

## A DEAD PORTUGUESE CITY IN INDIA.

BY THE REV. JOHN F. HURST, D.D.

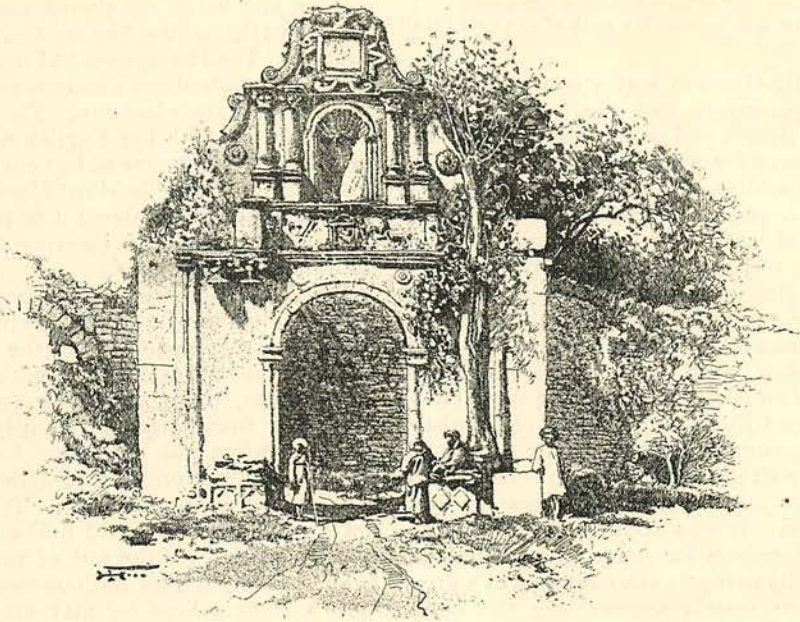
THE English, to gain India, have had to conquer the Portuguese, the French, and the native princes. This long gauntlet she had to run for two centuries and a half, and there is no chapter in English history which presents a stronger proof of the tact, persistence, and consummate bravery of the Anglo-Saxon character than this romantic Indian episode. It proves the masterful quality of the Englishman's mind, that his skill in planning is commensurate with his power to bring to pass, and that in both he has been as fully at home on the banks of the Indus and Ganges as on the Thames, the Tweed, and the St. Lawrence.

The story of the Portuguese in India is a marvellous bit of wild religious romance. It is now an old affair, its very memories being almost blotted out by the large later drama of the Saxon conquests and the later firm and wise rule. The Portuguese went first to India for wealth. The idea of general conquest was never fully in their mind. But no sooner had they gained a footing along the western coast, at Goa, Chaul, and Bassein, than the missionary idea even superseded the passion for gold. Francis Xavier determined to win for the Jesuits in this land what they had lost by the Reformation in the heart of Europe. The scope of his plans was broad, while his desperate energy hesitated no more in the presence of the pagan millions of India than if they had been a few scores of Mexican Aztecs.

What was India in those days? An unknown land. Its vast jungles had not yet been disturbed by the gun and dog of the European hunter. There was native splendor beyond all conception of the Occidental world. The tribes could destroy each other and the great nations of Europe know nothing about it. The Mohammedan, after many centuries of desperate effort, had at last crossed the Indus, and swept down its valley and that of the Ganges, and filed over the tableland to the south of them, and reached the narrowing of the peninsula, and laved himself in the equatorial surf at Cape Comorin. He built up the great Mogul Empire, with its varying capitals of Lahore, Delhi, and Agra, which was now beginning to show signs of decay. The Portuguese

sailor came in this stage of decadence. His thought was for gold, and to take it back to Portugal and live behind his gilded jealousy in splendid idleness in his far-off Lisbon home. With him came the Jesuit missionary. Brazil is a strong American proof of how the two men combined for a complete conquest. Nay, there was sometimes added a third—the soldier and the knight. Put these three together, and you have the Brazilian conquest. The same applies to the Spaniard in Mexico. The sailor, the soldier, and the priest, by a strong triple alliance, broke up the old life of the Aztec and the Inca, and built up the Spanish politico-ecclesiastical system which has only come to dissolution in our day. In the Indian case there were only two Portuguese characters, the sailor and the priest. The courtly knight staid away, save as governor and aids to administer law in the name of the king. The romance was not wild enough to attract him.

