

CHAPTER I

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Surat lies twelve miles up the River Tapti in the warm and fertile plain of Gujarat. Few boats came up the river to Surat, and these few were always flat-bottomed coasting vessels. The ocean-going European merchantmen anchored at the port of Swally. There you might count the masts of several hundred ships, only a minority of them European ; Arab dhows with red sails and Chinese junks and Mogul vessels carrying pilgrims to Jiddah, the port of Mecca.

European travellers found the customs examination a tedious ordeal. Every trunk, box and parcel had to be opened and sometimes shoes and hats were removed and peered into.¹ The customs officials wandered about with a retinue of black slaves carrying whips to dissuade intending smugglers. They were little kings in their own domain and levied duty on articles at their own valuation. They insisted on levying duty on the buttons worn by Europeans in their coats, not only on their first arrival at the port but each time they left their ships. This was particularly annoying for the pursers of English ships who often had to make several visits ashore to arrange for reprovisioning the ship and, as one of them complained, " in a short time the very intrinsick value of the buttons would be spent in

¹ Thevenot, *Voyage*.

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your charms." When the Moguls revoked their first permission to settle in Surat, English ships blockaded the coast of Gujarat, attacking the pilgrim-ships bound for Mecca till the Mogul Governor capitulated. And when the Portuguese opposed English penetration, the English, in face of extraordinary odds ("the *Dragon* alone made their Admiral and Vice-Admiral turn back and fly before her, we having had but one man slaine" ¹) swept Portuguese shipping from the Indian seas, and in spite of the Viceroy's exclamations against "these thieves, disturbers of States, a people not to be permitted in any commonwealth", ² actually blockaded Goa. However, English and Portuguese interests were too closely allied for long hostility and the two nations presently concluded a treaty which was "carried out with the greatest punctuality by the English", wrote the Viceroy of Goa, "very different," added the Viceroy, "from the Dutch." ³

¹ Letter from Thos. Aldworthe.

² Thomas Kerridge.

³ Danver's *Report on Achico da Torre do Tombo*.

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customs". If the customs officials found anything specially attractive in the foreigner's luggage they would put it on one side, pretending that they were not sure of the rate at which customs-dues should be levied on this article; and the owner never saw it again.

Emerging from the customs shed the new arrival hired a conveyance to take him to Surat. There was a wide choice in carriages. You could travel in "a chariot drawn by two Buffaloes attended by olive-coloured Indian foot-boys who can very prettily prattle English" as did Mr. Herbert, who would one day abandon commerce for a career in the parliamentary forces and become one of Fairfax's commissioners; or you could engage a great coach, such as most of the English merchants used, drawn by two white oxen "with circling Horses as black as a Coal, each Point tipped with Brass, from whence came Brass Chains across to the Headstall which is all of Scarlet, their flapping Ears snipped with Art".¹ Jangling and jolting the carriage carried the traveller through the alleys of the port. Beggars stared at the foreigner and clamoured for bakshish. But, as Dr. Fryer noticed with relief, you were not troubled "with Boys so rude as in England". Their chief fault was their Eastern curiosity. They followed every foreigner with inquisitive comments and would "presently upon their punctilio's with God Almighty and interrogate" the traveller. Otherwise "they are very Respectful", continued Dr. Fryer, "unless they get Drunk when are they Monarchs and it is Madness to oppose them."

It was relief to come out into open country and enjoy the prospect of wide green fields, richly cultivated and, in their evidences of efficient husbandry, almost reminiscent of the farm-lands of England were it not for the hundreds

¹ Fryer, *New Account of the East Indies*.

