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978-1-108-01493-9 - The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India, Volume 1

Edited by Edward Grey

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The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India

The publications of the Hakluyt Society (founded in 1846) made available edited (and sometimes translated) early accounts of exploration. The first series, which ran from 1847 to 1899, consists of 100 books containing published or previously unpublished works by authors from Christopher Columbus to Sir Francis Drake, and covering voyages to the New World, to China and Japan, to Russia and to Africa and India. A member of a noble Roman family, Pietro della Valle began travelling in 1614 at the suggestion of a doctor, as an alternative to suicide after a failed love affair. The letters describing his travels in Turkey, Persia and India were addressed to this advisor. This 1664 English translation of della Valle's letters from India, republished by the Hakluyt Society in 1892, contains fascinating ethnographic details, particularly on religious beliefs, and is an important source for the history of the Keladi region of South India.

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From the Old English Translation of 1664

VOLUME 1

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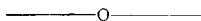
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OF
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INDIA.

*FROM THE OLD ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF 1664,
BY G. HAVERS.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Edited, with a *Life of the Author*, an *Introduction* and *Notes*,

BY

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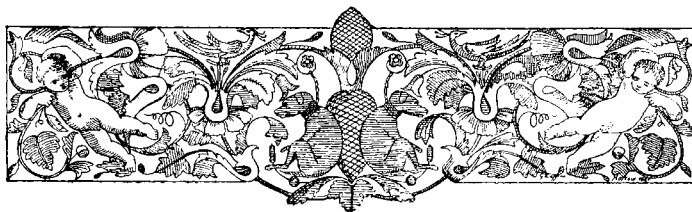
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P R E F A C E.



FEW words may not be out of place regarding the circumstances under which the preparation of this edition of the “Letters from India” of P. della Valle was entrusted to the present Editor.

Some years ago a translation of these letters was made by Professor E. Rehatsek, of Bombay University (who died there in January of this present year), apparently in ignorance of the fact that an English translation of the letters (which forms the text of the present edition) was already in existence. The Professor, being unwilling to undertake the task of annotating the translation made by him, sent it to the Hakluyt Society, in the hope that the work might be published by that Society. The letters were included in the list of works “suggested to the Council for publication”, and one of the members of the Council proposed to the present Editor that

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PREFACE.

he should undertake the work of revising and annotating the translation referred to.

The present Editor, though he had not had any previous experience of editorial work, ventured to undertake the task. A residence of twenty-one years in India, in the Civil Service, and some acquaintance with previous publications of the Hakluyt Society, several of which had come into his possession through his relationship with a former member of the Council, Mr. Ralph William Grey, formed a slight foundation, on which he felt bold enough to rest the attempt of which the result is now brought before the public.

On examination of the translation already referred to it became evident that a considerable amount of revision and correction would be required, and it was therefore decided, with the concurrence of the Secretary of the Society, to adopt the old translation of 1664, by G. Havers, instead of that made by Professor Rehatsek.

An additional reason for adopting the old translation was that the somewhat archaic form of the language used in it seems to be in keeping with that of the original letters, and to give them a character and flavour which would be wanting in a modern translation.

A few alterations in the text have been made where such appeared to be necessary, and a few short passages, omitted by the translator, have been added. But the translation now reprinted

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is substantially the same as that published in 1664.

The Editor has added notes wherever such appeared to be called for. Though they must necessarily be of a more or less imperfect character, he trusts that they may be found useful in some respects, and such as will be found to add in some slight degree to the interest of the letters. His object has been to avoid as far as possible the repetition of information easily obtainable from ordinary works of reference, and to assist the reader without fatiguing him with irrelevant matter.

In conclusion, the Editor wishes to express his thanks to Mr. E. Delmar Morgan, the Honorary Secretary of the Hakluyt Society, for the "Bibliographical Notice" included in this volume, and also for many valuable suggestions, and for information on various points, supplied by him during the preparation of this edition, and also for the trouble taken by him in superintending the press-work, and engraving of the frontispiece, etc.

Also to Mr. Coutts Trotter, a member of the Council of the Hakluyt Society, for his kind help in the acquisition of information on several subjects; and to two ladies who have kindly supplied the Editor with the translation of the Italian Dedication. The Editor's thanks are due also to the late Professor Rehatsek for some of the facts stated in the "Life of P. della Valle", as recorded in a memorandum prepared by him.

