Gem of the Orient Earth.
By C. Montalto de Jesus.

For an illustrated Far Eastern Review there can scarcely be a more appealing subject than the quaint and picturesque old Portuguese Settlement, nowadays out of the way of foreigners in China generally. Neglected and belittled, Macao is known to but few of them; and to some, if not to many, the heading chosen for this article may perhaps seem pretentious. The term, however, originated from no bias of patriotism; it was coined by a foreign admirer—one of the early governors of Hongkong, the scholarly Sir John Bowring; and his much admired sonnet is here given, not so much by way of justifying the heading as for the sake of the charmingly depicted scenery of one of those pen-sketches which are the despair of the Kodak.

**Gem of the orient earth and open sea,**
Macao! that in thy lap and on thy breast
Hast gathered beauties all the loveliest,
Which the sun smiles on in his majesty.
The very clouds that top each mountain crest,
Seem to repose there, lingering lovingly.
How full of grace the green Cathayan tree
Bends to the breeze—and now thy sands are prest
By gentlest waves, which ever and anon
Break their awakened furies on thy shore.
Were these the scenes that poet looked upon,
Whose lyre though known to fame knew misery more?
They have their glories, and earth's diadems
Have naught so bright as genius-gilded gems.
There is a spell of romance in the history of Macao, before which the records of later and more propitious European establishments in China seem tame and prosaic. A glamour pervades the impressive landmark and its grand past, evoked, perhaps, less by historic interest than by the memories of one of Europe's greatest bards. A favourite haunt of Camoens, the grotto which bears his name links the place with his glory; and to the Portuguese as a nation it is a spot hallowed by all that is most ennobling and inspiring. No other living nation can boast of a national epic so classic in its beauty and so intensely patriotic as that bequeathed by Camoens to his ungrateful country. It is the imperishable pride of Macao that he there composed the Lusiad. There, too, stands the very first monument ever raised in his honour, whilst at Lisbon his humble grave, alas! cannot be identified.

The bronze bust in the grotto is the gift of the late Commendador Lourenço Marques, to whose loving solicitude is also due a collection of poems inspired by the place, the prettiest ones being engraved on the stone tablets. It was an international cult of Camoens, which, unfortunately, has died out through the lack of civic interest, like that of the genial old gentleman above named, who formerly owned the place. On both sides of the bust's pedestal are inscribed stanzas from the Lusiad, arranged to express the poet's own fate—the plaint of a great, broken heart. Sir Richard Burton's version, the best in English, is appended.
GEM OF THE ORIENT EARTH

THOU hast a Rival, not alone in deed
But in his dolence and his guerdon dour:
In thee and him two breasts of noblest breed
We see degraded to low state obscure:
To die in spital, on the bed of need,
Who King and Law like wall of iron secure!
Thus do capricious Kings, whose will demandeth
More than what Justice or what Truth commandeth.

See how my Lay so long to sing hath striven
Your Tagus and the Lusians dear to you,
How oft this exile Fate from home hath driven,
New labours ever suffering, losses new:
Now tempting Ocean, then all helpless driven
The dread Mavortian risks and wrongs to rue;
Self-doomed as Canacé to death abhor'd,
In this hand aye the Pen, in that the Sword.

Now sunk by hateful, scornèd Penury
To chew the bitter bit of beggar bread,
Then mockt by Hope already brought so nigh
To be anew and more than e'er misled;
Then with bare life in hand condemned to fly
Where life depended from so fine a thread,
Only a greater miracle could save
Than what to Judah's King new life-lease gave.

Amid such fierce extreme of fear and pain,
Such grievous labours, perils lacking name,
Whose fair honour wooeth aye shall gain
Man's true nobility, immortal fame:
Not those who ever lean on ancient strain
Imping on noble trunk a barren claim,
Not those reclining on the golden beds
Where Moscow's zebelin downy softness spreads.