Goa was the great centre of this new Portuguese life in India. It lies about midway between the harbor of Bombay and Cape Comorin, and in the old days was a natural outlet for the productions of that vast and rich country which constitutes the Mysore. During the present century the railroad system of India has left Goa quite in the rear. It is a city of vast ruins. It is only a memory. Just now, however, there are indications that the fine harbor will be utilized as a point of departure for a new railway for a new piercing of the Mysore. But if Goa rises as a commercial city once more, it will be at the expense of the great Portuguese memorials. The ruined cathedrals and monasteries must soon disappear. No one can now conceive its former importance as a great Jesuit capital. It was a European fashion for long years to make rich gifts, from every part of the Roman Catholic world, to the institutions of Goa. Prince and peasant in Europe were induced to send thither their offerings, in the belief that nowhere was there a more promising field for the conversion of millions. One after another there arose in this vicinity buildings which would have adorned the broadest streets in Lisbon. Schools arose like mushrooms. Native



CITADEL GATE.

children were gathered in from the outlying country, crucifixes hung about their necks, and they were taught the whole ceremonial of the mother Church. Students to a great number were in quick training for the priesthood. Xavier went up the coast to Bassein, then down to the Cape, and up the coast of the Bay of Bengal; and, not satisfied with his Indian achievements, went to China and Japan, and gathered in communicants by the same methods—a mere compromise with the heathen faiths—which he had adopted in western India. A single sermon and a dash of water made the Hindu a Christian.

The first collapse of Goa as a missionary centre came with the native conquest of the Portuguese. But there was still a hope, and a great one, that with the now rising French power in India there might be a Roman Catholic restoration, and a new field for Jesuit operations. Yet France, while Romanist, does not put her political machinery at the mercy of her priesthood. She lets her priests take care of the ecclesiastical life. Goa, in the case of final French occupation, might continue its work of propagandism, but the Church would have to look after the work and foot all the bills. But

the final collapse came when the battle of Plassy was fought, and Clive claimed all India for England. This sealed the fate of Goa. Its harbor now shelters only an occasional ship. The streets are grass-grown. The vast churches are piles of hopeless ruins.

Bassein was to northern India what Goa was to the southern region. Its field was even more promising, for the territory which it commanded was broader, and embraced the two greatest valleys of all Asia. Xavier had his keen eye upon it, and three times visited it, and kept up a correspondence with the ecclesiastical leaders of the place. He came in the wake of the founder of Bassein as a centre of Portuguese authority in India, Nuno da Cunha, who ruled here from 1529 to 1538, and whose praises were sung by Camoens:

“Then the fierce Sampaio shall be succeeded by  
Cunha, who the helm long time shall wisely  
guide;  
The lofty towers of Chalé [Chaul] he shall raise  
on high,  
While famous Dio shall tremble when by him  
tried.  
Strong Baçaim [Bassein] shall not his artillery  
deny,  
But not without bloodshed; Melique with hum-  
bled pride

Shall see her superb palisades down-torn,  
And not less because the work of the sword shall  
mourn."\*

While Bassein was a commercial and political centre, and was held by Portuguese troops, and strongly fortified, it was still stronger as a base of ecclesiastical propagandism. The religious idea dominated over all. The absorption of all the hoarded wealth by the Church, and the city in which the Jesuits really subsidized the military force of the Portuguese in India to strengthen their position, form a most entertaining chapter in the Indo-European life of two centuries ago. Bassein is an island, hugging the shore closely, about thirty miles north of Bombay. The Portuguese fortified it by running a great wall around it, with towers and projections and all the appliances for long defence. It was honey-combed with secret chambers for stores in case of siege. From its parapets one could see at a great distance vessels approaching the coast, while from its peculiar relation to the land an enemy from the interior could be resisted with every hope of success. This island, with its bold headland, pushed its nose boldly out into the sea, tempted its owners to fortify it, build upon it, and prepare to hold it for all the ages to come.