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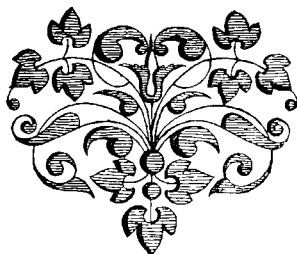
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PREFACE.

It is right to mention also that some of the latter part of the “Historical Sketch of the Portuguese Power in India” is supplied from an unpublished manuscript written by the Editor’s father, the late Rt. Hon. Sir C. E. Grey, formerly Chief Justice of Bengal, and afterwards Governor of Jamaica.



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L I F E
OF
P I E T R O D E L L A V A L L E .



P I E T R O DELLA VALLE, the son of Pompeo della Valle and his wife Giovanna Alberini, was born at Rome, April ^{1st}/_{11th}, 1586. His family was one of the most ancient and illustrious in Rome, and numbered among its members two Cardinals, viz., Rustico under Pope Honorius II, and Andrea under Leo X. From the latter the street and church in Rome of “St. Andrea della Valle” took their name. Little is known of his early life except that he received a good education, travelled over Italy, and was admitted into the Academy of *Umoristi*, a scientific and literary society of those days which had been instituted at Rome.

On differences arising between the Pope and the Venetians, and when also the troubles which ensued on the death of Henry IV of France led to expectations of war, he entered the military service; but it does not appear that he actually took part in any campaign.

Later on, in the year 1611, he joined a Spanish fleet in an expedition to Barbary, and took part in

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the capture of the Karkenssa Islands (the ancient Cercina and Cercinitis) in the Gulf of Cabes, off the coast of Africa, which were then the stronghold of pirates, and in other engagements, which, he says however, that he regarded “rather as skirmishes than fights”.

Subsequently, owing to a disappointment in a love affair, he went to Naples, and assumed the habit of a pilgrim and the title of “Pellegrino”, which he ever afterwards added to his signature.

In consequence of this disappointment, and by the advice of his friend, Signor Mario Schipano, a professor of medicine, he determined on travelling in the East, and embarked at Venice for Constantinople on board the *Gran Delfino* on June 8th, 1614. He remained at Constantinople until September 1615, and proceeded thence to Asia Minor and Egypt, and from there to Mount Sinai, the monastery of St. Catherine, and to Palestine. He visited Jerusalem, Damascus, Aleppo and Baghdad, besides Anah on the Euphrates and Hillah, the site of Babylon. On his return thence to Baghdad he married Maani Gioerida, a young Assyrian Christian, eighteen years old. Her father was an Assyrian, her mother an Armenian. Maani (which signifies “intelligence” in Arabic) was born at Mardin, a principal town of Mesopotamia, whence she came, at the age of four, with her father and mother to Baghdad, when her native town was ravaged by the Kurds. She appears to have been well educated and was acquainted with the Turkish language in addition to

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her own, which was Arabic. In one of his letters, written from Baghdad, Pietro describes at great length the history of his marriage with this lady, after repeated efforts to overcome the reluctance, whether real or assumed, on the part of her mother to the proposed union, and he enters into considerable details on the subject of the personal charms of his bride. This marriage took place in the year 1616, and he proceeded in company with his wife to Persia. He visited Hamadan and Ispahan, and, hearing that the King, Shah Abbas, was at that time in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea, proceeded to seek an interview with him in his camp. He was hospitably received by the King, and remained for some time at his Court. He had at this time two objects in view—viz., a desire to serve in a military expedition against the Turks, which was then talked of, and also to obtain certain advantages for the Christians who were the subjects of persecution in the Ottoman Empire. He accompanied the King to Ardebil, where the army was assembled, and took part in a sanguinary battle with the Turks. His wife accompanied him, and he speaks of her (in Letter No. III from Persia) as “a warrior who fears neither to see blood, nor to hear the sound of firing”. He then returned to Ispahan, and, quitting it on October 1st, 1621, visited the ruins of Persepolis and city of Shiraz. Thence he travelled towards the coast of the Persian Gulf. At Mina, near the Gulf of Ormuz, his wife died on December 30th, 1622, of fever brought on by hardship and an unhealthy