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of peacocks that clustered about the stagnant pools and an occasional camel moving jerkily in the shadow of dusty palm-groves. The roads were shady with over-arching banyan-trees and the traveller would remark the green parrots chortling and screaming as they flew from tree to tree, and on the branches "an infinite number of great Bats, hanging by the Clawes, making a shrill Noise". He would be lucky if he were not offered, by officious guides, the startling information that "this Fowle ingendreth in the Ear".¹ Then in the distance you saw Surat Castle "well-walled, ditched, reasonable great and faire with a number of faire pieces of ordnance, whereof some of exceeding greatnesse. Before this lyeth a pleasant greene in the midst of which is a Maypole to hang a light on"¹ and all round "very many noble lofty Houses, flat at Topp and Terraced with Plaster". The road led through the gardens of the city, which lay outside the city walls. In these the Indian merchants wandered on warm evenings "to take the Air and feast in pleasant Summer houses". There were many fountains and rivulets of fresh water and "Grottoes descending underground by huge Arches and Stone Steps shaded by Trees on each hand".

And so, passing through the clamour of the streets thronged with as cosmopolitan a crowd as you could find anywhere in Asia, the traveller reached at last the English factory and must have felt a sober satisfaction to note that it was

built of Stone and excellent Timber with good carvings without Representations, very strong for that each Floor is Half a yard thick at least, of the best cement, very weighty . . . with upper and lower Galleries, or Terras walks. The President had spacious Lodgings with noble Rooms for Counsel and Entertainment.

¹ Finch's narrative of Purchas.

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From the roof rose a number of flag-poles with English flags moving in the wind. This dignified exterior was, however, somewhat spoiled by the confusion and uproar in the courtyard where "the Packers and Warehouse-keepers, together with Merchants bringing and receiving Musters, made a meer *Billingsgate*, for if you make not a Noise they hardly think you intent on what you are doing".¹

The head of the factory was the President and he lived in almost as great state as the Mogul Governor. Outside the door of his bedchamber stood servants with silver staves and when he appeared they followed him from room to room. If he went downstairs a picket of liveried guardsmen sprang to attention in the hall, and if he left the factory "Bandarines and Moors under two Standards marched before him". He was provided with "well-filled stables for pleasure or services" and he had his own chaplain, physician, surgeon, linguist and mint-master. At his entry into the dining-room trumpets blew and while he sat at table violins played softly. All the English merchants dined together in the hall of the factory, the President at the head of the table and the others seated in order of seniority. On certain Church festivals, however, they dined in the gardens outside the city. They went in solemn procession, the President and his lady in a palanquin with banners ahead, the Council in ox-drawn coaches of special splendour, each having "a Four Square Seat, inlaid with Ivory", and the other factors on Arab horses whose saddles were of embroidered velvet and whose headstalls, reins and cruppers were of solid silver. All the dishes and drinking-vessels were of massive silver. Each diner was attended by a page with a silver basin and ewer, so that he might wash both before and after the meal. A peculiarly English grace

¹ Fryer.

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prescribed by the elders of the Council was intoned by the chaplain. "We, Thy unworthy creatures do most humbly implore Thy goodness for a plentiful effusion of Thy grace upon our employers, that we may live virtuously in due obedience to our superiors. . . ." Generally there were many and various courses. "Cabob" was a favourite dish, not unlike a goulash; "dumpoked fowl", that is, chicken boiled in butter and stuffed with raisins and almonds; "mango achar and sony sauce". On Sundays for dinner there would be "Deer and antelopes, Peacocks, hares and partridges and all kinds of Persian Fruits, Pistachoes, Plums, Apricots, Cherries". But meat was sometimes scarce and though the senior merchants never went without, the common sailors had to fast twice a week and content themselves with saffron rice. Beef was unprocurable. Captain Downton had attempted to start an abattoir but Hindu humanitarians had bribed the Mogul Governor to prohibit this; pork was, of course, unheard of in Musulman territory; and so the English had to satisfy their seventeenth-century appetites with mutton and chicken. At first some of the young factors tried to supplement this meagre diet by shooting doves and pigeons but the tender-hearted Hindus would implore them not to do this, and would as a last resort offer them money to spare the poor birds. This method of persuasion was so successful that it became a regular practice for impecunious young sportsmen (and the contrast between their splendid style of living and their small salaries was responsible for general indebtedness among all the junior factors) to take out a gun near some rich Hindu's house and talk loudly and ferociously about the number of pigeons they would massacre that afternoon till the Hindu ran out with tears in his eyes and money in his hands. Only on Sundays were European wines served at table;

