

CHAPTER I

THE LAND OF PRESTER JOHN

IF we would understand how South Africa came to be discovered, we must go back a very long time—to the days before either England or Holland was a power on the sea. Every one has heard of Christopher Columbus, and most people know the name of Vasco da Gama; but not so many, perhaps, realise the springs of action that led these sailors to make their great voyages, and some may be surprised to hear that the search for the road to the Indies was a move in the great struggle between the Cross and the Crescent, and Bartholomew Diaz and Vasco da Gama were just as much Crusaders as Richard Cœur de Lion.

In the middle of the fifteenth century Portugal was engaged in a truceless war with the Moors of North Africa. In this, the little country was only taking a part in the general war between Christians and Mahomedans that was waged all along the Mediterranean from east to west. Spain also took part in it, and so did Genoa and Venice, and the Knights of St. John at Malta, and even little England away in the rear of Christendom, sent her troops to defend the frontier. In those days Christendom was one nation, with one emperor and one pope, and all the European peoples knew that the war concerned not the part but the whole. For the Crescent had penetrated into

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Europe as far as France, and the Holy Sepulchre, which was then the shrine of all Christians, was in the hands of the Infidels.

In their part of the battlefield the Portuguese carried on a desperate war. They sent army after army into the north of Africa, they took the Moorish town of Ceuta, but they were beaten back from the walls of Tangier. Scimitar against sword, both sides fought with desperate valour, and the deeds of the heroes are still remembered in song and legend. On the Christian side, among the chief of these paladins was Prince Henry, one of the Royal Infants of Portugal. We hear of him holding the gate of Ceuta against a thousand Infidels; but in the end the power of the Crescent was too strong for him. He was gradually driven back, and was forced to return to his country, leaving his brother, the brave Prince Ferdinand, a prisoner in the hands of the Infidels. The Moors offered to set free their royal prisoner if Portugal would restore to them their town of Ceuta, and the king, torn between his duty and his love, asked all the other princes of Christendom what he should do. They replied that never must Christian town be surrendered to the Infidel for the poor body of one man, and Prince Ferdinand was left to die in the Sultan's dungeons.

His brother, Prince Henry, known to history as the Navigator, was struck with an almost mortal grief at this calamity. He withdrew himself from the sight of all men, and lived like a hermit on the barren Cape of St. Vincent.

But great thoughts were forming in his mind as he looked over the unknown sea. When he sacked the town of Ceuta his soldiers had rolled great jars of honey and wine and oil and spices into the streets, and had found wonderful treasures of stuffs and drugs, gold and silver and gems. Then Prince Henry realised that it was the

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wealth of the Moslems that made them strong, and he knew this wealth came from India. For in those times the whole trade of the East, its sugar and spices, its nutmegs and cloves and cinnamon, its silks and brocades, its pearls, and porcelain, and myrrh, and frankincense, all came to Europe overland from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea to Constantinople and Cairo. The Mahomedans levied heavy toll upon this merchandise before they allowed it to be carried to Europe in the ships of Venice and Genoa, and so they obtained the wealth which made them a danger to all Christendom. Not only did they levy toll on the merchandise, but the whole trade of Asia was in their hands. Arab ships alone sailed the Indian Ocean and took over the cargoes of Chinese junks at Singapore, and Arab caravans crossed the desert with these same cargoes to the Moslem custom-houses of the Mediterranean and the Golden Horn.

This Prince Henry knew, and he knew that so long as the Mahomedans held this trade the Crescent would be strong. But he had heard of two things which gave him hope. He had heard that behind the Infidels in the centre of Africa, in the land from which the Nile flowed, there was a Christian country governed by a Christian king called Prester John. This Prester John was a monarch so great that all India paid him tribute, and it was said that if he liked he could drain the Nile and ruin Cairo. He lived in a land of gold and fire; the anthropophagi, with heads beneath their shoulders, were among his subjects; he received as tribute the carbuncles which the poison-breathing Indian dragons wore in their heads; he was an all-powerful Christian monarch, and if Portugal could make him her ally the strength of the Infidel would certainly be crushed as between the two arms of a nutcracker.

Then Prince Henry had also heard that there was a seaway round the south of Africa to India. How this

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fact came to be known is a mystery to us. Perhaps the Carthaginians had found their way round in olden times, and the tradition was handed down through the centuries. Perhaps European travellers had visited the Arab settlements away far south on the east coast of Africa, or heard East African traditions of the shape of the Continent. However it came about, we know that in the middle of the fourteenth century, a hundred and forty years before the Cape of Good Hope was discovered, there existed a map (in the Medicean Atlas which is still to be seen in the Laurentian Library in Florence) showing the general shape of Africa, including the Gulf of Guinea and the way round the Cape to the Indian Ocean. Prince Henry, therefore, nursed the hope that he might get into the Indian Ocean by way of the South Atlantic, and so win for Portugal the wealth which was now providing the war funds of the Saracens. Prince Henry was, in fact, on the true scent where Christopher Columbus was on the false.

The prince was a very wise and patient man. He built a college and observatory on his barren spit of sand, and collected there the wisest scholars, the most learned books, and the latest scientific instruments of his time. He read such works as the travels of Marco Polo, of Jordanus of Severac, and Macudi the Moor, and here were gathered such men as Master Jacome of Majorca, deep in all the arts of navigation and the making of maps, Abraham Zakut the Jew, who demonstrated the value of the astrolabe, and many other Christian, Jew, and Arab scholars skilled in the mysteries of mathematics and astronomy.

It was a painful task to sift truth from fable in those times, and Prince Henry, very likely, believed that the earthly paradise came between India and the land of Prester John, and many other fables which seem equally absurd nowadays. But he held fast by

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every truth he discovered, and worked with untiring zeal. In his port of Lagos he built ships, and built them so well that the great shipbuilder, Cadamosto the Italian, whom he employed, was able to say that the caravels of Portugal were better than the best that Genoa could produce. In his college of Sagres he trained sailors in the use of the astrolabe, which took the height of the sun, and the compass, which pointed to the Pole, and he launched fleet after fleet on the Western Ocean to go south in search of the passage of which he dreamed.

Now the Atlantic was then an almost unknown ocean, and the Arabs—perhaps from guile, perhaps from superstition—spread abroad all manner of dreadful stories about the Green Sea of Darkness, as they called it. They said it was full of sea-monsters and serpent-rocks and water-unicorns, that in the tropics the sun poured down sheets of liquid flame and kept the water boiling hot day and night, and that from the waves Satan himself stretched a great black hand ready to seize the first sailor who should venture thither. But Prince Henry was not to be deterred. He obtained a dispensation from the Pope to protect the souls of sailors from these dangers and to ensure them Paradise if they should die upon the voyage; and his caravels, with the Cross upon their sails, went every year farther and farther south. On they went, past the Grand Canary and past Teneriffe, as far as Capè Bojador. For long they dared not venture farther, so dread-inspiring were the stories the Moors spread abroad; but at last, urged by their Prince, they doubled the Cape and came back gleefully with the news that the waters beyond were as easy to sail in as the sea at home, and that on the shores they had so much dreaded they gathered the flowers called in Portugal St. Mary's Roses.

But then the sailors came upon the slaves and gold

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of Guinea, and greed made them deaf to all Prince Henry's prayers. "I do not want gold, I want knowledge," he would say, as they returned with rich cargoes. "Plant the Cross on a new headland, that is what I want." But the work went on slowly, and the great prince died without seeing the fulfilment of his dreams.

To show how curiously superstition and religion are mixed up with this great discovery, let me tell a story of Prester John. Ambassadors were brought in Portuguese ships from the kingdom of Benin to the court of King John of Portugal, and they told him that beyond their country, far up on a mighty river, lived a great king called Ogane, who was held in high veneration by the people of Benin. So much did they venerate him that their kings could not reign without his consent, and when their ambassadors went to visit him they were only allowed to see his foot, which was stretched out from behind a curtain. As a sign of his favour, they were given a helmet of brass and a metal cross, which they took back to Benin in triumph. Now this mention of a cross led King John to believe that Ogane was no other than the great Christian monarch Prester John, and the information spurred him on to a tremendous effort.

One of his captains, Duarte Pacheco by name, was sent to seek Prester John by way of the dark fever-haunted rivers which flow into the Gulf of Guinea; two envoys, Afonso de Paiva and Pedro Cavilhao, were to go circumspectly in search of India and Prester John by an eastern route through Alexandria and Cairo; certain ships were to sail north and endeavour to find a north-east passage to China; and last, and most important to us in this great adventure, Bartholomew Diaz was commanded to sail south by the west coast of Africa until he should come to the end of the land, and so by the south sea to India.

