

## THE ROMANCE OF BRAZIL

ONE hundred years ago this September, the independence of Brazil from the Crown of Portugal, and the formation of the new state into an empire, were declared. In commemoration of that series of events, special celebrations are being held over there during September. The Holy See is being (as, indeed, how should it be otherwise?) represented at those rejoicings, and so also are Great Britain and many other Powers. It may be of interest to glance at the very stirring and extraordinary history of that far-away land.

The first European to land in Brazil was Vicente Yañez Pinzón, who, in the year 1500, coasted as far as the Orinoco River, discovering also the mouth of the Amazon. During the same year, Pedro Álvares Cabral, a mariner from Portugal, also reached Brazil. He disembarked on Easter Sunday. A solemn Mass was celebrated, and to the newly-discovered regions the voyagers gave the name, 'True Cross' (*Vera Cruz*). A vessel was sent back to Europe to announce to the King of Portugal the discovery which had been made, but Cabral himself had quite another object in view than following up that particular matter. In point of fact, in the voyage which had brought him to Brazil, he had been under the impression that he was on his way to India *viâ* the Cape of Good Hope! He contented himself, therefore, with leaving two of his sailors in the newly-found land, and then himself continued his original journey. We may remark that, being anything but of a conciliatory disposition, Cabral eventually became embroiled with the Moors of Calicut,

## *The Romance of Brazil*

against whom he conducted a sanguinary campaign before sailing off to Cochin and Cananor.

Of the two sailors whom he had left in Brazil (or, rather, *Vera Cruz*, the name by which it is now known not then having been invented), one was named Correia. He was a person of enterprise and, indeed, genius. Surrounded by a land of luxuriant natural products—a land, however, whose only inhabitants appeared to be primitive barbarians—he set about insinuating himself into the good graces of the savages. His tale seems almost a prototype of the De Rougemont of our own days. He formed a village of natives; he introduced primitive forms of civilisation; he drew his savage followers apart from the surrounding tribes; and he ruled over them as a benevolent despot. He took the name ‘Caramurú,’ signifying ‘Man of Fire.’

More than thirty years later, the Portuguese discoverer, Affonso da Sousa, landed in Caramurú’s territory, and found that adventurer ruling as patriarch of his people. The ‘Man of Fire’ received da Sousa under his protection, and the commencement was made of a European settlement which later developed into the great Brazilian city and state of Bahia.

Meanwhile, during the period between the landings (1500) of Pinzón and Cabral, and that (1532) of da Sousa, other adventurers had been seeking out the new lands. In fact, as M. Pierre Denis (*Brazil*, London, 1911, pp. 27 and 28) said: ‘Her (Brazil’s) history is complex in the extreme, for she was settled in many parts, developed into many colonies, and to this day consists of many peoples . . . The fact is that a presentation of the colonial period alone would fill volumes, while a modern political history would offer difficulties even to a native historian.’

There had been expeditions, for instance, under

## *Blackfriars*

Amerigo Vespuccio, who, in 1503, left a garrison of twenty-four men. The bay now known as that of Rio de Janeiro was entered, on the first day of 1502, by Gonzalo Coelo.

Of the natives of the country, we may quote the following remarks from *The Historians' History of the World* (1908), Vol. xxiii, p. 653: 'The Tupis wore absolutely no clothing; they dyed their bodies red, all except the face . . . Human flesh they considered a great delicacy, and they ate not only their enemies, but also their sick relatives, and even their sick children. Of the little ones, the father and mother made only a mouthful, but if they were adults they profited by the occasion to give a little family feast.' (By the way, the best history of Brazil in English is—up to the period at which it was written—the valuable work of Robert Southey, *A History of Brazil*, published in London in 1810; it is, of course, unobtainable now, but those who can go to the British Museum Reading Room should spend some time over the fascinating pages of its three splendid volumes.)

Thomé da Sousa, the first governor-general appointed by Portugal, was reinforced, in 1549, by the arrival at Bahia of six ships, with 350 soldiers and officials, 400 convicts, 300 free settlers, and six Jesuit missionaries.

The annals of the early Catholic missionaries in Brazil are—we were about to say 'unmatched,' but is not the whole history of the Church full of tales of heroism and devotion? Let us rather say, then, that the deeds of the missionaries to Brazil are hard to surpass for sovereign endeavour. Consider their task! Cannibal pagans to subdue to the Gospel; broiling sun, fierce beasts, trackless forests, torrid deserts, tormenting insects, hunger, drought, to be faced: and, to crown all, even the very countrymen

## *The Romance of Brazil*

of the missionaries themselves were often their bitter opponents! The last may indeed seem a strange remark, but the explanation is simple. The Portuguese expeditions contained a large proportion of men whose aim (when they had spied out the land) became that of using the natives as slaves, as the cheapest means of exploiting the natural resources of the country. To this policy the Jesuits offered a persistent resistance: hence the hatred with which they were often met by their own countrymen who came to Brazil. To quote the *Cambridge Modern History* (1907, Vol. v, p. 676): 'In defence of the Indians against their conquerors the Jesuits fought a hard battle. They desired to see the various tribes settled in orderly communities under ecclesiastical and not civil control, and to free them from slavery and from indefinite exactions of work, tantamount to slavery . . . But they were contending against the relentless nature of the Portuguese planter and the hard facts of the economic situation.' Also Southey thus (*History of Brazil*, Vol. 1, pp. 252—253): 'These missionaries were in every way qualified for their office. They were zealous for the salvation of souls; they had disengaged themselves from all ties which attach us to life, and were therefore not merely fearless of martyrdom, but ambitious of it . . . Nobrega and his companions began their work with those hordes which were sojourning in the vicinity of St. Salvador; they persuaded them to live in peace, they reconciled old enemies, they succeeded in preventing drunkenness.'