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climate. In one of his letters (No. XVI from Persia) he describes her illness and death in very affecting terms. He caused his wife's body to be embalmed and placed in a coffin, and taking it with him, and also a Georgian girl, Maria Tinatin di Ziba, whom his wife had taken under her protection, endeavoured to embark for India at Bender Ser. Owing, however, to the fact that the Persians, aided by the English, were at that time besieging Ormuz, then occupied by the Portuguese, his intention was frustrated for a time, and he returned to Lar. Afterwards, on January 19th, 1623, he embarked at Gombroon (Bandar Abbas) for India. He arrived at Súrat on February 10th, 1623, and thence visited Cambay (Khambáyat), Ahmadábád, Cháwal, Goa, Ikkeri, Barcelor, Mangalúr, and Calicut (Kálíkót), which last place was the limit of his travels in India. Thence he returned along the coast to Goa, and, embarking there on November 16th, 1624, sailed to Mascat. Thence he travelled by Bassora to Aleppo, and from that port sailed by Cyprus, Malta and Sicily, to Naples, where he arrived on February 5th, 1626, and finally reached Rome on March 28th of that year. Here he buried the remains of his wife, which he had conveyed with him throughout his travels, in the Church of Ara Cœli in the vault of the Della Valle family. He was well received by the Pope Urban VIII, and by his friends at Rome. He soon afterwards became honorary Chamberlain to the Pope, and married the young Georgian, already mentioned as having been taken under protection by

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his wife in Persia, who had been the companion of his travels ever since his wife's death. She was the daughter of an officer in the Georgian army, who had been killed in the course of an attempt to resist the invasion of his country by the army of the King of Persia, and had been carried with other captives to Ispahan, where Sitti Maani saw her and took her under her protection. By her marriage with P. della Valle she became the mother of fourteen sons. It does not appear that any of these sons attained to any distinction in after life. It is stated that on account of their turbulent conduct at Rome, after their father's death, they, with their mother, were compelled to leave Rome and to take up their residence at Urbino.

Subsequently to his marriage Pietro della Valle continued to reside at Rome until an event happened in consequence of which he was compelled to seek for a time another place of residence. On the occasion of a procession taking place in the streets of Rome a quarrel arose between an Indian servant in the employment of Della Valle and one of the Pope's servants, in the course of which the latter deprived the Indian of his sword, which he was about to break in two, when P. della Valle, drawing his own sword, ran it through the man's body, killing him on the spot in the presence of the Pope. He left Rome and retired to the Fort of Paliano and thence to Naples, but after a short time he was allowed by the Pope, through the intercession of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, to return to Rome, where he con-

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LIFE OF PIETRO DELLA VALLE.

tinued to reside until his death in the month of April 1652. He was buried in the Chapel of San Bernardino di Siena in the Church of Ara Cœli, where a tomb may still be seen with the following inscription on it :

“ Hic requiescit Petrus de Valle
Ci (cujus) Aia (anima)
Requiescat in pace. Amen ;”

though there is reason to doubt whether this inscription refers to the great traveller, or to some one less well known of his ancestors. His widow was still living in 1662, but the date of her death is uncertain.

From the time of his return to Rome until his death he appears to have led a retired life, receiving the visits of friends who came to hear the history of his travels and to inspect the museum of curiosities which he had collected in the course of his wanderings. The society of the *Umoristi*, of which he was a member, conferred upon him the title of *Il Fantastico*. He had always been a great admirer of music, and, besides composing several melodies, became the inventor of two new musical instruments, to which he gave the names of *cimbalo esarmónico* and *violino panormónico*.

But his claims to posthumous fame must, no doubt, be based on his merits as a bold and observant traveller. We cannot forget that he was the first traveller to penetrate into the second Pyramid, and to send to Europe two mummies, now preserved in the collection of antiquities at Dresden. He was the first who directed attention to the rock inscrip-

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tions and cuneiform writings in Assyria, of which he brought back some copies, and, though he was incapable of deciphering them, he was clever enough to discover that the inscriptions must be read from left to right, contrary to the direction prevailing in more modern inscriptions written in Oriental languages. He came to this conclusion by noticing that in the formation of the arrow-headed characters the thicker ends of those in a horizontal position were invariably towards the left hand of the inscription.