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Thus, in 1486, Diaz set forth on this mighty enterprise—fraught with consequences as great to the world as the voyage of Christopher Columbus itself. He had only two small ships of but fifty tons burthen, with a tender to carry such necessaries as might afterwards be required. With this meagre equipage he went boldly forward, passing the crosses which had been set up like milestones along the coast. The Gulf of Guinea, with its torrid languid air and oily water and shores of mangrove swamps, was left far behind. The coast became parched and barren and desolate. But Diaz went on, halting only now and then to land negroes and negresses, who were despatched like carrier-pigeons with messages for Prester John. At last even the cross that Diego Cam had planted near St. Helena Bay, the farthest point hitherto reached, was left behind, and Diaz beat round the Cape of Good Hope itself, then wrapt in storms, and so burst into a sea never before sailed by any man. Then he coasted along the southern shores of Africa, on the great road the ships of so many nations have sailed since. He had now—if he had only known it—the secret almost solved; but the storms never ceased, the food and water were nearly at an end, and the tackle of the ships was much worn by wind and weather. The officers and sailors came near to open mutiny; but the captain still persisted until he reached and passed the island of Santa Cruz in Algoa Bay, near where Port Elizabeth now stands. Twenty-five leagues farther, and his officers at last constrained him to turn back, after placing a cross on the island, to which, as the old chronicler tells us, he bade farewell with as much grief as if he were leaving a son in exile for ever.

So Diaz went sorrowfully home, stopping at Cape Point to erect the Cross of San Filippe.

On his way north he found Duarte Pacheco sick almost unto death on the coast of Guinea. He had

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done his best to find a riverway to Prester John : but in the dark channels and swamps of mangrove trees, where no sea comes through, and the roots are like black serpents writhing in the slime, the fever-demon seized him and he narrowly escaped with his life.

And Diaz also found his tender where he had left it—though some of its crew were dead, and the rest so weak that one of them died with joy at the sight of the ships.

So Diaz came back to Portugal with the news ; and it is said that when he told the king of the great southern promontory which he had called the Cape of Storms, the king commanded that the name should be changed to the Cape of Good Hope, because, no doubt, he saw that it was the turning-point on the road to India.

All this time Cavilhao and de Paiva were exploring in the east and seeking news of Prester John. The two chose different roads, and Cavilhao went from Egypt through Arabia towards India. He got to Aden with some Moors of Tremicem and Fez, and thence he took ship for Calicut, the great port in those days of the Malabar coast. Here he saw vast fleets of Arab ships, and learned the secrets of the Indian trade. Thence he sailed across the Indian Ocean to the east coast of Africa, and saw Mozambique and Sofala. And he passed north again and got to Cairo, where he found that de Paiva was dead. But he met two Jews of Portugal, Rabbi Hebrao of Beja and Rabbi Josephe, a shoemaker of Lamego, and by one of them he sent a letter to the king—one of the most important letters ever written in the whole history of the world. He told his master of the riches of India and the caravans of camels that passed from Ormuz and Aden to Cairo, and the golden cities of Aleppo and Damascus. And then he wrote these portentous and prophetic words, which helped to shape the destinies of the world :—

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“Keep southward : if you persist Africa must come to an end. And when ships come to the Eastern Ocean, let them ask for Sofala and the Island of the Moon (Madagascar), and they will find pilots to take them to Malabar.”

So he wrote, but he himself never went home. Instead, he turned his steps south and went up the Nile till he came to the kingdom of Prester John, who was no other than the Negus of Abyssinia, where he was made a great noble and abode all his life.

Thus between Cavilhao on the east and Diaz on the west the riddle was as good as solved. There only wanted the keystone to the arch, the last link to the chain, the passage from Algoa Bay to Sofala. This Vasco da Gama supplied, and won riches and honour and fame ; but Diaz, who was greater than he, has for monument the bubbling waves of the South Atlantic, where he lies near the country of Brazil, of which he and Pedro Alvares Cabral made discovery.

CHAPTER II

VASCO DA GAMA

AND now the King of Portugal knew everything. What he wanted was a man who should turn theory into practice. Diaz had turned back : he wanted a man whom the Devil himself would not be able to turn. So he chose a poor gentleman of his court named Vasco da Gama, and how just his choice was will be shown before the end of the chapter.

Vasco da Gama was the son of the Alcaide of Sines, a little fishing village which looks over the Atlantic. In front is the open sea ; behind is a waste of sand-dunes ; on the north side of the little bay in which it lies is a rocky promontory which encloses a sheltered cove, the only refuge for the fishing-boats of the village in stormy weather ; above, on the summit of the cape, are the ruins of an old castle, and the church which Vasco da Gama built to commemorate his voyage to the Indies. In this little village the boy grew to manhood. His interests were forcibly turned to the sea by the desert strip which divided the place from the land behind, and often he must have talked to the sailors prowling about among the tarry ropes and nets of the little cove, or watched the ships coasting along from the hill above. Here no doubt he heard stories of the savages of Guinea and of the King of Timbuctoo who tied his horse to a rock of gold, and of those beautiful Fortunate Isles to which the sailors of Portugal voyaged.

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And so he grew to be a man, and traded himself for slaves and gold in the Bight of Biafra. He was not much of a scholar, and he had a practical man's scorn of theoretical knowledge. He was heard to say that all men who are very good as pilots have mad fancies; and, for his part, if the king wished to cut off Magellan's head, he would not raise a finger to prevent it. There is a story that when he was passing along the south coast of Africa, his officers clamoured to turn back because of the bad weather and the unknown seas. But da Gama clapped the pilots under hatches and threw the compass and astrolabe overboard. "And now," said he, "since you know not your way home, you may as well go forward as back."

Whether this story is true or false, he was a man who would have done such a thing. He was strong of build, of middle stature, and of a fiery countenance, and he had a most choleric temper. He would stare at men till they shook in their shoes, and they obeyed him through fear. He thought nothing—as the records tell us—of dipping a Moor in boiling oil, and there are dreadful stories of his doings in India. He ordered the Arab ship, the *Joar Afanqui*, to be burnt, and looked on through his porthole as the women brought up their gold and their jewels and held out their children to beg for mercy. He cut off the noses and ears of some hundreds of poor unoffending Indian fishermen, and sent them to the Zamorin of Calicut to make a curry. When he got home from his voyage he built a house in the town of Evora, and had it all painted over with figures of Indians and elephants and crocodiles; and we may imagine the children trembling as this bluff, fiery, terrible sea-captain rolled up the street to his enchanted house.

Such was the man chosen by the king for the second great adventure. Nothing was spared to make the expedition a success. Bartholomew Diaz himself

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superintended the building of the ships, making them high and strong to withstand the heavy seas of the Cape of Good Hope. They were fitted with a double set of everything that ships required. Da Gama's was a three-master with great sails on which crosses were sewn; she had a low waist, and a very high poop and forecastle, and through the casemates of the poop showed the muzzles of no less than twenty guns.

It was a great day at the port of Rastello when the expedition put out upon its voyage. Portugal felt it was the turning-point in her history, a most notable enterprise in her career of discovery and war against the Infidel. Vasco da Gama, his brother Paul, and the rest of his officers and sailors, prayed all night in the hermitage of Our Lady of Bethlehem, which Prince Henry himself had built, and in which that good prince had placed holy men to offer the sacraments to seafarers. In the morning the captain and all his men walked through the streets to the ships with candles in their hands and all the city behind them, answering the litany which was chanted by the priests in front. It must have been a brave sight—the consecrated banner of the king streaming in the breeze, the bright vestments of the priests, and the glittering helmets and breastplates of the men. No doubt the sailors blessed Prince Henry in his grave, for he had thoughtfully provided Bulls, which he had obtained from His Holiness the Pope, to take all who should die in this discovery straight out of Purgatory into Paradise. They were of good service—more's the pity—for of one hundred and seventy gallant hearts that beat so bravely in the four ships that fair day of July, only fifty-five saw Lisbon again.

And so they sailed with Bartholomew Diaz to put them safely on their way. He saw them as far as Cape Verde and so left them, as sorrowfully, no doubt, as when he bade farewell to his cross on the Island of the

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Fountains. But his crosses were like signposts on the road as they sailed south, and for many days the ships passed over a now familiar track.

Far south, almost at the Cape of Good Hope—in the Bay of St. Helena—Vasco da Gama came to an anchor and went ashore to ascertain the latitude by means of the astrolabe which stood upon a tripod and gave best results when used on shore.

His sailors, you may be sure, were glad to have a run on land after the long voyage cooped up on shipboard. Some went off among the rocks to catch crayfish, and Paul da Gama set out with a boat a-whale-fishing in the bay. They were reckless fishers. Paul stuck two harpoons into a whale, and if the ropes had not been long and the sea shallow there would have been a sorry end to their fishing, for they had made fast the harpoon lines round one of the thwarts. As it was, the boat went over the bay like a flash of light, with the gunwale dipping under the water, before the whale, by good luck, ran himself ashore.