Father Nobrega was the leader of the six missionaries who, as mentioned above, came out in an expedition which reinforced Thomé da Sousa. To this band of apostles was given a large piece of territory near San Salvador. As Father Thomas J. Campbell, S.J. (*The Jesuits*, 1921, p. 87) says:

## *Blackfriars*

‘ There was plenty to do with the degenerate whites in the various settlements, but the savages presented the greatest problem. They were cannibals of an advanced type, and no food delighted them more than human flesh. To make matters worse, the white settlers encouraged them in their horrible practices, probably in the hope that they would soon eat each other up.’

Father Nobrega fearlessly penetrated to the very midst of the heathen tribes, tending their sick, defending them against the whites, and soon becoming beloved by the natives as their benefactor and friend. One day, he became aware of the preparation of a great cannibal feast. Walking straight into the midst of the howling barbarians, he carried off the corpse. Consequently, the infuriated tribe made a frenzied attack upon the settlement of the whites. Daunted, however, by da Sousa’s display of military force, the savages retreated, promising, moreover, to desist from cannibalism.

The result of this act of Father Nobrega’s was that, not only were the pagans excited against him by reason of disturbance of their unhallowed orgies, but also the whites became hostile because of the danger that they blamed him for provoking. There can, however, be no question that Father Nobrega’s drastic action was the right one to take. It was right in principle, and, moreover, it was justified, by its success, even from the mere point of view of expediency. The hostility of the savages died down, and (Campbell, *Jesuits*, p. 88) ‘tribe after tribe accepted the missionaries and was converted to Christianity.’

The years 1580 to 1640 were stormy ones for Brazil. During that time, Portugal was annexed to Spain. Her colonies, therefore, were counted as Spain’s. The result was that the military enemies of Spain made concerted onslaughts on Brazil. French,

## The Romance of Brazil

Dutch, and English fleets descended upon the Portuguese settlements with fire and sword. In 1630, the Dutch seized Pernambuco. Olinda they retained even until 1654. The Hollander attackers received great help from the *Maranos* (Jews converted—often in outward seeming only—to Christianity), who had come to South America from Portugal. 'The secret Jews welcomed and assisted the Dutch in 1618, particularly as at that time they had good reason to dread the introduction of the Inquisition . . . When their fleet (*i.e.* that of the Dutch under Count Maurice of Nassau) was sent against Bahia, all necessary information was obtained from the Jews' (L. Hühner, in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, 1906, Vol. III, p. 359).

No history of Brazil—even a brief article—is adequate without a reference to the 'captaincies' (*capitaneas*) and the *Paulistas*. The captaincies were a system devised by John III of Portugal for running Brazil without cost to himself. He announced that if adventurers would undertake to do everything at their own expense, each one who fitted out an expedition should be given practically absolute, autocratic powers over a strip of coast fifty leagues long! In the end, fifteen such *capitaneas* were allocated; and it was for the purpose of 'delimiting' these, and settling the disputes that had arisen, that Affonso da Sousa set out on the voyage which, as we have already narrated, brought him into contact with the patriarchal 'Man of Fire.'

The *Paulistas* were the original settlers of the territory which is now São Paulo. They represented the most fierce, determined, and adventurous of all the expeditionaries. It was they who first discovered rich ores in Brazil. 'In the year 1699, Portugal first began to derive supplies of the precious metals from Brazil, the chief wealth of which had till then been sugar and dye-woods. The rich gold mines of that

## **Blackfriars**

region were casually discovered by some wandering, outlawed criminals. They immediately communicated the important discovery to Government, and easily obtained their pardon, together with permission to work the mines, paying the customary fifth to the king . . . They were called the Paulistas, and long continued a source of much anxiety and trouble to the viceroys of Brazil' (M. M. Busk, *History of Spain and Portugal*, London, 1833, p. 165. Mr. Busk's account of the Paulistas, however, seems unfriendly. They comprised types of many kinds, and some of the sturdiest stocks of modern Brazil come from them).

The incursion of Bonaparte into Portugal caused the royal family of that realm to flee (1807) to Brazil. There the king held his court—*de jure* monarch of Portugal still—until the fall of Bonaparte enabled the exiles to return to Europe in 1821: with the exception of the Crown Prince, who remained in America as Regent.

It was in the next year that Brazil declared itself independent of Portugal. The declaration (of which this year's centenary celebrations are the commemoration) was in September, 1822. On October 12th, the Prince Regent was crowned Emperor of Brazil. In 1824 Portugal recognised the accomplished fact. In 1831, the first Emperor (he was named Pedro I) abdicated in favour of his son, Pedro II. As the latter was only five years old, regencies ruled until his coronation (1841).

The empire was overthrown in 1889, and the present system of a federal republic (the United States of Brazil) has prevailed ever since.

Slavery was abolished in principle in 1871, and disappeared entirely in 1888.

In Brazil there is separation of Church and State. Nearly the whole population, however, is Catholic,

### *The Romance of Brazil*

and harmony exists between the civil and ecclesiastical powers.

Unfortunately, the political history of Brazil has records of some terrible wars with other nations. Peace now, however, prevails, and we may wish a prosperous and noble future to this growing South American power.

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