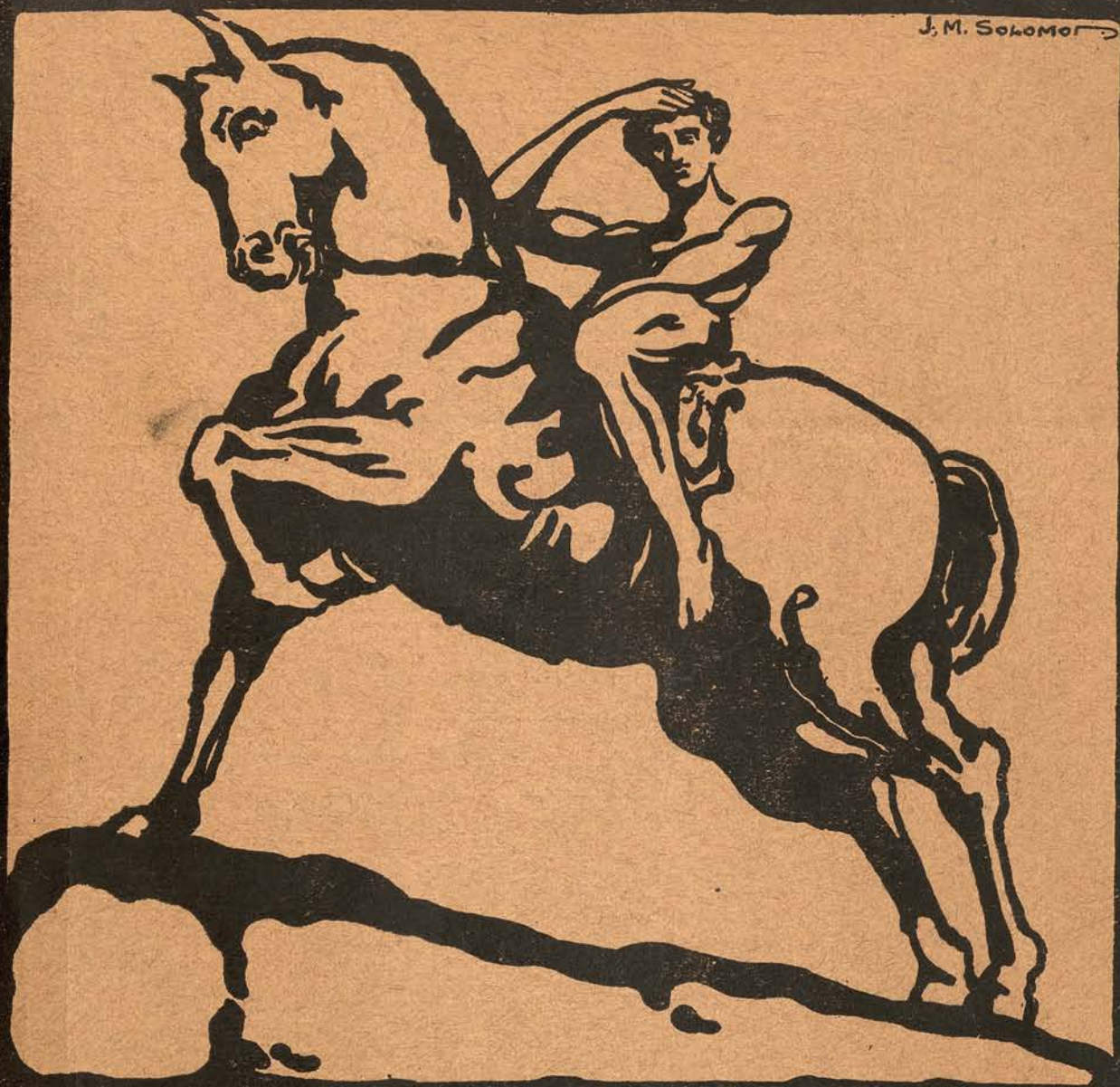


J. M. Solomon



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CAMOENS AND THE EPIC OF AFRICA.*

I.