As the Captain and Pedro d'Alanquer, his famous pilot, were taking the height of the sun, the company spied two little men behind a hillock stooping as if they were gathering herbs. Da Gama made a sign, and all the sailors drew softly upon them, creeping through the low shrub among the sand-hills. Then, without being seen, they surrounded the little men, who were working away among the bushes with lighted torches to keep off the bees, as they dug out the honey. They were such men as the Portuguese had never seen before—naked indeed, like the men of Guinea, but not so black. They were filthy and small, almost as much like baboons as men; and their hair was twisted in beads, stuck here and there upon their heads like black peppercorns. But their language was the strangest part of them, for, as one of the old sailors put it, they “clocked in their speech like a brood hen.” For besides vowels they have

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various clicks of which their language is full. Some people say that this race of pigmies long long ago dwelt in the very north of Africa, and are identical with an aboriginal tribe that lived in the Delta of the Nile. They have been driven ever south by stronger nations until at last the miserable remnant found a refuge in the most barren part of Southern Africa. Certain it is that some of their beliefs and superstitions have a smack of Egypt. For example, they have as a sort of tribal totem the scarab beetle; and their wall paintings in red and black ochre, which I have seen for myself on the walls of the caves in which they used to live, may derive from the frescoes of the Egyptian tombs, while they have among their stories a legend almost exactly similar to the story of the dividing of the Red Sea. They are, indeed, a wonderful little people, or I should say they were, for they have been hunted out of their last refuges, and their old hunting-grounds know them no more.

The two little men were gradually surrounded, as I have said, and then the Portuguese made a rush. One of the bushmen escaped, doubling through the bushes like a hare; but the other was captured. He was, however, so afraid that he would neither speak nor eat until all the men went away, leaving only two cabin boys who sat beside him and made friends. But when he did begin to speak even the men who knew the language of Guinea could make nothing of what he said. However, he was given some toy bells and glass beads, and, going off in high glee, brought back a large number of his people. They were shown gold and silver and spices, but made no sign of knowledge, though they were delighted with the food and beads which they received.

The sailors were somewhat mistrustful of these strange people; but one of them, Fernao Veloso by name, boasted that he would go with them. Off he

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went, swaggering bravely, with a troop of the little men trotting about him. A little way inland he came upon their encampment, where they lived in little holes scooped in the ground with branches bent over them and the skin of an animal over the branches. They made a feast in honour of the stranger ; but to Veloso's horror it was the raw flesh of an animal which they tore to pieces before his eyes ; and they offered him the entrails as a choice delicacy. Horrified at the sight of their savagery, Veloso felt his valour ooze out of him, and in a panic he took to his heels and ran for the boats.

The little bushmen picked up their bows and assegais and made after him. But Veloso, winged by fear, ran to such good purpose that he reached the landing-place before they could catch up to him. As he came down the hill towards the shore he shouted most lustily, but the sailors, who had just put off to the ships with their cargoes of whale meat, only lay on their oars and laughed. For Veloso was known through the fleet as a boaster, who was "always speaking of his courage," and the sailors vastly enjoyed this exhibition of his bravery. However, Vasco da Gama ordered them to row to the rescue, and as they reached the shore the runner, with one last mighty effort, leapt into a boat. The pursuers were close upon his heels ; but whether they meant evil or no is not quite clear. Whatever they intended the sailors did not trust them, and struck at them with oars and boathooks. In reply came a shower of bone-tipped arrows and assegais, one of which wounded Vasco da Gama in the foot, while two sailors were also wounded. The Portuguese shot at the savages with their cross-bows, hitting several, and then made for the ships. So ended the first unlucky meeting between white men and the people of South Africa.

Then the ships rounded the Cape of Good Hope

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“with less storm and perils than the sailors expected from the opinion they had of it, which had caused them to give it the name of Cape of Storms.” They had good weather, and “sailed along the coast with much pleasure, merry-making, and playing of trumpets.” They kept close to the land so that they could see it was covered with verdure, on which grazed herds of cattle and sheep. At one place, now called Mossel Bay, they landed on the Sunday of the feast of Saint Catherine, 25th November 1497, and there saw herds of elephants. The negroes came down to meet them, riding on oxen saddled with packs of reeds after the Spanish fashion. They entertained the strangers hospitably: “Our men,” says de Barros, “had great pleasure from these people, for they were joyous and given to playing and dancing, and among them were some who played very well upon a kind of pastoral flute, after their own fashion.” But soon there were quarrels over the barter of cattle, and the fleet sailed on. They passed an island covered with thousands of seals, “so savage that they attacked men like bulls” and wondered at the penguins “of the size of a wild goose, that cannot fly as they have no feathers on their wings, which are only covered with skin like those of bats.” Then they were buffeted by a storm which filled the sailors with terror, so that “they did nothing but call upon God, thinking more of repenting of their sins than of managing the sails, for the shadow of death was over everything.” But they came through it, and with great rejoicing they passed the islet where Diaz planted his last cross. On the feast of the Nativity they passed the coast of Natal, to which they gave its beautiful name, and so hopefully they sailed on, perceiving now that they were going north.

Yet Vasco da Gama must have been an anxious man, for his crews were sorely afflicted with scurvy; the flesh of their gums swelled so that their mouths could

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hardly contain it, and as it swelled it decayed, so that they cut it away like dead flesh, a most pitiful thing to see. Hitherto they had seen nothing but savages and the wilderness. But at last he saw something which rejoiced his heart—two sails, just such sails as might be seen on the coast of Morocco, long and upward-pointed like the wings of a swallow. Ships of the Moors they were in very truth—long, pointed, brown sails on the blue of the sea hard under the green shore. Then they were gone; but the Portuguese following close came into a great river (the Zambesi itself) and saw the ships again lying in a little harbour under the trees. There was a knot of men about them, some naked savages like those of Guinea; but at the sight of the others the Portuguese shouted with joy, for they had turbans on their heads or caps of coloured camlet, and wore blue mantles which fell to the ground behind them, and vests of bright silk. One of the Portuguese shouted to them in Arabic and they replied with the name of the Prophet. In this dramatic way the Cross and the Crescent met again, and the old enemies were face to face on a new battlefield—the hitherto untroubled waters of the Indian Ocean. As one of the Portuguese historians says, da Gama had ranged round Africa like a famished lion round the fold. He was now within, and with what dreadful consequences of fire and slaughter we shall presently see.

The mariners refreshed themselves and careened their ships, and they called the place the River of Good Signs. From that time it was as if they were sailing in the blue Mediterranean. There were white cities looking over the sea, and the flat-roofed houses were set in gardens and orchards, among palms and orange groves and pomegranate trees. The houses were of stone painted white and yellow, and on the roofs sat ladies in bright raiment. Above the houses rose the golden minarets of the mosques from which the Faithful were

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called to prayer.¹ The streets were so narrow that a man might jump from roof to roof, and were thronged with the people of the East and of Africa. There were Mahomedans "dressed in striped cotton cloths, and on their heads turbans with silk borders worked in gold, with Moorish swords girded round them and bucklers on their arms." Others were dressed in white cambric with little caps of white cambric on their heads. The Mahomedan women were in breeches with veils that covered all but their eyes, and the women of the country and of Madagascar, slaves of the Arabs, wore pieces of white cotton tightly wrapped round their bodies. Then there were merchants from India, "such devout followers of Pythagoras that they would not even kill the insects that annoyed them," and savages from the interior with their hair worked up into horns and wearing nothing but a string of beads round their loins and porcupine quills in their noses. All these jostled in the streets and trafficked in the market-places, for at that time the Arabs did a great trade between East Africa and India, with great fleets of deckless zambucos, which were not even nailed together, but were fastened with wooden pins and cord of palm fibre, with great sails of woven coir. The Mahomedans had settlements all along the coast, chiefly built on little coral islands separated from the mainland by a narrow channel so that they could not be attacked by the savages. They had come to this country long, long before, some from Persia, some from the centre of Arabia. The first of them was no less a man than Zaide, the great-grandson of Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet Mahomed himself. He had been chased out of his own land for heresy, and he was followed by other emigrations of fugitives from time to time. And now these Arabs sold the cloths and spices of Asia for the ivory and gold and slaves of

¹ *Damião de Goes' Chronicle of the Most Fortunate King Dom Emanuel.*

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Africa, their fleets moving this way and that like flights of swallows with the monsoons, so securely that they had not even guns to protect them.

At first these people thought the strangers were Mahomedans like themselves, and at Mozambique the Portuguese were treated with much courtesy. The Sheik Zakoeja himself paid the ships a visit, "accompanied by a great number of canoes and well-ordered people carrying bows, arrows, and other arms which they use, some dressed in striped cotton cloths and some in coloured silks, playing upon many Moorish and other trumpets, ivory horns and other instruments, which made so much noise that the instruments drowned one another, in which manner they arrived on board Vasco da Gama's ship." Zakoeja, we are told, "was a slender man, tall and handsome, of middle age; he wore a robe, after the manner of the Turks, made of fine white cotton, over which he wore an open tunic of Mecca velvet, and on his head a turban of different colours woven with gold thread: he had a short sword ornamented with gold and jewels in his girdle, a dagger of the same fashion, and velvet sandals on his feet." There were stately courtesies between this chief and the armour-clad Portuguese, and da Gama obtained provisions and two pilots to take him to Calicut. Subsequently, however, the Arabs found that their visitors were Christians, and tried to wreck or entrap the ships. But da Gama, by a judicious use of boiling oil, discovered their plot, and by placing a sailor armed with a stick over the pilot, was able to proceed on his voyage.