The relations of the Portuguese to the Mogul rulers of the north were anything but fixed. But these rulers conceived the idea of using the Portuguese as allies against other intruders. Now friendly and now hostile, these Moguls, who sat on jewelled thrones and made the whole Eastern world tremble at the mere mention of their names, found it to their advantage, after long meditation, to have such daring sailors as the Portuguese in alliance with them. They could be carriers of their goods and the fruits of their soil to the Western markets. They could check the newly coming English too, who were just now showing too decided a taste for Indian life, and showed a suspicious love of Hindu adventure. Hence, when the Portuguese would build up Bassein, and make it a strong fortress for war and an ecclesiastical centre in peace, the Moguls had little to fear. They let them go on without disturbance. In due time, however, the upstart Mahrattas, who had risen on the ruins of the vast Mogul Empire, saw no use for the Portuguese in India at all. They resolved on their de-

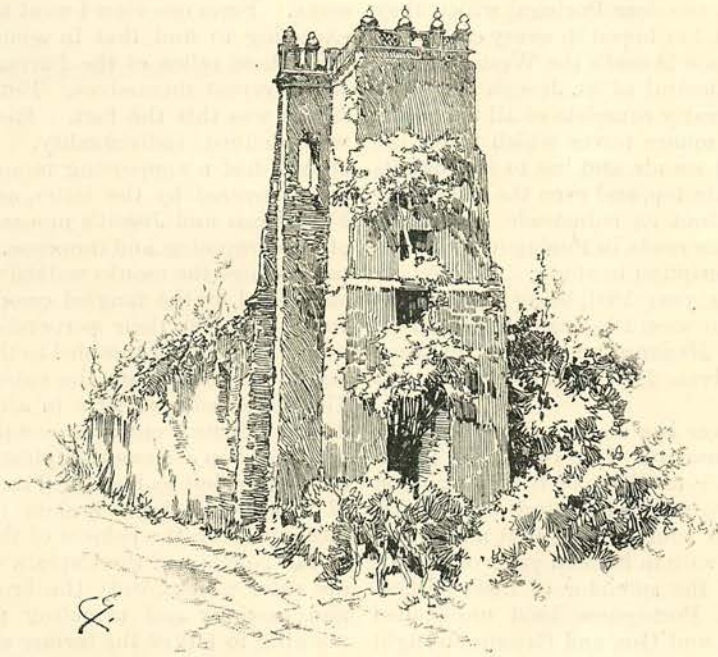
\* Lusiad, canto x., lxi. (Mitchell's version).

parture, and hence conquered Bassein, in the year 1750, as the key to their whole position. The Portuguese had dominated there two hundred and nineteen years, but had now fired their last gun. The strife of the Mahrattas with the English was long and bitter. They were at last conquered, however, and after holding Bassein sixty-eight years, surrendered it to the English in 1818, when it was incorporated with the Bombay Presidency.