Gainsay I not, that some of high descent
From wealthy houses, men of generous strain,
Still with their noble lives and excellent
Herited titles worthily sustain;
And if the light which ancestry hath lent
No novel glory by their doings gain,
At least it faileth not, nor dim it growtheth,
But, ah! few men like these the Painter knoweth.
And skill, my Nymphs! 'twas not enough of pain,
Such sorrow-clouds around my life should close;
But they, for whom I sang the patriot-strain,
With sad return must pay my toils, my throes:
In place of Peace and Rest I hoped to gain,
In lieu of Bay-wreaths bound around my brows,
Troubles by men unseen they must invent,
When ills of every kind my soul torment.

The melancholy, sepulchral appearance of the grotto, which indeed looks like a dolmen, was evidently not lost upon the bard. In one of his most touching sonnets, of which the following is but poor rendering, he is believed with good reason to allude to his romantic haunt.

WHERE shall I find a more secluded spot,
Of all delightful traits so sadly bare,
That need I say no man betakes him there,
When e'en by beast it rests uncared, unsought?
Some frowning woods with awful darkness fraught,
Or sylvan solitude of dismal air,
Without a sprightly brook or meadow fair,
In fine a place adapted to my lot.
For there, embosomed in the rocky cleft,
In life entombed, there freely may I mourn,
O'er plaintive, death-like life of all bereft,
Save tears and woes to which there is no bourn.
In cheerful days there shall I feel less sad,
Contented, too, when all in gloom is clad.

In spite of typhoon ravages and extensive wood-cutting, the grove still retains a wild, picturesque grandeur. It is an inspiring solitude, with ideal alleys for the pensive, with many a quaint freak of undisturbed nature to attract the thoughtless. Here a tall tree blown down by the terrific typhoon of 1874 grows almost trailing the ground like a serpent; here a wall; there a mass of rocks are surmounted by hoary trees whose overlapping roots clasp them in a titanic network as if to guard them from storms and vandalism.

The acquisition of the place as a national property has led to no atonement for the neglect of centuries; no embellishment, no improvement, save that, by the removal of an unartistic portico and superstructure, the grotto regains its natural, impressive respect; while some creepers, as if pitying the bare rocks, are beginning to garland them in nature's own simple and graceful way.

When the East India Company had establishments near by, the grove served as a British cemetery. All the tombs have been removed but one—
that of the supercargo who had much to do with the British occupation of Macao in 1808 which, but for the loyalty of the colony and the intervention of China, would, in all likelihood, have rendered the acquisition of Hongkong superfluous.

A prominent grave in the Protestant cemetery is that of a celebrated painter of Macao, George Chinnery, whose paintings and etchings adorn the collection of old China hands in England, notably a picture of the Franciscan Monastery (now demolished) with its superb flight of steps—statelier than that of St. Paul's—a picture of which Macao should at least possess a reproduction.
To China, Macao is a legendary spot, whence one of the most popular divinities, the Tien How, or Queen of Heaven, is said to have taken her celestial flight, after conducting thither a storm-tossed junk from her home in Fokien. The Mako temple, raised in her memory, is beautifully laid out on
the slope of a gentle, sylvan height, and amidst rocks full of inscriptions. On one of them is carved an image of the junk, on whose pennon is inscribed the bidding of the goddess to the skipper during the storm: “Fear not, and sail on.” From this legend, which evidently captivated the Portuguese navigators, is derived the name of the colony, originally styled “Settlement of the Name of God of the Port of Macao in China” (A Ma being the name of the goddess), whence the subsequent appellation “City of the Name of God,” to which is added, by royal command, “There is none more loyal,” in commemoration of Macao’s staunch adherence on the secession of Portugal.
from Spain; and this serves as the city's motto, the coat of arms—which it surmounts—being by royal prerogative the very Arms of Portugal.

THE CATHEDRAL OF MONTE.