Concealed or unconcealed, it was war between Christian and Moslem in the Indian Ocean from the time that da Gama raised the altar on the Island of Saint George over against Mozambique, so that the Christian evensong met the cry of the muezzin across the blue palm-fringed waters of the Indian Ocean. And the great guns of the *San Rafael* roared a dreadful warning

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of a new Holy War in the East, where the Christians took the Moslems on their unprotected rear, and fell upon them with such slaughter that merely to read of it leaves us aghast.

We must not follow the Portuguese to India, as it takes us too far from our history. Sufficient to say that they found at Calicut a great city of rich and well-governed merchants, where the Arabs traded from east and west, and they found the Zamorin a wise and courteous prince who lived in a palace of marble and rare woods. The visitors began by giving thanks to the Virgin in a temple which they thought was a church, for the Portuguese had believed that the Indians were the Christian subjects of Prester John; but they were somewhat puzzled by saints which had teeth a span long and a hundred arms. They obtained a cargo of nutmeg and cinnamon, pepper and silk; but instead of complying with the usages of the port, da Gama carried things with a very high hand.

Then the Portuguese sailed homewards, and a terrible voyage it was, for with the heat of the sun and the tropic winds, the bad food and the bad water, the men sickened and died like flies. Scurvy laid its dreadful hand upon the ships, and the dying sailors lay in the scuppers, their flesh turning black and putrid before death. The crews revived somewhat with the cool airs of the Cape; but in the Gulf of Guinea, where the very water seems to crawl with worms and foul emanations rise from the sea, they grew much worse, so that there were not enough men to work the sails of the two ships, for one had been abandoned and burnt on the east coast of Africa. Paul da Gama, who was as much loved by the sailors as his brother was feared, comforted the sick until he himself was struck down, and as month followed month, and the sea grew from cold to hot and from hot to cool again, he grew weaker. Vasco sat over him, appearing to care not

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how the ship went or whether it were day or night. Then a great storm fell upon them, and they laboured under shortened sail till they came to the Island of Santiago. Here, Vasco made John da Sa captain of his ship, and he lifted his brother and placed him in a little caravel that he found at the island. So he took him to Terceira, always hoping that in those tranquil and happy isles the sick man might get well. But Paul died in the monastery of St. Francis, where he was shrived and buried by the good fathers.

The news of the great voyage had already been brought to Lisbon by Nicholas Coelho, the captain of the second ship ; but Vasco, when he arrived, did not so much as enter the city. He went straightway to the Hermitage of Our Lady of Bethlehem, where he had prayed with his brother, side by side, on the eve of their adventure ; and there the great men of the kingdom found him when they came to do him honour, kneeling, with head bowed, before the image of the Virgin.

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF ALMEIDA

FOUR hundred years ago, the bay where Cape Town now stands was a wild and savage place. The Portuguese loved to see the Cape pigeons, as they called the sea-birds of those waters, and the rocky headland rising out of the waves, for it was a great milestone on their road to India. Antonio Saldanha had even climbed the mountain, by way of the Skeleton Gorge, and from the top looked over sea and swamp and sand-flat and the long lines of mountains beyond. But the Portuguese seldom touched there, and the place had a bad name. And the way it chiefly came to have this bad name is the subject of this chapter.

But to tell it we must go half the world over—to Portugal and the Red Sea and the bar off Chaul, and the little coral islands on the eastern shores of Africa—and I should introduce you to a number of people who lived far enough from Table Mountain, the Sultan of Cairo and the Sheik of Mombasa, and the Russian renegado, Malik Aiyaz, who was governor of Diu, and Albuquerque of the long beard, who wanted to take away Mahomed's coffin, and a number of other outlandish people. For the hero of my story is Francisco d'Almeida, who dined at the king's table and gave him an empire, and fought the Sultan of Cairo and imprisoned Albuquerque and ended his days with a javelin in his throat on the shores of Table Bay.

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Vasco da Gama and his friends trod heavily on the toes of the Infidel. The Moor might flash his scimitar over the Mediterranean; but he wore no armour on his back, and his back was the Indian Ocean. Here the Arab was a peaceful trader, he had no rivals and no enemies, he carried no cannon in his ships, and he was welcome at every port. From the Straits of Malacca his lateen-sailed dhows brought the silk and porcelain of China, and from India and Ceylon nutmegs and cloves, cinnamon and rice and pepper. With these he sailed to Ormuz in the Persian Gulf or Jeddah in the Red Sea, and was paid there in Venetian ducats or scarlet camlet, while his goods went in small boats and on camel-back to Cairo on the one side, and Trebezond, Aleppo, or Damascus, or Constantinople on the other. And so the Mamelukes and the Turks got their wealth with which to carry on the war against Christendom. On they went from India to the Eastern shores of Africa, to their own fair white palm-plumed cities, with mosque and minaret, pomegranate and vine, built on the coral islands along the shore, a bright eastern fringe to the black mantle of Africa, and there traded their glazed clay beads and black cotton cloths for ivory and gold and ambergris. The monsoons blew north-east or south-west according to their seasons, and with them sailed the great fleets of Arab dhows, with their pilgrims for Mecca or their spices to Ormuz, like birds migrating in flocks, and as defenceless as birds. With fair winds and fair seas and no rivals, in their coir-sewn boats, they went about their business as peacefully as a mill-wheel over a stream.

It was into this quiet scene that the Portuguese burst, as one of their own writers says, like a famished lion breaking into the fold, with their strong ships built to withstand the storms of the Atlantic, their armour, and their cannons, their crossbows and arquebuses. They hung round the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea

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like birds of prey, and wherever the Arabs fled they sought them. Vincente Sodre destroyed a fleet of near two hundred ships and galleys in two days, and Albuquerque sank four hundred vessels under the walls of Ormuz. So great was the panic that the Arabs would no longer sail even on pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Sultan of Cairo could no longer take toll of the pepper that was of old his chief wealth. The Portuguese went everywhere, plundering and burning and massacring; they seized the spice islands and fought the Sultan of Calicut because he favoured the Moors, and plundered the tombs of the Emperors of China. Vincente Sodre seized the chief of the Egyptian merchants and flogged him at the mast, tied a piece of bacon over his mouth and sent him to his master to show him what the Christians thought of the power of the Crescent. Then the Sultan of Cairo swore by the beard of the Prophet that he would allow no more pilgrims to go to Jerusalem, and that he would destroy the Holy Sepulchre and the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, and the Portuguese replied that they would turn the Nile into the Red Sea, and take the coffin of Mahomed out of Mecca.

It was in this great quarrel that Francisco d'Almeida set forth from Portugal four hundred years ago. He was the son of the Count of Abrantes, a valiant knight and a good commander, and with him went his son, Lourenço, a giant in stature and the best at sword-play and tournament in all Portugal. In all the land there were not enough sailors for the fleet. In one of the caravels not a man of the crew knew starboard from larboard, so that John Homem, the captain, the greatest madcap that ever put out of port, hung a string of onions on one side of the ship and a string of garlic on the other.

"Now," said he, "tell the clodhoppers to onion their helm and garlic their helm, and they'll understand, I warrant you."

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There were twenty-one ships with fifteen hundred men-at-arms : such a fleet had never before put out of Portugal.

The king's commands were to clear the Moors from the Indian seas, and build a fort wherever a fort was needed to guard the king's ships and fly the king's flag. So they sailed merrily round the Cape till they came to the Moorish town of Kilwa, on the eastern shores of Africa, and they anchored before the king's palace. Almeida was wroth with the king because he did not show the flag of Portugal, for the wolf will always find cause for quarrel with the lamb. He demanded an audience in the harbour, and set out with his captains in a boat, clad in the garb of peace, but with coats of mail beneath their cloaks and spears and crossbows hidden away under the thwarts. But the sheik had a man of discretion, and he sent word that a black cat had crossed his path and he dared not venture forth. Then Almeida swore that "he should see more omens to-morrow than he sees to-day. We will visit them in our true finery," he said ; "the Moors have always paid greater honour to our iron than to our gold."