His travels were described in a narrative divided into three parts, comprising his wanderings in Turkey, Persia and India respectively. The first part only was published in his lifetime. The second and third parts appeared several years after his death, being published under the care of four of his sons, Valerio, Erasmo, Francesco and Paolo. They are all composed in the form of letters addressed to his friend, Signor Mario Schipano, who resided at Naples, and are evidently written by an acute observer, who knew how to make use of his uncommon learning, and who had an advantage over many other previous travellers in his knowledge of Eastern languages, of which we know that he wrote and spoke Turkish, Persian and Arabic, besides having some acquaintance with Coptic and Chaldæan. As to his merits as a traveller, Gibbon—a man not given to praise anyone unduly—has recorded his opinion that “no traveller knew and described Persia so well as P. della Valle”. Southey

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speaks of him as “that excellent traveller”; and the late Sir Henry Yule, than whom few persons could form a better opinion of the merits of an Eastern traveller, says—speaking “of travellers whose steps have led them to India by no inducements of trade or service, but who came for their own pleasure or convenience”—“The prince of all such who have related their experiences is Pietro della Valle, the most insatiate in curiosity, the most intelligent in apprehension, the fullest and most accurate in description.” (See *Diary of Sir W. Hedges*, published by the Hakluyt Society, vol. ii, p. 343.)

The present volume comprises only the eight letters which contain an account of P. della Valle’s travels in India. His wanderings in that country were confined to a comparatively limited area, extending, as has been already stated, only to Ahmadábád towards the north, and to Calicut (Kálíkót) on the south, and comprising (with the exception of expeditions to Cambay, Ahmadábád and Ikkeri, towns in the interior) visits only to settlements on the western coast of the peninsula. It is to be regretted that he did not extend his travels further; but these letters, describing as they do only a very limited extent of country, are nevertheless full of graphic descriptions, and bring before the mind’s eye a vivid and life-like representation of men and manners as they existed in the early part of the seventeenth century in the Portuguese settlements on the coast and in the native territories adjacent to them. Nor is there wanting in some of them a deeper

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vein of thought, which crops up every now and then in the attempt to penetrate into and to explain the mystery underlying the outward semblance of religion among the Hindus, as represented by their idols their temples, and their pagan ceremonies of religious worship. And, although the interest of the reader is more likely to be attracted towards the descriptions of native life, the account of Portuguese towns and of the mode of life adopted by their European inhabitants will be found little less interesting. To us, who in the present day see nothing in these settlements but the relics of departed greatness, the pictures here laid before us of the commercial activity and political enterprise which were exhibited in those days must have a fascination which is all the greater because they owe their attractions to the “touch of a vanish’d hand” and the charm of “a voice that is still”.

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HISTORICAL SKETCH
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RISE AND FALL OF THE PORTUGUESE
POWER IN INDIA.



AS an introduction to the following letters of P. della Valle, it may be useful to the reader to have a short account of the rise, progress and decline of the Portuguese power in India, extending over a period of about 270 years, from the arrival of Vasco da Gama at Kálíkót, in the year 1498, to the capture of Bassín by the Maráthas in 1765; a period which may be roughly divided into two halves, of which the first half comprises the rise, and the last half the decline, of Portuguese dominion in India. It was not long after the arrival of Vasco da Gama at Kálíkót—viz., in the year 1499—that the Portuguese obtained permission to build their first fort at Kúchi (Cochin), which was completed in 1503, and in the same year they commenced to build another at Kananúr, which was finished in 1505. In 1509 they built a third fort near Kálíkót, and in 1513 a fort was erected at that port.

The year 1508 had been marked by the arrival in

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THE PORTUGUESE POWER IN INDIA. xi

India of the second Portuguese Viceroy (Don Francisco Dalmeida being the first), the renowned Don Afonso Dalboquerque (better known, perhaps, as Albuquerque), who arrived at Kananúr in the month of December 1508, though it was not until November 1509 that he actually obtained possession of the Viceroyalty from Don Francisco Dalmeida, who objected to be superseded by the Admiral. The next great event was the expedition on December 31st, 1509, against Kálíkót, under the command of Dalboquerque, when the Portuguese destroyed and sacked the city and the King's palace, though they were ultimately compelled to retreat with severe loss.