I had planned for a visit to Bassein when in Bombay, just after coming from Europe, but failed to find the needed day. However, on the completion of my Indian tour, when returning from the Punjab, I found my opportunity. But the discomfort was extreme. I reached the railway station from Jaipore about three o'clock in the morning. There was not a place where I could find even fair accommodation for the rest of the night. In most of the Indian stations one can secure a room, where he may spread his bedding, which he must take with him on all his journeying, on a plain bed frame, and so pass the night, and get his meals in the restaurant department. But this time there was no room for a most weary traveller. I was referred to a bungalow a few hundred yards from the station. On going there, and being shown the room, it had a most woe-begone appearance, and seemed far from inviting to even the most sleepy occupant. There were too many crevices, and I feared insects large and small. I returned to the station, and half sat and half reclined until the broad daylight. After a frugal breakfast, I engaged a bullock cart for the four miles and a half to the town or fort of old Bassein. There are no springs to the typical bullock cart, and your best position is to sit flat on the bottom of the contrivance. If you have a tuft of hay for a cushion, that is clear gain. My two little bullocks started off in frisky style, and in an hour I was within the narrow and winding streets of the town which has grown up outside the old one, and yet must have had its beginnings even during the existence of the original Bassein. The scenery from the station to Bassein proper is charming, and I thoroughly enjoyed it, notwithstanding the many and almost dislocating motions of the cart. Fields of rice and various other grain stretch out on either hand. Here and there was a pond, which was all radiant with the sa-

cred lotus in full flower and fragrance. One of the most conspicuous objects on getting fairly into the village was a ruined church. Its walls and roof were entire, but it was in wretched condition. Its windows were a curiosity, the first I

nearly three centuries ago, was a very paradise of Portuguese enterprise and luxury on the one hand, and of Jesuit worldly wisdom on the other. Any way that I might turn brought me face to face with some vast ruined cathedral. Now it was



CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOSEPH.

had seen in India where the panes were of the pearl-oyster shell, cut thin, and about an inch and a half square. This was the Portuguese window. The labor of making great windows of such small pieces of shell neatly cut and smoothed must have been immense, even for one building. At least one-half the light was obstructed by the shell strata, and when one adds to this the wooden framing for the shells, there must have been a considerable addition to the semi-opaqueness. But then this is India, and it is always a study to keep out the glare of the sun.

I soon left the town behind, and came upon a rising ground by a winding road, through a thick grove of mango and peepul trees. Off to the left stood the grim ruins of the old fort. I had now crossed the bridge, and so had passed upon the island of Bassein, which is about four miles long and two miles broad. This,

only the bare walls without ceiling or roof, and then I found myself walking over the marble slabs, with nearly effaced inscriptions, which covered the dust of Portuguese ecclesiastics and fidalgos. The dead underlay the entire nave and choir of the church. Some of the towers leaned at threatening angles, and yet in several cases it seemed safe enough to climb to the top of the wall and overlook this weird scene of ruin. There were arches which rose in graceful curves from one side of the portal to the other. Yet at the keystone there was a depression in many instances which made it the part of wisdom not to linger directly in the neighborhood of any of them. Occasionally the central part of the wall had fallen outright, and left the jagged ends of the ruin on either hand.

Great pains had been taken to ornament the choir. Here was an elaborate

sculpture, only fragments of which could be seen in scattered pediments and capitals, and bits of the carved shafts themselves. Where the walls had been less disturbed by the ravages of war and the elements there still remained tablets in memory of ecclesiastic or civic officers whose lamp of life had gone out here, far away from the dear Portugal which they left behind, but hoped in every case to see again and die beneath the Western sun.

The Cathedral of St. Joseph is one of the most nearly complete of all the ruins. The great square tower which forms the portal still stands, and has to this day its gallery at the top, and even the ornamental work about its balustrade. Over the entrance one reads, in Portuguese, the still perfect inscription in stone:

"In the year 1601, being Archbishop Primate, the most Illustrious Sr. Dom Frei Aleixo de Menezes, and Vicar the Rev. Pedro Galvao Pereira, this Matriz was rebuilt."

This tower is a most inviting point for a curious ascent. But Da Cunha in his history tells us that he tried it, but on finding two steps crumbling beneath his feet he was compelled to beat a hasty retreat. No ruin in Bassein gives one a fairer idea of the splendor of these edifices when the Portuguese held undisputed sway here, and Goa and Bassein wrought hand in hand for bringing the millions of India beneath the Jesuits' crossier. Here were belfries which had sent out their sweet chimes over land and water in the days long gone by. Then there were lancet-windows, side chapels, richly carved archways, and majestic pillars the entire length of the nave, all of such lavish wealth of sculpture and ornament as would have delighted Lisbon itself. The rebuilders of this cathedral died in Goa, but because of his relation to Bassein his remains were transferred here.