So at dawn, when the light was striking upon the towers of the palace and the minarets of the mosques, the army landed. As it pressed through the narrow lanes the enemy rained stones and arrows and pots of boiling oil from the flat tops of the houses, and the men-at-arms could neither reach them with their spears nor shoot them with their crossbows. But they burst open the doors and so up the stairs to the roofs, and they chased the Moors like cats, running from house to house and jumping from street to street. Imagine the scene if you like—the white city, the flat-topped houses, the throng of spears and morions in the narrow street, Moor and Christian on the roof, scimitar to sword, the one in steel armour, the other in the gay silks of Asia. Then the bursting open of the doors of

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the inner chambers, the shadowy harems, the quiet courtyards with pomegranate tree and vine and fountain, with steel-clad men-at-arms everywhere killing and plundering, loaded with rare stuffs and great vessels of brass and silver. Then when they had spoilt the place, gathering silk and spices, ivory and ambergris in one great heap upon the shore, they set the town in a blaze while the monks put up a cross and chanted the *Te Deum Laudamus*.

Then on they went to Mombasa, which stands on a high island, like a great castle surrounded by its moat, a narrow arm of the sea. There the Moors made a better fight, for they had landed some guns from the wreck of a Portuguese ship, and as the streets were steep and narrow, they made barricades and rolled great stones down the slope, while the archers shot the Portuguese from the tops of the houses. But Almeida, with part of his army, got in behind the town and set fire to it and the palace while his son was attacking it from the shore, so again there was massacring and looting and burning, and Almeida sailed away, leaving the cross on the palace roof and "the nest of infidels" smoking to the skies.

To judge those old Portuguese is none of my business: the reader can do it for himself. When he thinks of Tristan da Cunha cutting off the arms of Arab women to get their bracelets, he will find it hard to forgive them. Romance and manslaughter are two sides of a mirror; you can choose which you like; it is my business to look only at one, like the Lady of Shalott. But the moral reader should remember the dungeons of the Saracens where so many Christians languished, as he may read in *Don Quixote*, and remember also that in those days it was war to the knife between Cross and Crescent. The Portuguese on the right flank of the battle had got round to the back of the enemy and were destroying his supplies and slaying his camp followers. It was Almeida and

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Albuquerque, not Dom John of Austria, that saved Christendom from the Turk.

But to return, when Almeida, the Viceroy, was fighting the Raja of Cananor and the Zamorin of Calicut, his son Lourenço was prowling like a hungry lion up and down the coast. Once, with three ships and a brigantine he destroyed a fleet of near three hundred vessels which had been armed by the Zamorin with five hundred brass cannon cast by two Italian renegados. But the Soldan of Cairo was preparing a surprise for the Doms. He collected all the sailors in the Levant and gathered wood at Scanderoon. Scanderoon is in the Mediterranean, and it was a good chance for Almeida that the fleet of the Christian knights of Rhodes met the Sultan's ships as they were bringing the wood to Alexandria and captured some of them. Though in this case "the Turkish preparation" did not "make for Rhodes," all Christendom was then in alliance. The remainder of the wood was taken up the Nile, and then over to the Red Sea on camels, and there Mir Hashim built twelve ships and sailed to find the Portuguese. He and his ally, Malik Aiyaz, caught Dom Lourenço off the bar of Chaul and sank his ship. We have our last glimpse of the valiant young captain, sitting on a chair by the main-mast after his leg had been carried away by a cannon shot, shouting to his men to fight for Portugal and the Cross. Then said the old Viceroy, "He who has eaten the cockerel must eat the cock"; he sailed down the wind with eighteen ships, caught the Infidels at Diu, utterly destroyed them and fired the limbs of his captives over every town on the Malabar coast. Such was the manner of man Almeida was, a fighter for love of it. When he was not fighting the Zamorin he was fighting the Raja, and when he was off with the Raja, he started a quarrel with the great Albuquerque himself and imprisoned him in Cananor fort.

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But now I must come to his end, and the end of my story. The old man lost in his fight with Albuquerque, and, childless and sorrowful and in disgrace with his king, he set out for home in the rotten old ship that his rivals allowed him. It was a sad voyage, a strange contrast to the pomp and glory of his setting out. All the way he nursed forebodings of evil, for the witches followed him in their sieves, and it had been prophesied that he would never round the Cape. As they swung into Table Bay, "Now God be praised," he said, "the sorcerers of Cochin are liars." But he spoke too soon. There was a quarrel between some of his servants and the Hottentots, and in an evil moment he was persuaded to land and punish the savages. "Where are you taking these sixty years?" said the old man as he stepped into the boat. The Bay was white with squalls, the high caravels strained on their cables; a great white cloud lay on the mountain and fell in long streamers like a cataract into the valley; the forests of silver trees gleamed and flashed as they bent to the wind. It must have seemed a place altogether unearthly to the old man. But he went, and with him a hundred and fifty of the flower of his company. They scorned to put on armour to fight with savages; they did not even take with them their crossbows. They landed in the sand at the head of the bay, somewhere near the Salt River on the Woodstock beach, and the Viceroy, as one who still feared evil, bade those in charge of the boats on no account to leave the spot till he should return. And so he walked on gloomily towards the Hottentot village, seeing evil omens in everything, even in the sand that the men shook from their shoes. They found the Hottentot village almost deserted, for the men had gone up the hillside with most of the cattle; but the soldiers gathered together the children and such cattle as remained and began to drive them towards the boats.

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Now the wind had risen higher ; the air was dark with flying sand, and there was a great tumult behind the soldiers. Then out of the gloom a herd of cattle charged down upon them, with small naked men running and leaping on to their backs and yelling like fiends. They came with the rush of a storm, and from behind the cattle these black and naked devils threw their javelins. The sky rained spears and stones and flying sand. The Portuguese could neither fight nor run, for at every step they sank to the ankle and their foes danced here and there like birds. The points of their javelins were only wood charred in the fire ; but they hurled them with such force that they pierced like steel. The soldiers blundered and stumbled on, and when a man fell, a swarm of the enemy were upon him in a moment pounding his head with stones. Dizzy with blows, those who were left staggered to the shore. And now the Viceroy saw indeed the evil conjunction of his stars, for the boats were no longer there ; they had sought refuge from the storm near the ships. In their panic some of the men rushed into the sea, and others fled along the shore. The Viceroy stood alone save only George de Mello, his standard-bearer. He was the valiant knight to the end. "Where are those to whom you have done honour now?" said the ensign. "Surely this is the time to repay benefits!" And Almeida turned upon him : "'Tis no time for evil-speaking," he replied. "Those who owe me any favour lie behind me on the sand. Save the king's flag ; it is being dishonoured." He spoke no more, for a javelin pierced him in the throat, and de Mello left him there and saved the flag.

There he was buried, and fifty more with him, the man who had given the king an empire and been Viceroy of the Indies, among those nameless sand-hills at the watering-place of Saldanha.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S MINES

IT is a little hard to realise that the Portuguese were exploring East Africa when the English were still fighting the Wars of the Roses, and that an army was being led three or four hundred miles up the Zambesi when Shakespeare was little more than a baby. It was the fate of the Portuguese to spend their blood and treasure looking for gold among the fever-stricken jungles and mangrove swamps of South-east Africa. The tales of death and massacre, of battles with cannibals and wild beasts to be found in the old Portuguese records would take a volume to themselves. The Portuguese believed that Ophir, where the Queen of Sheba got her gold, was somewhere in the interior, inland from Sofala. At Sofala itself they had built a fort in a mangrove swamp on the edge of a fever-haunted river, and there Pedro d'Anhaya had first fought the savages, then massacred the Moors of the neighbouring village, and last of all died of fever with most of his men and was buried alongside of them in the hot, foetid, squelching mud of the river-banks. But all the gold that was brought down from Sofala was a little dust sealed up in quills, which the natives sold for striped cloth and strings of blue and yellow beads made of potter's clay. It came from mines far inland, and the Portuguese thought if they could only reach these

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mines they would find more wealth than the Spaniards had got in Mexico.

The stories grew as the years went on, until fifty years after Pedro d'Anhaya was sung to his last sleep by the frogs of the Sofala river, all Portugal was in a fever to find the gold-fields. The stories were prodigious. The gold, says one writer, was so plentiful that great lumps of it were forced up out of the ground by the trees, and were to be found in the forks of the branches. Diego de Couto tells of a nugget "like a large yam" that in its rough state weighed twelve thousand cruzados, and of places where nuggets lay on the ground like ginger in the Indies. That this mine could be no other than Solomon's Ophir was plain, for "the Kaffirs call it Fur or Fura, and the Moors Afulur, and altering a few letters in both names, with little change in pronunciation—which these barbarians corrupt—the sound is very similar to Ophir."

It was to find these mines that young King Sebastian sent his greatest soldier, Francisco Barreto, with a splendidly equipped army to Mozambique. Francisco Barreto had fought the Moors in North Africa and had been Governor of India. He was a man advanced in years, and was as true a gentleman as he was a soldier. At the time he was appointed to the command of the expedition he was general of the galleys, and his soldiers and sailors, who loved him like a father, mobbed his vessel in their eagerness to be enrolled. The force was to consist of three ships and a thousand soldiers, and of the six hundred in Barreto's ship half were noblemen and two hundred servants of the king. So many men applied, indeed, that the officers sorted out the best of them in the galleys, and there were enough left over to man another fleet. Of all that brilliant assemblage which set out that brave day of April 1569 with so much pomp, with processions of priests, and waving of banners and blare of martial trumpets, only

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a few fever-stricken wretches were destined to see Portugal again.