The greatest of South African poems is still the first and probably one of the least familiar. Though it was written by a man who probably never did more than set foot on our shores, and who never thought of South Africa as more than a desert station on the route to India—a great, gaunt elbow of the world that had to be turned,—I hope to make good my contention that he left us the only poem in which South Africa has yet been epically celebrated as she ought. The breath which filled the sails of Da Gama was the breath that inspired the “Lusiads” of Camoens,—the breath of the winds that blow round the African coast. If South Africa owes her existence to the sea, as Lord Selborne reminded us some months ago, she can rejoice in the possession of a poem in which the spirit of adventure by sea has been enshrined and has been sung as in no other poem since the unknown author of the “Odyssey” sang of these things. But it is not only the African seas that are sung of in the “Lusiads.” Down there at the far southern end of the continent this poet, who was only ours by the slender chances of a voyage, set up a monument of perpetual endurance in the giant figure of Adamastor, the genius of the Cape. The only great figure added to mythology since classical times is a South African figure. Guarding the first entrance to South Africa, and keeping back—one is sometimes tempted to imagine—the spirit of poetry from passing into the interior, this great poetical creation left us by Camoens in the sixteenth century is a thing unique in the newer world south of the Line or west of the Atlantic. It stands there to

* A lecture delivered at the Transvaal University College, Johannesburg, August 28, 1909.

remind us of our portion in the Renaissance, older than Shakespeare's plays and grandiose like the figures at the gate of Hell in Milton's epic. The long wave of the classical renaissance slowly creeping round the African coast left this vast relic high and dry on our shores; and although that wave carried other treasures to remoter shores it left nothing more sublime anywhere. It is a relic which should be one of the most familiar of our landmarks.

I wish to speak to-night of Camoens principally as the poet of the African seas and as the poet of that Renaissance in which South Africa too readily forgets her share. But first of all I must speak of Camoens the man. Some men, it has been said, live their romances and some men write them. To Camoens, as to Cervantes, it was given to do both, and one does not know if a more fabulous and extraordinary existence is to be found in all the modern annals of literature. When Milton thrills us with those extraordinary glimpses of the East which are the most romantic things in "Paradise Lost," he describes with the allusive touch of a literary poet what Camoens had seen with his own eyes, and what few other poets or none of the Renaissance were allowed to see. He had come, and his poem has come—

"Close sailing from Bengala and the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore: whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs: they on the trading flood
Through the wide Ethiopian to the Cape
Ply stemming nightly toward the pole";

he had seen the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind, and that utmost Indian isle Taprobane—

"Dusk faces with white silken turbants wreath'd";

and nearer home these meant more to him than names—

"The less maritime kings
Mombasa and Quiloa and Melind
And Sofala, thought Ophir, to the realm
Of Congo, and Angola farthest south."

And all this he put into his poetry not with the close mosaic art of Milton but with the free confident touch and the broad familiarity of the man who describes what he has seen. Camoens is the poet of the East Coast of Africa as well as of the South, but in the broader aspect he is the poet of that war

between Christian and Moslem in the Indian seas during the sixteenth century which Mr. Ian Colvin has just brought so vividly before our imagination afresh in his "Romance of South Africa," when, as he says, "the Cross and the Crescent, Portuguese and Arabs, were face to face on a new battlefield and the Christian evensong met the cry of the Muezzin across the blue palm-fringed waters of the Indian Ocean." We are sometimes reminded how closely linked still from geographical and political causes are India and South Africa, and how the closing of the Suez Canal might bring this home to us again. The whole of Camoens' work is imaginatively conditioned by the same truth, and we might, if we chose, claim for it a political as well as an historical significance. But I prefer to speak of it under other aspects to-night. It is difficult for a foreigner to record the exact debt of nationalism to a strange epic, but I can fall back on the testimony of a great living critic of Portugal, the poet and historian Theophilo Braga, who has given us the best book on Camoens by one of his countrymen* and to whom I am largely indebted for the matter of my lecture. The epic of Camoens, says Braga, means for a Portuguese more than a masterpiece of literature. "In it we have what no other masterpiece has yet attained—the entire demonstration of the life of a nation." By this Braga does not mean that we shall find the "Lusiads" a mere museum of historical specimens, or a prosaic guide to the everyday life of Portugal. He refers rather to the spiritual elements of national life,—the scientific curiosity of the maritime explorers, the religious feeling which makes the Portuguese epic a landmark of Catholicism, and the courage of his race (*O peito Lusitano*) which Camoens announces as his theme in the forefront of his poem. "The real value of the 'Lusiads,'" it has been said by an English writer, Sir George Birdwood, in a volume of the old records of the India Office, "despite the historical truth which underlies the supernatural machinery and elevated imagery of the poem, is not as a record of authentic discovery, but as evidence of the higher moral and spiritual aims of the Portuguese in their inquisition of the Indies; the history of which, but for the light thrown on it by Camoens, would only preserve the memory, better lost, of deeds of indescribable tyranny, senselessness and shame." But if the poem is