The church of St. Antonio was in its time one of the most imposing of the entire group on the island of Bassein. It seems to have been built by Fra Antonio do Porto, who figured largely in the Jesuit operations for the conquest of India. He destroyed two hundred Hindu pagodas, built eleven churches, and converted—that is, in his way—ten thousand one hundred and fifty natives to Christianity.

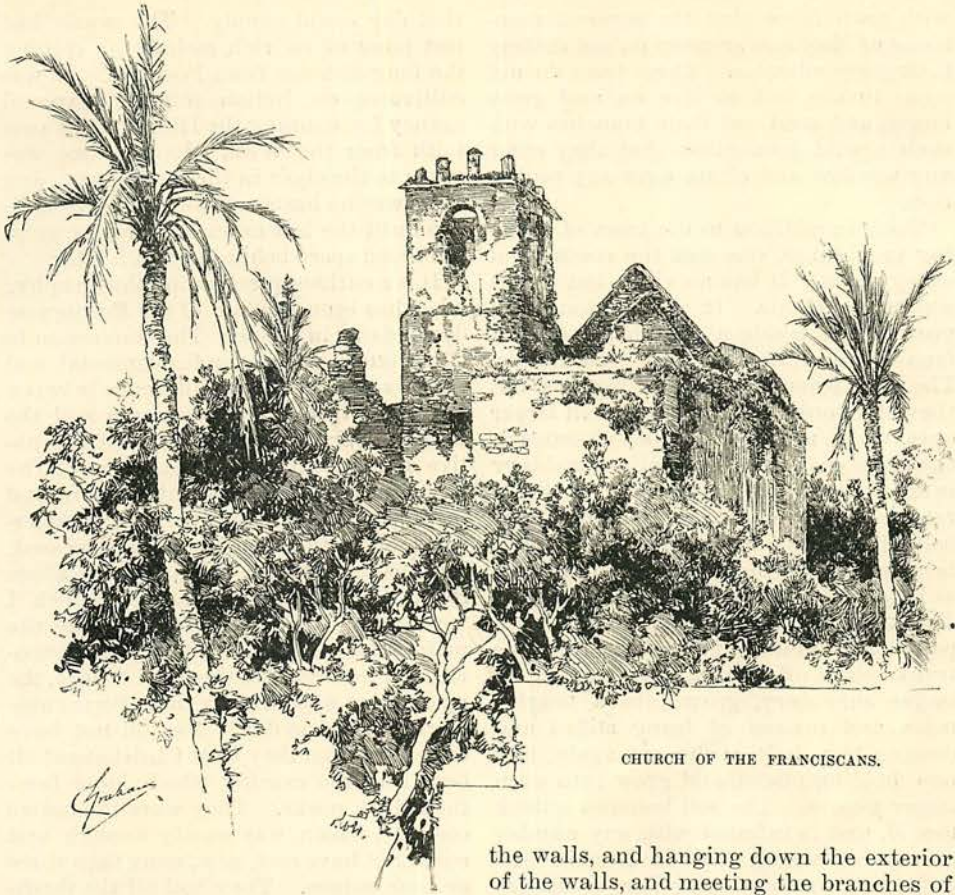
The Franciscan church, or monastery—for it seems to have combined the two qualities—was, however, the grandest of

all these ecclesiastical structures. It divided with that of St. Francis in Goa the honor of having chief authority in India. Several other churches were affiliated with it. The lateral chapels in the ruin are still to be recognized, and contain many tombstones.