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on weekdays they drank Persian wines from Shiraz and, more commonly, arak. Arak was evidently an acquired taste and the French traveller Bernier was surprised at the English liking for it. He described it as "a drink very hot and penetrating like the brandy made of corn in Polan. It so falls upon the nerves that it often causeth shaking hands in those that drink a little too much of it." On the other hand Captain Symson attributed to arak various medicinal properties. It was "good for the gripes . . . in the morning laxative and in the evening astringent". But he added that immoderate indulgence in arak made drinkers "so restless that no place is cool enough; and therefore they lie down on the ground all night which occasions their being snatched away in a very short time". Occasionally the factors dined with Muhammadan friends and found the pulavs and birianis delicious. These meals were, however, of enormous length and coffee was served between courses. And once they could persuade their hosts to ignore the Prophet's ban, they found Musulman heads stronger than their own. They were "not content with such little glasses as we drink out of, nor Claret nor Rhenish (which they call Vinegar) but Sack and Brandy out of the Bottle they will Tiffle till they are well warmed".¹ But Western science could still score a minor success, and Indians who first witnessed the opening of a bottle of beer expressed a George II-like surprise at the bubbles and froth. "It is not", they cried, "the sight of the drink flying out of the bottle, but how such liquor could ever be put in".² On occasion, however, the effect of beer and brandy on the temper of a Muhammadan unused to alcohol was unfortunate. A party at the Mogul Governor's was interrupted by the host falling

¹ Fryer.

² Price's *Memorials*, quoted in Douglas's *Bombay and Western India*.

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into a sudden rage with some dancing-girls and ordering their instant decapitation, there in the dining-room, before the eyes of the startled English guests. Whatever their opinions, however, the guests cannot have ventured on too open an expression of disapproval, even when they left the palace, for there were spies everywhere. The chief of these in Surat was called the "Harcarrah" and he sent his reports direct to Delhi. He

harkens to all kind of news, whether true or false, listens to everything that happens, whether of moment or no account and reports to the Great Mogul whatever is done or spoken of ; but with so soft a pen that nothing may offend, considering the profound veneration due to such a powerful prince whose frowns are mortal.

Fortunately, perhaps, the Harcarrah was even more interested in comets and earthquakes and other portents than in seditious gossip. He related, with some concern, that in a village near Surat "a monster without a head and with his eyes placed in his breast every night cried out with a horrid noise, 'Destroy and kill'. At hearing this read the King (Aurangzeb) said calmly, 'twas the twelfth century, when the Prophet foretold strange things in nature should happen'." ¹

On holidays the factors amused themselves with archery and musket-shooting ; or they would stroll round the bazaar, the temples and the old palaces. They were interested in Indian religions, though, like most foreigners, it was the seamy side of Indian religious life that intrigued them. Mr. Hamilton was excited by the stories he was told of a sect called the "Molacks who observe *heathenish* customs. They have a yearly Feast, but the time of its celebration is only known to themselves, wherein, after much Mirth and

¹ *Surat Factory Records*, 1698.

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Jollity, each Sex withdraws to a Room. The women take each a Handkerchief and go in the dark promiscuously among the Men." They admired the earnest attachment of Hindus to their faith, their quiet and reverent worship (or "decent cringings" as Mr. Hamilton put it). But the extravagances of the Yogis excited their laughter and exasperation. "I have seen a fanciful Rascal", exclaimed Mr. Hamilton, "seven Foot high with a large Turband of his own Hair wreathed about his Head, and his Body be-daubed with Ashes and Water, sitting quite naked under the Shade of a Tree, with *pu'denda* like an Ass." And if they chanced upon a conjurer in a corner of the bazaar they could not resist joining his audience. Then as now the mango-trick was a popular feature of the performance. Dr. Fryer relates how he saw some conjurers

present a Mock-creature of a Mango-tree, arising from the Stone in a short space (which they did in Hugger Muggers, being very careful to avoid being discovered) with Fruit Green and Ripe; so that a man must stretch his fancy, to imagine it Witchcraft; though the common Sort think no less.

