as the *galivat*: a lateen-rigged craft of moderate dimensions resembling a Sicilian felucca, fast and handy under oars or sail, but an indifferent sea boat in heavy weather. When light winds or calms made escape impossible and manœuvring difficult for a large Indiaman the *galivat* had her opportunity; and an attack by a whole swarm of these wasps generally ended in tragedy if the defenders ran out of ammunition, as sometimes occurred.

Among other highly competent and energetic leaders who came to the top in the long Mahratta rebellion was Kanaji Angria, a man of obscure origin but outstanding power of command, who established himself as an independent chieftain



in a series of strongholds—said to have been first granted to him for services in war—along a stretch of about 130 miles of the coast immediately to the southward of Bombay, whence he overlooked a main artery of sea traffic under European and native sails. As head of a following who only existed by the sword, the chances of loot led him afloat; not very far and never in stiff weather, but quite far enough and often enough to introduce a new and most disturbing element into the sea area covering the approaches to the chief European trading centres in western Hindustan. Thenceforward his career was devoted to sea plunder as a methodical industry, with such success that the adventurer of humble birth not only amassed sufficient wealth to found and maintain a realm repudiating any allegiance to a higher lord for half a century—which was passed on to his sons—but actually left a more conspicuous name in the salt-water annals of the east than any of the great dynastic rulers in the history of Asia excepting Kublai Khan.

The fortress capital and fleet headquarters of this prince of marauders stood at the port which in those days was generally called Gheria—but is now known as Viziadroog—at the mouth of one of the numerous small rivers flowing down from the Western Ghats. Before actually reaching the sea this stream turns sharply northward and runs nearly parallel to the shore for a short distance, thereby leaving a narrow tongue of land between the estuary and open water, which gives extreme natural strength to the position. On the tongue stands a ridge of rocky heights, so that vessels lying inside are screened from seaward and effectually protected against the fire of any attacker who may be unable to force his entrance into the river itself. To prevent such an entrance a strongly armed citadel was built on the ridge, with a wide arc of fire and observation; and, moreover, as only the Angria pilots were acquainted with the navigable channels in the inner reaches of the estuary, no enemy could follow them far up stream even if he succeeded in breaking in below. So formidable was the problem of reducing this almost inaccessible seat of power that for fifty years it was never seriously contemplated; and within its shelter the Angria fleet increased and improved till it became a model of predatory

organisation, with soundly-built vessels, serviceable armaments and well-equipped dockyards staffed by competent shipwrights. Subsidiary bases for occasional anchorage were established at the mouths of two or three other rivers rather farther northward on the same coast, into which the light draught galivats could slip without any fear of being followed if beaten off or chased by a European ship. Of these the principal was Severndroog. As in the fleet of the Seyids of Muscat, service under Kanaji attracted followers from reckless and renegade Europeans in eastern seaports by the prospect of booty and good pay for skilled hands; in addition to whom a certain number of white prisoners were usually employed on compulsion in his dockyard.

If the Angria adherents were under the influence of any special religious or racial bias their chief antipathy was probably directed against Moslems: but such feelings counted for little in practice, and any vessel under whatever flag or ownership heaving in sight of their watch towers had to be prepared for trouble unless there was plenty of wind. In course of time their flotillas became such a terror to native traders, and such a source of anxiety to white, that the former kept a hundred miles to seaward of the land between Colaba and Gheria, and the latter found it advisable always to cross this danger zone in convoy. It was chiefly to protect their interests against the Angria menace that the British Company established a small war squadron of their own—apart altogether from their fleet of regular freighters—composed of a few corvettes, sloops and native types, all built by local labour at Surat or Bombay. This squadron was the force known at one time as the Bombay Marine and later as the Indian Navy; never more than a small organisation at any time but with a very fine record of service. It soon earned the wholesome respect of Kanaji's galivats outside Gheria or their other fortified retreats, though never strong enough to reduce their main shore defences, which were only battered down eventually by ships of the line belonging to the Royal Navy many years later.

Another important, but very different branch of oriental pirates, were the Arabs of Muscat. When their fleet had ousted the Portuguese from as much of the East African coast as they

themselves required for the slave trade no other promising field for expeditions of that kind remained. As an outlet for their energies, therefore, and a source of general profit, they seized anything afloat on which they could lay their hands without incurring serious risk. Like the Atlantic type these were blue-water bandits who despised coast hugging; and whereas their rivals and deadly enemies in the Angria fleet were always loath to find themselves more than fifty miles from a secure home anchorage, the big Muscat gun-dhows thought little of sailing two thousand, and might be encountered well out of sight of land anywhere between East Africa and the Bay of Bengal. The Mahratta breed, in fact, resembled the Turks in being more ready to face the risks of the sword than the risks of drowning, except for good plunder within easy reach. But though far bolder and more enterprising as seamen, the Arabs were much less venturesome than Angria's men in selecting their objects of attack, and very seldom had the temerity to molest any European flag but the Portuguese. As their main squadron of European-modelled ships was kept near Muscat for defence, their piratical cruises were usually undertaken in the stout teak-planked type of dhow known as a buggalla, which not only carried a sloop's full broadside armament but could face any weather, and had the heels of most square-rigged vessels except in a gale.

Against the Portuguese the enmity of the Muscat Arabs was not only traditional, but could find some scope owing to the naval weakness of Portugal. When, therefore, the coasting trade between Goa and other points began to revive early in the eighteenth century—as already mentioned—the Muscat cruisers made it their special object of attention, and thereby in time drew down upon their own heads the first noteworthy naval operations of that century in eastern seas. Having insufficient naval protection, and no ports of shelter in the Indian Ocean away from western Hindustan, a number of small Portuguese traders were captured. This was the first move, compelling the government at Goa to take some action or lose a returning prosperity. The Viceroy seems to have believed—or affected to believe—that the officials of the British Company had a hand in

these proceedings, perhaps because the Arabs were shrewd enough to leave British ships entirely alone. He even went so far as to accuse the Company of selling arms, lending men and supplying British papers to the Seyid's fleet as a safeguard; possibly in the hope of raising trouble between Bombay and Muscat. But the Company's President denied all such charges and declined to take any steps.

Finding in consequence that if he wished to put a stop to these losses he must rely upon his own efforts, the Viceroy proceeded to raise the necessary sea forces. In the days when the Dutch were powerful and jealous of Portugal they would have prevented any such proceeding; but those days were past, and when peace reigned among Europeans in the east no Asiatics could prevail against even the feeblest European flag in deep water. It so happened that local resources were equal to the requirements of the Portuguese situation. Native shipwrights had long since learnt to build excellent teak ships from western models, and lascar seamen of sufficiently good fighting quality for service against an Asiatic enemy were obtainable in Surat and Malabar. From such sources a squadron officered by whites was eventually created to defend the Portuguese merchantmen against Arab depredations. So well did it answer its purpose that before very long it turned the tables on the enemy and passed from defence to attack. Its efficiency—relatively to native standards—in the course of time attracted the notice of the reigning Shah of Persia, whose coasts had suffered from the Muscat fleet for fifty years in impotence, and who now suggested to the Viceroy that Portuguese and Persians should combine to break up the Seyid State by taking Muscat itself. The division of responsibility was to be the same as that proposed by Shah Abbas to the English East India Company of nearly a hundred years before, when inviting them to co-operate in taking Ormuz from the Portuguese; that is to say, Persia would provide an army if the European partner to the scheme would provide a fleet.

This project found favour at Goa, especially as it was to be understood that when taken Muscat would revert to its former Portuguese ownership, for the Shah professed that for his part

he would be satisfied to see the obnoxious Arab dynasty expelled. The Viceroy lacked the necessary land force to embark on such an enterprise single-handed, but he was quite prepared to send his fighting ships to deal with the Seyid's fleet and clear the way for the passage of the promised Persian troops. A bargain on these lines having been struck, the Portuguese-Indian squadron sailed from Diu on the autumn change of monsoon in 1719 to fulfil its share of the contract, in the execution of which it fought the first Indian Ocean general action of the eighteenth century, and achieved the last notable success of its country's record in the seas to which Vasco da Gama had led the fleets of western civilisation.

Though never at peace with the Muscat Arabs, the Portuguese had been so decisively weakened by the long series of Dutch attacks in the seventeenth century, that sixty-nine years had elapsed since their last engagement with an Arab fleet. On that occasion the enemy had lost little time in retreating under the protection of his heavily armed forts on shore; but in the interval the new Muscat navy had come into existence, and this time the Moslem admiral accepted battle in the open sea. It is to be regretted that no detailed lists of the contending forces in this highly interesting encounter has survived, but the readiness of the Seyid's ships to meet the issue warrants the belief that in total weight of metal they were at least not inferior to their adversaries. In the matter of the men behind the guns little difference of quality existed, both fleets being manned by Asiatics with a small stiffening of Europeans of mixed nationality; but in the matter of officers those on the Portuguese side were all white, while those on the other were all orientals. History has repeatedly proved that where other things are equal, a force under European leadership is more than a match for a force led by Asiatics, and on the water, at least, not one single instance to the contrary ever stood on record till the rise of modern Japan. The rule held good on this occasion as on all others; for though the Arabs offered so stubborn a resistance that in spite of three days' fighting the first engagement remained indecisive, they became demoralised under the strain of a renewed attack—delivered after an interval of temporary

exhaustion on both sides—and went so completely to pieces that only a remnant escaped. In the absence of any account of the movements producing this result we should probably be justified in supposing it to have been due to the superior manœuvring of the victors; for even if the Portuguese officers of that generation were without any experience of squadron tactics, it seems reasonable that they should be credited with a share of the tactical sense inherent in European seamen as contrasted with any eastern race of nautical traditions. European standards of discipline are likely also to have contributed to success.

In so far as it deprived the Arabs of power to do further injury to Portuguese sea trade, this victory was not without its important consequences. But it was barren of fruit as regards the more immediate and declared object of the whole enterprise—that is to say, the recapture of Muscat for Portugal—through the bad faith of the Persian Shah. Europeans were long in learning that little trust could be reposed in the pledges of Ispahan if the obligations attached to their observance could be safely evaded, and history was once again repeating itself. In the early seventeenth century the head official of the London East India Company at Surat found that the facilities for trading in Persia, promised by Shah Abbas as a condition of the Company's assistance in taking the island of Ormuz, came to nothing when the ships had done their work; and in the early eighteenth century the Viceroy of Goa underwent a like experience, for when the sea power of Muscat had been broken the guaranteed Persian army was not forthcoming. In both cases an astute and unscrupulous follower of the Prophet had made a catspaw of Europeans by inveigling them into a compact, in which the white man's share of the task had necessarily to be completed before that of the Persians could even be commenced; and in both the latter defaulted when their own ends had been secured. When, therefore, the Portuguese admiral had freed the coasts of Persia from any immediately further fear of the Muscat raiders, and announced that he was ready to embark the promised Persian troops for the attack on the enemy's capital, he received no reply; and finding that all his

representations in the matter were ignored, returned to Goa in disgust on the change of monsoon.

After this success over the Arab fleet the Portuguese could unquestionably have retaken their lost East African possessions in so far as any opposition on the sea was concerned. Nothing left afloat under the Seyid's flag could have prevented it, and as neither the British or Dutch ever evinced much interest in the ownership of a region so devoid of commercial opportunities as compared to India or the Malay islands, no obstruction was to be apprehended from that quarter. But in addition to a fleet, a sufficient land force was necessary here to overcome the numerous and well-armed Arab population which had settled in that region during the twenty years elapsing since its conquest from the Portuguese; and as the constant danger of attack by the native States on the land frontiers of their Indian possessions made it impossible for the Portuguese to spare a single soldier from their Indian garrisons, such a force as was required to retake East Africa could only be supplied from the mother country. To this costly alternative the prospective advantages to be gained were hardly commensurate. Mombasa and its adjacent littoral had not been occupied by the early Lisbon pioneers in any hope of founding a lucrative export business, but in order to prevent their uses as points at which hostile native craft could lie in wait for Portuguese ships on the main route to India where it passed close to the African shore. But as the traffic using this route had been practically confined to British and Dutch vessels for sixty years—which were well able to look after themselves—such a consideration had no longer any weight for Portugal; and no national interests remained to be served by an expensive military undertaking involving the maintenance of a perpetual garrison in a region not rich enough in itself to meet the outlay. No re-assertion of Portuguese sovereignty over this region was therefore attempted; and in spite of the long-continued piratical propensities of the Seyids of Muscat, the domains over which they ruled in the eighteenth century were left in their possession, and handed on to their present-day descendants.

A different fate was in store for the pirate State founded by

Kanaji Angria the Hindoo, which, though tardy in its fulfilment, afforded an instructive illustration of the white man's power in the Indian Ocean, and perhaps even more of the considerations which guided him in exercising it while still in the earlier stages of the process of extending and developing the contact of east and west. In our own age these considerations accept certain moral obligations towards humanity in general which have no connection with self interest; as, for example, the forcible suppression of piracy and slave dealing, even when not directly injurious to Europeans. But in the early eighteenth century no such altruistic principles played any part in eastern seas, where the only motive inspiring the activities of the white man—or any other man—was the gain of wealth. Hence it was that the Sultanate of Muscat was suffered to continue in existence while the Mahratta pirates were eventually stamped out. Two severe lessons at the hands of the Portuguese, though separated by an interval of seven generations, had proved to the seafaring Mahomedans that the flags of all Christian nations must remain unmolested when afloat, even if they had their periods of semi-eclipse; and though the people of Muscat still remained pirates and slave dealers in principle and practice for another century and a half, they were astute enough after their second chastisement to harass native shipping only, with the safety of which the white man made no pretence of being concerned, except when paid to protect it by some such native sovereign as Aurungzeb. In the eyes of Europeans of that period the Arab pirate might be a beast of prey for all they cared, so long as he remained harmless to domestic stock. Perhaps he even served a certain useful purpose in preventing other game from over-running good pasture. But the Angria species was the sort which prefers raiding the flock to anything else, and had to be exterminated when the means for a successful hunt could be organised if there was to be any permanent security. Until too late to profit by it he never suffered penalties for his misdeeds of a kind which instilled caution; though, considering his nature, it may possibly be doubted whether any lessons would have convinced him of the ultimate consequences of his proceedings. Such experiences



indeed as fell to his lot were rather of a character to teach him the opposite, and his long immunity from retribution only served to increase his self-confidence.

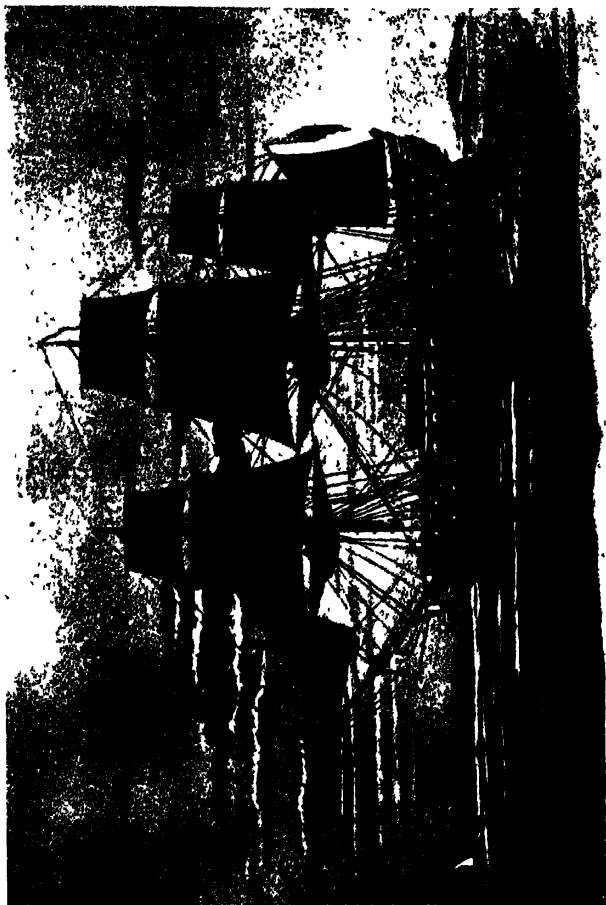
When Kanaji died in 1730—or thereabouts—his sons fought over the inheritance in true oriental fashion, and to some extent divided the father's foreshore possessions. But all carried on the paternal occupation in greater or lesser degree; and, moreover, through maintaining an intransigent attitude towards the paramount Princes of the Mahrattas, created enemies for themselves on their inland frontier in a way which made them more than ever dependent on gathering spoil from the sea. But although without friends in any direction, so great was the reputation of their strongholds for impregnability, that for a full quarter of a century after Kanaji's death neither European nor native sufferers by their ravages were prepared to attempt their extirpation; and all submitted to the burden of such purely passive measures as convoy or patrol by specially maintained sea forces as a defence. It was not till 1756, therefore, that the crushing of these long irrepressible menaces to the security of traffic in the waters of western Hindustan was taken in hand; and even then only because other and much more important events happened to bring sufficient naval power to the spot for the work. By its extension to the east, the mid-century rivalry between Britain and France resulted in the despatch of regular battlefleets to the Indian Ocean for the first time; and in 1755 Admiral Watson, the British Commander-in-Chief, having arrived at Bombay with no other immediately urgent service in hand at the moment, assented to a proposal of the President of the British Company at Bombay for reducing Gheria by a combined expedition of the Royal Navy and the ships and troops of the Company. Severndroog—the lesser of the two principal Angria sea fortresses—had already been reduced a few months earlier by the Company's forces unaided, but Gheria was more than they could attempt. When all arrangements had been completed, Watson sailed accordingly from Bombay early in 1756 with a joint fleet of three sail-of-the-line, eight frigates and sloops, and some bomb ketches. Embarked on board the ships were 1400 European and native troops under Colonel

Clive, who afterwards became the most celebrated figure in Anglo-Indian history. On arriving off Gheria, the troops were landed to seize the neck of the ridge on which stood the citadel, the liners brought their heavy armaments to bear at close range on its sea face, and the smaller vessels forced an entrance, and attacked the Angria fleet lying in the harbour behind the castle before they could escape up river. When two days' bombardment had reduced the walls to rubble and the ships to wrecks the fortress surrendered and the Angria rule of nearly sixty years of organised sea pillage came to its end. By the terms of a previous promise Gheria itself, and Toolaji Angria its chief, were both handed over to the Mahratta realm.