* "Camões, Epoca e Vida, por Theophilo Braga." Porto: Livraria Chardron. 1907.

more than a masterpiece of literature, it is that as well. The texture of the poem has been interwoven with the common speech of Portugal in a way to which Shakespeare in England affords the only parallel. This is not of course to say that the two poets resemble each other, or can be put on anything like the same level. The genius of Camoens is at once elegant and flowing, sententious and broadly descriptive. He has the romantic nature of Spenser together with a gift for epigram which could hardly be found in an English poet before Pope. The contrast between the two styles is a measure of the difficulty of conveying an impression of the style of the "Lusiads" in the terms of English poetry. But we find no sense of contrast or of discord in the style itself. The verse of Camoens is singularly of a piece, and no English translation—and there are many of them—conveys anything but a distorted notion of his manner. Sir Richard Burton, who perhaps distorted him most of all, has shown at any rate that he was sensible of the merits of his author as these appear to the poet's countrymen, though he was unable to transfer them to his version of the poem. "The lovers of Camoens," he says, "admire his unaffected simplicity, his elegance and his perspicuity of style, which conceals under its natural flow the highest art; his sweetness, melody and harmony; his masterly power of making sound echo sense; his grace and polish of expression; his copiousness and facility of rhyme; his variety and vivacity of apostrophe; his conciseness at pleasure, confining his verse to noun and verb; his nice conduct of the marvellous, which Aristotle bluntly calls "the false"; and lastly, his modesty and delicacy, which make the picture of the Isle of Love resemble, as Mickle well said, "the statue of Venus de Medici." The influence of Camoens on the language of Portugal was hardly less decisive than, and can only be compared to, that of Dante when he established literary Italian. "We can say," Braga writes, "that his book (the "Lusiads," that is) prevented the breaking up of the Portuguese language into separate dialects; the speech of the kingdom established itself in the noblest unity. Even under the Spanish dominion, while the rich and cultured classes conversed in Castilian, the common people generally employed Portuguese, which in consequence of these events was at that time looked down upon." A poet who has done all this for his country would be worth our study even had we no nearer interest in his work, but the life of Camoens

is much more than a literary life. There is one note in his biographers, especially in those outside Portugal, which has been perhaps somewhat forced. The life of Camoens was crowded beyond that of most men and poets with misfortunes, but it had also more—much more—than the ordinary man's share of adventure and experience. He is too often made merely an elegiac figure, a character and a destiny to shed tears over. This is true especially of his treatment at the hands of such incorrigible sentimentalists as Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Browning. But the artist or the poet, however great his sufferings, is never without his compensations. It is time to recognise in Camoens something of the epic nature and the epic character which he gives to the heroes of his own poem. We see him a lonely antagonist of destiny, defeated and maltreated in three continents, the seeming plaything of fortune, thrown from one end of Asia to the other, exiled for sixteen years from his country, but

"Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,"

and returning to lay his offering in poverty and obscurity on the threshold of his country before he died. That offering was the "Lusiads," and the life which had gone to its making is not one to shed tears over.

II.

It was probably in 1524, the year of Vasco da Gama's death, that Camoens was born. We have no documentary evidence of the date, but the modern biographers incline to an agreement over the year more complete than they yet show regarding the place of the poet's birth. If the conjecture is right—and Dr. Storck, the principal German student of Camoens, takes it as proved—the omens were in singular conjunction for a life of stormy infelicity and wild adventure by sea. In February of that same year in which the terrible sea captain died who had opened up the route to India—"the famished lion who had ranged round Africa as a fold"—all Portugal, and indeed a great part of Europe, was expecting an unprecedented flood. So the astrologers had predicted. And if their prophecies were not literally fulfilled there was at least plague enough in Lisbon to make the year a time of national gloom. The poet was not going beyond the most

obvious imaginative truth when he said that he was born under no happy star—" *estrellas infelices*."