Of the expedition we have two excellent accounts, one by Diego de Couto, himself a soldier, who had been in the Indies and East Africa and had conversed with the leaders of the expedition though he had not taken part in it. It is a clear and graphic narrative, and agrees in the main with the other account by the Jesuit Father Monclaro, who accompanied the expedition.

Where the two differ is that the first is, as we should say now, anti-clerical. The king, Dom Sebastian, was young, and leaned much upon Jesuit advice, and de Couto says that Monclaro, who represented the power behind the throne, was the malign influence of the expedition, upsetting all the plans and bringing upon it all the disasters from which it suffered. Upon this side of the story Father Monclaro, as might be expected, maintains a discreet reserve.

The affair began badly. One of the ships had to put back into port, and Barreto had to winter in Brazil. Then when the force got to Mozambique there was vexatious delay. De Couto says that Barreto and all his officers desired to go by way of Sofala, the most direct route to the mines; but Monclaro, by pressure and intrigue, forced the general to go up the Zambesi so as to march to the mines through the territories of the Monomotapa. A Jesuit father had been killed by that great chief, as we shall see in our next chapter, and de Couto says that the Jesuits wanted to revenge his death and to find his bones to keep as relics. This, the soldier adds scornfully, was impossible, since the body of the holy father was thrown into the river where "it was immediately devoured by the iguanas and crocodiles, therefore it could not appear excepting at the last universal judgment." That de Couto is likely to be right may be gathered from a remark of Monclaro's that one of the chief motives of the expedition was "the

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unjust death of Father Gonçalo da Silveira, whom the Monomotapa caused to be executed, being thereto persuaded and bribed by the Moors of those parts." The fact that after the failure of the Zambesi route, the expedition was taken by way of Sofala also seems to add point to de Couto's allegation.

However that may be, Barreto seems to have been loth to start upon the journey inland. He put off a great deal of time on the coast, putting down a rebellion and collecting arrears of tribute, and then he was very nearly sailing to India on hearing that Chaul was being beleaguered. It appears, indeed, that the old man's heart was not in the work. Perhaps he already knew that he had embarked upon a wild-goose chase.

Barreto had arrived in Mozambique on the 16th of May 1570, and it was not until November 1572 that he set out for the Zambesi. By that time a hundred of his men were dead of fever; and though they were replaced by twice the number from the hospital, the expedition had lost a good deal in many ways by the long period of waiting. Still Barreto had not been idle. He had built boats and wagons, he had gathered together oxen and horses, and even asses and camels from Arabia, he had collected clothing and tents, water-bottles and provisions, and it was a brave and well-found little army of more than seven hundred arquebusiers, experienced in war and well officered, "more in the humour to fight Turks or other skilled soldiers than Kafirs."

The Zambesi filters through its mangrove swamps into the Indian Ocean by several mouths, and it was by the largest of these, the Cuama, which long before had been called by da Gama the River of Good Omens, that Barreto took his way into the interior. The great fleet of boats crawled slowly along shores lined with dense thickets, peopled by "apes the size of greyhounds," and savages who ground their teeth to a point

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and wore their hair made up into horns a foot long "The higher the rank of the negroes here," says Monclaro, "the more red ochre mixed with oil they put upon their heads to make them look like figures from hell, and they use many other stinking things, which smell sweetly to them. Their lips are all pierced, and they thrust pieces of copper through the holes, so that their lips being dragged down by the weight they are always slobbering." The soldiers shot at the hippopotamuses and crocodiles that wallowed on the sandbanks, and made fine breastplates of crocodile skin.

It was a slow journey: the boats were dragged up hand over hand by ropes anchored ahead of them in the stream; but at last they got to Sena, "a small village of straw huts in a thicket," nearly two hundred miles up the Zambesi, where the river, at this point two miles or so broad, emerges from the steep hills which tower above its dark waters farther upstream.

In this village of Sena lived some twenty peaceful Arab traders, some of whom had grown rich by selling beads and cloth for gold dust and ivory, and they gave Barreto and his army a cordial welcome. And here the Jesuit's zeal led the general into an abominable crime. Monclaro, as we have seen, believed that the "Moors" were responsible for the death of Gonçalo—how slight was his proof will be seen in our next chapter. He thirsted for revenge, and was ready to believe any evil of the Mahomedans, and when he got to Sena he found the opportunity. "The oxen," he says, "died suddenly, though fine and in good condition, and were given to the soldiers for food. When I saw this I always suspected the cause, and maintained that it was poison, so that the governor was vexed and cast black looks upon me when I spoke to him." Of course, the animals were really dying from the tsetse fly. This is clearly shown by the fact that, as Monclaro tells us himself, the oxen of the country, "escaped the poison of the Moors"

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were, in fact, "salted." But as the imported oxen and horses came to a mysterious end poison was a simple explanation, and a wretched groom, on being tortured, "confessed" that the Moors were guilty. "The governor," says Monclaro, "was almost forced to give leave to put the groom to the torture; while they were setting about it, the groom bade them desist, saying that he would speak the truth, and he made known the whole plot of the Moors; and the governor, convinced at last, ordered them to be arrested." The men had been dying as well as the cattle, among them Ruy Franco Barreto, the governor's own son, and this was also attributed to the wretched Arabs. They had been kind; they had treated the soldiers with a generous, though no doubt interested, hospitality, and one of them, Balthazar Marrecos, was endeavouring to accommodate the general with a loan of three thousand miticals of gold when he was arrested. Monclaro tells us of their end with cruel delight. The soldiers, he says, arrested them willingly, "for besides being revenged on the Moors, most of the gold which they had fell to their share, of which more than fifteen thousand miticals went to the king." Seventeen of the principal men were taken, among them the sheik, "and one of the plotters of the death of Father Dom Gonçalo." And then in a passage which makes one shudder to read the Jesuit describes the wretched end of these people:—

"These were condemned and put to death by strange inventions. Some were impaled alive; and some were tied to the tops of trees, forcibly brought together, and then set free, by which means they were torn asunder; others were opened up the back with hatchets; some were killed by mortars, in order to strike terror into the natives; and others were delivered to the soldiers, who wreaked their wrath upon them with arquebuses." Only one, we are told, abjured his faith, and, poor devil, he did not gain much thereby.

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He was baptized with the name of Lourenço. The fathers offered him "great consolation," and he was then hanged, "accompanied by the crucifix."

That horses and cattle and men continued to die after this massacre just as before does not seem to have altered Monclaro's opinion in the least—so true is it that people believe what they desire to believe. We must remember that the life-and-death struggle between Cross and Crescent was still raging. While the Portuguese were on the Zambesi they heard the news of the battle of Lepanto.

Then, at the end of July 1572, the general marched up the river, keeping on the high ground along the right bank. On the river itself were twenty boats laden with provisions, merchandise, and ammunition. Twenty-five wagons drawn by oxen of the country—"as big as the large oxen of France and very tractable"—accompanied the army, which now consisted of six hundred and fifty trained men, while there were more than two thousand slaves, and a number of camels and asses. Barreto rode a horse "that escaped the poison at Sena," and was "always clad in a thick coat of mail." Strange, is it not, to think of those sixteenth-century soldiers, with their shining steel helmets and breastplates blazing in the sun, marching along the mountain banks of the Zambesi into the heart of Africa!

At that time the supreme chief of those regions was the Monomotapa, whose territory, the Portuguese believed, was bounded by Prester John, and whose army numbered a hundred thousand fighting men. Little wonder if Barreto desired to be at peace with this formidable lion in his path. As it happened, there was a subject tribe known to the Portuguese as the Mongas, which had rebelled against the Monomotapa, and had also given the Portuguese traders a good deal of trouble. Barreto adopted the same policy as the Boers later on used with the Zulus; to conciliate the Monomotapa he

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offered to punish his troublesome rebels. As the Mongas lived south-west of Barreto's position on the river, the Portuguese left their many sick with the boats at an island and marched across country, now only some five hundred strong. It was a terrible march, the soldiers broiling in their steel and buff, breaking through thorns and clambering over rocks hot with the sun. The water was scarce and bad, and many of them fell out through thirst and dysentery.