This affair bore a certain historical interest as a portent of what was to come. Though still entirely under the influence of self-interest, Britain was making an initial move towards the reign of order and security benefiting all peaceable sea avocations, which she afterwards extended to the whole Indian Ocean when her supremacy in all the seas of the world became an established fact. But viewed in their true proportions the ravages of pirates, and the conflicts described above in which Asiatic belligerents formed one side or both, were no more than squalls in the eastern maritime situation of the eighteenth century. Great international gales never arose there unless Europeans were opposed to each other; and, as already mentioned, the three western nations principally in touch with the east at the close of the seventeenth century were in a condition of mutual and stable peace. British, Dutch and Portuguese traders sailed fully armed, but not to cross swords among themselves, and when they passed at sea exchanged salutes instead of broadsides. Nor was it until the intrusion of France as a fourth rival for power began to loom large, when the eighteenth century had entered its fifth decade, that this atmosphere of political calm became unsettled: to be succeeded by several periods of violent strife. On two important points the renewed struggles of white man with white in the Indian Ocean differed in character from their earlier conflicts in the same area, for they were now to be waged by Crown forces instead of privately owned ships, and inspired quite as much by political as commercial ends. Thus

the new sea wars of Europeans fought under the eyes of Asiatic spectators were greatly to transcend the old in scale if not in spirit, and excite the interest of the onlookers in proportion. Giants entered the ring where only light-weights had contended before.

With the passing of the day of small States in the Indian Ocean passed also the rule of the smaller types of vessels upholding it. Caravel, galleon, Indiaman and frigate had all been familiar objects at one period or another in eastern waters; but these instruments of power and their traditions faded into insignificance with the advent of whole squadrons of two-deckers. When Delahaye's division appeared on the coasts of Asia two generations previously, the east had a brief glimpse of earlier models of these majestic specimens of the shipbuilder's skill; but owing to the miscarriage of his expedition through bad seamanship the impression left on the native mind by their size and armament had been merely fleeting. When France and Britain, however, began struggling for the mastery of the sea approaches to their respective centres of trade and government in the Carnatic provinces of Hindustan, Asiatics had visible proof that all former standards of power as represented by naval architecture needed revision, and that the last word in any altercation afloat lay in the annihilating metal of the ship-of-the-line.



BRITISH SEVENTY-FOUR OF THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

*(From a sketch by the author)*



## XII

### The FIRST and SECOND ANGLO-FRENCH CONFLICTS in the INDIAN OCEAN

**T**HE narrative of the principal naval operations in the east during the eighteenth century affords one of the best illustrations in history of the processes whereby the installation of a trans-marine sovereignty, such as the British rule in Hindustan, alone becomes possible in the face of hostile and formidable competition. For British readers, therefore, the story possesses a special interest; all the more because many features of the general situation in the Indian Ocean of our own time, with their bearings on vital problems of Imperial defence, remain almost precisely as they were left by the outcome of the great wars of the later Georgian era. To those, however, who are unversed in that branch of national history in which oceanic problems play an essential part, it may perhaps be useful here to preface a narration of the story itself by some exposition of the reasons which have so often invested warfare on the sea with decisive consequences for political, military or commercial situations on the land. Any student of our national past knows that the struggles between British and French on the soil of India were accompanied by exchanges of heavy blows on the water; but for some the precise connection between the operations on one element and those on another remains ill-defined. It is to remove any obscurity in regard to first principles in this matter that the remarks immediately following are intended.

A professional writer is often assisted to explain his subject by instancing some analogy or simile borrowed from the field of familiar general knowledge, and it so happens that a very modern parallel of this kind can be used with advantage in treating of the Anglo-French fights for India. The man of ordinary education who moves in the world of to-day, for instance, can hardly fail to be acquainted with the elementary facts connected with the application of electrical energy to a host of different requirements. He knows that the energy or current is created in a power house and carried thence by cables to the point at which the work is to be done, whether

in driving trains or tramcars, rotating factory machines, lighting towns or effecting other public purposes. If the power house plant breaks down everything stops. If the transmitting mains or cables are cut the work at the business end is suspended for lack of driving force. Sometimes the cessation may be delayed where arrangements exist for accumulating a reserve of energy on the spot, but that is only a respite, which can merely keep the wheels going till the reserve energy has run down. And, if the machinery which is actuated by the energy conveyed through the cables is defective in itself, the work remains unexecuted, even though the power house and cables are operating properly.

Each section of this apparatus designed to function as a whole for a specific object has its precise counterpart in the founding and maintenance of a rule in a region separated by the sea from the ruling State. The power house is the ruling State itself, whence emanates the energy. The energy in this case takes the shape of troops, arms, money and supplies; and the transmitting cable is the sea route along which these are carried to the point where they are to be applied to the industry of government. All three sections of this united organisation must be maintained efficient for that industry to exist. If a rival State with ambitions in the same region can defeat the ruling State in the latter's home territory, then the power house has been wrecked and everything collapses with it. Or should the rival get the upper hand at sea sufficiently to prevent the passage of troops and supplies to the coveted region, then the supply main has been cut, and the consequent deprivation of energy brings the work at the far end to a standstill sooner or later. The stoppage may on occasions be immediate; but sometimes the men and materials already at the far end represent a sufficient reserve of accumulated force to keep the machinery revolving for a while without fresh current. Should the loss of sea command be only temporary, this stored energy may perhaps suffice to carry on the work till the sea command has been regained; which would mean, of course, that the severed transmitting cable had been rejoined and rendered fit for use again. Finally, if the men and materials sent out fail to hold

their own against those of the rival State on the spot, then the factory machine is at fault, even if the power house and cable are performing their shares satisfactorily.

It will be seen that the division of responsibility, therefore, is threefold. The duty of the administrators of the ruling State—or mother country—is to see that the power house sends off an adequate supply of energy and is protected against rival violence. The duty of the seamen is to keep the transmitting line intact, and in time of war to cut the line of the rival concern. The duty of the officials at the far extremity is to make the best use of the power it conveys to their hands against opposition and competition on the spot. Speaking generally, the Dutch were the first to understand this doctrine as a nation, although from his writings Raleigh seems to have been the first as an individual. By the Netherlands East and West India Companies it was systematically and successfully applied all through their long wars with the Portuguese in Asia and America. Cromwell evidently regarded the Dutch example as sound from his method of waging war against Spain; but it did not become the established model for the distant war strategy of England till the middle eighteenth century. Many French officers displayed an instinctive perception of the principles involved—such as Montcalm in the west and La Bourdonnais in the east—but few French governments comprehended them more than imperfectly. Clive appreciated them clearly, while Duplex failed to recognise them at all.

Though all three spheres of labour as detailed above were equally necessary for the success of the whole, it is only with the responsibilities and work of those engaged on the central section that this treatment of the subject is concerned; that is to say, the seamen entrusted with the preservation of the lines of communication which represented the conveying cables of military and commercial energy for their own country, and the destruction of the similar lines of the enemy. And more especially still, with those whose duties lay near the further extremities of those lines in the Indian Ocean. They were the longest of the important routes of communication in use in the whole earth at that period, and proportionately vulnerable



in consequence; and during the three Anglo-French wars which spread to India it was usually the home end of the British line that was the better guarded and the far end of the French. Sometimes both of these metaphorical power cables were functioning in competition, at others both were cut: but a full account of their attack and defence throughout their length would entail a description of naval movements in European waters outside the proper geographical scope of this survey of events. Only occasional reference will be made to operations outside the Indian Ocean, therefore, where essential to a complete presentation of the general situation.

The war of the Spanish succession, in which Britain and France were involved as enemies, came to an end in 1713. Owing to the naval weakness of France, it never extended to the Indian Ocean, where its only effect had taken the form of uniting former rivals, not from apprehension of any danger to their interests in the east, but as a result of the defensive alliance of the mother countries in Europe. That war was followed by peace lasting for a full generation, through the determination of Walpole and Fleury to maintain amicable relations between Britain and France; so that men who were in their childhood when the lull began grew to maturity without knowing what war meant. During this long silence of the guns the steady expansion of the British East India Company left the Dutch and Portuguese far behind in political and commercial influence in Hindustan; but the French Company—hitherto an insignificant factor in eastern longitudes—had been amalgamated with the French West Indian concern, and in its enlarged constitution was making great efforts to rise to a position of importance in Asiatic trade. Two years after the war of the Spanish succession, the governing board made a well-judged move towards establishing a firm footing in the Indian Ocean, by appropriating the unclaimed island of Mauritius; which gave the Company for the first time an eastern harbour suitable as a naval headquarters in war, from its windward position during the season of the summer monsoon in Indian waters. For a good many years they left Mauritius comparatively undeveloped from motives of



**BERTRAND FRANÇOIS MAHÉ DE LA BOURDONNAIS**  
French Naval Squadron Commander and Governor of Mauritius



economy; but in 1735 appointed Commander Mahé de la Bourdonnais, of the French navy, as Governor; under whose competent and vigorous policy a fortified naval base was created at Port Louis on the north side of the island, with equipment and resources second to none in the southern part of the Indian Ocean except Batavia. Bombay was at that time the only British harbour in Asiatic waters suitable for the headquarters of a fleet in war; and thus, after Port Louis came into existence, the respective naval centres of Britain and France in the east faced each other north and south across the Indian Ocean, at the easily traversable distance of only 2500 miles.

La Bourdonnais began his career as a merchant seaman before receiving a naval commission, but he was endowed with a natural comprehension of large strategic problems, and realised the important position which Mauritius must occupy in any future war with England. As an officer of wide outlook his grasp of the situation not only covered the Indian Ocean—where he perceived that British interests had very little local protection—but reached back to the home end of the long line of communication; recognising, as he did, that even in the east the final outcome of such a conflict would depend less upon what happened in the neighbourhood of the Bay of Bengal than what happened in the neighbourhood of the Bay of Biscay. And as the British navy counted about ninety sail of the line to the French forty-five, he suffered himself to entertain no false hopes as to the probable fate of the French position in India by the time a war with Britain came to a finish. When, therefore, a conflict broke out between Britain and Spain in 1739 as a result of commercial disputes in the Caribbean, which seemed likely to involve France on the Spanish side, La Bourdonnais spoke his mind to the authorities in Paris as to their best line of policy in the Indian Ocean. While declaring that they had little chance of permanently holding their own in the Indian peninsula, he pointed out that if they despatched a squadron to Mauritius in readiness to act with promptitude on the outbreak of war, before British naval superiority had time to extend its long arm, they might seize a large amount of valuable and removable British property in the form of ships, goods and

bullion. This was obviously not a scheme of the dramatic and ambitious sort which aims at changing the map and appeals to the French love of the sensational; but it promised at least certain tangible profits under circumstances which La Bourdonnais felt assured would yield nothing but loss otherwise. As Britain and France were unmistakably drifting towards war, he requested that the force required to undertake this plan of operations should sail for Mauritius without delay; but the directors of French policy turned a deaf ear to his representations and only one vessel was sent out.

In India the affairs of the French Company were under the control of Joseph Dupleix, who had been appointed Governor General in 1742, the year before the occurrence of the irregular collisions between Britain and France—such as Toulon and Dettingen—that led up to the formal hostilities beginning in 1744 which were afterwards known as the war of the Austrian succession. The oriental policy of Dupleix lay at the opposite extreme to that of La Bourdonnais—whom he detested—for whereas the latter thought of little else than the maritime situation, the former took no heed of it whatever. His judgment therefore lacked a sense of proportion in regard to fundamental issues, although he displayed so remarkable a capacity for statecraft of the sort which is based on a thorough understanding of the oriental temperament that his influence with several of the most powerful Princes in Hindustan practically placed their armies at his disposal. In so far as that assisted him to menace the small British garrisons at such places as Madras, it provided him with a source of power on the spot—poor in quality though abundant of its kind—without drawing on that of France; and with this at his back he aspired to drive the British out of India, and found an empire acknowledging the sovereign authority of the House of Bourbon. But at best this local native support was a totally inadequate substitute for power of the quality represented by European forces even in limited numbers; and as he never looked beyond India, it evidently did not occur to him to consider how France was to exercise authority of any sort over a land from which she might become so totally isolated as to be unable to work on either the

self interest or the fears of its inhabitants while her rivals could do both.

Faulty in their very foundations though they were, however, the grandiose schemes of Dupleix appealed to the directors of the French East India Board as an ultimate ideal, in their ignorance of oceanic strategy; though actually at the moment they were making great efforts to keep Indian affairs outside the scope of a struggle which had become plainly inevitable on the continent of Europe. In this last attitude they had the co-operation of their rivals in London, who were well aware of the unpreparedness of their own Company to take up arms, and feared for Madras and Calcutta. But, just as La Bourdonnais had anticipated, the British government had no intention of subordinating national war plans to private interests by refraining from using the naval superiority which was the most effective weapon in their hands at any point where it could hurt the enemy. War was war to them, and if the King of France chose to attack the interests of England in mid Europe then the French must accept the consequences in all the seas of the world.

When, therefore, war was at last formally declared in 1744—after several violent encounters afloat and ashore in a time of nominal peace—the British Admiralty despatched a division of four vessels to the Indian Ocean under Commodore Barnett, with orders to attack French interests in eastern seas, where they were reported to be undefended by any regular warships. Three of the four were 50-gun ships—that is to say liners of the lowest rate—which by all reasonable calculations was an ample command for the work in prospect: though, if the Admiralty had been acquainted with the character of the Governor of Mauritius, they would probably have increased the squadron to six or eight. But La Bourdonnais was an unknown man, even in Paris, outside a small circle. Arriving in the Indian Ocean shortly before the autumn change of wind, Barnett estimated that his best initial position would be at its eastern gateway, through which the French vessels returning with valuable cargoes from China would be likely to pass in a group some time during the winter or homeward bound monsoon. His expectations

were realised, and all unaware of the British appearance in the Straits of Malacca these heavy laden craft sailed right into his arms. Knowing then that nothing remained to seize in that direction, he sold the prizes to the Dutch at Batavia, and turned to consider the possibilities of attacks on the possessions of the French in India; whose chief trading locality lay on the eastern or Coromandel side, facing the Bay of Bengal, with its centre of administration at Pondicherry. This seaport lay between the British Company's ports of Madras on its north side, and Cuddalore—or Fort St David—on its south; Madras being the British seat of government in southern Hindustan.

In pursuance of this object Barnett left Batavia for the Coromandel coast so as to arrive in the spring; a choice of season imposed on him by the complete absence of a single sheltered harbour anywhere on the east side of the Indian peninsula suitable for large ships, which made the whole coastline an open and dangerous lee shore for sailing craft throughout the winter monsoon. On anchoring at Madras he found that the originally arranged truce between the Companies was no longer in observance and each was preparing to take the field. As the French had much the stronger backing from the native States, Madras was in some danger; but, on the other hand, the French ports were open to sea bombardment and some French ships were loading cargo in Pondicherry roads. Barnett's appearance therefore balanced the situation and each side abstained from provoking reprisal by attacking. This condition of equipoise remained undisturbed till the year following, but the Commodore died and was succeeded in temporary command by Captain Peyton, his next senior in the squadron; a nervous and irresolute officer unfitted for the position.

It was at this point that La Bourdonnais appeared on the stage in a manner upsetting all anticipations and arrangements on both sides alike in Europe and the east. After the French directing body had rejected his advice a man of less calibre might have fallen back rebuffed on a routine performance of his duties and left his superiors to go their own way. But La Bourdonnais was incapable of submitting to a passive rôle in war, and, as Paris was far distant, took matters into his own

hands. For the time being fortune was kind to him by placing material at his disposal which a man of energy and determination could use as a makeshift in default of anything better. Barnett's captures of the year before, and the subsequent presence of his squadron—now raised to six sail—on the Indian coast, had held up several large French merchantmen at Mauritius, which had been on outward passage to India and China before these matters were known, and were now lying there awaiting orders. Seven of these *La Bourdonnais* requisitioned on his own responsibility to form a raiding squadron, with the one ship-of-the-line already at his command as flagship. Like all vessels engaged in eastern trade, they carried a sufficient armament for defence against pirates, for which he partially substituted heavier metal from reserves of ordnance at Mauritius; and at the same time added a large proportion of negro hands obtained from East Africa to the crew of each, so as to leave the white complement entirely free for the guns. It was a scratch fleet at best, with which none but an audacious leader would have ventured to meet regular built fighting ships; but there also fortune was with him, Peyton being his inferior in every quality making for success in war.

Having raised his force, it was for *La Bourdonnais* to select his first point of attack, and in that his judgment was more open to professional criticism than in anything else he did. No reasonable prospect of obtaining a permanent command of the Indian Ocean presented itself to his choice, for even if he defeated Peyton—which cannot have seemed likely—overwhelming enemy reinforcements were certain to arrive out before the war ended. At best, therefore, the time at his disposal was limited, and the degree of his possible success exactly proportionate to the period devoted to laying hands on valuable and easily-seized British property. Under such conditions he was doubtless right in not going out of his way to find Peyton and fight him for a temporary and problematical supremacy which might very well cost him so dear in the acquisition as to cripple him beyond the power to undertake his real object. But he was wrong on the next point, or at least so it will seem to most students of naval warfare. Two alternatives lay before him. He



could begin by attacking enemy property afloat, here to-day and gone to-morrow; and follow that up by threatening land positions which could not run away in the meanwhile. That was Barnett's method. Or he could reverse the process; which in point of fact he did, and thereby only won a half success. His extemporised squadron was ready for work by the spring; a season giving him indeed a fair wind to India, but just the time of year when the British freighters outward bound for Bombay and Calcutta were coming round the Cape. Had he followed Barnett's example of setting a trap for traffic certain to be entering the Indian Ocean by a fixed route at the very moment, and proceeded with the raiding of seaports afterwards, he would have increased the losses he inflicted on the British Company immensely, at certainly no additional risk to himself. But on leaving Mauritius he made Madras his first objective; with the result that all these ships not only reached their several destinations, but loaded up and sailed for home again at the change of season.