Was it real fruit? To test this a friend of Mr. Ovington's "pluckt one of these Mangoes and fell sick upon it, and was never well as long as he kept it till he consulted a *Brahmin* for his health, who prescrib'd his only Remedy would be the restoring of the Mango, by which he was restord to his Health again".

Many of these young factors must have been pretty rough diamonds, for one of the earliest resolutions of the Company was "not to employ any gentleman in any place of charge". And when the King began to negotiate for a place for a penurious but deserving knight, the Company fell into a panic at the prospect of this aristocratic recruit and petitioned the King to "be allowed to sort their business with

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men of their own qualitye". They were particularly afraid of the martial propensities of seventeenth-century gentlemen ; like their cousins in the London counting-houses they regarded soldiers as unrighteous and lewd men who would trouble the godly tenor of their lives. And soldiers provoked fighting, and fighting led to unnecessary expense. Look at the Portuguese, they said, " notwithstanding their many rich residences they are beggared by keeping of soldiers". This did not mean that every clerk and factor was not prepared to buckle on a sword and shoulder a musket as readily as the London apprentices who defied Rupert's squadrons ; when they spoke of soldiers they had in mind the ferocious mercenaries who thronged the London taverns, bragging of skirmishes in the Low Countries and always ready to pick a quarrel, a very general pest in seventeenth-century Europe. Another reason for prejudice against aristocratic employees was the fear that they would not be amenable to the discipline imposed on all servants of the Company, whose way of life resembled that of students in a well-conducted college. All had to sleep in the factory whose gates were only open from dawn till dusk. With the coming of night the Company's servants retired into a virtuous seclusion, congratulating themselves on their self-imposed remoteness from the tumult beyond their gates, where like some great City of the Plain, Surat awoke to new liveliness in the cool of twilight ; and in addition to the strains of music and song there came faintly through barred windows, to the ears of the factors the noise of police activity ; for their Superintendent's " Business is to scower the Streets and Brothels of Idle Companions ; so that all Night long he is heard by his Drums and Trumpets, shouting and halloing of his Crew in their Perambulation". Any youth returning to the factory after sundown was fined five weeks'

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salary, which was distributed among the poor. Absence from prayers, which were held twice daily, was visited with a fine of half a crown on weekdays and five shillings on Sundays.¹ Oaths were penalised at a shilling a time, and there was a variety of punishments for being drunk "and thereby prostituting the worthiness of our Nation and Religion to the calumnious Censure of the Heathen". Even the maximum amount to be drunk was regulated and though the allowance would appear to be liberal—"not more than half a pint of brandy together with one quart of wine at any meal"—yet no doubt there were found many to grumble at the restriction. But wine was not the only refreshment, for as Mr. Mandelslo noted, "at our ordinary meetings we took only Thé which is commonly used all over the Indies as a drug that cleanses the Stomach and digests the superfluous humours". It was not drunk with milk, though sometimes candy sugar was dissolved in it, but the factors with more delicate palates brewed it with a variety of spices and "the more curious with conserved lemons". A few packets were sent home to friends in England where there was an outcry against this "hay water"; but the doctors, as usual scenting profit in a new drug, were loud in their advocacy of its qualities. For long, however, it was considered an oddity and in an order despatched in 1664 it was included in a cargo of oil of cinnamon, "rarities of birds, beasts or other curiosities", and some years later Leadenhall Street remarked as though with indulgent surprise that "very good *tea* might be put up in tutinneague Pots".

Sundays must have been tedious; for in addition to the services there were two sermons read out by the President. But there were compensations on "the great Feasts of

¹ In money of that time.