The poet's family came originally from Galicia in Spain, and an ancestor of his, Vasco Pires de Camões, who took refuge in Portugal in 1370 had some reputation in his day as a poet. Besides being literary, the family was noble, and obtained favours from the Kings of Portugal as they had formerly from those of Spain. Senhor Braga, like a true scientific historian, finds in Camoens' nature clear traces of his heredity. He finds that the family early showed traces of neurotic qualities such as poetic sentiment, genius for adventure, the passion for quarrelling, prodigal and spendthrift ostentation, amorous intrigue, and in its intermarriages and relationships the connections which determined both its maritime activity and its tendency towards religious mysticism or idealistic contemplation. The poet's grandfather, Antao Vaz de Camões, married into the family of the Gamas of Algarve, to which the great navigator belonged. The poet's father, Simao Vaz de Camões, also saw service on the Fleet in the Indies and elsewhere like many of the Portuguese nobility. Indeed it was a byword of the time, repeated in many of the satirists and dramatic writers of the sixteenth century, that the command of ships of war was often given to members of noble families without any regard to their nautical experience, and that many of the naval disasters and shipwrecks which abounded were due to this cause. The two elder Camões, however, seem to have acquitted themselves honourably,—Antao as commander of a caravel and as having taken part in the capture of Goa, and Simao through his labours and services in the Indies and in Guinea for which he was made a burgher of Lisbon.

This was in 1529. In 1527, a year of terrible plague in Lisbon, he accompanied the Court to Coimbra; and he seems to have resided there at intervals in a house which he had inherited from a family ancestor, and indeed to have considered the town—one of the oldest in Portugal—as his home. Whether his famous son was born there is another matter. Most of the biographers, and Braga in particular, give their vote now to Lisbon; Wilhelm Storck stands out, however, for Coimbra, and certainly it is plain that Camoens himself cherished a particular affection for the latter town and especially

its little river, the crystal Mondego, which he has sung of in a hundred places with all the affection of Petrarch for his Vaucluse and the Sorgue. There is a curious difference of opinion between the biographers regarding Camoens' mother, Donna Anna de Macedo or Anna de Sa de Macedo as she is sometimes called. Storck tries to make out from certain references in the poems that his mother, Anna de Macedo, really died at the poet's birth and that Anna de Sa was his stepmother. But the other biographers think that the pension which was granted (after Camoens' death) on the 31st of May, 1582, to Anna de Sa was granted to her because she was the mother of the famous poet; and indeed this seems proved by the document itself, in which the grant is made by the King "*A Anna de Sa mai de Luis de Camois*" (To Anna de Sa, mother of Luis de Camoens), who is spoken of as "*muyto velha e pobre*" (very old and poor). When she died is not clear.

The third of the poet's relatives whose acquaintance we have to make is his uncle, Dom Bento de Camões, a high ecclesiastic, who was made Chancellor of the University of Coimbra in 1539. The University of Coimbra was one of the oldest foundations in Portugal, but it had long been removed to a seat in the Capital. In 1537 it was brought back to Coimbra and the colleges, mainly church colleges, of which it was composed were reorganised. Dom Bento had a large part in this work, and his influence on his nephew's life and education were extremely important. He procured him admission into the Chapter School of Santa Cruz at Coimbra, and afterwards at the age of thirteen into one of the colleges which formed part of the University. It is easy to understand that for "the honourable poor student"—this was the title under which Camoens held his bursary—the position and example of his uncle must have been of no little advantage. He entered life under the protection and patronage of learning, whereas most of his contemporaries looked for such protection only to the uncertain favours of the Court.

We can now picture to ourselves, if we have any imagination, Camoens' forebears; and first the poor gentleman his father, of decayed fortunes but proud of his family traditions and something of an adventurer still. Indeed as late as 1553, when his son had already set sail for the Indies, we find him under arrest for the somewhat surprising exploit of having forcibly

entered the Convent of the Sisters of St. Anne. Apparently he did penance for this offence, for in 1563 he found a humble post for his later years as Procurator to a Dominican College of St. Thomas. And the stately and more reputable figure of his uncle,—a man evidently of some decision of character, since his Chancellorship of the University was marked by conflicts both with the royal power and with the rector of the University. It has been conjectured by Braga that his uncle's quarrels did not improve Camoens' prospects when he afterwards came to frequent the Court of Don John.