If his decision was questionably sound in itself, however, he carried it through with a superb audacity, displaying no hesitation to meet a British force, which under proper leadership ought to have been more than a match for his own heterogeneous and semi-trained command. And here again luck favoured his enterprising spirit beyond expectation. On arriving in the Bay of Bengal he ran into the British division almost at once, and an action ensued in which, without any reasonable justification, Peyton did his utmost to get beyond range from the outset, and eventually retired from the scene practically undamaged. Because neither side suffered appreciable loss this encounter has been described by some writers as indecisive. But it was far from indecisive in its consequences nevertheless, for it gave La Bourdonnais the measure of his opponent, and removed all doubt that he might proceed to attack any British position he chose on that side of India without serious fear of interruption. The British transmitting cable of national energy had in fact been cut. It is true that Peyton hove in sight again a few days later, but contented himself with sailing about at a safe distance and then disappearing finally. When this futile demonstration

had passed off without result La Bourdonnais anchored unhindered in Pondicherry roadstead, and notified his intention of attacking the British seat of government in that part of India to his compatriot Dupleix. Jealousy prevented the latter from aiding, but the admiral persisted in the project and successfully compelled the surrender of Madras after a brief investment by land and sea. Thenceforward the different views of these two high officials were accentuated. La Bourdonnais held the seaport as spoil of war, and now Dupleix wanted to absorb it in his visionary Franco-Indian empire, having done nothing himself to take it. But the naval officer frankly disbelieved in the possibility of such a dream ever materialising in the face of British sea power, and resolved to make the most of his prize in the only practicable fashion. Madras might not be carried away, but could be reduced to ashes in a day unless the residents made it worth his while to stay his hand. A businesslike parley on these lines ended therefore in his acceptance of a ransom of about double the monetary value of the entire squadron that extracted it. When this deal had been concluded La Bourdonnais returned to Pondicherry, having first, to the furious annoyance of Dupleix, pledged the honour of France that Madras should remain free from further molestation.

Everything attempted by the French admiral so far had passed off successfully. For the moment he commanded the Indian Ocean and could proceed to attack British interests at any point therein he pleased unhindered by human opposition. Nothing was known as yet in England of his activities, and for a whole year no reinforcements came out to join the British squadron. In that time, if disaster had not overtaken him in a form against which he was powerless, he would have conducted, beyond any reasonable doubt, one of the most sensational cruises in history; for with the approaching turn of monsoon, the British ports in western India lay open to the same form of treatment as Madras, and the Dutch ports in Ceylon as well; Holland being another enemy of France. La Bourdonnais had in fact planned to utilise the tail end of the summer monsoon to carry him to an attack on the Dutch stations in Sumatra when Madras was liberated. But now fortune suddenly deserted

him, and the forces of nature came to British assistance as so often in history. The Bay of Bengal happens to be one of the four general sea areas of the world subject to the devastating visitation of revolving storms; and in that particular region they occur towards the end of the summer monsoon, the only season in which, as already remarked, operations on a large scale were practicable to sailing fleets in the same locality. Belligerent forces engaged in conflict in the Bay of Bengal were like hostile armies facing each other in an earthquake area, where both may be impartially swallowed up without warning; and it was just when La Bourdonnais was on the point of starting for Sumatra that one of these hurricanes smote his squadron, bringing his schemes to ruin by totally wrecking three of his best ships with all hands, and dismasting the remainder. Any hopes of further success were now shattered, and his crippled surviving hulks had no option but to crawl back to Mauritius, whence, at the instigation of Dupleix, the admiral was recalled next year to France and imprisoned for serving his country according to his lights, dying a broken man. If his character and war plans are taken into consideration, and the absence of any effective check on his movements, this cyclone has some claim to rank as one of the most notable incidents of Indian Ocean history. And it is no more than a just tribute from his former opponents to the memory of a fine seaman and gallant officer that his statue should still overlook the Indian Ocean from the seaport which he created and whence he sailed to spread dismay among the enemies of France, though that seaport now lies under the flag of those same adversaries.

Only a few days after the final departure of La Bourdonnais from the Bay of Bengal, the French Governor General, aided by a native Prince, cancelled his treaty, seized Madras, and compromised the honour of his country; the pledge of the French admiral having been given under the discretionary power of a King's officer to decide an important point in war without reference to higher sanction when the circumstances make such a reference impracticable. With Madras thus in the hands of Dupleix, the British Company's staff and forces had no fortified rallying point left on that side of India except Cuddalore,

which Dupleix prepared to besiege with the help of the Nabob of the Carnatic next year, that is to say, in 1747. But other events intervened and great transformations in the world situation were occurring. By the wreck of the ships under La Bourdonnais, and the supersession of Peyton by Admiral Griffin, who arrived a few months afterwards with two additional vessels to reinforce the British division, the far end of the British line of power transmission was restored. Results were soon apparent. Both combatants were getting exhausted in India more or less; but the British had the smaller reserve of energy on the spot, and their need for a fresh supply of Imperial force was greater than that of their adversaries. It was fortunate for them, therefore, that Griffin's appearance on the coast happened to coincide with the French move against Cuddalore, and caused Dupleix to retire to await a more favourable chance that never came. From that stage the rôles of attack and defence began to change hands. Scarcely had the far end of the British line been re-connected when the home end of the French was so decisively broken that it remained inoperative for the rest of the war. Six powerful vessels sailed from France, with orders to join the now refitted remnant of La Bourdonnais' former command lying disengaged at Mauritius, and then move on as a whole to destroy the force under Griffin. When French supremacy had thus been reasserted in the Bay of Bengal they were to co-operate with Dupleix in sweeping the British Company clean out of southern India, for which purpose they carried French troops. These six started with a large fleet and convoy bound for America, to travel together till clear of European waters; but another fleet specially despatched under Anson broke up the whole combination in the Bay of Biscay, and not one of the ships destined for the Indian Ocean went further than three days' sail from home, four surrendering to Anson and the other pair being chased back. After two years of conflict, British superiority in the main theatre of operations was now at length producing the decisive effect in far distant areas which La Bourdonnais had foretold.

This effect steadily gathered weight. With the return of the summer monsoon in 1748 the British resumed the offensive

in eastern seas begun by Barnett but interrupted by La Bourdonnais. A fleet of ten sail arrived in the Bay of Bengal from England under Boscawen; which, in conjunction with those already on the station, made up by far the most powerful force ever assembled outside the North Atlantic up to that date. It was superfluously strong for the requirements of the naval situation, but the easier position in Europe enabled the British government to spare the ships from home service, and their numbers permitted the conveyance of enough British troops to reverse the whole state of affairs in the Carnatic by passing from defence to attack. The British power line was now in full working order. As no sea enemy required Boscawen's attention, he lost little time in commencing operations against the heart of the French possessions, and encircled Pondicherry on all sides; but, though that well-fortified colonial capital was to fall into British hands eventually, the time was not yet. This first siege entailed such heavy losses to the attackers on the land side through mismanagement and disease that Boscawen broke it off, and re-embarked the surviving troops in time for the fleet to leave the bay and sail round to Bombay before the winter monsoon made re-embarkation impossible: but not until a hurricane of the same kind as that which had ended the cruise of La Bourdonnais a year before took its toll of the British in their turn and caused the loss of some of their best ships and men. The attack would undoubtedly have been resumed next season nevertheless, if Britain and France had not already arranged a treaty of peace—unknown, of course, in India till many months later—while the investment of Pondicherry was actually in progress. Among its other clauses this treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle provided for the restitution of Madras to the British Company in exchange for a similar handing back of Louisbourg in North America to the French Crown; a seaport captured during the war, to which the French attached a strategic value not at all shared by British naval opinion. That this exchange was decidedly in favour of England can hardly be denied if the two places be compared as they stand to-day; and the hauling down of the Bourbon colours over so great a prize as Madras when no enemy was in sight much mystified the

natives of southern India, to the detriment of French prestige.

The close of five years of strife between these two great Powers, therefore, left the territory of their respective Companies in the east exactly as it stood before; and, if the map of India had been the sole gauge for measuring the results of the contest on that side of the world, it would have lacked historical interest as a stalemate leading nowhere. In reality it was far otherwise. For the first time British national forces were engaged in waters where only privately employed British forces had been in action before; and the despatch of Barnett and Boscawen to the Indian Ocean marked an immense widening of the direct pressure applied by British sea power against the interests of a European opponent. Moreover, it signified official recognition of the claims of British commercial enterprise in distant regions to State support when endangered by European rivals in arms. The flag was here following trade, in accordance with the general tendency in British foreign expansion, and not *vice versa*, as some political economists would have us believe.

Equally important was the effect produced by the war on the views of the directors of the French Company. Like the Londoners, the merchants of Paris and Bordeaux had originally speculated in eastern ventures purely as buyers and sellers on business; and the visionary suggestions of founding a great Franco-Indian Empire poured into their ears by Dupleix only sounded attractive as a possible preliminary to the establishment of a colossal monopoly. This hope sustained them to some extent during four years of complete cessation of trade; begun by the alarm caused through Barnett's captures, continued by the diversion of freighters to fighting purposes by La Bourdonnais, and prolonged to the end by Boscawen's overwhelming strength in eastern seas. But when the French line of power transmission was severed by Anson the prospects of a great empire in the east were obviously receding; and as a first direct consequence of the rupture of their only transport route to the Carnatic came the inevitable abandonment of the plan of Dupleix to annex Cuddalore. Then followed the inversion of

the whole military position in the disputed region, when Dupleix was compelled to stand on the defensive himself and submit to the complete isolation of the Company's own seat of eastern administration; which, though failing to enforce its surrender at the time, proved the insecurity of Pondicherry against the possible repetition of such attacks. And, lastly, came the blow of the order to the Company to evacuate Madras, on the retention of which great anticipations were founded as an outlet for the commerce of a large area through a long established trading connection. All these lessons and disappointments were emphasized by the knowledge that the business of their British rivals in Bengal and western India had flourished throughout the war, in spite of occasional losses by privateer captures; for even when La Bourdonnais was a terror on the Madras side, the south-west monsoon kept him to leeward of the Indian peninsula while Bombay harbour was full of ships loading for home, beyond his reach till they could slip away.

With such experiences to discuss, some of the more influential French shareholders were beginning to lose faith in the schemes of Dupleix, even before the war terminated; but he himself remained blind to the real situation, and when peace was restored associated himself more than ever with the intrigues of the native States in such a way as to embarrass the policy of the British at every turn. This compelled the latter to form alliances with the native rulers who were in opposition to his supporters; and in that way many encounters took place between the troops of the two Companies as partisans of warring Indian potentates, though the Companies themselves were at nominal peace with each other. As the spheres of these irregular conflicts widened their expense increased, and to all demands on the part of the Board in Paris for more parcels of Indian goods the militant Governor General replied by asking for more soldiers and ammunition. At the same time, however, he managed to send home enough in the way of marketable freights to keep them just appeased for so long that it was not till 1754 that they lost all further patience and ordered him home. He died in destitution and obscurity, like his victim La Bourdonnais.

When Dupleix was recalled, peace between Britain and

France had lasted for six years. But as the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was little more than an armistice caused by general exhaustion, many of the minor points in dispute had remained unsettled and a fresh war was already imminent. During 1755 several collisions were provoked on either side, and in May 1756 Britain issued the formal declaration of hostilities which launched the memorable Seven Years' War, whereby Anglo-Saxons were raised to heights of power never approached in their former history.

In the earlier part of this celebrated conflict British statesmen failed in some respects to make full use of the naval superiority at their disposal, though certain precautionary steps were taken. Among these was the despatch of a squadron to the Indian Ocean under Admiral Watson in 1755, when the political outlook was becoming seriously disturbed. Watson's command included four sail of the line, and carried troops under Colonel Clive for use as might be necessary in defence of the British Company's territories against either French or native invasion. For a time this naval and military combination acted as an amphibious flying column. As no French fleet required his attention the British Admiral held straight for India, and as the near approach of the winter monsoon denied him any possibility of visiting the east side for five months he made Bombay his first destination. Thence, after a brief stay, he proceeded with Clive's help to begin work by extirpating the Angria pirates. At the change of monsoon in the spring of 1756 he sailed round to Madras with Clive and his men still on board. His appearance thus in the near neighbourhood of Pondicherry, at a time when intelligence of the outbreak of war between France and England was daily expected, secured the safety of the British ports on that side of Hindustan; but while lying in Madras roads he was informed of the seizure of Calcutta by the Nawab of Bengal. This placed Watson in an anxious position. Clive urged the admiral to carry him and his troops up the Hooghly without delay to recapture the Bengal capital; but Watson's principal duty was to prevent the arrival of any enemy in India by sea, and such a contingency had to be regarded as among the possible consequences of the expected war with



France. British naval commanders were well aware that, at peril of Court martial, the Admiralty expected them to ensure that there should be no recurrence of such incidents as La Bourdonnais' capture of Madras; and if he pushed himself up one of the most difficult rivers in the world to navigate, in the largest ships that had so far entered it, he might suffer accidents reducing his force in the process, and in any case could not get back to the Coromandel coast for some time if needed. Few admirals would have set aside these considerations at once to meet Clive's suggestions. Some might have declined the responsibility altogether. Watson took the middle course and accepted the risk of leaving Madras exposed after a careful review of the position, for Clive's army was impotent to remedy the indisputably disastrous state of the Company's affairs in Bengal without his help to take it there. He agreed, therefore, to make the move; and so enabled Clive to recapture Calcutta and defeat the Nawab on the famous field of Plassey, at odds almost as great as those faced by Albuquerque's squadron at Ormuz. Some of his ships assisted also in the taking of the French capital in Bengal at Chandernagore on the Hooghly, which was their last direct co-operation with Clive. Soon afterwards Watson died, and was thus denied the opportunity of meeting the French in the Bay of Bengal; which fell to his successor, Admiral Pocock; a fearless and energetic commander but a mediocre tactician.

War with France had been declared in the meanwhile, and the British situation in the east was so far satisfactory that the Anglo-Indian line of communication was well guarded at both ends. But on the other hand, the ministry failed to cut the corresponding line of the French by any blockade of their ports, such as Pitt instituted when he came into power at a later stage of hostilities. Through the absence of any such check a French squadron of six sail left Brest for the Indian Ocean in 1757—the year of Plassey—under Commodore D'Aché, carrying troops for Indian service under the Irish Count Lally. On both sides, therefore, the conveying lines of national power were working in competition. Clive's position having been consolidated on the Hooghly, the fleet left the river to meet the



GEORGE POCKOCK

British Vice-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief in the Indian Ocean

*(By permission, from the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery)*



new danger; and D'Aché, with three extra vessels picked up at Mauritius, entered the Bay of Bengal in the summer monsoon of 1758, where Pocock was already on the watch. In this second Anglo-French series of encounters the better commander was on board the British and not the French flagship; but as the difference between him and his opponent was not so pronounced as between La Bourdonnais and Peyton, success was more fluctuating and the fighting much more severe. The British had seven vessels, the French nine, but of individually less force. In the opening moves the combatants passed each other unseen at night, the British admiral hunting to the southward for the enemy and the French making northward to attack Cuddalore. Pocock soon searched back up the coast, however, and, finding the French hastily getting under way from Cuddalore roads, fell on them forthwith. This was the first of a succession of battles, each in turn the bloodiest ever fought in the Indian Ocean up to the date of its occurrence. The British attack was delivered in line abreast from windward against the parallel French formation in line ahead, according to the conventional and unscientific practice of the day. But it was faultily executed, and D'Aché struck back with such vigour, that although eventually forced to retreat in disorder, he saved all his ships and crippled his enemy too much for pursuit. By that the French gained a somewhat important point, apart from the immediate avoidance of loss in vessels; for it was imperative for Pocock to recondition his command for service with the utmost expedition, and as the necessary repairing material was only in store at Madras, he was obliged to abandon Cuddalore temporarily to its fate, which fell before a land siege by Lally in direct consequence.

After the fleets had drawn apart, each made for its nearest refitting port at the best speed its damages would permit—the British to Madras and the French to Pondicherry—under the double urgency of being ready to meet either the enemy or the weather, as the cyclone season was at hand. Pocock was soon refitted again by strenuous effort, but for a time remained at Madras, which was weakly garrisoned and expecting attack by Lally's army. Finding, however, that the French general was

making no move, he sailed once more in search of D'Aché, whom he met and attacked a second time. Except that the losses in men were even heavier, this round was in all its features and results a repetition of the first; the same determined onset, the same wholesale bloodshed, the same retreat by the French, the same futile effort at pursuit by the dismasted British. But Pocock's persistence was beginning to tell; for all the French repairing stores at Pondicherry had been used up to make good the damages after the first action, and now D'Aché was compelled to retreat the whole way to Mauritius to obtain a further supply, without which he was helpless to fight again. For thus leaving the Indian coast some writers have criticised the French admiral, and Lally complained bitterly of the withdrawal. But as the absolutely essential refitting equipment was exhausted in India D'Aché could in truth have done nothing else. Pocock had the advantage there, and could soon be ready for further encounters, which the French ships were in no condition to face. At Mauritius the French commander knew that at the worst he could not be brought to action for some time after arrival, even if followed when his enemy was again ready for service.

It happened, however, that Mauritius had deteriorated greatly as a naval base since the recall of La Bourdonnais ten years before, through a lack of understanding of the administrative requirements of sea warfare on the part of the French; and here it is pertinent to observe, as an important and instructive circumstance connected with the whole subject, that, although the British Company were often inferior to their French rivals in military preparations, they were always much better in naval, except in the time of La Bourdonnais. At this point of history the Bombay yard could build or dock even a seventy-four; and its reserves of equipment were ample and good. But at Mauritius every kind of supply was deficient, even to provisions; so that only by dismantling his worst damaged ships entirely and using their gear for the others was it possible for D'Aché to restore any to a serviceable state; and even the repaired ships had to be sent on several months' absence to the Cape of Good Hope for victuals, a point as far distant from Mauritius in one direction as India was in the other. Thus,

though reinforced by three liners from home, he did not return to the Bay of Bengal till late in the summer of 1759.