The year 1510 was signalised by an event of greater importance—viz., the expedition against Goa, which resulted in the storming and capture of the fort of Panjim at the entrance of the port, followed by the occupation of the island of Goa and the adjacent territory by the Portuguese. This event may be regarded as the actual foundation of their dominion in India; for, although they were forced to abandon Goa in the month of May, they succeeded in November of the same year in regaining possession of the place and have held it ever since.

The subsequent chief events may be briefly stated. In 1515 permission was obtained to build a factory at Kálíkót. About this time the greater part of the island of Ceylon submitted to the Portuguese. In 1521 a fort was built near Cháwal, and in 1526 Mangalúr and the town of Mahim were taken. In 1531 another fort was built at Shália, near Kálíkót,

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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE

and in 1534 the port of Swálya (Swally) was captured, and the town of Damán and the island of Diu, where a fort was built ; in the same year the towns of Bassín, Cháwal and Bombay were ceded to the Portuguese by Bahádur Sháh, King of Guzarát, and by the defeat of the King of Bijápúr they obtained the two peninsulas of Bardes and Salsette, which adjoin the island of Goa. In 1554 their territory was further increased by the cession to them by Malú 'Adil Shah of the whole of the Konkan—*i.e.*, the territory lying between the Gháts and the sea from about lat. 17° to lat. 19° N. In the year 1569 the town of Honáwar was taken. The year 1570 was marked by the unsuccessful siege of Goa by 'Alí 'Adil Shah, and the year 1592 by the siege of Cháwal.

In the year 1595 the first Dutch ships arrived on the coast of India, and from that time there commenced a struggle for mercantile supremacy between the Dutch and Portuguese, which resulted in the gradual extinction of the Portuguese power in India. In the year 1603 the Dutch blockaded Goa, and, though they were then compelled to withdraw, they again besieged it in the year 1643, and soon afterwards succeeded in driving the Portuguese out of Ceylon, Malacca and the Moluccas, and in excluding them by their intrigues and influence from the trade of Japan. So that it came to pass that by the year 1640 nearly all their ports and forts had been wrested from them. As an instance of the ruin which now fell upon the nation Tavernier mentions that, when

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he visited Goa in 1648, many of the inhabitants who at the time of his first visit in 1642 enjoyed incomes of 2,000 crowns, were now reduced to beg alms secretly ; and P. della Valle, in one of his letters (Letter III, p. 157) mentions a similar state of things even as early as 1623. Bombay was given up to the English (as part of the marriage dower of the Infanta Katherina) in 1662, and Kúchi (Cochin) was taken from them in 1663. Further losses took place from time to time. Finally, Bassín was taken by the Maráthas in 1765, together with the island of Salsette. Only Goa, Diu and Damán were left to them, and these ports they still retain.

The first blow which fell upon the Portuguese power was, no doubt, inflicted by the competition of the Dutch merchants, who were better fitted for the struggle by their national training and natural temperament, and also by the fact that their settlement at the Cape of Good Hope, half-way from Europe, gave them an advantage which was wanting to the Portuguese. To these advantages must be added a greater tact and facility on the part of the Dutch merchants in providing for the wants of the markets in Europe, as compared with the Portuguese traders. But other causes also contributed to the rapid decline of their power. The union of Portugal with Spain in 1579 had an injurious effect in this respect, not only by its direct result in involving Portugal in the war with the Dutch Republic, but also by indirectly weakening the attention and support which the Portuguese dominion in India received from the home Govern-

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ment, so long as Portugal remained an independent kingdom. The discovery and conquest of Brazil, and consequent attention directed towards South America, contributed in some degree also to weaken the control of Indian affairs, and a want of proper discrimination in the selection of men appointed as Viceroys at Goa was another cause of the gradual decay of Portuguese power. These men showed an indifference to their duties as governors which not only of necessity produced disastrous results in the weakening of control over public affairs, but they also by their example brought about an extravagant and luxurious mode of life among the Portuguese residents, which gradually sapped their energy and gave an opportunity to their rivals of which they were not slow to take advantage ; while, by depriving the Government of men willing to serve as soldiers and seamen, it also seriously crippled its military power.¹ Intermarriage with people of the country had also an injurious effect in the diminution of energy and moral qualifications of the Portuguese. To these causes must be added a natural tendency