A main feature of old Portuguese colonisation was the predominance of religious influence; and yet one looks in vain for a church at Macao worthy of the colony's ancient splendours. There was one up to 1835—St. Paul's, destroyed by fire. All that remains of it is the noble façade, a befitting relic of Macao's golden age. The "History of the Mings" remarks that the like of this church was never seen in China before. And its magnificence has not yet been surpassed in the Far East. It was built by Japanese Christians during the persecution in Japan. The adjoining seminary (likewise destroyed by fire) was the alma mater of many a gifted Japanese youth who issued forth to win the palm of martyrdom. There, too, Japanese nobles, sent on an embassy to Rome, published an account of their travels—the first work printed at Macao, in 1590—*De Missione Legatorum Japonensium ad Romanam Curiam*, of which only the British Museum, the Bibliothèque National, and the Torre de Tombo, are known to possess a copy. In short, the history of St. Paul's is the history of the martyrs of Japan, and of the
marvellons achievements of the Jesuits in China.' What Macaulay prophetically says of the solitude and ruins of St. Paul's in London, is sternly realised at Macao, where tourists, however, do not moralise on the fall of greatness amidst an altogether imposing desolation, for hovels, nay pigs, desecrate the place; pearls are there actually thrown to swine.

Overlooking the ruins, frowns the citadel of Monte, constructed by the Jesuits at a psychological epoch. The fortification had not been completed when the Dutch invaded Macao, and from those battlements one telling shot blew up the powder waggon of the invaders, which led to their retreat and rout, the fire being directed by Father Rho, the celebrated astronomer of Peking. Soon after the repulse of the Dutch, the Jesuits were evicted from their citadel under circumstances which bring to mind the saying that truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. It is recorded that after a banquet given by the fathers there in honour of Dom Francisco de Mascarenhas, Captain-General of Macao, he loitered about the place with his retinue till reminded that it was already past the usual hour for locking the gate, when coolly he bowed the Jesuits out in the King's name. A series of high-handed measures gave rise to a revolt ending in his assassination, according to one
version, while another has it that he managed to escape from the colony. From Monte three shots were fired at the Augustinian monastery, where he took refuge—shots which he caused to be gilt, sending one as a present for the King and another for the Viceroy in India. A mysterious subterranean passage connects Monte with St. Paul's; and stories are still rife of treasures hidden in the underground vaults, as if the Jesuits were foolish enough to leave them behind.

PORTA DO CERCO.

By an irony of fate the Dutch, instead of taking Macao, contributed to the defence of the place; the picturesque stronghold of Guia, originally a hermitage, was converted by the labour of Dutch prisoners into a fort, on the very height which the invaders attempted to take. The bell of Guia, like that of the hermitage of Penha, gave welcome tidings to the people of Macao in the halcyon days of their maritime activity. It rang merrily on the approach of ships. Immediately on arrival, especially after a perilous voyage, skipper and crew, joined by their families, usually proceeded barefoot for a thanksgiving at Penha, carrying with them the mizzen topmast, which was laid down before the altar of Our Lady of Penha, protectress of navigators. The days of degeneracy had not then tainted the colony, then worthy indeed of the name of Holy City—paternal in its government. When the Senate had its respondentia funds, every respectable citizen, however humble and poor, enjoyed facilities for trading ventures at a time when cent.
per cent. profit for a voyage was considered but poor return—ventures which the Senate itself insured against marine risks. At Guia, too, stands the first lighthouse built in China, when Macao had lost its maritime importance. In one of the accompanying illustrations a stranded brig is to be seen—the last ship of Macao, driven during the terrific typhoon of 1874 into a flooded paddyfield miles away. The view may well serve as a prophetic vision of what is to become of the past silting harbours of Macao, if dredging operations are postponed for another twenty years.

Vestiges of the piety of Macao in olden times are still very evident. In the houses of old families are invariably to be seen countless holy pictures, and richly adorned shrines with glass cases, treasuring ivory images of saints made by Manila artists and resplendent with gold and silver halos. The churches, as of old, have no seats, and divine service is well attended every morning. Church-bells peal at all hours from sunrise to sunset. The repulse of the Dutch in 1622 is still commemorated only by a religious procession every year. The realistic funeral ceremony on Good Friday amidst general mourning is suggestive of the Passion Play of Ober Ammergau, and so is the grand pageantry on the first Sunday in Lent, when a fine life-size image of Christ bearing the cross is solemnly borne along the streets by worthy citizens. Even stolid heathens are impressed by the awful, woeful beauty of the life-like image as it slowly moves along, amidst the knell of church bells, the funereal strains of the military band, the richly embroidered banners, with pictures of the successive stages in the august drama of Calvary, one even with the full text of the Roman decree for
crucifixion. As many times as Christ fell under the weight of the cross, the procession pauses, and the throng kneels down, while a pretty little girl in angel's garb personifies Veronica and pathetically pleads for mercy in a sad, sweet song. Several little girls, also, in angelical attire follow, bearing flowers, with the hammer, nails, and other emblems of crucifixion; and amongst the crowd it is not unusual to see tiny Celestial angels escorted by long-robed converts—rare as an instance of natives genially and religiously fraternising with foreigners in China.