During this twelve months' interval in the active operations Pocock also left the Coromandel side for the winter monsoon period, and sailed round to Bombay, where his squadron was thoroughly overhauled after its two years of strenuous service. In his unavoidable absence Madras was besieged by Lally, but managed to hold out till Pocock's return caused the French to retire. That retreat marked the turn of events, which now, as in the previous war, ran in British favour with increasing momentum till the end. Clive predicted such an outcome even when Madras was under siege, in a letter written home to Pitt; in which he expressed confidence that though British prospects might appear bad, the French would have lost everything in India by the end of the year, through shortage of war supplies from external sources as long as the British squadron commanded the Bay of Bengal; while the Madras army could make good all the wastage of war from overseas. Thus the current of national energy through the French line was cut off and threatened with total exhaustion, the British supply well assured and growing in volume steadily.

Once more, however,—though now for the last time—Pocock had to fight to maintain that situation. D'Aché reappeared in the Bay of Bengal in the late summer with eleven sail; but as his original vessels had only been indifferently refitted, and his losses in men could only be replaced by natives from East Africa, the fibre of his numerically powerful command was feeble. Pocock had no more than nine ships under his orders, but all in excellent condition and British manned throughout, having been completed to full crews by hands entered from merchantmen at Bombay. The result was inevitable. A small replenishment in troops and munitions carried by the French for Lally did succeed in landing at Pondicherry before the British intervened, though too few to affect the military situation. But almost immediately afterwards Pocock again caught their fleet at sea and forced a third pitched battle, in which the carnage on the French decks was so devastating that D'Aché lost any remaining hope of ultimate success; knowing that the

combatant value of his command deteriorated progressively after every engagement through irreplaceable loss of the right kind of men and material, while that of his opponent could always re-enter the arena as dangerous as ever. He decided therefore to retire while his ships were still sufficiently seaworthy to escape from irretrievable disaster in a contest where no prospects of victory remained, and sailed for Mauritius and France. Lally protested against his departure, knowing nothing of the nature of a seaman's responsibilities, and it has sometimes been held that D'Aché might have done more. He was certainly not in the same class of war leaders as the two other French commanders of Indian Ocean history, La Bourdonnais and Suffren; for, unlike them, he remained content with defensive tactics, and never attempted to gain a command of the sea theatre of operations. But though shamefully starved by the home authorities, he did nevertheless twice thrust himself into an area where he was certain to be attacked, in order to support his comrades on the land. Thus, if he made no effort to sever the British power line, he still endeavoured under great handicaps to maintain the French; and his detractors are not the men of his own profession, who can appreciate the immense difficulties with which he had to contend.

By a vigorous and sustained offensive, which eventually drove the enemy's flag from eastern seas, Pocock had finally cut the French line at the distant end while keeping his own intact; and in this same year 1759 it was also severed near the home terminal by Hawke's great triumph at Quiberon, which shattered the French navy beyond recovery till long after the return of peace. The complete isolation of the Carnatic possessions of the French Company thereby brought about ruined their last ambitions in India, where Lally's situation went steadily from bad to worse, as Clive had foretold. Half the white troops originally sent out with the Franco-Irish commander had already been lost through war and disease, most of his munitions had been used up, and all his money was spent. No replenishments of any kind could reach him from France. But all the requirements of war on the British side could be met—and were more than met—through the transmitting

cable of national force. Colonel Coote was carried to Madras with British regulars, where he at once moved to attack on the field, defeated Lally at Wandewash, and captured or recaptured all the positions held or taken by the French, beginning at Arcot and ending at Pondicherry, with the fall of which Lally and the remnant of his army surrendered. The French flag had now disappeared from India as utterly as from the Indian Ocean, and not a shred of its authority remained for the time. Pondicherry was returned to France at the end of the war, but its fortifications had been levelled and its trade was gone. Lally subsequently fell a victim to the mortification and disappointment of the French Board of Directors; at whose suit he was executed for not saving an impossible situation, for which they themselves had been responsible through lack of understanding.

The white man's dominion over the Indian Ocean—first established by the Portuguese, and for many generations the foundation of all contact between east and west—had lasted for about two centuries and a half when it came to Britain's turn to hold it as a result of the Seven Years' War. In British hands it has remained ever since, except for one brief lapse. That dominion is of course only a means to an end, but in the absence of any alternative means essential to the attainment of that end. The end itself is the application of British energy to vast fields of labour and enterprise, to which the command of the sea ensures that the energy shall be safely transmitted if threatened by hostile action. By acquiring an unchallenged command of the Indian Ocean as a first step, Britain was able not only to proceed with great developments in India but to use India as an advanced base for further overseas conquests; or as a secondary power house for the storage and distribution of national force received from the mother country. Hence, in following up the course of subsequent history, we find that in later wars every one of the more important possessions of her enemies lying in or adjacent to the Indian Ocean was attacked and taken by expeditions crossing it from India as a starting point. The Philippine Islands, Java, Malacca, Ceylon and Mauritius all fell into British hands sooner or later in that way, though many were ransomed or returned to their former owners



on the restoration of peace. These conquests were in fact initiated even before the Seven Years' War concluded. In that war Spain eventually took the side of France, whereupon a squadron sailed from India for Manilla under Admiral Cornish—Pocock's successor—conveying troops commanded by General Draper. This combination captured the Philippine capital and a large Spanish treasure ship with gold from Peru. The treasure ship and her freight were prize of war, and Manilla was ransomed after the example set by La Bourdonnais at Madras. In all the booty amounted to £1,400,000. Since the attack on the Portuguese at Ormuz in the very early days of the London East India Company one hundred and forty years before, this seizure of Manilla was the first blow struck at an enemy fortress colony by a British sea expedition launched from India. It was a fore-runner of many others undertaken in later wars as a consequence of British sea power in the east; the latest being the subjugation of German East Africa one hundred and fifty-five years after.

## The LAST BATTLEFLEET STRUGGLE in the BAY OF BENGAL

**I**T has often occurred during the long process of the expansion of the British Empire that a state of war on its land frontiers in Asia and Africa has been contemporary with a state of complete peace at sea; and in this co-existence of strife on one element with calm on another the operation of cause and effect may be discerned without much difficulty. Hostilities on the water entail an uncertainty in the transmission of Imperial energy to distant parts of application on the land, and work at those points has to be planned or undertaken on a correspondingly reduced scale. But peace on the water secures to them an uninterrupted and unthreatened flow of power, enabling the Imperial workers on the spot to overcome local opposition, whether active and mobile in character, or merely passive and inert. Thus we find that the fifteen years interval of peace among the maritime Powers which came between the second and third of the great ocean wars of the eighteenth century coincided with one of the most turbulent periods in the contact of Europeans and Asiatics on the soil of Hindustan.

When the two principal white nations holding territory and interests in that land ceased to strike at each other in 1763, the victorious British were liberated to march against any native enemy with an assured line of reinforcement and supply at their backs reaching all the way to Europe. Thus supported from the main generating station of national power, they pushed far inland during the next decade from their fringe of coastal settlements, and brought wide areas of thickly populated territory under their control, either directly, or through native rulers acting as their instruments. This penetration, however, went further in Bengal than in Western or Southern India. On the Bombay side the Mahratta chiefs proved formidable neighbours, while in the Carnatic region the brilliant soldier upstart Hyder Ali usurped the Sultanate of Mysore, and became a source of frequent anxiety to Madras. Under such conditions the line of least resistance in moving towards new areas of trade lay up

the banks of the Ganges; and when, after leading separate existences since their establishment, the three Presidencies of the British East India Company were united in 1773 under Warren Hastings as first Governor General, his seat of administration as such was left at Calcutta, where he was already President, though Bengal was the youngest of the Presidencies, and from a naval or military standpoint Calcutta was an incomparably worse headquarters position than Bombay.

During this same fifteen years of European peace and Indian warfare the fleets maintained by Western Powers in eastern seas dwindled to very small proportions. Even when the possessions of the dissolved and bankrupt French East India Company were transferred to the French Crown in 1769, they were left almost destitute of immediate naval protection; and though the Dutch Company had yet another generation of decaying existence to run, ships of the State Navy of Holland practically disappeared from Asiatic waters, where the only naval forces left under the Dutch colours were a few small coastguard sloops. Even the British Royal Navy was only represented by one liner of the lowest rate, and three or four cruisers; supported by an equal number of the light armed vessels belonging to the British Company. But insignificant though the European squadrons might be, they were sufficiently a reminder of far greater powers in reserve to prevent any Asiatic challenge to the white man's dominion over the Indian Ocean, or any recrudescence of piracy on the scale which prevailed during the first half of the century. An effort of Hyder Ali to establish a coastal flotilla on the model of the earlier but now defunct Angria sea forces did indeed occur, but was suppressed at one blow; and though minor piratical disorders occasionally broke out at remoter points, such as the Persian Gulf or Malayan channels, none of these were of a nature to cause alarming dislocation to peaceable sea traffic.

Matters were in this condition of maritime tranquillity when the whole scene was suddenly changed by the action of France in attacking England in 1778, ostensibly in support of the revolted American colonies but actually in the hope of profiting by British national emergencies. In this new conflict the French

king adopted the policy of striking at the most distant extremities of the British realms rather than threatening an invasion of the heart, as in the last war; and in the interval of peace the French navy had been considerably strengthened and reorganised. But through the consequences of the preceding war French power had fallen so low in Hindustan that their small garrison stood no chance of holding its own against the army of the British Company; and having no prospects, therefore, of setting up an Indian Empire of their own, their plan was to help the native Princes to make such an empire equally impracticable for England.

As events on the Atlantic occupied the whole energies of the French navy for a long time after the war began, however, this problem of intervention in the East was not seriously taken up till the addition of Spain and Holland to the muster of the anti-British nations pointed 5000 more guns at England. When France drew the sword in 1778 her navy could only count 75 sail-of-the-line to the British 130—excluding about a dozen others past service—and in India the military odds were so greatly in British favour that Warren Hastings had merely to order the seizure of Pondicherry for that place to be occupied after a brief resistance, and a skirmish in the roadstead between the small British and French squadrons stationed in the Indian Ocean, which ended in the flight of the latter to Mauritius. But next year, when Spain joined France, 60 liners were added to the fleets arrayed against England, and the potential scope of major operations was extended to the furthest limits of British rule east and west. As that important change in the strategic situation necessitated an immediate and considerable re-disposition of forces, the British and French Governments both despatched a squadron of the line to the Indian Ocean, neither being aware of this action on the part of the other at the time. Six British vessels sailed for Bombay under Sir Edward Hughes and six French for Mauritius under Count D'Orves. Neither side, therefore, secured the dominant position on the far side of the Cape of Good Hope at which both had aimed; and for more than a year each admiral felt too uncertain of his prospects of success to risk an attack on the other.

While the fleets were kept in this attitude of mutual watching and waiting the troops of the British Company in India completed the capture of the French positions, by seizing their last remaining settlement of Mahé, on the Malabar side of the peninsula. Though only a minor station its fall produced highly important consequences by bringing the redoubtable Sultan of Mysore definitely into alliance with the French. For some time previously Hyder's relations with the British had been fairly amicable; but on his part it was a truce of expediency only, and when he learnt that England was entangled in formidable difficulties in Europe and America he saw what he conceived to be a promising chance for a forward move against British possessions in his neighbourhood. Mahé lay near enough to his own territory to make its enforced change of ownership a pretext for war, to which a successful issue seemed to be guaranteed by a French pledge to assist with a strong brigade of white troops specially sent out from home. On the French admirals, therefore, fell the responsibility of ensuring that these troops were duly landed in India, on the British admirals the responsibility of preventing it.

Before any contact had been established, however, between the Sultan of Mysore and his French comrades in arms, the general British situation was rendered graver than ever by the accession of yet another navy to the great combination already formed to encompass the eternal downfall of the British nation. Holland joined it with 26 more ships-of-the-line, raising thereby the number of heavy vessels which the British fleet was called on to withstand to 160; and thus for the first time in a hundred years that fleet took the sea in war with fewer ships than its antagonists. Had the latter now worked properly together, overwhelming disaster must inevitably have overtaken the realms under the Union flag. But so defective was their collaboration that in spite of great advantages in numbers and position they failed either to overthrow British resistance in European waters, or to prevent the despatch of reinforcements to the hard pressed extremities of England's 20,000 mile line of defensive activity. Four more liners were ordered out to join Hughes and in due course arrived at Madras.

Almost simultaneously with that movement the French despatched five liners to join D'Orves at Mauritius, and under their protection a large fleet of transports carrying regiments and guns for service in conjunction with Hyder Ali; the whole convoy sailing under Commodore Suffren, whose heroic figure now appeared on the stage of eastern history. While these reinforcements were making the nine months' outward passage, D'Orves paid a flying and futile visit to the Bay of Bengal during the winter monsoon—calculating correctly that Hughes would then be on the other side of the Indian peninsula—and communicated with Hyder, who was halted before Cuddalore, impatiently awaiting the French admiral's help to take it. But D'Orves was so daunted by the lee shores and surf-swept beaches of the season that he returned to Mauritius, leaving the irritated Sultan to withdraw again to his hills. With the coming of the south-west monsoon in spring Hughes sailed back to the Bay of Bengal and embarked British Company's troops at Madras to seize the Dutch Company's ports in southern India; the loss of which was the first consequence to Holland on that side of the world of her entry into the war. Such a result the Dutch had probably foreseen, hoping at the same time with some reason, that the ruin of Britain which the autocrats of France and Spain were now confidently anticipating—in common with their allies of British ancestry and anti-autocratic principles in America—would put everything right in due course. Having missed his chance of meeting and engaging the French fleet under favourable circumstances through his absence at Bombay, Hughes remained on the Madras side when the winter monsoon again returned, in spite of the risks attendant on exposed anchorages, open coast and onshore winds; and even transported an attacking body of troops from Madras for the seizure of the fortified and strategically valuable Dutch harbour of Trincomalee in Ceylon, the only anchorage anywhere on the west side of the Bay of Bengal affording sheltered accommodation for a fleet at all seasons of the year. Here he captured a large number of Dutch merchantmen, which had made for that port for safety on the outbreak of war.

By this time the four liners from home had joined up, and

brought the news that the large convoy of French troopships for India, escorted by a battle squadron, was well on its way out, having indeed fought an indecisive action with the British reinforcing vessels *en route*, at the Cape de Verde Islands. As soon as Trincomalee had been captured, therefore, Hughes went straight back to Madras, to replenish magazines in preparation for big emergencies. It was well for him that he did. D'Orves was not a venturesome officer, but to do him justice, lost little time in starting from Mauritius to Hyder Ali's help after Suffren had joined his flag with the extra ships and transports from France. He was already far on his way towards India while Hughes was still assisting in the capture of Trincomalee.

It was at this critical stage of a rapidly developing situation that an event of the highest consequence occurred. The French admiral was in failing health, and on the 9th February when nearing the scene of action succumbed to climatic disease, being succeeded as Commander-in-Chief by Suffren, whose dominant genius for war put a new complexion on everything, and doubled the menace confronting Hughes and his military colleagues in the Carnatic. Sir Edward was an officer of the not uncommon type, in which a selfless courage and sense of duty are handicapped by an imperfect understanding of war as an art; and though a tenacious fighter his grip was unequal to that of his untiring and far abler opponent. Suffren had all the best qualities of Hughes on a higher plane, combined with the intellectual grasp of main issues and readiness of initiative which produce a commander of the first rank. He was far ahead of the doctrines of the French navy in matters of general sea strategy, and through never being afraid to take his own line, perplexed the British by introducing a factor of a novel kind in their experience of dealing with French fleets. Thus in the third of the Anglo-French sea campaigns in the Indian Ocean—as in the first—the better leader served under the colours of France. But in all three the British leader handled the weapon of finer proved temper. In seven of the nine general actions fought from first to last—counting the meeting of La Bourdonnais and Peyton as one—the French fleet was the larger. In



PIERRE-ANDRÉ DE SUFFREN SAINT-TROPEZ  
French Rear-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief in the Indian Ocean  
*From a painting by A. Roslin. By permission of "The Connoisseur"*





six of the nine it was certainly commanded by the better admiral. But with everything in French favour when actually engaged, the British officers and men saved the situation again and again by superior valour, discipline and seamanship. The British line of battle was a definite fighting formation whether for attack or defence. The French ships seemed incapable of maintaining any formation at all till the very last action was fought and the war practically over. The British *morale* seemed to harden and improve under the strain, but the French *morale* deteriorated till Suffren had made a drastic weeding out. If supported as well as Hughes he would have carried everything before him from the first engagement, whereas in the end his mission was not fully accomplished till after five pitched battles.

In the highly important but often unappreciated matter of fleet maintenance on distant war service—seldom really understood in France—the British Admiral had also the great advantage of an ample reserve of guns, ammunition, timber, spars, canvas, rope, provisions and water, all close to the scene at Madras; besides the support of batteries on shore when he anchored there to refit, or draw ammunition after action. Having lost Pondicherry already the French had no such repairing base nearer than Mauritius, a month's voyage distant: though even Pondicherry had never been the equal in that respect of Madras. But as Suffren could carry large quantities of spare powder and stores in the troopships under his escort, and could moreover obtain provisions and water from his Dutch allies in Ceylon, the lack of an advanced base was not enough to prevent a man of his determined vigour from holding the situation in spite of stubborn opposition. At the same time the acquisition of some sheltered anchorage wherein to pass the next winter monsoon, instead of returning to Mauritius and abandoning the Bay of Bengal to the enemy, was so prospectively urgent that it occupied a very important place in his programme. Trincomalee was incomparably the best, but it was in British hands. He decided, therefore, that Trincomalee must be recaptured in due course, and in his scheme of operations aimed firstly at demolishing Hughes to clear the way for

everything else; then at landing the army to assist Hyder Ali in overthrowing the British in India; and then seizing Trincomalee and using it as a base for a fleet commanding all sea approaches to India till the end of the war. Such a plan, if successful, would have isolated the British garrisons indefinitely from relief, and encouraged their native enemies throughout the peninsula. In Suffren every naval officer must recognise the artist.