Of Camoens in his youth we know little except that like Byron he was precocious in love; but of his academic life and surroundings at Coimbra we are able, thanks to Braga, to form a singularly complete picture. It was at a moment of crisis and change in education that Camoens began his studies. The old mediæval scheme of an Arts course, comprising grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic—the trivium,—and a course of moral philosophy, logic and natural philosophy, together with possibly theology and canon law, was being modified by the new current of the renaissance. Camoens learned Latin thoroughly, but he also studied Portuguese simultaneously and from a grammar which explained them comparatively, so that when in the "Lusiads" he makes Venus the protecting goddess of the Portuguese he finds her sympathy on the fact of the close relationship between Portuguese and Latin. The range of his mythological reading may be gathered from the ease with which he introduced classical allusions into his work later in life when far from books and in such remote quarters as Goa and on the islands of the Chinese coast. That he knew Greek has not been proved, but his training in scholastic philosophy made him acquainted with Aristotle, and it is interesting to notice how something of the newer experimental thought of the Renaissance impinges on dogmatic natural philosophy in many passages of the "Lusiads." Speaking of the strange natural phenomena of his African voyage he says:

"If those antique philosophers who paced
So many lands their secrets to espy,
The sail-yards to as many winds had braced,
And seen as much to wonder at as I.—
What lore had they for after ages traced
What stars revealed, what signs on sea and sky?
Rare things and great, unthought of by the wise
All true, though strange as fiction could devise."

And again :

“Sights have I witnessed that the seaman rude,
Whose only teacher is experience, deems
Facts he can vouch ; and tells them as he viewed,
Taking the thing he sees for what it seems.
But keener intellects, in judgment shrewd,
And strong in science to detect the schemes
Of nature, hidden from the vulgar eye,
Such tales as wild or fabulous decry.”

“When Camoens left Coimbra,” says Braga, “in the end of 1542, humanistic teaching was not yet corrupted by the false comprehension of antiquity and negation of all national spirit by the Jesuits. It is the alliance of these two elements—national spirit and the feeling for the past—which gives equilibrium to the genius of Camoens, making him superior to the best exclusive spirits of the Renaissance. In the reading of his works two distinct intellectual currents are at once visible, apparently opposed to each other, but at bottom united : his verses are full of instances, which proves the knowledge he had of Homer, Virgil, Petrarch and Sanazzaro, of mythology, of the Greek geographers and of the encyclopædias in which classical studies were condensed ; but all this weight of learning and authority borrowed from humanist collections did not succeed in quenching in his soul the sentiment of nationality which breathes out in his sympathetic allusions to the popular and traditional romances, to the drolleries and other forms of popular literature, in the preference given to Vicente’s form of the Auto in his dramatic experiments, in the legends which diversify the history of Portugal which is interwoven with such art into the ‘Lusiads.’ This national education came to him in a natural and simple manner from his happy sojourn on the banks of the Mondego, in a district animated with historical traditions and old and characteristic customs. It is this education which strengthened his individuality, stirring up in him the sentiment of nationality, which only grew the more intense the more events conspired to quench it.”

It was in 1537, the year in which the University of Coimbra was restored to its original site, that the Inquisition first obtained a footing in Portugal. Had Camoens’ years of study fallen a little later he would have witnessed the sad results of a reactionary policy in education and he might have made the acquaintance and sat at the feet of one of the most remark-

able of Scotsmen and of humanists. In reorganising the University it had been the intention of the King (John III., the Pious, 1521-57) that, started on a new career, it should make an era in the history of his kingdom. Now it happened that although humanistic education was only struggling to its feet in Portugal an eminent Portuguese scholar, Andrea de Gouvea, had made a great name for himself in Paris as the head of the College de Guienne. It was to him that John turned with the request or rather the command that he should superintend a new college at Coimbra. Gouvea accepted the invitation and gathered together a staff of which George Buchanan was the most famous. The company sailed from Bordeaux in March, 1547. "The institution founded by Gouvea and his staff," says Mr. Hume Brown, "was named the College of Arts. The idea of the King was to put this college on a level with the College de Guienne and the best colleges of Paris, and so render it unnecessary for the Portuguese youth to leave the kingdom for higher education. With Gouvea as principal, supported by the brilliant scholars he had brought with him, John made sure that everything must turn out to his wish, and so at the outset it seemed. Under Gouvea's management the new institution was launched with the happiest auspices; but before the year was out Gouvea died, and his death, as it proved, sealed the fate of the college.