¹ "Society was almost rotten to the core. The morals of the community were extremely lax. Profligacy had become the predominant and fashionable vice, and men gave themselves up to the sensual pleasures peculiar to Oriental life. Nor was the public administration less tainted. The civic virtues of Albuquerque and Castro were supplanted by corruption and venality ; justice was bought, public offices were put up for sale, and the martial spirit of the nation degenerated into effeminacy, sloth and indolence, as in the last days of the Roman Empire." (*Soldado Pratico*, pp. 34 *et seq.*, quoted by Fonseca in *Historical Sketch of Goa*, p. 168.)

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on their part to despise other nations as inferior to themselves, and a consequent disinclination to make the necessary efforts to retain the position which they had formerly held, but which they were now rapidly losing. Another cause of decay is to be found in the too great increase in numbers and wealth of the numerous religious orders which had established themselves at Goa and other settlements. These constituted a dead weight on the resources of the Portuguese settlements which could not but tend to produce a disastrous effect on the inhabitants, who required all their wealth and energy to enable them to contend against such formidable rivals as they had to meet with in their competitors for mercantile supremacy. Lastly, the epidemic fever which broke out for the second time in 1635 with unprecedented violence tended in no slight degree to complete the ruin which was being brought about by the causes already mentioned. Owing to the poverty of the Government treasury at that time no proper measures could be taken to arrest the ravages of the disease, and the Government officials contented themselves with merely joining with the clergy in imploring the Divine mercy. (See Fonseca's *Sketch of Goa*, p. 169.) Nor must it be forgotten that from their very first landing in India the Portuguese had been far too impetuous and venturesome in their attempts to establish themselves as a power in India. Instead of concentrating themselves in one or two settlements and thence gradually extending their power, they established

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xvi HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE

isolated ports at various points on the coast, from which, when the time of adversity arrived, they were gradually driven by their enemies.

To sum up in a few words the history of the decline and fall of Portuguese power in India, it may be said that it was a tree planted with the sword and watered with blood, which, "because it had no root, withered away."

For the use of those who wish to inquire further into the subject, thus briefly referred to, it is only necessary to state that an ample list of authorities is quoted in the Introduction to the *Commentaries of Afonso Dalboquerque* (published by the Hakluyt Society in 1875), vol. ii, p. cvii *et seq.*, and in a paper by T. W. H. Tolbort, Esq., B.C.S., on "Authorities for the History of the Portuguese in India", in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. xlii, Part I, 1873, pp. 193-208.

In *The Times* of August 15th and 21st, 1891, will be found letters making mention of valuable records at Lisbon and in the Library of Lincoln's Inn in London on this subject, to which the attention of the British Indian Government has lately been directed. An announcement has lately been made also of two works on the *History of the Portuguese in India*, and on *The Causes which led to the Decline of Portuguese Power in India*, about to be published by Senor J. da Pinheiro of Goa.

As frequent reference is made in the following letters to the English and Dutch merchants, and as these two nations were the rivals of the Portuguese

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PORTUGUESE POWER IN INDIA. xvii

power in India, and constantly in collision with its representatives both in war and in matters of trade, a brief sketch of the origin and growth of the British and Dutch East India Companies up to the period when the Portuguese power ceased to hold sway on the continent of India may be useful to the reader of these letters, and may tend to a better understanding of affairs as they existed at the time referred to therein.

The spirit of enterprise and the spread of commerce which had ensued upon the discovery of America and of the passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope, the successes of the Spaniards and the Portuguese and the commercial efforts of the Dutch, disposed the English Government in the latter part of the sixteenth century to encourage plans for securing to the people a share of the increasing benefits of trade; and, in consequence, several mercantile companies were established by letters patent. In 1589 a memorial was presented by divers merchants to the Lords of the Council, setting forth the public advantages which would result from trade in the East Indies; and, at length, a charter of incorporation was granted, which is dated the 31st of December in the forty-third year of the reign of Elizabeth, A.D. 1600, the last day of the sixteenth century.

In this charter it is recited that two hundred and nineteen individuals, who are named, have petitioned for licence that they, "for the increase of navigation and the advancement of trade of mer-

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