The nine ships-of-the-line lying in Madras Roads under Hughes when the French fleet reached the Bay of Bengal were the first and most formidable obstacle with which Suffren had to deal. By pure good fortune he had already met and captured a tenth on passage to join her consorts who badly needed her. With a prize crew placed on board—which his strongly manned fleet could easily spare—this gave Suffren the appreciable superiority of twelve liners to nine instead of the bare margin of eleven to ten. Some fifteen or twenty transports sailed under his escort, and thus about thirty vessels were visible on the horizon through Hughes' telescope on the morning of February 15th when Suffren appeared in sight of the Presidency capital. Being necessarily still in ignorance of the death of D'Orves the British Admiral supposed him to be in command, and was not apprehensive of any bold or immediate attack; but the number of sail in view enforced caution, and if compelled to engage he hoped to do so with the support of the batteries on shore. He drew his blade, so to speak, and stood on the alert by clearing for action, heaving short on his cables and watching for the enemy's next move. That move was rather what might have been expected from a man of D'Orves' irresolute character, for when the approaching French fleet had reconnoitred Madras and the offing for a day or two, it turned southward again and headed in the direction of Ceylon. In reality this was a trap of Suffren's to draw Hughes from the support of the batteries, and it proved quite successful. He calculated rightly that the British Commander would be alarmed for the safety of the still weakly garrisoned prize of Trincomalee; and indeed it is noticeable all through the long struggle which followed, how clearly the opponents read each

other's minds when Hughes had learnt what manner of adversary he had to contend with. When he saw the direction in which the enemy was now steering, Hughes' anchors were up in a trice, and he gave chase in the full belief that he was after D'Orves. He was even fortunate enough to capture some of the French troop transports separated from protection by bad management in the night. But for two whole days Suffren continued the pretence of running away till the British fleet was lured off far from its base; a trick that Hughes himself employed on a later occasion. Then he suddenly turned on it and struck his blow on February 17th, hoping that with his superior numbers one straight fight would give him final victory.

But now the French admiral was to suffer his first experience of disloyal and incompetent subordinates. So negligently and clumsily were the vessels of his rear division handled that his line went to pieces, and the attack resolved itself into a chaotic encounter of unequal brunt in both fleets, which was prolonged without decisive result till the fall of the black tropical night broke it up. As some of the British ships were too seriously damaged for immediate further service, however, Hughes felt a withdrawal was imperative, and slipped away under cover of darkness for Trincomalee, which was much nearer now than Madras. This baulked Suffren from a fresh attack next morning, and so far not one of his enemy's vessels had been sunk or captured. But on the other hand they were at least temporarily thrust aside, and he knew that he might return to the Coromandel coast and land the army to assist Hyder Ali without much risk of being attacked in force during the laborious and delicate operation of disembarking thousands of soldiers from open sea on an open beach. For the time, therefore, he postponed a search for Hughes, and sailing north, put the troops and camp equipment successfully on shore to form contact with the Sultan's army; a junction of forces which soon brought about the long delayed fall of Cuddalore. That important part of his mission was thus accomplished; but until the British fleet had been finally put out of action by destruction or capture, the sea maintenance of campaigning supplies for the brigades in the

field necessarily remained a constant source of anxiety to the French admiral.

While Suffren was thus employed Hughes was pushing forward his repairs at Trincomalee, and within a fortnight his fleet was again ready for action. He knew nothing definitely of the whereabouts of the French fleet since the battle, but feared that he was too late to obstruct or threaten the disembarkation of the French army, and could only operate thenceforward by cutting its line of communication. Foreseeing, however, that Suffren might be looking round for a base in case of a prolonged struggle and would probably cast his eye on Trincomalee, the British commander resolved as his next immediate occupation to make that port stronger by bringing some more guns and troops thither from Madras if it could be managed. Such a move was obviously dependent on being kept secret from Suffren, who happened to be lying between Madras and Trincomalee in an excellent position to intercept sea communication between the two, though still mystified as to the whereabouts of the British fleet since its disappearance on the night of action. Hughes took the risk, sailed from Trincomalee, kept out of sight of land on the passage and arrived undetected by the enemy at Madras, where the military authorities at once agreed that Trincomalee must be strengthened, and put the necessary troops and guns on board. At this juncture, by a timely stroke of good fortune, the British fleet was increased by two more ships-of-the-line arriving from home, which just managed to escape report by Suffren's scouts. But intelligence reached the French admiral through native spies of Hughes' arrival at Madras, so that when the latter again left for Trincomalee he encountered Suffren at sea and a second general action ensued on April 12th. Leaving out tactical details this second fight was merely a repetition of the first in its main points and consequences. So carelessly did some of the French captains obey signals that all organised movement attempted by their leader was faultily executed to a degree rendering the official reports of the engagement widely discrepant from opposite sides. The French impact, however, fell mainly on the British centre, where it produced a confused but

terrific *mêlée*, in which several vessels—including both flagships—suffered a fearful list of casualties and others were dangerously disabled; while those further out received little injury.

But before any clear advantage had been won on either side both found themselves threatened by a danger of another kind. The battle began near the north coast of Ceylon, and in grappling with each other the fleets had drifted so close to shoals as to be in perilous proximity for the crippled ships; which, by compelling the admirals to yield to the exigencies of navigation, forced them to disengage and draw apart beyond range before dark. At sunset both had anchored in open sea, out of shot but within sight of each other, where for several days they lay laboriously re-conditioning their battered gear, like exhausted pugilists in opposite corners of a ring. The British had fared worst in injuries to masts and the French in men, but both were in a shaky plight and could count themselves fortunate that it was too early in the year for cyclones.

Suffren's spars having suffered least he was first recovered, and got under weigh, but to the great surprise of Hughes did not at the moment renew the fight. For this abstention, however, the French admiral has left his reasons on record. His ships were running short of ammunition, and the twice proved inefficiency of his captains was causing him such qualms that even so intrepid a chief was not prepared to take the risk of engaging under any disadvantage. He foresaw now that the vanquishing of Hughes was going to be a long and strenuous task; though perhaps hardly anticipated that it would occasion as many as three more general actions, of which two were destined to come near to French defeats. The necessity for filling up magazines on every opportunity had become pressing, and as a convoy of transports with additional ranks for the army and general supplies for the fleet was already due from Mauritius he went south to meet it at the allied Dutch harbour of Galle, leaving Hughes alone for the time. At this *rendezvous* he completed up with all kinds of war necessities and then escorted the troopships on to the Indian coast to land their military drafts; seeing nothing of Hughes on the way, who, when he found that Suffren was not re-engaging at once, had taken the

chance to move into Trincomalee to put ashore the reinforcements for the garrison embarked at Madras before the battle, and also to complete in a sheltered port the very extensive refit required by his worst damaged ships. This last occupation kept him there for several weeks; but when at length ready for sea, he sailed again to try and prevent Suffren's further communication with Hyder Ali, meeting the French fleet near Cuddalore and forcing a third fleet action on the 6th July. All the eleven liners of his command were present, but of the twelve under Suffren's flag one had been disabled through bad handling in a squall. For the first time, therefore, the fleets were numerically equal, and for the first and only time it was the British who attacked.

At the outset everything pointed to a British success. Hughes was not a tactician of the order of Rodney, Hood or Nelson, but in devotion and skill his officers were second to none and his ships sailed into action in a well kept line very unlike the straggling mob of the French. Once engaged on a properly distributed line of targets their superior gunnery soon began to tell. But it seemed to be ordained that this series of battles was in every case to be rendered barren of decisive results by the intervention of external factors. This time the weather conditions robbed the British of a victory that seemed otherwise almost certain, for the French were losing men at nearly three times the greater rate. It was an afternoon of light and variable winds, and when the action was at its height from van to rear and going in British favour everywhere, a sudden shift of the breeze to right ahead cleft the contending lines apart on opposite tacks, and having separated then beyond effective range left them as suddenly becalmed and unable to resume action before dark. Among the British casualties was Hughes' second flag captain killed at his side, whose predecessor had fallen in the first battle.

During the night the wind sprang up again and both fleets made for the land to get rid of wounded and obtain more ammunition, Hughes steering for Madras, and Suffren for Cuddalore, which he used as a war anchorage after its capture from the British. Here he heard that a second convoy of troop

transports was shortly due at Ceylon, and as the action of Hughes in forcing the third battle suggested that he was determined to take the offensive when numbers were equal, the French admiral deemed it his first duty at the moment to protect this convoy in force when entering the theatre of operations. Sailing south from Cuddalore therefore he met it on the coast of Ceylon, where the two liners forming the escort on the ocean passage joined his battlefleet and raised it to fourteen sail. A similar movement in the direction of Ceylon in the opening stage of the conflict had drawn Hughes after it in anxiety for Trincomalee, as we have seen. But this time he was more dilatory—in the belief that the enlarged garrison was able to defend the fortress—and delayed following the French till priceless days had been lost. When at length, therefore, he did proceed to discover what was passing he suffered the mortifying blow of finding that he was too late. Trincomalee was in Suffren's hands, and this consolidated the French position to such a degree as to alter the whole prospect in India.

On meeting the convoy Suffren had reached the vicinity of Trincomalee with fourteen sail-of-the-line, and several transports carrying troops which his discretionary power enabled him to divert for any specially important purpose. Hughes was apparently nowhere near. Having therefore, an exceptionally favourable opportunity for grasping the prize which he always intended to acquire sooner or later, he delivered an attack by land and sea whereby it was forced to surrender. Hughes had failed in everything now except in saving his own fleet from destruction. The French army had been landed in India and kept supplied. The French fleet had seized for its own use the only first class natural base in the immediate theatre of war.

But in spite of these failures the constant proximity of an undiminished enemy fleet threw a perpetual strain on the vigilance of the French commander, as a potential menace to transports and disembarkations; and this anxiety tended to increase. He feared that Hughes might at any time be strongly reinforced from home before he could be defeated; a well-grounded apprehension, for six more British liners happened to be eastward bound to join the British admiral already. And



he knew that large additional bodies of troops were due to start for India from France, whose numbers would add to the difficulty of conveying them to the field in face of active sea opposition. When therefore the British fleet appeared outside Trincomalee again on September 3rd, he promptly sailed out with his fourteen ships to attack once more. Hughes now copied his opponent's former tactics of drawing the enemy far from his base before fighting, in a fashion that stands as the finest bit of seamanship in the whole conflict, and one which evoked the candid admiration of Suffren himself. Keeping his fleet well together he ran to leeward all day in a zigzag retreat which only a thoroughly trained force could have executed, and by frequent changes of course scattered his unseamanlike pursuers far and wide. Then he turned and faced the leading group which included the French flagship. In his impatience to close while daylight lasted Suffren attacked without waiting for the rest to come up; and so staggered was his disorderly crowd of sails by the British counterblows that if Hughes had been a Nelson he would have profited by their utter confusion to double on them to windward and gain a fine victory, as French officers themselves have pointed out. That, however, he failed to do, nor was he a commander of the high type only satisfied with the perfection of success. Having shattered the onslaught of an enemy holding every advantage of numbers and windward position, he remained content with breaking off the action at nightfall and steering away for Madras; leaving Suffren dismasted in open ocean with the cyclone season on him, and unable to follow. This fourth battle was the worst French failure of all. It took Suffren a week to get back to Trincomalee with his crippled ships; and in his disappointed exasperation he very properly at last removed from command all those of his captains who had consistently proved unfit for their responsibilities.

Hughes had thus defeated all the attempts of a numerically more powerful fleet to accomplish his destruction, even if he had done nothing else. But subsequent events proved that his fine defence in the fourth battle was the effort of a tired man, and his outlook for the more immediate



**SIR EDWARD HUGHES**

*British Vice-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief in the Indian Ocean*

*By permission, from the picture by Reynolds in the Painted Hall at Greenwich*



future was difficult. Summer had passed, and the loss of Trincomalee caused him serious uneasiness with the change of seasonal winds in near prospect. A year and a half of war service including four general actions had left his ships in poor condition to face the steady blast of the north-east monsoon for months together on an open coast and permanent lee shore. Hulls were patched and leaky, upper gear mostly a makeshift. Half his captains had been killed. All the repairing outfit at Madras was used up, and Suffren was well placed to prevent any more reaching him from Bombay. His enemy's fleet, though as dilapidated as his own, enjoyed a perfect shelter for the coming monsoon, and the assurance of ample refitting supplies by safe routes, not only from Mauritius but Batavia. As for Suffren himself his powers were rising higher than ever; and if the strain of responsibility was bearing heavily on the British admiral, his French opponent was one of those rare characters on whom it acts as a positive tonic. As may be seen from portraits both were men of very corpulent physique; but whereas the handicap which that imposes on long sustained exertion in a hot climate affected Hughes, it diminished the vigour of Suffren not one atom.

Hughes, however, had at least the satisfaction of knowing that if the coming monsoon compelled his war-worn fleet to evacuate the Bay of Bengal, it would also prevent any large reinforcements or campaigning supplies from being landed for the enemy army before the early part of the following year, and since taking Cuddalore they had made little headway on shore. This consideration, together with the state of his ships, practically decided him to withdraw to Bombay for the winter, though postponing his departure to the last moment. Events however over which he had no control precipitated the movement; for before the change of monsoon actually occurred his fleet was struck in Madras roads and completely dispersed by one of the shattering cyclones which were the constant dread of sailing fleets in the Bay of Bengal during the summer months. When one of these hurricanes was abroad nothing else much mattered, and though its effects were less severe to the southward Suffren remained within the landlocked shelter of

Trincomalee doubtless commiserating his enemies as brother seamen, but hoping that for the sake of France it would sweep them out of existence. Fortunately for Hughes his scattered ships were commanded by men with few professional equals. Not a single vessel was lost, and all found their way independently to Bombay in due course. By this separation of the fleets active hostilities were suspended in eastern seas till the following year, and it would have been better for the reputation of Hughes if he could have retired from command.

At this point attention is necessary to the important progress of events at the home end of the line of communication with India. Here the French authorities had made great preparations for the support of Hyder Ali by organising the despatch of the largest European military force ever up to that date assembled for service in Hindustan. It was embarked in three convoys starting from different points, so as to arrive early in 1783 under the command of the Marquis de Bussy: but two of the three were intercepted and either captured or driven back by the vigilance of the British fleets in Europe, though de Bussy himself got through. Suffren met the one convoy that escaped as it neared Ceylon, and escorted it to the Indian coast, where de Bussy and one brigade were landed as the only representatives of an expected force three times that size. His fleet was joined by the three liners which came out with the convoy; but as he had lost two others by wreck since his last encounter with Hughes his total command was only raised from fourteen to fifteen. Hughes' fleet, on the other hand, was increased by the six from home already mentioned, which brought him up to eighteen all told. During this lull in the naval hostilities Hyder Ali died, and his successor Tippoo was much disheartened by the small scale of the French reinforcements.

With the spring change of monsoon in 1783 Hughes sailed back to Madras, where the non-arrival of French troops in the Carnatic, except the few with de Bussy, had raised the hopes of the British Company's army commanders. Further encouraged by the re-appearance of their naval colleagues in apparently decisive strength they resolved to attempt the re-

capture of Cuddalore and marched from Madras accordingly. Cuddalore was besieged on the land side and blockaded by Hughes to seaward. Everything at this juncture, therefore, seemed to promise well from the British standpoint, except for a terrible outbreak of scurvy in the fleet. Hughes' fortitude was sorely tried by this grave misfortune, and the British military offensive produced an almost inevitable crisis in which everything depended on his firmness. Against an ordinary adversary he might have held his own, but Suffren was on the move once more, and Suffren had the same exhausting effect on his enemies as Nelson. When the struggle recommenced against such an antagonist Hughes fought almost like a man resigned to defeat.

The French admiral had superseded his incompetent subordinates by successors of his own choice, and was now to show what he could do with proper backing. Even when armed with a blunt weapon he had been dangerous: with a sharp one he became deadly. To Suffren's intense vexation de Bussy had been placed over him by King Louis; and in his alarm at the size of the force under Hughes the French general insisted that the French fleet should remain inside Trincomalee for safety unless a grave emergency arose. The encirclement of the French garrison of Cuddalore, however, was regarded by Suffren as quite emergency enough to justify acting with explosive energy when he heard the news. Embarking food and munitions for the besieged troops he hastened northward at once, and by the unhesitating boldness of his approach with only fifteen ships to eighteen, so discomposed Hughes that the latter abandoned the blockade and left Cuddalore open to relief. After landing the supplies for the garrison Suffren followed the British fleet and on June 20th, 1783, in a fifth and last battle attacked so fiercely—and in such good order—that he knocked the British admiral squarely off the stage; who was in retreat by nightfall a beaten man. With the remarkable personal triumph to his credit of having compelled the retirement of a hostile fleet superior to his own in every respect but leadership, the great Frenchman reached the culminating exploit of his career; and when he returned to Cuddalore roadstead after the

battle the British military leaders lost hope of re-taking the place and prepared to raise the siege.