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Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide ” for then, as a contemporary wrote, “ we have the Solemn Service, publike Feasts and noc great busynes permitted to be done in the factory house and all the country people know why we are soe solemn and feast and are Merry. Soe allsoe for Gunpowder Treason Day,” though one cannot help feeling that Indians must have wondered at this persistent observance of an abortive plot when in their own country similar plots were of such frequent occurrence that they were forgotten in a very short while. Besides these celebrations, “ we have very strikt Fasts kept upon Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and the Thirtieth of January ”. Even if other members of the Factory omitted to observe the religious calendar it was incumbent on the President to fast every Friday ; not that, as it was hurriedly explained, “ our Fasts are as the Romanists ” ; nevertheless they involved, “ a meane dyett, nay generally none untill night, but Prayers and Retirement ”. And the frivolous were not encouraged. A Mr. Sturdivant found himself in hot water as a result of a report that “ he hath a stragglng humour, and delighteth in Tobacco and Wine ”. Interest in the arts was regarded with some suspicion, and when Mr. Lenton ventured on an ode he was told “ the Court did not well relish his conceits and desired him neither to print them nor proceed any further in making verses ”. Nor was the local council the only tribunal of taste ; for Leadenhall Street kept a close eye on the morals and behaviour of its employees and had occasion even to comment on the factors’ pets. “ The Tygar ”, for instance, “ you keep at the expense of a Goat a day, we looke upon as a superfluous vain Charge.”

So to judge by the rules of conduct prescribed for the English merchants in seventeenth-century Surat it would be difficult to find another community of such sobriety and

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discipline. Unfortunately the rules represented an ideal of conduct and often had little relation to reality. Even at the beginning of the seventeenth century Sir Thomas Roe found most of the English liable to frequent bouts of drunkenness and to "other exorbitances proceeding from it". Sir Thomas, of course, felt deeply on the subject of Surat liquor since his own servant's drunkenness had caused him some embarrassment. The man, probably sick to death of ship-board rum, had no sooner arrived in Surat than he discovered a taste for the Armenian wine which was served him in the first *buvette* he entered. After slaking his thirst he staggered out into the sunlit streets at the same moment as the Mogul Governor's brother went by with a great train. Swaying into the middle of the road he addressed the Mogul nobleman with a "How now, thou heathen dog?" Fortunately the Governor was in a good humour and when Sir Thomas hurried to apologise he dismissed the incident with a smile and a suave gesture. This was not poor Sir Thomas's only trouble with a servant, however; his valet at Delhi tried to escape punishment for disobedience by interesting a Mogul Prince in his case; and the whole court was involved in the affair which Sir Thomas refers to disgustedly in his diary as "Jones His Lewdnesse". After Sir Thomas, the Italian traveller Della Vallee reported that not only the junior factors drank to excess but that the President himself, as soon as he awoke in the morning, shouted for "burnt wine" which he "drank frequently to comfort the stomach, sipping it little by little for fear of scalding". Nor was drunkenness the only accusation levied against the foreign merchants, for from Terry we learn that the "natives who are very square and exact to make good all their engagements used the word Christian as a synonym for cheat. . . ."

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The prejudice against employing gentlemen rapidly declined after the fall of Charles I. The Company had to appease the voracious appetites of the Parliamentary oligarchs by enrolling as many of them as possible among their shareholders and finding jobs for their stupid nephews. With the return of Charles II courtiers succeeded to the privileged position of the revolutionaries; and a new, almost aristocratic, tone becomes evident in the communications of the Company's servants. "We thought it necessary", they wrote when recounting Streyntsham Master's resistance to the Marathas, "to maintaine your honour and that of the Nation (which wee had hitherto reputably preserved) from any scandall that might be cast upon us of deserting the Towne in Time of danger."