The new college, with its foreign colony of humanists, had been especially hateful to the Jesuits, who had by this period secured a firm footing in Portugal. Simon Rodrigues, the celebrated associate of Loyola, had gained the most absolute ascendancy over the mind of King John, and on the death of Gouvea all his arts were directed towards the acquisition of the college for his company. The usual weapons were brought into play, secretly and publicly charges of heresy were adduced against Gouvea's companions. First, three were thrown into the prisons of the Inquisition, and only after long confinement were brought to trial. The trial was a mere pretence, the accusers not even being named; and they were again sent to their dungeons. With such weapons at their disposal, the Jesuits had not long to wait for the attainment of their ends. One morning the Provincial of their order presented himself at the gate of the College of Arts with a signed order. The order came from the King, and it bore that thenceforward the college was under the absolute control of the Society of Jesus.

The bearing of this on the life of Camoens is that it points clearly to the transitional character of the moment in which he was fortunate enough to obtain his education. The "Lusiads" appeared when humanism had been monopolised by the Jesuits, but the poem, although Camoens had no sympathy with reform, reflects a freer and a happier phase of Catholic piety. One of the main motives of the poem, we shall see, was religious. It is well to recognise that it is not a work of propaganda, as some writers have almost hinted, but that it has its roots in a freer, more generous and therefore more humanistic time.

When Camoens came down to Lisbon in 1542 or 1543 he threw himself into all the dissipations of city life with the ardour of a young and questing nature. "The sudden change from an intellectual and contemplative milieu like that of the confined life of a university town to the noisy agitation of a turbulent and festive Court was," says Braga, "enough to produce hallucination and moral loss of balance in the emotional organisation of a youth not accustomed to this environment." We have poems and letters of this time, one of them published as lately as 1904, and we see Camoens the intimate of Rabelaisian companions and sharing with the best of them in their literary and social pastimes. His fame as a versifier, skilled in the Italian manner, a pastoralist after the fashion of Virgil and Sanazzaro, had already reached the Court, and the ladies of the Palace were in the habit of requesting impromptus and emblems from him. But a great passion was still lacking to co-ordinate and inspire these exercises. This came to him, it would seem, in 1544 in the Chapel Royal of Ribeira, when in the approved manner of Petrarch and after the fashion of his first meeting with Laura, Camoens caught a glimpse of an angelic face among the Queen's attendants. The language of Camoens' lyrics becomes infused henceforth with an almost religious fervour. Braga contends, indeed, that the situation was not an imitation of Petrarch's love case, as some of the sonnets of Camoens would make us think: it sprang rather, he holds, from the new and devout fervours of the Court of King John, in which the emotions of religion and gallantry were for the time united. The poet's entry at Court indeed coincided with a moment when the Palace was shadowed by a recrudescence of fanaticism, but Camoens seemed unconscious

of this and of the atmosphere of suspicion it engendered. The lady Camoens had seen in church on Good Friday bore a name which was shared by several other ladies about Court. She was called Catherina de Athayde. She has finally been recognised as the daughter of Dom Antonio de Lima, and was born probably about 1530 or 1531. Unlike Laura or Beatrice, she died unmarried, probably still in the Queen's service, when Camoens was returning from China or had reached Goa about 1558. The poems which he addressed to her under the anagram of Nathercia are enough to have given him high rank as a lyrical poet, and one of the most personal of the Renaissance, had he left us nothing else. Mrs. Browning's "Catarina to Camoens" is a pretty enough poem, but it pales into insignificance before the sonnet and eclogues in which the poet himself tells of the death of his lady, snatched off in her tender years by the hard fates.

With Camoens' admission to the Court his troubles began. An atmosphere of jealousy and suspicion seemed to reign there. His gifts of improvisation made him welcome to the Infanta and possibly to the Queen, but lesser poets envied his easy progress, and it was not possible to keep the secret of his love for Nathercia hidden,—a love soon breaking the barriers of merely conventional sentiment. It is plain too that Camoens was careless in giving offence. The reason for his first banishment has not been made plain, but it coincided with some appearance of severity at Court against the suitors of the Maids of Honour. The overcharged character of the atmosphere is shown in the fact that in that same year the poet Bernardim Ribeiro was taken to the hospital of incurables as the result of a similar love affair. Camoens' case was less severe, but he was sent out of the way, probably to the town of Santarem. He was twenty-two and Caterina fifteen.