Events, however, on the other side of the world had been moving meanwhile in a direction affecting all theatres of war; and terms of peace had in fact actually been signed in Europe, unknown to the combatants in the far East, five months before Suffren's final defeat of Hughes. Intelligence of this arrived just as the besiegers of Cuddalore were falling back, and brought all operations to a standstill on both sides pending instructions from home. Finding that Britain's position in the Atlantic remained unshaken, her numerous but exhausted antagonists had relinquished the attempt after four years of wrangling effort. By the terms under which all belligerents hoisted the "cease fire" signal to their navies, England retained her oversea possessions intact—excepting the revolted American colonies—whether temporarily occupied by enemy troops, like Cuddalore, or not. Thus, just as the defeats of the main Dutch fleets in the seventeenth century, and the main French fleets in the earlier wars of the eighteenth, had saved the situation of the British Company in India when matters were going against them on the spot, so now they were once again succoured by a renewed assertion of British naval supremacy carrying its consequences far and wide. From the very first days of European intercourse with the East by sea the position in the Indian Ocean had depended as a last sanction on that in the Atlantic. Suffren might have the upper hand of Hughes on the coasts of Hindustan, but what really mattered was that Rodney, Howe and their colleagues nearer home were holding down the admirals of France, Spain and Holland in the west. That being the case, England, before sheathing the sword, was able to impose the condition that any distant possessions seized by European adversaries should be restored to her flag. Together with their official notification of peace, therefore, the French commanders in India received orders to march out of Cuddalore—just as Dupleix had been ordered to evacuate Madras—and return with fleet and army to France. Hughes was ordered by the British Government to send most of his ships back to England to pay off at the same time.

Thus the valiant genius of Suffren gained no lasting benefits for his country, though establishing for himself a place as the greatest of French sea commanders; on which point recognition was very soon forthcoming from the quarter best entitled to extend it. Such was the impression created by his personality and leadership among those whose duty it had been to confront him that they gave rise to an incident without any parallel in naval history; perhaps without any precise parallel anywhere. By chance the homeward bound vessels of both sides met at the Cape of Good Hope on their passage; whereupon the surviving British captains repaired in a body on board the French flagship *Héros* to salute in person a master of their profession, though one who had but recently sailed under enemy colours. It may be possible that naval officers of other nations might have acted similarly, but there is certainly no record that any but British naval officers have actually done such a thing; and Suffren was genuinely surprised and pleased with a compliment of so unique and spontaneous a kind; the more especially as he himself had formed a very high opinion of the skill and efficiency with which those who paid it had handled and fought their ships.

The last scene, therefore, of the Indian Ocean drama in which he played the principal part was fittingly laid on his own quarterdeck; but if the old-fashioned three-cornered British cocked hats which came off at the gangway of the *Héros* were doffed in honour of one who had been a formidable opponent to the country which their wearers served, it may perhaps be claimed that in the change of circumstances the act did some honour to that country itself.

From the hour when the fleet under Suffren rounded the Cape of Good Hope in obedience to orders of recall, and entered the Atlantic homeward bound for France, down to the present day, British naval representation in the Indian Ocean has always been effectively superior to that of any country with which Britain has been at war; and at no point in the long stretches of British territory washed by its surf has the flag of any European rival ever been hoisted since the French colours were struck over Cuddalore in 1783.



Colossal encounters have occurred in that long interval, embroiling Britain with all the leading military Powers of Europe in turn, as well as many of the lesser. Only a single decade of Anglo-French peace intervened indeed between the day when the growling thunder of Suffren's broadsides last shook the Carnatic shore and the beginning of another Anglo-French conflict, destined to endure with merely a couple of brief pauses for twenty-two years before the ending at Waterloo. In the mid-nineteenth century Britain found herself at war with Russia and in our own time became involved in the most terrific general struggle that ever convulsed mankind. But never, in the most searching of these trials of strength, has France, Russia, Spain, Germany, Austro-Hungary, Holland, Denmark or Turkey proved competent to vanquish the British navy, or even able to spare a fleet for undertaking major operations against British sea forces in any quarter of the world beyond the Atlantic. Throughout the long tale of strife, therefore, in which Britain has participated since 1783, the activities of her opponents in the Indian Ocean have been limited to the subsidiary form of sporadic commerce snatching; an indecisive method of attack quite distinct from organised commercial blockade, the latest example being the cruise of the *Emden*. Thus not only have the British land possessions in the east been free from danger on their seaward side since the mastheads of Suffren's line-of-battle disappeared below the horizon, but free from any attack on their land side by troops despatched from Europe. Napoleon has been credited with designs on India, but neither he himself nor any of his very numerous biographers has ever attempted to explain how he meant to proceed after reaching Suez. His one movement towards oriental conquest ended in irretrievable failure merely through having to cross the Mediterranean; a trivial adventure in comparison with the deep-water voyage on the far side of Africa.

## XIV

### PAST CONSEQUENCES and PRESENT CONDITIONS of BRITISH SUPREMACY in the INDIAN OCEAN

**S**INCE first fairly established, British supremacy in the one hundred and forty thousand square miles of water which lie between Asia, Africa, the Malay Archipelago and the tropic of Capricorn has remained unshaken through peace and war to our own times; and in concluding this general survey of the main history of that immense expanse since the days when it first became a region of international importance, some reference would seem in place as to the consequences of five generations of British domination therein. "What," it may be asked, "has been the attitude of England towards the maritime interests of the coloured millions inhabiting the shores of the Indian Ocean, and what towards the other white nations who stand conspicuous in its commercial and political retrospect?"

The best answer to such questions is to be found in a series of historical facts regarding which there is no room for dispute. In the absence of any publicly announced general policy we must look to performances to discover guiding principles, and in her deeds if not her words the principles which guided England's actions on that side of the globe are plain enough, and in the main consistent. She began by suppressing barbarism and disorder on the sea, and then by degrees effected an extension of human intercourse on a scale unprecedented in oriental history. If it had been possible to foretell the results to the native races, of the British rise to commanding power in the Indian Ocean, such a prediction would have held forth the promise of an era in which, through no effort or sacrifice of their own, they would sail it north, south, east or west in perfect security; but an era in which from that very condition they themselves would be prohibited from regarding the sea as a place outside the law, where the stronger might rob, murder, or enslave the weaker without being called to account. The legitimate trader would enjoy opportunities for amassing wealth to an extent inconceivable to his forefathers, but

the pirate would find a halter awaiting his misdeeds, and the purveyor of live humanity would lose both ship and freight.

Again, a forecast of the consequences of the British command of the Indian Ocean to the interests of rival European States in the East, might very properly have pointed out as a preliminary that the London Company of Merchants had traded to the northern coasts of the Indian Ocean before either the Dutch or French, and thereby established a moral priority of claim. It would then have proceeded to warn them that as both had striven hard to turn the British out they were destined to suffer the fate of the aggressor by being permanently reduced to insignificance on the northern side themselves. The Indian Peninsula with its immediately adjacent continental territory and islands would remain the special sphere of British eastern enterprise, wherein no competition would be tolerated; but in view of the long Portuguese alliance with England no British hand would be raised against the Portuguese possessions even in India. And except on the north side of the Indian Ocean British oriental policy would aim at no monopoly of possession of the kind which fired the ambitions of Portugal, Holland and France in earlier periods. As far as British aspirations were concerned each European State with an established historical position in the Indian Ocean might remain undisturbed in its own original sphere of influence—even if temporarily ejected when at war with England—unless making strategic use of that position to injure British interests. Each might also expand within its own original sphere without encountering British opposition.

A glance at a few prominent facts will show how completely such prophecies would have been verified by actual British proceedings during the last one hundred and forty years. For instance, if the case of the natives indigenous to the coasts of the Indian Ocean be taken first, it will be found that under the maritime supremacy of England the expansion of facilities for commercial intercourse directly profitable to the lands they inhabit can only be described as gigantic. Where one ton of cargo passed in or out of those countries taken as a whole when the British reign of power began, three hundred tons pass now; all

of which means a proportionately increased production of regional wealth. On that point a momentary inspection of one of the trade charts periodically compiled by a special department of the British Admiralty is more illuminating than days spent in the study of published statistics. These charts indicate the known or closely estimated positions on certain dates throughout the world of all British vessels above a small tonnage which were then at sea. For adequate reasons they are kept confidential, but it may be observed without disclosing any official secrets that they show the Indian Ocean as thronged in our own time with a moving swarm of vessels on a maze of routes to which the activity on its surface in the period before British supremacy might be compared to the traffic in Trafalgar Square and that on a highland moor.

Through this enormous extension of water conveyance whole new industries have sprung up in the countries surrounding the Indian Ocean, whereby millions of natives have found new methods of livelihood irrespective of the flag under which they happen to be governed. Such are the great cotton, grain, jute and tea exports from Hindustan; the coffee, rubber, sugar and tobacco exports from the Dutch Indies; and others far too many to enumerate here. But for such a development of industry it was essential that Britain should hold the naval supremacy not only of the Indian Ocean but of the world; for two-thirds of the great carrying fleet without which it could not exist is British, and could neither have been put afloat itself had England been defeated in her great maritime wars of the past, nor equalled in tonnage by any hypothetical mercantile marine under a rival flag. Such an immense organised sea transport—with all the advantages it brings in its train to humanity in general—is dependent on solid and efficient naval protection combined with capital wealth for its creation, and a national sea instinct with good home ports for its administration and manning. As the Dutch lack both the capital and the home ports while the French lack national maritime aptitude, neither could have filled the great place now occupied by England as a mercantile shipping Power, even if the battlefleets of either had exterminated the British Navy as a first step. And

with the sea-carrying capacity of the world in general correspondingly reduced, the growth of the commercial industry to which it has given rise must have been stunted in proportion all round the Indian Ocean as well as in other lands.

The advantages of this supremacy to the native races round the Indian Ocean are by no means confined, however, to increased markets for the fruits of their home labours. Hundreds of thousands have been afforded the chance to seek for new and better homes elsewhere; and that opening has caused redistributions of population on a considerable scale, which are still in process; some of which indeed have produced problems directly affecting the white man's own welfare, though others raise no difficulties. As an example of the last-mentioned may be instanced the peopling by harmless fishing communities of whole stretches of seaboard formerly rendered almost uninhabitable by pirates. But the most noticeable movement has been the crossing of the sea by Asiatics to territories under the British flag in Africa, America and Oceania. Before the days when oceanic travel under the British colours gave assurance of safety, no Asiatic mass emigration had been possible within the period of authentically recorded history, and the enormous population of Hindustan had no outlet. Since the British Peace has been established in the Indian Ocean, however, crowds of Indian natives have found opportunities for subsistence in the British parts of Africa and tropical America; to which lands they have been conveyed with all the rights of British subjects under facilities and securities which they themselves had done nothing whatever to earn. This migration may conceivably attain such proportions at some future period as to become the most colossal of the many results of the safe and easy transit of the Indian Ocean, by populating the uncleared lowlands of tropical Africa with an agricultural stock drawn from congested regions in Asia well suited to the climate.

But no such mass transfer of native humanity could ever be conducted peaceably except under European control; for the undying mutual enmity of the coloured races must inevitably breed violent strife between brown and black in the event of

any wholesale industrial invasion of Africa by Asiatics, unless the impartial justice of strong white rule exists in the regions of disembarkation. Of this the history of Arab rule in East Africa affords ample proof.

Expediency, therefore, is emphatically in favour of leaving absolute power to the white man in these undeveloped territories for the sake of the brown and black races themselves; while equity cannot in reason deny his right to such power in view of the sacrifices whereby it originally came into his hands. But these important considerations do not always receive the recognition to which they are fairly entitled, for the native passengers who have been carried to other shores on the white man's back often demand a share in the government of the lands of their selection; lands which knew no settled authority of any kind till the white man had produced order from barbaric chaos after strenuous labour, and which were all but inaccessible to the native of India till England had opened a road by generations of sea effort costing thousands of white lives. Such demands have not been without support in some quarters even in England, which it is only fair to assume must be due to ignorance of eastern history; for no part whatever in the long, costly and dangerous enterprise of making the Indian Ocean safe for the native of India fell on the native himself. Under such conditions a surrender of the white man's moral right to the sole power purchased at great sacrifices by his ancestors would be at once a betrayal of their labours and a negation of elementary justice to his posterity, such as the law would permit in no country in the parallel case of the individual. The sole right of the pioneer to the management of the claim he stakes out by priority in clearing the ground is universally acknowledged, even though others may profit afterwards by his risks and his exertions; and in logical fairness the same rights should be recognised as appertaining to the claims purchased by racial effort, whatever plausible arguments to the contrary may be advanced by extremist schools of social doctrine.

Among other results of the establishment of a reign of law and order by British power in the Indian Ocean stands one which has no materialistic aspects and yet permits millions of

Asiatics and Africans to satisfy an aspiration of their lives which otherwise would be difficult and dangerous of attainment. To the followers of the Prophet of Mecca a pilgrimage to his tomb constitutes the supreme religious act of their faith, but for a very large number a portion of it can only be made by sea. In former chapters reference has been made to the subsidy paid by the Mogul Emperors to the British East India Company for the protection of these pilgrims while on the water against the attacks of plunderers who were often Mahomedans themselves. No such form of recompense has been forthcoming from any Moslem Prince for at least a century and a half, and yet this protection has long been so effective that the troubles and the dangers of the devotees only begin when the sea part of their journey is over and they step ashore on sacred soil among their co-religionists. Thus although the symbol of the Cross is offensive to their faith, enormous throngs of Moslems have been implicitly relying for generations on the security provided for the greater part of a purely religious act of travel by the British white ensign; a flag that proclaims the emblem of Christianity more emphatically than any other national or sovereign standard in the world—or even the flag of the Roman Pontiff—since its design consists entirely of a display of the crosses of three Christian Saints.

In extirpating the pirates, England was not of course by any means acting disinterestedly, for in some areas her own shipping suffered quite as much from their ravages as that of other European countries trading to the East, though never so much as that of the natives. But in rooting them out on her own account she benefited all maritime traffic under any flag in those parts; and even if at first her sea police were only concerned in preventing injury to British vessels, their operations were later extended against piracy in general, till even the Muscat Arabs—who molested none but the feebly defended native craft—learnt that such practices must cease altogether. The suppression of the white pirates was practically completed by the third quarter of the 18th century, after which their appearances in the Indian Ocean were rare; but native pirates offered a more complicated problem on account of their com-

parative facilities for escape. In their case the process of systematic extermination began with the Angria clan; the destruction of whose power created a notable impression throughout the oriental seafaring world from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca, and sounded a far-heard note of warning to other communities of like habits. By the beginning of the 19th century the coasts of India and the main trade routes of the Indian Ocean had been rendered safe enough; but it was not till nearly fifty years later that the pirates of the remoter channels of the Malay Archipelago had been thoroughly combed out. From first to last Britain carried out the task unaided by any European State except for some Dutch action in the neighbourhood of Java.

The suppression of the sea slave trade was a totally different affair, not only from the standpoint of British interests but in its wider general aspects; for whereas the pirate had stood condemned as a criminal of the first magnitude for centuries by the laws of all countries in Europe and America—and some even in Asia—when British cruisers undertook to hunt him down in the Indian Ocean, the business of the slave dealer was considered legitimate everywhere till England took the lead in denouncing it. Nearly all the countries in Europe followed the British example so far as to abolish slavery within their own borders; but in most parts of America except those under European flags it remained legal up to a period well within living memory, and in many Mahomedan countries it remains permissible still. And with the exception of the British Empire not even the States professing anti-slavery principles made any appreciable move towards suppressing the traffic outside their own territories; for which attitude they had their reasons. In proclaiming her intention of preventing the maritime conveyance of stolen human beings England was deliberately violating all world precedents by interfering with a branch of traffic on the High Seas which nowhere entered British territorial waters or injured British material interests, and which was perfectly legal in the countries to which the traffickers belonged, till England brought pressure on their rulers to prohibit it. On any strict point of international custom or law



no world court of justice, had any such a thing existed at the time, could have upheld the British proceedings. Nor was diplomatic persuasion of any use here. Years of argument could never convince Moslems that a custom recognised by their religion might be morally indefensible. Force therefore remained the sole arbiter in this matter, and Britain's only sanction lay in armed strength on a scale enabling her to impose her will on weaker states as she pleased, under no responsibility to any authority but her own national conscience. But most other governments regarded the British national conscience as a highly irrational and illogical tribunal of judgment; especially as in this particular question the very same sections of the British public that were foremost at one moment in demanding the suppression of slavery were precisely those which at others were wont to decry the use of force in anything, or the maintenance of the armed organisations such as navies, whereby alone piracy, slavery, and sea disorder in general can be kept down. Foreign countries therefore were disinclined to bear any active part in this modern crusade, wherein England received no appreciable aid from any other Power, and sometimes experienced indirect but none the less troublesome opposition in quarters where slavery was theoretically condemned; as for example in the refusal of France to allow any dhow or other native craft to be searched if she could produce a French flag or French papers; a protection that was grossly abused. In her attitude towards the slave trade England furnished one of the extremely few cases in history in which any nation has followed the promptings of pure idealism on a matter of external policy far enough to submit to actual sacrifices; though of all people on the earth the British are perhaps the least anxious to claim idealism as a national characteristic.

The seaborne slave traffic from Africa had two great and quite distinct branches, the western and the eastern. Britain attacked both, but it is only the latter with which we are concerned here. In the Indian Ocean the trade was mainly in Arab hands and existed to meet the demands of native purchasers alone; the slaves being embarked at points on the East

African coast at certain seasons of the year for conveyance to the Red Sea or Persian Gulf by a route within sight of shores friendly to the slave dealers all the way. That facilitated escape as a last resort in the event of chase, by running the dhow on the beach, forcing the slaves to jump overboard and driving them inland out of reach of pursuit. For most of the latter half of the 19th century this route was patrolled at every proper season by sloops and gunvessels specially detailed from the British squadron stationed in the Indian Ocean, at the sole expense of the British taxpayer in money and of British officers and men in blood, neither the one nor the other being spent in the defence of any material interest of their own country. As financial considerations limited the number of patrol ships to three in each season, and as that number was insufficient for the adequate watching of 2000 miles of route by the ships themselves, each vessel on reaching her beat sent off from two to four of her boats on detached service with provisions, water and ammunition for six or eight weeks of independent cruising in open ocean. The climatic exposure of the officers and men so employed was naturally extreme, but the system gave good results, and had been applied not only to capturing slavers but at a somewhat earlier period to dealing with Malay pirates. A boat was far less conspicuous and less easily evaded than her parent ship, and could remain concealed behind rocks or headlands on the coast flanking the slave route, or in creeks too small for a ship to enter. Thus in spite of their comparatively insignificant force the boats actually made the majority of the captures; for the mere sight of a handful of armed bluejackets in a cutter or gig seemed enough as a rule to paralyse the wits of the average slavedealing Arab nakoda and all his men<sup>1</sup>. But occasionally a crew of tougher quality than the rest would show fight and fall on the British officer with his six or eight

<sup>1</sup> For example, on being surprised from behind a rocky point a Muscat slaver surrendered after some blustering panic but no actual resistance to the author, when a very junior officer in a boat with five men and no support nearer than another boat a mile down the coast. When disarmed, the Arab skipper tried to escape by suddenly jumping overboard and swimming strongly for the shore a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile distant, but was chased and recaptured from the boat, though not without considerable difficulty.

men who came clambering from their boat up the high side of the dhow at the critical moment when their heads appeared over the bulwarks. In such cases the ensuing scuffles were often very sanguinary affairs in which almost every participant was killed or wounded; and they possess a certain historical interest as the last encounters in the annals of sea-fighting in which the blade bore as prominent a share as the bullet, for though the Arabs generally carried fire-arms, their principal weapon was a long straight two-handed sword. On the whole the general organisation of patrol reduced the number of slaves transported by sea to small dimensions, though a few were smuggled over year by year until the gradual spread of the white man's rule in equatorial Africa stopped the traffic at its sources.