I was bewildered with this wonderful scene. From one view I went to another, expecting to find that in some cases at least these relics of the Portuguese past would repeat themselves. But in no instance was this the fact. Each had its well-defined individuality. Where a church had a supporting monastery, the space covered by the latter, as with the Franciscan and Jesuit's monasteries, was at once imposing and immense. The old paths where the monks walked were quite obstructed by the tangled creepers. The walls had lost their perpendicular, and now and then had tumbled to the ground, but it was easy to see the entire outline. The sacred edifices were in all stages of decay. Some were such complete ruins that not even a memorial tablet was longer in place, but had tumbled into the mass of stones and been broken into small pieces. Even the palaces of the General of the North and the Captain of Bassein are utter wrecks, only the broken walls and bastions and tumbling portals remaining to tell of the former splendor of the place, and its importance in the eye of Portugal and the daring and never-resting Xavier.

In one section my guide became uncertain of his way, and we proceeded with caution. We were in a thick jungle, and could see only a short distance ahead of us. The path was overgrown, and I was intent on getting out of the tangled brushwood. All at once we emerged into the clear sunshine and an open space. Here there broke on my vision still another splendid view of a cathedral, with all its vast proportions, and yet far gone in wall and campanile. I was not looking for it, but only for an egress from the place, for already I had been surfeited with these wrecks of the Portuguese past, when all India was the dream of Xavier, and its wealth was the hope of Portugal's richest traders. But this too I was not willing to leave until I had gone along the old nave, looked at its displaced tablets, and clambered over the roots and knolls which surrounded its vast walls.

One feature of this strange place sur-



CHURCH OF THE FRANCISCANS.

prised me more than any work of the Portuguese priest, governor, or factor. I mean the prodigies of vegetation. The custard-apple, the mango, and the peepul tree grow here with a wild luxuriance which positively defies description. The English throughout India take pains to keep in order the palaces of the Mogul dynasty and other remnants of the past rulers. But here in Bassein there seems to be next to no effort to keep these ruins from going into shapeless masses of decay. Some of the better preserved appear to have had an occasional sweeping, but not of recent date. The rank vegetation has taken possession of them all. Just within the walls where Portuguese fidalgos sat with their wives and children and listened to St. Francis, amid all the wealth and pageantry for which the Portuguese rule in Bassein was famed, there now grow tall trees with immense trunks, their topmost boughs higher even than

the walls, and hanging down the exterior of the walls, and meeting the branches of the trees of less sacred growth. Trees have taken root on the walls themselves, and sent down their long roots into the crevices of the rocks and struck the earth, and then twisted the very walls out of place, and grasped whole masses of solid rock, and now hold them in their firm embrace. The creepers, not slender vines, but gigantic trees, have thrust their roots beneath the very walls of the churches, and shot out their arms into the lancet-windows, and gone up the sides of the campanile, and expanded into vast umbrellas, which hang over every side of the carved balcony, as though to hide it from the glare of the sun. No woodman's axe is here. Nature, beneath this prodigal Indian sky, grows with a lavish and rapid splendor, and defies all the patience of the architect, and hides the finest toil of the sculptor's chisel. These vines spare nothing. Where the tree cannot penetrate the mass of rocks, its roots run down either side of bastion or wall until they reach the earth, and then penetrate it

with such force that the severest monsoons of May and summer do not destroy their perpendicular. These trees do not seem to die, but to live on and grow larger, and send out their branches with such a wild prodigality that they enter any window and climb over any projection.

Then, in addition to the trees of creeping proclivities, one sees the cocoa-palm everywhere. It has no vines, but it still asserts its rights. It stands alone, and grows right beside a church portal, and fans the archway with its bold fronds. The dead leaves lie in all directions, but they have only given place to still larger ones, which are beautiful and vigorous in their new growth. The smaller shrubbery is made up of many a species. It would require a very close examination of the botany of India to identify them. But here in Bassein they make a jungle such as I did not see an approach to in Ceylon. The tendency everywhere, except with palms, is to vines. The strings from the trunks shoot off at all angles, catch upon larger shrubbery, grow into a tangled mass, and instead of being stifled and coming to a halt, strike out again, find new holding-places, and grow into even larger masses. The soil becomes a thick mould, and is infested with any number of reptiles, which here in Bassein find only an occasional traveller to disturb their composure. Beneath some of the churches there are secret passages, and in their best days it is most likely that all the larger ones had in this way an underground connection.