The stream of events broadens, and it is necessary to pass down it swiftly. In 1547 he was sent to Africa, whether on the representations of Caterina's family or from his own choice—a choice which was the next thing to a necessity—is not exactly known. Although Camoens seems to have fought bravely both in Africa and in the East, he was never a soldier for the love of it. It was always the pressure of events, the necessity of gaining a livelihood, that compelled his choice. Either in an attack by sea from Moorish pirates or in a skirmish on land near Ceuta the poet lost an eye through a wound made

by the splinter of a cannon ball. Whether it was his right eye or his left is uncertain: some of the biographers follow the one tradition and some the other. The portraits, too, differ in the same respect.* Camoens made his first contributions to African literature during his three years in Morocco—1546-1549—in the shape of letters and sonnets and eclogues describing his experiences. That the plan of a national poem was already forming in his mind seems certain, but it gained little from this first exile; and the poet cannot hide his chagrin and disillusionment before the realities of garrison life and the crumbling glories of the Portuguese dream of a North African empire. It may very well be, then, as Braga contends, that Camoens resolved to depart for India, "in order to retemper his ideal in the living tradition of Portuguese heroism." In December, 1549, the poet was back in Lisbon only to find that his chance of regaining favour with the Court seemed gone for ever. What the reasons were that combined to shut Camoens out of society as effectually as Shelley was shut are difficult to divine. We know from the lives of other Renaissance poets that indiscretions of the affections were sometimes punished in the most implacable way. Donne is a case in point. And if these happened to be combined with other pretexts, political, social or religious, a man might be driven out from the society to which his gifts and his birth entitled him without the least compunction on the part of his enemies or even of the powers that were. It is probable that Camoens, proud, cynical and more than a little bitter, delighted more and more to flout the proprieties of the Court and to live much as Byron was said (with no real ground) to have lived in Venice.

In 1550, as we know from a Register of the Portuguese India House, Camoens enlisted for service in the East. Why he abandoned his project at this time is again not plain; but there is force in Braga's suggestion that the enthusiasm for letters of the young prince Dom John may have stirred up in the poet fresh hopes at the eleventh hour of literary or academic employment. If he cherished such hopes the closing of the College of Arts and the imprisonment of the new professors, which were among the events of the same year, must have

* Braga puts aside the suggestion of a sea-fight, and considers the evidence conclusive for the right eye. Camoens is represented so maimed in an engraving of 1624, from which the later portraits have mostly been derived; some, however, have been reversed in the printing.

dispelled them speedily. Again the only result of delay was to turn a choice into a necessity. The crisis came in 1552. On Corpus Christi Day, June 16, the populace of Lisbon gave themselves up after the Church Procession to stage-shows and festivities in the open streets. As a Court official, Gonçalo Borges, came riding into the Market Square, two masked men obstructed him and addressed some taunting words to him. Borges drew his sword, but Camoens, who happened to be standing near, came to the assistance of the two men, whom he recognised as his friends, drew his sword likewise and gave Gonçalo a side blow on the back of the head. "He had taken the final step," says Braga, "towards his downfall: he had fallen into the clutches of justice. The solemnity of the day and the presence of the king in the city only added to the gravity of the deed." Camoens was thrown into prison and lay for some months under scrutiny, until Borges, whose wound had quickly healed, withdrew his action, whereupon King John pardoned the luckless poet on the 3rd of March, 1553, on condition of his joining the army in India. On Palm Sunday, March 26, after having been eleven days out of prison, Camoens left Lisbon for the East. The reminiscences of that voyage are given with the fullest evidence of truth in the 5th Canto of the "Lusiads." Two things, according to Braga, induced Camoens to combine his own experiences with those of Vasco da Gama in the poem. First, the date of Da Gama's setting out, 28th March, 1497, was only two days distant in the calendar from that of the poet's own departure, 26th March, 1553. The weather and the circumstances of the voyage would not be greatly dissimilar. In the second place, the poet used the full liberty of an artist, the more so since in his time there had not been published the apocryphal "log-book of Vasco da Gama," an unintelligent literary fabrication, full of errors of date and of digressions unknown in a ship's diary.

JOHN PURVES.

(To be Continued.)