The changes in manners that marked the Restoration in England had their effect on the life of the Surat factors. The almost conventual life of the first half of the century was disturbed by a new spirit of atheism and indifference, and in spite of President Oxinden's order from England for "a large Table in a frame gilded and handsomely adorned with Moses and Aaron and in ye midst and at ye Topp God's name writt", the prevailing sentiment of many of the sceptical or lazy juniors was expressed by Shem Bridges of Bengal who exclaimed "that we have divine service once on the Sunday is as much as can be expected in these hot countries". Instead of attending the President's sermon the young factors preferred to spend their time with their fighting cocks, especially imported from Siam, or with their other pets with which the factory was crowded—we hear of innumerable fantail pigeons, Basra turtle-doves, tame cockatoos and a performing cassowary. They were less interested in pomp and ceremony than in comfort and while the officials stationed at Swally, the port of Surat, had been

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formerly satisfied with tents they now demanded bungalows. Private rooms began to be furnished with an elegance that disturbed the directors, and what was to be said of Mr. Young who sat up till two or three "in drinking of healths . . . thus perverting or converting to an ill private use those refreshments intended for the Factory in general"? The court of Directors became increasingly anxious at the "riot, prodigality, carelessness and folly and expensive and vicious habits" and soundly denounced its employees as "incorrigible Lumber" most of whom ought to be dismissed "in a summary way, without formality of tedious, impertinent examinations or other trumpery".

But as threats were more often uttered than put into effect the factors attended office when they chose and in the evenings strutted about the gardens of Surat in their vast hats of velvet and taffeta with bunches of feathers, followed by troops of servants in elaborate liveries. The uniform of one's servants was an important matter and even visitors had to decide how they would dress their retainers. Sir Thomas Roe, after some thought, chose for his servants an elaborate outfit, including "red taffeta cloaks guarded with green taffeta" as the proper dress for an English ambassador to the Great Mogul. The extravagance of European costume, the ruffs "of twelve, yea sixteen lengths, set three or four times double", the slashed silks and heavy folds of lace, always impressed Indians with awe. A Mogul noble inquired politely if Dr. Fryer slept in those grand clothes of his; and when an English mission visited the Maratha court, their enormous Caroline wigs caused a sensation. At sight of them the King stopped his palanquin and begged the foreigners to come nearer so that he could feel with his own fingers those prodigious ringlets. Considering that this interview took place in the middle of the hot weather it is

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difficult not to admire the stoic endurance of those English envoys, sacrificing all comfort in their determination to do their country credit by their fashionable appearance. A certain prejudice against any concession to the severest climate as being unworthy of English hardihood lasted until the first half of the nineteenth century, and General John Jacob, whose long residence on the upper Sind frontier certainly qualified him to speak as an expert on tropic heat, was loud in his disapproval of modern concern with the dangers of heat-stroke. Certainly the gentlemen in the seventeenth-century Surat would have earned his approbation, for their clothes seem to have differed in no respect, not even in lighter materials, from those worn in London. It was in vain that the Company issued sumptuary decrees directing with a shrewd combination of Puritan sobriety and protectionist zeal

that for the encouraging good husbandry, by preventing the vaine and immoderate excess of apparell . . . no apparell or outward garments, to wit, Tunicks, vest, Doublet, Breeches be used or worn, of what quality, nation and condition soever but such as are made of English manufactures, of silke, wooll or cotton.

The Company's employees were less interested in the country of origin or material of their clothes than in their approximation to the latest fashions at home. They begged their friends in London for advice on dress. No present was more gratefully received than some example of the recent fads and fancies of the smart world, and Mr. Christopher Oxinden was delighted at his sister-in-law's gift of "a small box in which is a crevat and cups and riben of the newest mode with a border of lace for your nightcap". In return they would send Indian curios and these would often take a strange form in that superstitious age when people expected

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material benefits from Eastern magic and not the mere spiritual advancement of modern parlour-occultists. Sir Streynsham Master sent in all seriousness to his daughter, Lady Coventry, along with the most elaborate directions for use, "in an *Indian* silk Bag and Paper, an Eagle Stone good to prevent miscarriages of women with child, to be worne about the Necke". But other presents were less outlandish and fantastic and the "Japan dressing-box" which Mrs. Nicks sent home to "her dear garlls" sounds like a sinister forerunner of those countless Oriental knick-knacks with which in subsequent centuries so many English drawing-rooms were to be encumbered.