Safety of the seas therefore—through a clean sweep of piracy and slavery—together with a three hundred-fold increase of water transport which promotes material wealth and opens other lands to emigration, have been the first hand and essentially maritime benefits conferred on coloured races by the British Command of the Indian Ocean. Moreover on this command—as part of a world-wide naval ascendancy—ultimately rests the British rule of India, with all which that implies; though any attempt to trace the consequences of that sovereign authority on the welfare of the 300 millions who live under its sway except in their directly maritime aspects would be outside the specific purpose of this book.

We may pass therefore to a further investigation of the second question already answered in a summarised fashion in a previous paragraph; and follow up in more detail the facts connected with British policy towards the other European nations who played important roles on the Indian Ocean stage before the curtain rose on the era of British preponderance. Britain's attitude in this matter has provided one of the chief strands in the fabric of eastern naval and political history since the 18th century—if not indeed the main core—for it has to be remembered that the so-called Indian Ocean is in reality the most European of all the major water-spaces of the globe—not even excluding the Mediterranean—as regards the

sovereignty of its shores and islands. Excepting on a relatively small stretch of coastline in its north-western sector its whole land circuit is planted with an array of European flags, British, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Italian and not long ago, German, from the Cape of Good Hope in the south-west right round to Australia in the south-east. And omitting only those in the Indian Ocean extensions formed by the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, each of the scores of Indian Ocean islands is claimed as part of some European realm, from the 800 miles long Madagascar down to the uninhabited coral dots on the chart which are the home of the sea-bird and the turtle.

Of all these European possessions in the East the chief is India; which strategically speaking stands as an advanced base or station for the storage of British Imperial energy; whence the path has always been clear for the transmission of that energy in striking form against any of the shores or islands mentioned above since the day when a battlefleet hostile to England was last seen east of the Cape of Good Hope. And so complete have been the results of that unfettered liberty of sea movement that when any European State with dependencies in the Indian Ocean has been at war with England during that period, all the more important of those dependencies have actually been seized and occupied by forces despatched from India sooner or later as troops were available.

But in most cases they were restored at the return of peace; sometimes as the price for political advantages in other directions but more often almost as a gift, and nearly always on easy terms for their previous owners. And therein lay the essential difference between the policy of an all-powerful British flag in the Indian Ocean and that of its several predecessors in their respective days of mastery. When Portugal, Holland or France seized the eastern holdings of a rival, whether British or otherwise, they always aimed at permanent retention; but not even the most uncompromising detractor of British methods and ideals can lay that charge against England's eastern policy, excepting in the quarter where her own pioneers led the way. England's position in the Indian Ocean for nearly a century and a half past cannot perhaps be better

illustrated than by applying to it the description of her general world position at the close of the Seven Years' War as given by a very distinguished American historian, who wrote that she "had but to put forth her hand to take what she pleased." This authority added the suggestion that with such an opportunity it was a mistake not to take more than she did; but in world politics the expediency of such a course lies open to doubt. American standards in foreign affairs differ from British, and every Anglophobe with any knowledge of history is perforce embarrassed by the established historical fact that the people who stand as the only generous creditor nation on a grand scale to-day are also descendants of an ancestry who often displayed a similar liberality in their conduct towards others. As regards the Seven Years' War we have the above-quoted testimony of a non-British expert that England refrained from taking all that it lay in her power to take. Such an attitude displayed self-restraint, but it did at least spare her some small degree of effort and possible sacrifice. At the settlement after the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars however she went a step further by restoring—under no compulsion—much that had cost sacrifice and effort to acquire. In those wars she did lay her hand on every important enemy possession in or near eastern seas as a legitimate belligerent act, but lifted it again wherever such a voluntary surrender did not seriously jeopardise her own safety in the event of future hostilities; even though these very same enemies had frequently aimed at stamping the British permanently out from the whole East in earlier collisions. Only on the northern side of the Indian Ocean did the British retain for other reasons than that of their own strategic security any of the numerous territorial prizes of war which fell before their victorious arms.

The chief illustration of this is to be seen in the two settlements with the Dutch, after the latter had fought against England twice as allies of France in the wars of the first Republic and first Empire. In the terms of peace granted to Holland on those occasions many Englishmen who were well acquainted with the East protested that England was carrying magnanimity

towards a defeated rival beyond all reasonable bounds. The Dutch East India Company was finally dissolved in 1798 while the first of these two wars was actually in progress, but as the Company's colonies were transferred to the State they remained under the Netherland flag. As the tyrants of the Indian Ocean for the greater part of the 17th century the Hollanders had only been prevented by the firm stand of Cromwell from ruining their British rivals altogether, and in countries where the rising generations are deliberately educated on the memory of real or imaginary wrongs in the past this would have been borne in mind in squaring later accounts. But very fortunately for the Dutch such memories are too short-lived in England to produce any lasting influence on public sentiment; and thus it came to pass that when England stood again over an ancient enemy whom she was fighting for a fifth and a sixth time she helped her vanquished opponent to rise twice over by restoring temporarily held Dutch territories on the eastern side of the Indian Ocean as being within the original sphere of Dutch Eastern enterprise.

These restitutions were in effect free gifts. When Holland joined the French Republic in waging war against the British, the latter retaliated in the East by despatching expeditions by sea from India to capture Ceylon, the Molucca Islands, Amboina and other places in the Dutch Indies; while a squadron from England seized the Cape of Good Hope, where a Dutch Colony had long been established as a half way link with Batavia. But when that particular conflict was ended by the Peace of Amiens, all the Dutch Indies were given back except Ceylon, which lay on the northern side of the Indian Ocean in the general quarter of specially British interest. And when the Napoleonic wars followed soon after and Holland was drawn into Buonaparte's anti-British coalition, the same thing happened again. Once more the Dutch possessions in the far East were conquered by over-sea attacks launched from India; and this time the reprisals were extended to include Java itself with the great oriental capital of Batavia, which surrendered after some sharp fighting in 1811, and remained for seven years in British occupation under the brilliant administration

of Stamford Raffles. For a second time, however, the return of peace saw nearly all the captured Dutch territories restored to Holland although Batavia had been systematically used before its seizure as a supply base not only by the Dutch commerce raiders but the French. It must certainly be admitted that the restoration of a windward position so admirably suited in the sailing era for a naval headquarters in the Indian Ocean would have been an inexcusably unwise proceeding from a British point of view if the termination of hostilities had left Holland with a strong fleet. But the sea-greatness of the Dutch—already far-declined before the war—received its deathblow from Duncan at Camperdown with no hope of recovery; for, apart from the lasting impoverishment of Holland to meet the financial exactions of Buonaparte, the Dutch home coasts were too shallow for the constantly increasing size of the standard ship-of-the-line, and on that type of vessel sea power inevitably depended in the end. Thenceforward the horizontal tricolour counted for very little in the maritime politics of the world, and the strategic importance of Batavia under its folds sank to the same level as that to which the Dutch themselves had reduced the strategic importance of Goa. From the standpoint of war both were now the useless appurtenances of an extinct force, though commercially they might still retain a status of some consequence in times of peace.

But one noteworthy exception to this wholesale return of temporarily though legitimately forfeited possessions was essential to the future development of British Eastern trade and the consolidation of the British strategic position in that part of the world. For more than a century the traffic of the British East India Company had overflowed from the Indian Ocean eastward to Canton and back through the Straits of Malacca; on both sides of which channel the Dutch held territory but the British none, though far the greater number of vessels passing through were under the British Company's flag. The immense importance of that waterway alike in peace and war had been recognised by all Powers interested in eastern affairs ever since the instinctive genius of Albuquerque marked it with a red cross on the chart; and for British trade the acqui-

sition of some spot on one side or other of that channel had become a pressing necessity as a general commercial rendezvous and centre for transhipment and exchange. History had also repeatedly proved that in time of war this hole in the wall was of the highest strategic consequence, for here many sea routes were forced to converge. Here it was that the Portuguese had permanently maintained a watching force all through the century of their eastern sea rule, and here that the Dutch opened their thirty-year course of naval conquest in the East by forcibly taking the Portuguese place. Here also the first British squadron ever despatched to prey on French commerce in Asiatic regions began its work, and here the French Admiral Linois—the victor of Algeciras—tried to reverse that process sixty odd years afterwards, but was so deceived by the formidable appearance and resolute bearing of the homeward-bound China fleet of sixteen large British Indiamen under Commodore Dance that he mistook them for fighting ships and retreated at once to Batavia. Here lastly Stamford Raffles—an English landsman with a range of maritime vision little inferior to that of even Albuquerque—was constantly scheming to establish a British foothold at the time of the Napoleonic wars and eventually succeeded. Thanks to his persistence the negotiations for the final settlement with Holland in the Indian Ocean, though offering back to the Dutch a whole archipelago of some of the largest islands in the world, entered a claim for a solitary British post on that constantly coveted trade alley way. The city of Malacca itself stands on the mainland side and happened to be one of the few Dutch points of importance which had not been seized by an Indian expedition during the war, because the troops required for the attack of such a completely fortified position were all employed elsewhere. But several of the less strongly defended Dutch harbours on the opposite or Sumatran side of the Straits were captured by minor British naval expeditions; and as a compromise these were given back in exchange for Malacca, so that the Dutch retained the entire Sumatran shore but evacuated the mainland in favour of Britain. A third successive European standard consequently rose over the earliest far eastern outpost of the white man;



and for the first time in history British colours flew at a point flanking this door to the Indian Ocean.

But though the planting of that flag marked a highly significant step in British world expansion, Malacca itself did not satisfy Raffles, who realised that its open roadstead and shallow inner soundings would militate against its suitability for meeting the great increase in traffic through the Straits, which he correctly foresaw as inevitable in the future. He knew that a far finer natural harbour with immense potentialities for development lay not very distant from Malacca on the north side of the entrance to the Straits from the China Sea, near the ancient Malayan city of Singapura; and by permission of the local native chief had already some years previously established a small trading connection there for the East India Company. When therefore the transfer of Malacca to British ownership signified the general acceptance of the policy of extending British influence to the region of the Straits, he arranged for the purchase of the harbour in question with its surrounding land from the native ruler; and here in 1824 founded the great seaport of Singapore, which has since become the focal point of the whole British Imperial position to the eastward of India through a series of events to be presently detailed.

As in the case of the Anglo-Dutch general terms of peace, so in the Anglo-French no attempt was made on the British side to deprive a prostrate opponent in permanence of eastern possessions after the exhausting conflicts with the Republic and Empire; *except* where these had proved useful to the enemy as points from which to deliver direct and serious attacks on British property. All the French trading centres in India were seized by the British Company when war broke out in 1793, and retained under armed occupation throughout the twenty-two years during which hostilities continued with one brief interval. But long before that period had elapsed the British military hold on Hindustan had become much too secure to be in any danger from the small and scattered French communities at such places as Pondicherry and Chandernagore, nor could those places ever be used as bases for a French army sent out from Europe in possible wars of the future, unless in

the event of a general and decisive British defeat by sea. Being thus in themselves no strategic menace, they were handed back to France as the last remaining traces of the brief day of French power in India; even though lying in that particular quarter of the East in which British interests had been pronounced as paramount, that is to say the northern side of the Indian Ocean.

A different policy however was essential to British security when the question came up of the future status of the strategically important islands owned by France near the great sea trade routes to the eastward of Africa, such as Mauritius, Bourbon and the Seychelles. All of these in some degree, but Mauritius especially, were constantly in use throughout these same wars as wasps' nests from which to worry British commerce; and from an early stage in the protracted struggle it became evident that their seizure would go far towards reducing war risks to British shipping in the Indian Ocean. But a first attempt by a squadron of four British frigates on Mauritius was repulsed with such heavy losses as to prove that troops as well as ships were necessary for its capture, and no troops were available for many years owing to the calls on the Army in India for other duties. While that state of affairs lasted British Indian trade had to be afforded what protection was possible by convoy and by chasing the French cruisers; but as the number of British cruisers stationed in eastern seas was severely limited by the exigencies of the situation in Europe, neither of these methods gave more than partial security as long as the raiders could run for safe shelters. When therefore a time eventually arrived in which a sufficiency of troops from India could be spared, Mauritius was taken by a combined naval and military force; the Seychelles suffering a like fate soon afterwards. Bourbon was raided, but as in comparison with the others it offered indifferent shelter to commerce destroyers, it was not occupied.

At the return of peace the future destiny of those islands had to receive attention, and considering their war record the verdict went against their restoration to France. Under the circumstances no other decision was indeed compatible with

the insurance of important British interests, for the French, though temporarily crushed like the Dutch, differed from the latter in remaining potentially formidable as a naval Power of the future, through the possession of greater natural advantages in the way of many fine harbours on the home coasts. Nothing short of a culpable blindness to possible eventualities would have surrendered such bases to a flag which might again make use of them; and with the handing back of their possessions in India the French had to remain content. The return of anything was more than they had a moral right to expect after their own record in the days of Dupleix and Lally.

For Portugal the British advance to the premier position among European nations in the East meant the salvation of the last relics of her own. Thanks to a long tradition of good relations with England, the three old Indian coastal cities of Goa, Daman and Diu, which she still retained when the British Company were laying the foundations of a general rule over Hindustan, have never been in danger of absorption under that rule; and its rapid spread since the days of Clive safeguarded those places on their land side against third parties who would certainly have seized them sooner or later. All the other Portuguese possessions on the Indian Ocean except Timor were attacked and captured during the 17th and 18th centuries either by the Dutch or by Asiatics; but the rise of British naval power put a stop to the Dutch conquests, and the rise of British military power put a stop to the native conquests before the last Portuguese flag in India had been hauled down. The same cause saved them from the French; for if a Franco-Indian Empire as planned by Dupleix had materialised, Goa, Daman and Diu would undoubtedly have been swallowed up, through the political antipathy which in the 17th and 18th centuries was almost as constant between Portugal and France as the opposite was constant between Portugal and England.

For a hundred years and more after the Napoleonic wars Britain was under no provocation to invade the possessions of any other European State on the shores of the Indian Ocean; and when that again occurred, the traditional British policy of abstaining from any wholesale annexation of the conquered

enemies' eastern territory was reversed through circumstances over which Britain had only a partial control. This time the adversary was Germany, a comparative new-comer in the East, and the point of attack was German East Africa; a colony which had only existed as such since the latter years of the 19th century, having originated through a German assertion of sovereignty over a portion of the coast to which no European Power had laid claim since the Muscat Arabs had driven out the Portuguese in 1698. Its precise extent had been settled by treaty with England, as being the Power most directly affected by the commercial potentialities of equatorial Africa on that side; and like other European possessions with an Indian Ocean coastline, it fell, when its sovereign State went to war with England, under the assault of a sea-carried force despatched from India. Unlike the great majority however it was not restored when the conflict came to an end but retained under British rule by mandate. Thus it befel that the political deliberations of a victorious European coalition regarding the seaboard of the Indian Ocean, advanced further towards extending a British dominion over those shores than even British policy itself had done in the past, save only on their northern portion.

By ejecting Germany from East Africa the Great War restored in one respect the general situation round the Indian Ocean to the condition in which it stood as far back as the middle Georgian period; for of the five European flags which cover territory washed by its surf those flying over the most extensive areas are precisely the same three as then, that is to say Britain, France and Holland. And they occupy much the same general regions. British rule predominates more widely than ever on the northern side, along a littoral which gradually spread eastward from Hindustan all through the 19th century, till it absorbed Burma and reached the Malay Peninsula. In the northwest corner a British post was established at Aden, so that the span of the position from wing to wing almost exactly coincides with that of the Portuguese in the 16th century, having the naval headquarters in both cases in Malabar. After surviving all its ancient rivals and leaving a name in

history as the most justly famous of the several associations formed at various periods by private merchants, the British East India Company followed the way of the rest, by being dissolved, when its powers and functions were taken over by the Crown. But as the British supremacy of the Indian Ocean had already by that time long been upheld by Crown sea forces that particular change made no difference to the situation in the Indian Ocean itself.

All down the eastern side of that ocean the horizontally-striped tricolour of Holland still covers the chain of great islands which form the outer ring of the archipelago on that side, only broken by a solitary Portuguese link at Timor; and in its southern latitudes the position lost by the French when deprived of Mauritius was regained geographically though not strategically by their annexation of the very large adjacent island of Madagascar in the last quarter of the 19th century. Intrinsically Madagascar is more valuable than Mauritius, but the diversion of the main route between east and west caused by the cutting of the Isthmus of Suez has left the former island too remote from the regions of crowded sea traffic to hold any importance as a base for commerce destroyers comparable to that occupied by Mauritius before the days of the canal. The French themselves apparently failed to realise this, for in Diego Suarez Bay, at the north end of Madagascar, they created the strongest sea fortress under any European flag in the whole East except Vladivostock, at gigantic expense; although such a fortress can answer no purpose except as a commerce destroyers' shelter. Diego Suarez stands in fact as a conspicuous example of money spent in the wrong place; because it is almost impossible to conceive of any war following such a course as to bring Grand Fleets to operate in that quarter of the seas, and a third of the outlay would have provided quite enough local defence to resist the attack of anything short of a first-class naval and military expedition. But French politicians have even less understanding of such matters than British; and when Pelletan, the then Minister of Marine, asked the Chamber of Deputies to vote the estimate, he explained with such eloquence that Diego Suarez would "com-

mand the Indian Ocean" that the francs were forthcoming. And yet only a few years after the armament had been installed, the German cruiser *Konigsberg* was terrorising the near neighbourhood with impunity till chased up an East African river by British vessels; a practical illustration of the impotence of a fortress without ships to command any blue water area accessible to an enemy from other directions.