But at last, after marching for nine days, they saw the enemy, at first only scouts, who raised a great cloud of dust by "whirling sticks with buffalo tails attached to them," and then upon a level plain covered with grass and tall reeds they came upon an army of ten or twelve thousand men. It is very interesting to note that Barreto drew up his men in a hollow square, two companies before the wagons, two on the sides, and one behind, so that the baggage was in the centre, and the artillery seem to have been placed round the square much in the modern manner. "He commanded," says de Couto, "a swivel-gun (swivel-falcon, Monclaro calls it) to be placed in the rear, cannon and demi-cannon on the flanks, and three field pieces loaded with cast-iron balls in the vanguard." Indeed Barreto marched exactly in the same way against the Mongas as Lord Chelmsford three centuries after marched against the Zulus at Ulundi. And the Mongas adopted the same tactics as the Zulus. "They advanced in the form of a crescent," says Monclaro, "and almost surrounded us on every side." Both accounts speak of the enemy using arrows, but it is easy to understand how these might be confused with the thrown assegai. In the various fights the Mongas charged bravely, advancing almost to the guns.

"The Kafirs," says de Couto, "approached in a semicircle, preceded by an aged woman whom they looked upon as a great sorceress. When near our army

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she took a small quantity of dust from a gourd which she carried, and threw it into the air, by which she had made Mongas believe all our men would be blinded and fall into their hands. This they so firmly believed that they had brought many ropes with which to bind them. The governor, seeing the old Kafir woman making antics before them all, thought that she must be a sorceress, and commanded the gunner to fire the falcon at her, which he did, taking such good aim that the ball shattered the wretched creature, which seemed to stupefy the Kafirs, as they believed her to be immortal. For this the governor took off a handsome gold chain which he wore, and put it round the gunner's neck. This did not prevent the Kafirs from falling upon our men in savage disorder, with great cries and shouts, brandishing their swords and darts which they call pomberas."

The swords may have been stabbing assegais, and it is worth noting that the Mongas also carried the knobkerry.

As for Monclaro, he led the fight with his crucifix, like the fanatic he was. "It was noticed that wherever I was with the crucifix, although the arrows were numerous, no one was wounded by them within ten or twelve paces of it; and, looking up in some fear of the arrows, I observed that though many seemed falling on my head, the Lord, whose image I carried in my hands, diverted them, so that they left as it were an open space, within which no one was wounded, although I was in the front, and they came with great force, the wind being now in their favour."

Barreto's generalship and his arquebuses and cannon were too much for the Mongas. They thought that the white men were wizards, who had "medicine" too potent to be overcome. When the smoke of the guns enveloped the little square in a cloud, "the enemy was astonished, saying that we were great wizards, since we could turn day into night." At last, after a fight in which



Barreto Fights the Kafir

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Barreto defended a laager made of tree-trunks and brush-wood, and after more than four thousand of the enemy had been slain, the chief sued for peace. Barreto received the ambassadors in state, seated in a velvet-covered chair. "The governor wore a strong coat of mail with sleeves, with a sword ornamented with silver hung crossways, and a page stood near him with a shield of shining steel. When the Kafir was brought before him he was so overcome with amazement that he could not speak or answer any of the questions put to him, but trembled from head to foot." The natives were still more frightened when they saw the camels, which, they were assured, fed upon human flesh, and they agreed to Barreto's terms with the most respectful alacrity.

Nevertheless, in this first great campaign between the black man and the white in South Africa, it was the white man that was really beaten. The Portuguese were encumbered by sixty wounded and many sick; they were short of provisions and water; in front of them was a wilderness of scrub and rock. Barreto ordered the retreat, and fell back upon the boats.

It was a disastrous retreat. The only water was that of the "stagnant pools left from the winter, exposed to the sun, and covered with green slime; and even this was scarce." "It was crawling, and it stank," and so many fell sick that there were none to carry them. "Even Francisco Barreto carried the sick behind him on his horse." Thus they retraced their steps a weary seventy miles, and at last, starving and tottering, the little army reached the boats.

This was but the beginning of disaster. Barreto heard that there was intrigue against him at Mozambique, so he left his little force at Sena and hastened to the coast. At the fortress he found the aged governor, whom he had himself installed, had drawn up lying statements against him addressed to the king, and had forced many to sign them. Barreto took the

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governor, an old sinner of eighty, to a little chapel—"the hermitage of the Holy Ghost, which faces the old fortress on a rock overhanging the sea, and is reached by a bridge." There they went alone and prayed and heard Mass. Then Barreto came out again, and, "leaning his back against a support, he drew Antonio Pereira to him. Some persons told me," says de Couto, "that they saw Francisco Barreto prepare a dagger which he wore in his belt, and that Antonio Pereira Brandao fell on the ground and clasped him round the legs two or three times. The governor bent down and raised him, and, putting his hand into his pocket, he drew out the papers that had been directed to the king. Upon seeing them Antonio Pereira was astounded and burst into tears, and, falling at the governor's feet he begged for mercy with sobs which could be heard by those who had remained at a distance. The governor, who was very kind-hearted and compassionate, turned his back and went towards the fortress with his eyes full of tears, as if it had been he who was the culprit. He was so fatigued that he seemed as if he had been engaged in some laborious task."

Poor Barreto! He himself was an old man. After sailing he heard that his wife had died of the pest in Lisbon. His son had died at Sena. Now his friend had proved a traitor, and he knew that his army was dying by inches in the swamps of the Zambesi. He did what could be done. He collected comforts and provisions for the sick, and returned up that dolorous river. When he reached Sena his heart must have been like to break. On the river bank fifty soldiers waited to receive him. They could hardly stand, and they had no captains or other officers; but they held aloft the four banners and saluted their general. "Passing by the hospital," says the Jesuit, "we saw the sick seated in the huts, looking more like dead men than living beings, but rejoiced at our coming. They had

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the arquebuses on the ground, and one who was a little stronger than the rest fired them all, for the others were unable to do it." Not one man was in good health, and most of them were dead. "The colonel came to the bank upon a horse with men to lead it, but had a severe seizure there, so that we took him for dead. The doctor was dying at the time of our arrival, and all were in such a state that it was evident everything was at an end."

Everything was indeed at an end. Barreto went about among the sick, tending them with his own hands; but eight days after his arrival he also was struck down, and after a week's illness the brave old general died. "I went to see him in the morning," says Father Monclaro, "and found his pulse imperceptible and dead and his arms and feet cold. I gave him the holy unction, he being still conscious, and sent for Vasco Fernandez Homem to come and see him before he died, for his decease was certain. He came and remained to assist him, though he himself was suffering from fever and ague nearly every day. Close upon midnight he yielded his soul to God, in a straw hut, and we could not find in his desk or elsewhere as much as a cruzado for his obsequies or for the benefit of his soul."

He was buried next morning in the chapel of St. Marçal, "where as the building was full of fresh corpses so that there was no room for him, it was necessary to make a grave crossways along the altar, even this being wanting at his death to a man who had been so prosperous, and who had ruled India with so much pomp."

Of the army only one hundred and eighty remained alive, and they were sick and dying fast. Homem, the new commander, withdrew this remnant to Mozambique, where he formed a new army, and with great toil and suffering in the end reached the country of the mines by way of Sofala. At last they had reached the Eldorado, the Ophir of Solomon. The men's eyes

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glistened. They expected, says de Couto, to see everything gold, "to find it in the streets and woods and to come away laden with it." But when they got to the mines they found only a few deep holes in the earth, with some Kafirs painfully at work. "With the earth which they dug up they filled their basins and went to wash it in the river, each one obtaining from it four or five grains of gold, it being altogether a poor and miserable business."

There was nothing to be done but to retreat and leave the Kafirs working in their holes. So ended the great expedition, conducted with a gallantry and skill that seemed to deserve a better fortune. But it may serve as typical of the sojourn of the Portuguese in South Africa. They ventured out bravely with trumpets and banners, they fought in the style of heroes; but all that they gained was "a poor and miserable business"; a few tusks of ivory, a few lumps of ambergris, a few miticals of gold dust—and a hole in the ground.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST MARTYR

ALL the Portuguese missionaries were not like the fierce Jesuit who held his crucifix before the eyes of the poor tortured Moors at Sena. So at least we may gather from the story of another of the Order, the first Christian martyr of South Africa. There may be some among my readers who think that all the old Jesuits were like Father Monclaro, fanatics who loved the rack and the Inquisition, and tortured English sailors for the good of their souls. But some were bad and some were good, and some were cruel and some were gentle, just as other men the world over, and the Father whose bones you have heard of in "the maws of the crocodiles and the iguanas," was as sweet and brave a soul as Livingstone himself or St. Francis, or any other of those holy men whose lives are like candles in this "naughty world."