It must often, however, have seemed a sad waste of all this male finery that there were so few women to admire the feathered hats and watered silks and lace cuffs. English women were rare and though on festive occasions the local Armenian and Portuguese ladies might sit at table with the English merchants such reunions were not encouraged, for there was no knowing when some Englishman might wish to marry a Portuguese and then the children "thro' their father's neglect, brought up in the Roman Catholic principles to the great dishonour and weakening of the Protestant religion". The Dutch merchants of Surat had no such foresight and often married Papists. Many of those Portuguese women had started for India as the intended wives of officials in Goa; for the Portuguese Government, in its concern for the morals of its employees in the East, used to send out annual batches of women who had failed to find husbands at home and, that the obedient officials might not cavil at such trifles as lack of physical attraction, sent with them substantial dowries. These women, however, as often as not were provided by fate with other husbands in other parts of India, their ships being captured by Musulman

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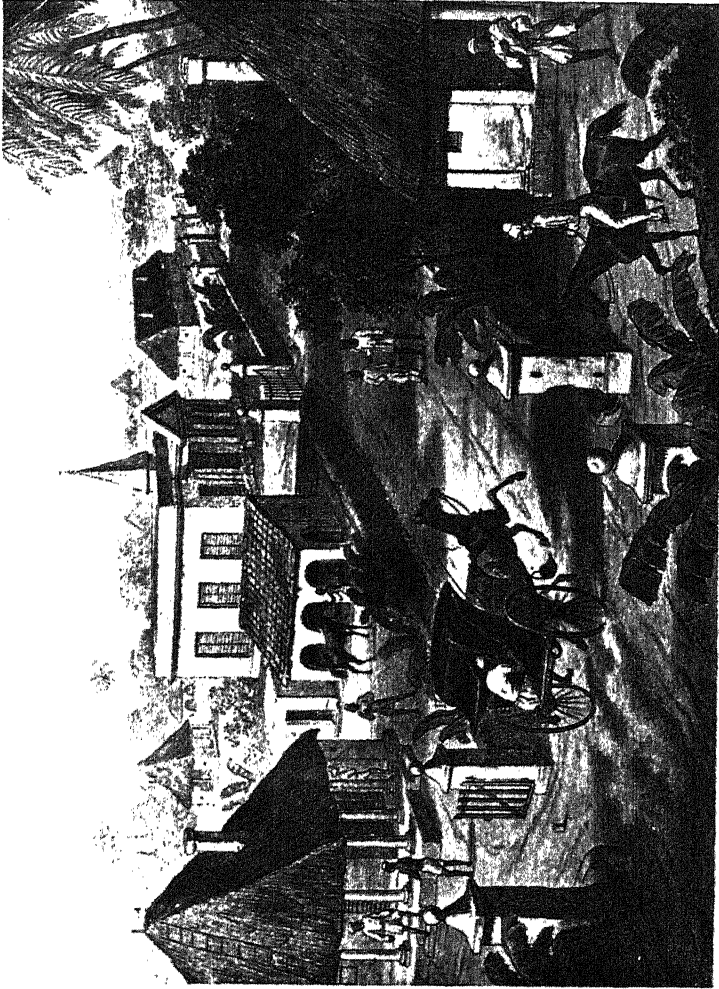
pirates and themselves despatched to the slave-market at Surat. A famous beauty of seventeenth-century Surat was a Donna Lucia who, having arrived at Surat in this manner, attracted the attention of a rich Dutchman. They were married by the rites of the Dutch Reformed Church ; and all the foreign merchants in Surat attended the wedding dinner. It was a most successful marriage and the English merchants related, as a proof of the Dutchman's unreasoning devotion, that he allowed his wife to practise her religion, though in private. Some of these Portuguese captives brought to Surat reached even more exalted stations ; in the previous century one had become an Empress and another the wife of a Mogul Chamberlain, the renegade Bourbon, founder of the house of the Bhopal Bourbons. Some, however, were bundled into the harems of local officials and never heard of again. Senior members of the English Company discussed the dangers of these Papist women and warned susceptible juniors against their seductive charms. But no one seems to have thought of the emotions of these mild convent-bred girls looking forward to a quiet and dutiful existence as wives of minor civil servants, caught away suddenly from their curtain-shaded cabins and their stout duennas and paraded through the cosmopolitan bazaars of Surat with less ceremony than a herd of cattle. Probably piracy in general was so common a peril that men had little thought to spare for such everyday occurrences. The worst pirates, indeed, in the Indian Ocean then were English ; and many of the Company's servants had clandestine relations with these savages. And when the Governor of New York, Lord Bellamont, at last persuaded the Home Government to realise the disgrace of the increasing power of the pirates, it was unfortunate that the man they selected for the expedition was Captain Kidd.