Although, however, the general distribution of white sovereignty on the borders of the Indian Ocean stands much as it did a century and a half ago, the problem of maintaining any stable position in the East, and especially of dominating the Indian Ocean itself, has been drastically changed to the disadvantage of all European Powers by the events of the last twenty years. From the days of Vasco da Gama till the end of the Victorian reign all the principal fleets of the world were European and had their metropolitan bases and mobilising centres in Europe; whence it followed that after the white man had raised a trident over the East the decision as to which branch of the white race should hold it was automatically settled in favour of the nation which for the time happened to be supreme in the waters of the west; as previous pages in this book have endeavoured to point out. The championship of the seas of Europe carried with it in fact the effective dominion of all the other oceans, because to reach the other oceans any of the great navies existent during that epoch had to sail from European ports; and in order to control the course of events in distant maritime areas the strongest sea Power in Europe had only to prevent such sailings by watching the ports in question, which lay close to its own. But a profound change in that condition of affairs was brought to pass towards the end of the 19th century by the building of a great ocean-going war fleet in America for the first time in history; which was closely followed by the similar construction of another in Asia for the first time in history also. This diffusion of the several naval headquarters of the world between three continents in place of their former concentration in one exercised a prodigious effect on international politics; as the rise of the United States navy terminated the monopoly of oceanic power held by

Europeans since the first great era of oceanic exploration, and the rise of the Japanese navy terminated the monopoly of oceanic power still in the hands of white men even when the new American fleet had been launched. Through the birth of formidable fleets with their home mobilising ports and sources of supply far removed from Europe, the long established strategic axiom that the rule of the Indian Ocean was inevitably secured by a rule of the Atlantic ceased to stand except as between European States. These new fleets could enter the Indian Ocean without any necessity to navigate European waters at the start, and the newest of all had its headquarters on the opposite side of that ocean altogether.

This centrifugal movement of the world's oceanic power from its region of origin and long monopoly in Europe—where it had first played a part in authentic history as one of the deciding factors in shaping the destinies of some nations at least—was soon followed by its wholesale decline in Europe itself. Of the five first-class navies under European colours at the beginning of the present century only the British retains what may be called oceanic rank; the Russian fleet having been destroyed by the Japanese and the German by its allied enemies, while post-war poverty keeps the French and Italian far below their former order of precedence. Thus of the various national services which are joint inheritors of the superb records and traditions of the European fraternity of the sea, the British alone has still to be reckoned with as a prime factor in world-wide politics; and even that solitary surviving upholder of a great position once equalled or emulated by several of the others during four centuries of human progress has lost its lead outside the waters of its own continent. History offers no parallel to so wide a geographical transfer of armed power on a majestic scale.

The British navy continues to hold the chief place in the Indian Ocean it is true, but the tenure of that ascendancy can no longer be assured merely by holding the naval supremacy in Europe. In the years to come it will depend quite inevitably on special supplementary measures in a totally fresh direction; and if the statesmen whom destiny calls to the helm in England

in the near future are gifted with wisdom and foresight, the completion of those measures will not be indefinitely delayed. Like all defensive precautions they entail a certain expenditure; but the sum involved is small in comparison with the advantages to be gained, and unless the British people are prepared to sanction the outlay the British Empire will depend for its future existence in the form in which the map shows it to-day on the toleration of other Powers rather than on a strength of its own. Moreover certain highly important branches of the commerce which is its absolute life blood will travel under the permanent risk of a blow that would paralyse them past any reasonable hope of recovery; a matter directly affecting the subsistence of millions of men, women and children in the United Kingdom, whose daily bread is earned in export industries.

As regards its present form or fabric the Empire may be roughly divided into an occidental half—including the British Isles—and an oriental; which are held together commercially and strategically by the Imperial lines of communication across the Indian Ocean; the whole being kept in contact with foreign lands throughout the East by the trade routes traversing the same water-space. If those connections are cut, the two halves of the Empire will fall apart as surely as night follows day, and the severance of the commercial arteries will inevitably cause an exhaustion that must gravely weaken the vitality and powers of resistance of both. Only a fleet can apply the axe, but two fleets are in existence now strong enough to make the attempt should occasion arise, neither of which can be blockaded in its home ports like the French and Dutch fleets of old, and both of which could, by an effort, approach the Indian Ocean from its exposed or eastern side.

In this particular case where only a fleet can strike the blow it happens that only a fleet can ward it off, but the parrying force must be provided with adequate facilities for its work if that work is to be effective. The proper watching station for ships covering the Indian Ocean against an enemy arriving from the eastward is at or near the entrances on that side from the China Sea, in other words the vicinity of Singapore. For



lack of any sufficiently equipped base in that region, a British fleet so occupied would fight at present under a burden of disabilities seriously handicapping its efforts and certainly adding heavily to its losses. The creation of a base at Singapore, therefore, arises from a soundly reasoned appreciation of British requirements of supreme consequence; but a section of British public opinion, led by some former Prime Ministers, opposes it nevertheless, and readers of these lines who may have experienced a difficulty in grasping the actual facts of the situation may find it helpful if they are explained in a little more detail here.

Firstly then, it must be understood that under the conditions of naval warfare in our own time, a fleet is more dependent than ever before on the assistance of a secure and fully equipped repairing and replenishing harbour close at hand, if it is to be maintained at a proper pitch of efficiency for service. The modern fighting vessel of any description not only wears out rapidly under the strain of belligerent duty but remains constantly exposed to damage under water; which can only be repaired in dock. All her movements, moreover, are absolutely governed by the question of fuel. Unless tank storage for at least 500,000 tons of oil lies actually within its cruising area, a properly constituted war fleet acting on the strategic defensive may be compelled to leave a vital point unguarded at the very moment when its presence there is urgently required. And unless docking accommodation of adequate capacity exists in that same area, any of its ships that may receive serious injury from mine, submarine or underwater shell hit represent a permanent loss of fighting strength to their side while the war lasts; for even if kept afloat they cannot risk an oceanic voyage to reach dock elsewhere.

Such facts have been so well established however by the actual experience of 20th century wars that the opponents of the Singapore project usually attack it on other grounds. Many are honest, others do not scruple to use questions of such national import for the furtherance of party or personal ambitions; but both rely very largely on the contention that a war against either of the only two first-class foreign naval Powers

—the United States and Japan—is so remotely improbable that expenditure on war bases to meet such a contingency cannot be justified. In so large a question as that, however, the views of the Americans and Japanese themselves cannot in reason be ignored; for if it takes two to make a quarrel it also takes two to maintain a peace. What then do the Americans think? Is it the opinion of the official representatives of the huge and heterogeneous mixture of races populating the United States that a war with the British Empire is unlikely? Yes, if we are to judge by their words. But do they consider it so extremely unlikely that no special precautions to meet it are advisable? Emphatically no, if we are to judge by their actions. Most of the public men in the United States are fully aware that such a conflict would hurl the whole economic structure of modern civilisation into the nethermost pit; but their favourite argument that the unfortified state of their Canadian frontier is a proof of their faith in permanent peace, does not in reality carry much weight, simply because no country needs to fortify itself against a neighbour with less than a tenth of its population and a fiftieth of its wealth. As well might Imperial Germany have pointed to its lack of fortresses towards Switzerland or Belgium as demonstrating its own hatred of militarism. If we turn to the situation on the sea, where the Anglo-American balance of power is much more even, we are confronted by ample evidence of a very different American attitude in the enormously strong sea fortifications which have been erected within quite recent times at the Atlantic as well as the Pacific end of the Panama Canal.

Those defences are avowedly designed by Americans to resist the attack of a first-class fleet, though apart from their own, no such fleets exist except the British and Japanese. The batteries at the Pacific end may no doubt be intended as a safeguard against the latter, but not even the most extravagant alarmists in America have ever suggested that the Japanese could attack the Canal in battle-fleet strength from the Atlantic; and if an American officer is asked to explain the object of the array of guns on that side he will answer at once that of course they were placed there with an eye on the British navy. What

other *raison d'être* could first-class forts at the Atlantic end possibly have? The truth is that those hard practical people take up all such questions in a sober business spirit. They see here a matter of insurance in which great national interests can be adequately safeguarded at what is really a low premium against a risk potentially disastrous even if remote, and heartily though they dislike anything in the way of unproductive expenditure, they insure accordingly. Moreover, though to many Americans the hideous idea of yet a third war with the parent branch of the Anglo-Saxon stock would be frankly detestable, they know well enough that in the past Anglo-American disputes have often reached so acrimonious a stage on paper as to bring war almost in sight, and they realise that in a political deadlock the absence of any vulnerable point in their position must inevitably lend weight to their diplomacy.

That element in the British public therefore, which protests that no account need be taken of the United States navy in organising British Imperial defence, can find no warrant for such a view in the actions of responsible United States authorities; and every argument in the case of the Panama Canal applies with at least equal force to the case of Singapore, for the safety of sea communications is a vastly more important matter to the British Empire than to America. Of course if the British navy ever does happen to find itself engaged in defending the Empire against United States attack, the main location of such a tragedy will lie in the Atlantic; but a detached squadron of American cruisers based on the Philippines—of the composition of the German force stationed at Tsingtao under Von Spee in July 1914—would be a very grave danger to the British situation in the East, unless masked by at least an equal force based on Singapore. Von Spee was compelled to retreat across the Pacific because the whole Japanese navy joined in the hunt against him; but the exploits of the *Emden* proved that when the bulk of the British fleet has its hands full in the Atlantic a single small enemy cruiser can inflict wholesale destruction very quickly on British trade in the Indian Ocean, and even compel special measures to be taken for safeguarding its transit by armies.

When considering the factor in the problem represented by the sea forces of Japan the case for the construction of the Singapore base rests on even stronger grounds. All Japanese governments in these times strive hard to maintain a peaceable foreign policy, but occupy the anxious and difficult position of responsible leadership in an overcrowded land denied outlets, with a population already exceeding that of any European country except Russia, and increasing at the rate of nearly five hundred thousand a year. A highly congested, necessitous, and spirited nation such as this, resembles a boiler with no safety valve. It may hold together for some time, but if it does explode, its pent up force will escape by the line of least resistance, and other countries with interests in its neighbourhood are well-advised to make sure beforehand that that line does not point in their own direction when the liberated energy issues from one of the most formidable Powers in the world. Eruptive tendencies of this kind, affording an object lesson, may be seen in their earlier stages of operation in one of the nations of Europe to-day; for the first immediate consequence of the check to the transatlantic emigration of Italians caused by the new quota laws of the United States was to intensify Italian foreign policy in the Mediterranean and regions nearer home. Though Italy is a far smaller and weaker state than the Empire of the Rising Sun, problems born of the heightened rivalry resulting with other Powers through this new turn of affairs have already confronted the Council of the League of Nations—towards which body the pressure of circumstances does not incline Italians to be too subservient—and the directors of foreign policy in countries with near eastern interests foresee the ultimate probability of diplomatic situations that will need steady handling.

Japan also is barred from overflow to America, and like Italy can only find a line of less resistance to expansion by looking towards regions near the motherland; but those are localities with which England ought always to preserve some degree of commercial connection if possible. Should they become a scene of acute diplomatic controversy British interests are less likely to be swamped or ignored if it is obvious

to all whom it may concern that British policy in the East stands on the firm foundation of a secure hold on the Indian Ocean. A fleet alone can give that security, but, as already emphasised, such a fleet must be provided with the requisite accessories at Singapore if it is to do its work properly should occasion arise.

Apart from the definite existence of two great modern navies able to approach the Indian Ocean from the eastward, there is a third factor in the situation too serious to be overlooked altogether, even if much vaguer in character than the others. Stirrings of a racial consciousness among orientals have been in evidence for some years past of which no man can foresee the outcome. It seems plain enough however that their main inspiration lies in a spreading anti-white sentiment, astutely fanned by Bolshevik propaganda and finding its chief expression in the yellow or Mongolian breeds. As yet this is far from assuming the proportions of a palpable menace to the white man's position on that side of the world; but the fact cannot be ignored that some extraordinarily rapid changes on a portentous scale have occurred in the East within living memory. In the youth of the men who are scarcely now middle-aged, the Japanese counted for no more in world politics than the Tibetans or Siamese to-day; and even ten or twelve years before they suddenly hurled the Russians in the dust, any suggestion that they would ever seriously engage a European Power would have been received with universal and genuine ridicule. It can be hardly wise to assume that what has been accomplished by one Asiatic people must always remain impossible to any other; even if for the moment we can see no obvious sign of such an upturn any more than we could see it half a generation before the great Asiatic victories of Tsushima and Mukden. We do know that the anti-white bias is there; and it seems hardly too much to maintain that the sane middle course between unnecessary alarm and sightless neglect lies in reasonable precaution for dealing with its possible manifestation in dangerous forms. A strong position at Singapore—as the gateway to the Far East—is a measure of such a kind.

A few adversaries of the development of Singapore oppose

it from another angle. Freely admitting that the safety of the Empire demands a first-class naval base somewhere on the eastern side of the Indian Ocean they contend nevertheless that it should be in Australia. The Australians themselves, however—who are intensely interested in the whole question—see more clearly, and strongly favour Singapore, because it meets the first essential for a naval base of being in the right position; that is to say, within the operating area of the fleet for the use of which it has been created. A base in Australia would not satisfy this prime qualification, for no fleet invading the Indian Ocean to cut the British links of Empire from the eastward would ever go all the way round by Australia. Steaming distances and other strategic considerations must always compel such an attacker to travel by one or other of the channels emerging from the Malay Archipelago; and money spent on an Australian base as a substitute for Singapore might just as well be tied up in sacks and thrown into the Indian Ocean at once.

Yet another kind of critic of the Singapore project is the ultra-believer in defence by air. In the discussions on Imperial defence which were so frequent before the Great War reference was common to the so-called "blue water school" and now apparently a "blue sky school" has come into existence also. In both schools the extremists are apt to claim rather too much for their own branch of warfare; and certainly those who contend that sea navies have become obsolete altogether are going very fast indeed. Before aircraft can either attack or protect the routes across the Indian Ocean effectively, they must possess the power to remain over enormous stretches of water for weeks at a time *in all weathers*. That means that they must be capable of withstanding not only the steady pressure of the Indian Ocean monsoon, but the furious violence of the Indian Ocean hurricane, which often throws down full grown forest timber as if it was standing hay. No airship has yet been designed that even begins to display such qualities of flight, nor are there any signs that she will appear in the near future. Until she does, the Imperial arteries in the Indian Ocean will be safe from serious menace except in naval form;

and only by a navy can they be adequately shielded while such conditions last. Beyond any question a fleet of aircraft with headquarters at Singapore would be a highly valuable and even necessary adjunct to the battleships using the same base in war; but they could never hold the Straits by themselves, for the simple reason that a hostile battlefleet forcing its way through to the Indian Ocean would only have to wait for a spell of bad weather to pass with impunity unless opposed on the water.

So far as it is humanly possible to look ahead at present therefore, it is only on the water itself that the connections of the British Empire in the Indian Ocean can be either threatened or protected; and the introduction of air warfare does nothing to negative the value to England of a first-class naval base in the proper strategic locality for a naval defensive covering the regions where the supremacy of the white ensign has long been so beneficial to millions.

In the far distant days when a Pope cut the blank chart of the unexplored world into two parts and handed the eastern half to Portugal and the western to Spain, the Kings at Lisbon assumed the designation of "Lords of the Commerce and Navigation of Arabia, Ethiopia, Persia and the Indies" and though not one of them ever set eyes on the brilliant seascapes of the Orient their ships made good that majestic title to the full for their masters all through the 16th century. Their turn has passed. After many changes and vicissitudes British monarchs have long stood in their place. These lay no claim to the titular sea honours of the former occupants of the Portuguese throne, but their squadron on the East Indies station holds a position in no respect inferior to that of the galleons of Manoel the Fortunate; and for a hundred years or more has used it to a much better purpose in furthering the welfare of humanity. Moreover George V has a personal connection with the Indian Ocean shared by no other Crowned Head in history. In his younger days the wearer of the Regalia of the British Empire often donned the oilskin foul weather rig of an arduous profession, and not only has he seen the Indian Ocean, but alone among the holders of sovereign rank



*W & D Downey*

### KING GEORGE THE FIFTH

*(By permission)*

The only holder of Sovereign Rank who has sailed the  
Indian Ocean as a professional seaman





past or present has sailed it as a fully qualified and competent sea officer. Nor is his personal connection with it ended in one respect at least, for even though he can never again heave the log as midshipman of the watch, or keep his eye on the weather leech of the main topgallantsail when steering "full and bye" he still signs the commissions of the admirals commanding the premier force in its waters.

If the teachings of past history are any guide to the future it will be helpful to the continued progress of civilisation throughout the eastern hemisphere that the supremacy of that force should long remain effective. All things must have their end, but the end of a thing which has been proved to be good ought never to be hastened by neglect on the part of the nation which alone has the power to preserve it. And here this brief study of a great subject may perhaps be fittingly brought to its own conclusion by quoting the pregnant words of the first European Viceroy of the Indies to his sovereign. Thus wrote Francisco Almeida to Manoel I:

*"Let it be known to your Majesty that if you are strong in ships the commerce of the Indies is yours; and if you are not strong in ships little will avail you any fortress on land."*

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