One cannot help thinking, while wandering amid this scene of desolation, of the old Portuguese days. The Governor-General of India, who lived here, was supported by an immense salary. He had his rich retainers and vast household, who lived in such splendor as none in Portugal besides the royal family had ever enjoyed. Then the bells sent out their chimes from the many campaniles, and the congregations gathered for worship, and all the elaborate ritual of Romanism was conducted with a splendor and leisure quite in keeping with the hopes for the occupation, some day, of all India. The ladies, each with several attendants, coming from the splendid homes which surrounded Bassein on the water-front, were attired in the richest silks and adorned with the rarest jewels which the India of

that day could supply. The music had lost none of its rich melody by coming the long distance from Portugal. It was cultivated on Indian soil as a special agency for winning the Hindu to the new faith from the West. Large place was given to the choir in the service here, and there was no haste to leave the sacred edifice until the last notes had died away in the broad space behind the high altar.

It is a curious question in ethnography, what has been the fate of the Portuguese descendants in India? The conversion to Christianity was never fundamental, and there is a much wider difference between the present race of Portuguese and the English Christians than between the native Hindus and the Portuguese. The Portuguese intermarried with natives, and in time almost all the Iberian characteristics of feature and form disappeared. The matter of faith and language alone remained. In the steamer by which I went from Colombo to Tuticorin, on the main-land, just a trifle above Cape Comorin, and the centre of the pearl fishery, the whole deck was filled by these Portuguese Christians of to-day. I could not have discovered that they were Christians at all but from the crucifix which hung from their dirty necks. They wore the native costume, which was scanty enough, and could not have cost, new, more than three or four rupees. They had all the thriftlessness of the lower Hindu castes, and were ignorant in the extreme. Yet they were so-called Christians, and the direct offspring of the Portuguese missions planted by Francis Xavier around the Indian coast, from Bassein in the northwest around to the Cape, and then nearly up to Madras, on the Bay of Bengal.

The question forces itself upon one, as he walks away from the vast ruins of former Portuguese glory in Bassein, what if those people were to-day dominant over the two hundred and fifty millions of India? A strange Providence has ordered otherwise. Had the masters, civic and ecclesiastic, in Bassein, conducted themselves properly, and in carrying on trade and planting missions been fair types of the Christian colonist, there is no likelihood that they would have been disturbed, but their influence would have extended throughout the great valleys of both the Ganges and the Indus. But neither Hindu nor Mohammedan could see unselfishness in their measures. Theirs



MONASTERY GARDEN OF THE JESUITS.

were the greed for gold, pride for the Church, and a lust for hasty, violent, and numerous converts. So, when the Mah-rattas conquered Bassein, and paved the way unwittingly for the final triumph of the English, they were only helping India to her certain Protestant destiny.

There are many of these Portuguese in Bombay, a race of themselves. All the waiters in the hotel where I lodged are of the same race. They are people who never rise above a very low level.

The Portuguese Roman Catholic here, and all over India, is a poor commentary on the character of the first converts un-

der Xavier. They have churches here and there, but of such quality is their service that one finds it but little above the average Hindu worship. No wonder is it that the native Hindu, in endeavoring to measure the full worth of Christianity, thinks first of all of the Christians who have been longest in India, and hesitates long and seriously before accepting our Protestant Christianity. He looks at character, the Portuguese type, and may well wonder what he and his offspring could gain by the poor exchange. But the Portuguese is in decline. Protestant Christianity is the conquering force to-day.

## A LOVE SONG.

BY GEORGE WITHER.

I LOV'D a lasse, a faire one,  
 As faire as e'er was seene;  
 She was, indeed, a rare one,  
 Another Sheba queen;  
 But, foole, as then I was,  
 I thought she lov'd me too;  
 But, now, alas! sh'as left me,  
*Falero, lero, loo.*