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This officer left New York in 1696 with 155 seamen and the blessings of the Government and within a few hours of sighting the shores of India had developed into the most ferocious of all the pirates. A number of other English vessels joined him so that he was soon in command of a formidable fleet ; and even the Company's vessels were often in danger of capture. A year after Kidd's arrival in Eastern waters the *Dorill* fell in with one of his ships. Solomon Lloyd relates, "wee could discern a fellow on ye quarter deck wearing a sword. As he drew near this hellish imp cryed, 'Strike you doggs,' which we perceived was not by a general Consent for he was called away. Our Boatswain in a Fury ran upon ye Poop unknown to ye Captain, and answered that wee would strike to no doggs as hee." Then on the pirate ship "one stept forward on ye forecastle beckoning with his Hand, and said 'Gentlemen, wee want not your ship nor Men, but Money.' A parcel of Blood Hound rogues then clashed their cutlasses and said they would have it or our Heart's blood." ¹ Nevertheless the pirate vessel was driven off after a violent cannonade lasting three and a half hours, and the Company's ship proceeded safely on her way.

Of other Europeans in Surat the English took little notice. The French of course talked too much ; with the Portuguese there was the religious difficulty ; but the Dutch in spite of their faults had some qualities in common with the English. They were good hosts for instance, regaling Dr. Fryer with "good soops of brandy and Delf's beer till it was late enough" ; and among their number were some whose drinking abilities excited awe even among the English as they did respectful admiration among their own countrymen, who celebrated their anniversaries in suitable manner. In the cemetery for instance

¹ Hedge's *Diary*.



"OUR STATION"
A Mid-Nineteenth Century Impression

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there was the tomb of a great Dutch drinker. At the top was a great cup of stone and another at each corner. Dutch drinking parties used to frequent this tomb, brewing their punch in the large stone basins ; remembering their departed companion they sometimes forgot themselves.¹

The English might extend to their Dutch rivals a faint cordiality that they denied to other Europeans but they seldom troubled to learn their language ; and when Albert de Mandelslo from Holstein visited the English factory expecting that his knowledge of Dutch would be of service to him there he found that only the President knew anything but English. Nevertheless, the English did their best to entertain their guest ; the President asked him to supper, offering him, however, only fruits and preserves, since he was unaccustomed to a heavy meal at night " out of a fear of overcharging his stomach, digestion being slowly performed, by reason of the great heats " ; and he attended the " divertisement " in the great hall of the factory on Friday when healths were drunk to wives in England. " Some made their advantage of this meeting ", he noted, " to get more than they could well carry away, though every man was at liberty to drink what he pleas'd, and to mix the Sack as he thought fit, or to drink *Palepuntz*, which is a kind of drink consisting of *aqua vitæ*, rosewater, juice of citrons and sugar." On the Sunday he accompanied the English to a garden outside the city where they amused themselves by " shooting at Butts " and challenging his hosts to a competition, he won £5 in wagers. After this gesture of hospitality the English must have been glad enough when their guest left them and they could return to the insular routine of their life with a sigh of relief.

It was to this curiously self-centred community that the sudden news of the cession of Bombay came with a shock of

¹ Ovington's *Surat*.

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surprise. They were not so well informed on world politics as Lord Clarendon who at that moment was congratulating himself on the acquisition of a valuable island "with the towns and castles therein which are within a very little distance of Brazil".