His name was Father Dom Gonçalo da Silveira, and when he was a young man he went from Portugal to India, and lived a very holy life in the Jesuit College at Goa. It was through his labours that the great Cathedral of St. Thomas was built, and all his brother-priests thought him almost as saintly a man as Francis Xavier himself. He was for ever fasting and praying and reading his breviary and meditating on the lives of the saints, and all the twenty years he lived in India he spent in working for the glory of God and the good of

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his Order. So when at last it happened that a chief near Sofala turned Christian, and asked the captain of Mozambique, who was his godfather, that missionaries might be sent to his country, it is not surprising that the good Gonçalo was chosen for the work, and it is easy to imagine with what joy he undertook it. He was a simple man, as I gather; he did not know very much of the world outside the cloisters of his convent, and he believed that the savage chiefs of Africa were just like the kings and princes of his native land, except that they lived in ignorance of God and the blessings of baptism. So he packed up his new cassock and his surplice, his breviary, a picture of the Virgin, his lives of the saints, his altar stone, the bone of a saint, and his chalice, and set forth very simply upon his great adventure. With him went Father Andre Fernandes, an old man with white beard and hair, almost as holy and as unworldly as Father Gonçalo himself, except that he thought perhaps a trifle more about his food and the other necessities and comforts of our vile body; and the third of the party was a lay brother of the Order, Andre da Costa, who served the other two with due humility and faithfulness. These three holy men took ship for Mozambique, and while on the caravel Father Gonçalo spent his time in writing a discourse in praise of the Mother of God, which, we may depend upon it, was very beautiful, though he himself says that "it was no more ornament and grace to her than the words and imaginations of a soul so imperfect towards the most High Virgin."

When they arrived at Mozambique, they embarked for Sofala in a little Moorish boat, in which, as Father Andre tells us, you could not stand, nor sit, nor lie down. Father Andre grumbled a little that his superior should have chosen to sail in so uncomfortable and perilous a craft rather than go in the captain's own ship, as they might have done. Why the holy man chose

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to embark in this little cockleshell we are not told ; it may be because it was the season of Lent, when good Catholics mortify the flesh ; it may be because St. Paul and others of the saints had suffered much by shipwreck, or perhaps it was that the sailors of the captain's ship were, as sailors are now, somewhat given to the use of oaths and words that hurt the ears and the hearts of saintly men. But whatever the reason, so it was. They set out in this little cranky Moorish boat, which had not a nail in its whole structure, and whose planks were sewn together with the fibre of the cocoa-nut palm. It was after the monsoon had broken and the wind came down upon them in great black squalls. One may imagine the three good priests hunched up under the lee of the boat's side, for the tiny cabin was too foul for their stomachs, with no room to lie down in even on the hard boards, and unable to stand because of the tossing and the wind, while the Arab boatmen beat the planks for luck, or cried out to the seabirds to give them a fair breeze. It was Lent, you must remember, and they were fasting on rice and butter, honey and beans. Father Andre tells us how he asked his superior if a second bowl of beans might be allowed to him, "because as I said I had lost my appetite for rice," and the poor lay brother who did the menial work gave out altogether, upon which the father allowed him to eat meat thenceforth. And so fasting, drenched with rain and scorched with sun, with an ache in every bone from the hard planks and sharp corners of the boat, they sailed for twenty-seven days till they came to Sofala, where the lay brother was nursed and grew better. But they only stayed there five days, and then set sail again, this time for Inhambane, a little place just upon the Tropic of Capricorn. By this time the fever had seized upon Father Gonçalo, and he lay in the boat very nigh unto death, with his two friends watching over him.

So at last they reached their port, as Father

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Gonçalo describes it, "the most fitting place to inspire devotion that I have ever seen, with lawns all commanding a view of the sea." Here Father Gonçalo remained, shaken with ague, while he sent Father Andre on to Tongwe to interview the noble monarch of the land. How they both at last reached that potentate I need not tell you in detail. It was a long journey, and Father Andre went on foot. His new shoes pinched him, and first he walked barefoot and then he cut the shoes where they hurt him. "The dew was so heavy and so cold that it was marvellous." He found many rivers on the road, "which pleased or vexed me according to the time of day," and on one blessed evening he came upon the house of a chief who "brought me some green beans and a bowl of what must have been a paste of meixeira, and beans boiled, and this food seemed to me so good that it occurred to me that mixing and seasoning was a waste of time." But he arrived, and when Father Gonçalo was sufficiently recovered he too was brought on in a litter, though he was still so weak that he fell upon the sand at the end of the journey, and thus Father Andre found him, "without being able to raise his head he spoke to me." The lay brother came too; but this poor wretch was in a state of health so miserable that he had to be sent back to the coast.

In those days, as I need not tell you, they had no quinine, neither had they syrup nor physic nor sugar of roses, which were the cures they believed in; but they bled themselves and ran till they perspired, and so by these means and God's grace in the end they grew a little better. Then they set about to convert the heathen, and to cure them of their evil practices. For they found them not only scantily dressed and wearing horns upon their heads, but with the most indefinite notions in the matter of wives. Father Gonçalo gives a list of five of their errors, one of them being that

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“they swear by blowing in each other’s faces and not by the name of God.” However, they were very willing to receive baptism, and the good father baptized them in platoons. The chief he called King Constantino, and the chief wife was called Queen Isabel, while the sons and the courtiers and the counsellors of the realm were renamed after the leading fidalgos of Portugal. What these elephant-eating, rhinoceros-hunting, black and naked savages thought of their new names and their new faith is not known to us, but the good men rejoiced in the success of their pious work, and we find Father Andre writing to Goa, with a fine eye for the use of local colour, “of your charity, beloved brother, let the picture of the judgment which I have asked for contain devils with horns.”

But while Father Andre was thus planning to root out their evil superstitions, Dom Gonçalo had determined on a great undertaking, which was nothing less than to baptize the Monomotapa himself. Now the Monomotapa was the supreme king of those parts. He could muster overwhelming strength when he wanted to make war, so that naturally he had great influence over the whole of the country, and Father Gonçalo thought that if he could only convert this great emperor everything else would be made easy. But the monarch lived far away in the heart of Africa, in a wild and desert country, and it would take many long months to reach him. Nevertheless, the saintly man made up his mind to do it, so he bade farewell to Father Andre and the lay brother, whom he left to establish the new church among the savages with the horns, and plodded back to the coast.

Now by this time, which is just about four years before Shakespeare was born, Portuguese traders and adventurers had gone far into the land of Africa. They were four hundred miles up the Zambesi, and one of them, Antonio Caiado by name, was actually, as it was

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then put, a nobleman at the court of the Monomotapa. Most of these people were, I imagine, rough and ready traders, who themselves, as another good man has told us, did not know fish day from flesh day, and cared not one clay bead whether the savages with whom they traded were Christian or heathen. But they were good-natured fellows, and they helped Father Gonçalo on his journey.

We may follow him then coasting along in his little ship, and with him an altar which he set up when he landed and said Mass before it, even when the sun was so hot that it blistered his tonsured head, and when he reached the Zambesi he embarked in a little pinnace manned by the rough pioneers of the river trade. "He begged them," we are told, "for the love of God not to be scandalised or surprised at the retirement in which he must keep himself from that time until they disembarked, for nothing would be accomplished without first communing with God in prayer. He asked them to hang a cloth round the awning of the pinnace, and here he went into retreat, speaking to none for eight days, and only eating once a day a handful of roasted grain, and refusing everything else, and with this he drank a cup of water. Here he remained in constant meditation after he had said his office, and if any time remained he spent it in reading the lives of the saints." Thus the good man voyaged up that savage river, sitting in calm reflection like a Buddha within his curtain. Perhaps he may have looked out sometimes on that scene which Livingstone saw three hundred years afterwards, the dark woods lively with the song of the kinghunter, the mangrove jungle with its bunches of bright yellow fruit, the golden flowers of the hibiscus, the screw palms as tall as steeples, and the native huts standing on piles among the bananas on the swampy shore. He must have looked over the level grassy plains and seen the round tops of the palms hanging

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like green clouds in mid-air, and he must have been entertained by the great flocks of geese and spoonbills, herons and flamingoes, the starry kingfishers, or the huge hippopotamuses blowing spray from their nostrils and shaking the water from their ears. And so he arrived at Sena, where, as Livingstone said, one is sure to take fever on the second day, if by chance one escapes it on the first day, and thence like Barreto's army he travelled overland to Tete. He had to go high above the river along mountains which rose three thousand feet to the skyline, covered with dense thorn-bush and black boulders heaped upon one another, so hot that they blistered the feet and burned the throat as dry as a limekiln. At Tete the holy Father met a good fellow called Gomez Caelho, who was a great friend of the king's and could speak the language, and the two set out together across country, for it was a long weary journey from the river to the chief town of the Monomotapa. "The Father," says the story, "carried the church ornaments on his shoulders, often crossing rivers with the water up to his neck, and carrying the altar stone, the chalice, and the other holy implements of the mass upon his head, or holding them up in his hands," as more precious to him than life. One river, we are told, was so wide that the poor man, burdened as he was with his church furniture, could not wade through its waters, so the Kafirs got a great earthenware pot of the sort that they store their corn in, into which they put the holy man, and so swam with him to the other side. You may imagine it if you like,—the rushing waters, the pot swaying this way and that, and the good Father within hugging his dear possessions to his breast, his tonsured head above the rim, and his face mildly apprehensive, looking out upon that strange world, while the black polls of the Kafirs bobbed around him.

And so he came at last to the Great Place, to the capital town of the Monomotapa. He made something