No mission achieved such triumphs in China as that of Macao, whose converts, prior to the fatal controversies regarding the Confucian and ancestral rites, included members of the Imperial families, Ming and Tsing, ministers of state, viceroy, generals, and hundreds of academicians and mandarins. Quality not quantity, was a wise objective. The missionaries sometimes fared badly indeed, but, like Christ, meekly, forgivingly; and their lives had no equivalent in land or money. On the contrary, in Macao's darkest days even, altars were once despoiled of their gold and silver adornments—melted to satisfy the greed of mandarins and avert the colony's ruin.

Weakness hath its pathos. During the persecution in Japan, tidings of martyrdom, of envoys even, were hailed at Macao with solemn thanksgiving, ringing of church bells, and salvo from fortresses and ships. In China, the martyrlogy of three centuries falls far short of that of the last half century, for of yore the foreign policy goaded not the Chinese to an incurable resentment. History will yet show whether the sway of the sword lasts longer than that of the heart, even in China.

Commercially, Macao can lay claim to countless victims. It seems as if Portugal has declared a war of extermination against economists and financiers. No sooner does a welcome goose that lays the golden egg appear at Macao than, alas! it is scared or slain quite recklessly. Suffice it to quote two instances connected with Shanghai. Not many years ago a capitalist proposed favourable terms for working the rich petroleum wells of Timor,
but the project had to be abandoned in view of government exactions, which found a striking contrast in the facilities offered by the Dutch, with the result that, whilst a most thriving company is now developing the resources of Langkat, undeveloped Timor remains a heavy burden on the budget of Macao. During the Boxer trouble three Chinese steamers would have been placed under the Portuguese flag permanently at Shanghai, if the shipowners had not been scared with registration fees amounting to half the value of the steamers, and regulations requiring the coasters to call periodically at Portugal. It seems as if Macao should be content with being only a sanitarium and Monte Carlo. Only sentries seem to be alert there.

PRAIA GRANDE.

As a health-resort Macao has no equal along the China coast. Who, sick of Hongkong, ever passes a summer night at Praia Grande and forgets the undying breeze there, the softly splashing waves, that sweetly lull one to sleep! But the boon is not for all. In vain the French Government recently sought to acquire an establishment where invalids from Indo-China might recruit; in vain was the sale of the building negotiated, as some one officially apprehended a Trojan horse in the matter. Nowhere as in the Far East is it so essential to bear in mind the truism that Nature imposes a penalty for the construction of every city; and on this point the colony's founders deserve every praise for having had the requirements of a tropical climate well and wisely in view. Every old house, however small, invariably had a
A BIT OF OLD MACAO.
little garden, some shaded by fruit-trees. There was even no house-tax till the middle of last century; no callous landlord to bleed poor tenants and further victimise them with insanitary dwellings. For long, restrictions were placed on Chinese domicile, mainly for sanitary reasons; and it was only towards the close of the eighteenth century that these restrictions were removed in view of the reign of terror caused by rampant piracy in the neighbouring districts. Yet the comparative neatness and sanitation observable even in the Chinese quarters of the city have been the subject of complimentary remarks, notably since the administration of Governor Calho de Amaral, himself a distinguished civil engineer. Sir Rutherford Alcock was so favourably impressed at Macao that he is known to have studied its municipal régime, evidently with the view of adaptation at Shanghai.

In conclusion, let not this sketch be looked upon as an attempted creation of another Model Settlement regardless of much that there is of the seamy side. A pictorial magazine has its aesthetics. Moreover, consistency is a jewel; and even on paper it would be a pity to wantonly flaw the Gem of the Orient Earth.